

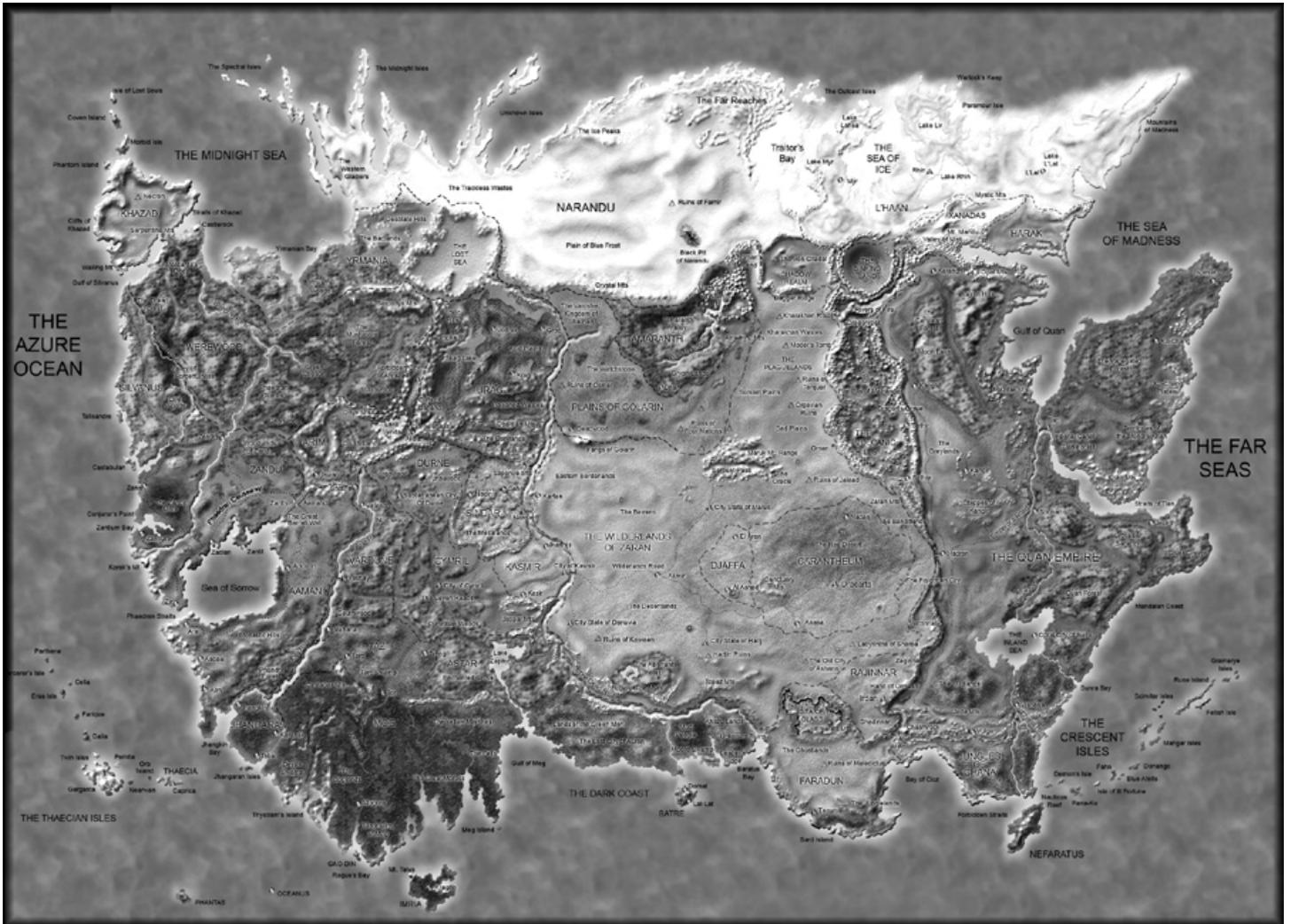
# TALISMANA



Hotan's History of the World

# TALISLANTA

## HOTAN'S HISTORY OF THE WORLD



TALISLANTA  
FANTASY ROLE PLAYING GAME  
Fifth Edition

# Hotan's History of the World

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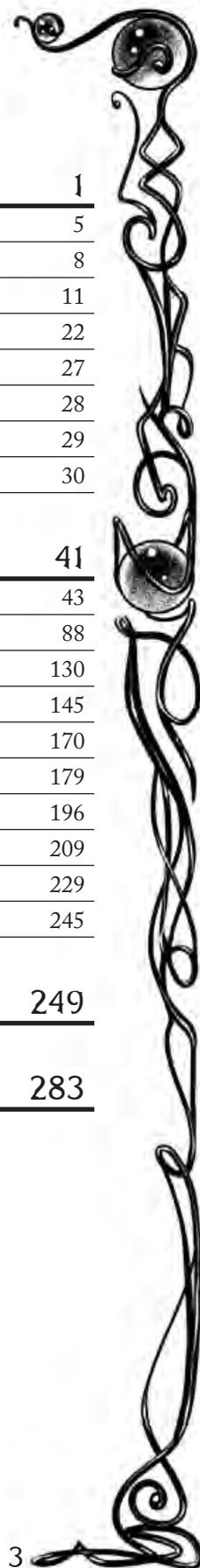
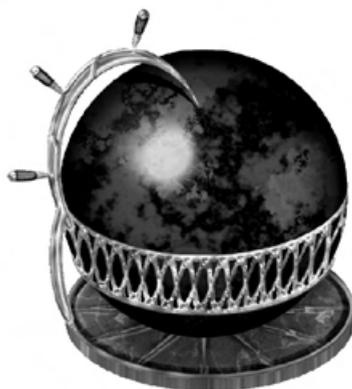


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# HOTAN'S HISTORY OF THE WORLD



*The secrets of a thousand ancient civilizations lie buried beneath the dust of past ages. If you would know the forgotten lore, then search the ruins.*

*- Excerpted from Hotan's History of the World*

The Forgotten Age is a series of periods that, overall, spans many thousands of years. From the Time Before Time (even predating the discovery of the orb that brought magic to the men of Talislanta) through the world-wracking horror of the Great Disaster, and down through the centuries until the founding of the Phaedran Empire. During this long-ago age, the world's first—and greatest—magicians rose to prominence. Beginning as simple tribal folk, these primitives would eventually master the arcane might necessary to allow them unrivalled dominance of the world itself. Exploration, colonization, discovery, invention... these were the words that summed up the people we know as the Archaens.

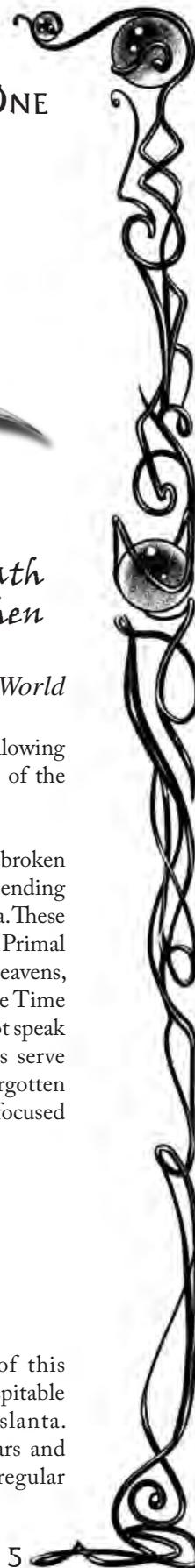
Reliable evidence and surviving records of this ancient era are rare, and accordingly, their value cannot be overstated for many scholars. To attain factual knowledge of the long-past age is the life's work of many worthy chroniclers and adventurers alike. Several events in history have destroyed any true hope of reacquiring the ancient lore, most notably the burning of the Library of Badijan and the Great Disaster itself. For those who seek the secrets of the past, fragmented accounts of savants and scholars make up the majority of what has survived to the modern age, and now serve as the primary sources of

lore. As a result, all dates mentioned in the following text are estimates based upon interpretations of the ancient Archaen calendar.

To the modern scholar, the Forgotten Age is broken into seven lesser periods, each beginning and ending with great societal shifts on the face of Talislanta. These ages are known as the Time Before Time, the Primal Age, the Archaen Ascension, the Age of the Heavens, the Age of Decline, the Great Disaster, and the Time of Chaos. Naturally, the people of the era did not speak of living in these times, but the appellations serve modern historians well enough. After the Forgotten Age came the New Age, which was initially focused – albeit briefly – on the Phaedran Era.

## THE TIME BEFORE TIME

The only remnants, such as they are, of this prehistoric era are found today in the inhospitable region of Khazad in north-western Talislanta. Travellers to the region can find stone pillars and grave markers dotting the landscape at irregular





intervals; evidence of the long-departed race known as the Thane, who were—according to carvings on the gravestones—a tall breed of humanoids. It is not known exactly when the Thane came to the region, for the Time Before Time stretches back to the world's very creation. It would seem that the Thane were either the lone example of the region's inhabitants in ancient times, or simply the only ones who left their mark for future races to witness. Whatever the truth of the race, they lived and died in the Forgotten Age, lasting many centuries without establishing any real contact with the rest of the world as it developed. Perhaps they had grown used to being alone.

Khazad bears markings of the Thane even today, in the form of the ancient city now referred to as Necron, and the scattered “warning stones” that dot the landscape here and there. These pillars seem to mark places where great battles or events took place in the Time Before Time, though exactly what the Thane were trying to relate with these faded etchings is lost to the past. Some evidence of demonic figures remains on a few of these pillars, but nothing is conclusive. What is known for certain is that the Thane were occultists with a great deal of interest in the lower planes, and they assembled a minor fleet of black-hulled sailing vessels that plied the waters near the north and

west coasts of Khazad. Standing stones littering the beaches of Morbid Isle attest to some presence on the small island to the north as well, but most of the lore pertaining to the Thane comes from Archaen writings dating thousands of years after the Time Before Time, and nothing can be considered certain.

## ECHOES OF THE PAST

### CITY OF THE DEAD

Necron is a sprawling city with alien architecture and a past shattered by both the passing of time and the Great Disaster. The legends of this city—located somewhere in north Khazad and buried under the sands of the region—tell of an entire people mummified and buried within their ancient capital. What treasures of a long-forgotten age could adventurers come across if they located an entrance down into Necron?

What few records of the Thane survive speak of a race that dealt with demons and had a vested interest in dark arcane arts, so what relics and ancient wonders would such a people produce? Do these dark wonders still lie in the depths under the desert? And of course, what of the tales that speak of the city's inhabitants living on as spectral undead, or mummified in the hope of one day awakening once more?

### The Black Savants

It is a rare historian that dedicates many years of his life to wandering the desolate realm of Khazad in the search for knowledge, but some of the most learned adventurer-scholars that make the journey believe they have chanced upon a potential link between the ancient Thane and the occult order of Neferatus; the Black Savants.

Of course, the island of Neferatus is barred to all outsiders, and few people even know the Black Savants exist, let alone have the years of knowledge behind them to make the connection. The link is tenuous at best, formed from sightings of black-hulled ships sailing the seas around Khazad, etchings and carvings upon the pillars that resemble what rare and priceless lore has been acquired about the Black Savants, and a general assumption that the two races are purported to be similar in appearance; i.e. tall, exceptionally gaunt humanoids.

Some of the ancient lore points to the Thane colonizing the region of Talislanta now called Khazad and creating Necron in order to survive a coming apocalypse (thought to be no less than the Great Disaster itself). If this is true, it would certainly explain why the Black Savants – a magical order unknown to most Talislantans – has a vested interest in the entombed city. It stands to reason that even now the dark spellcasters are seeking artifacts of their lost imperial glory...or perhaps working on a way to restore their mummified brethren to life.

### THE STANDING STONES

The grave markers and standing stones of the long-forgotten Thane are notoriously faded and difficult to decipher. For adventurers traveling to the desolate land of Khazad, any but the most cerebral characters are going to find little of interest in the etchings that do remain. Grave-robbers are likely to find mummified corpses interred at these sites, perhaps buried with trinkets and items that have somehow survived thousands of years without corruption. Perhaps all there is to be found is the dust of ancient bones.

However, what if the markings of some of these stones can be deciphered? It is all too easy to imagine that the stone pillars tell of ancient battles or the locations of hidden settlements, but could it be possible that others form a “map” of sorts to locate the lost city of Necron? Or what if the carvings have endured throughout the millennia and still tell of an ancient ritual once used to summon and bind a powerful demonic entity from the lower planes? It is wholly possible that some of these pillars were left as markers for traditional locations for ritual summonings, and scraps of history show the Thane in a very dark and unwholesome light.

### WAILING MOUNTAIN

In south Khazad, a colossal mountain range is dominated by the twisting, spiral crag called Wailing Mountain. This edifice of grey basalt is named for the ululating moans and deep cries which seem to emanate from its uppermost reaches. Skeptical scholars attribute these noises to the rushing of the wind through the many twists, caves and hollows in the mountain's body, while those with a more preternatural explanation point to an ancient Phaedran legend involving an archmage binding a powerful Shaitan somewhere within the mountain.

Perhaps neither of these explanations is true. Littered around the foothills of the crags surrounding the Wailing Mountain—and at the base of the gigantic spire itself—are several Thane standing stone markers. Whether a scholar might still be able to decipher the faces of these stones is debatable, but it seems the Thane also had reasons to avoid (or draw attention to) the Wailing Mountain, even in the centuries before the story of the bound demon was first told.



## THE PRIMAL AGE

In the Time Before Time, an otherworldly vessel of alien origin fell to the world and crashed into the untouched wilderness of western Talislanta. It lay there for an unknowable amount of time, perhaps centuries, perhaps millennia, before it was finally chanced upon by the primitive barbarian tribes of the era. A group of these tribal hunters entered the wreckage of this gigantic icon from the sky, and within its strange walls they discovered the single most important item in Talislantan lore: an orb of unknown material. This crystalline sphere contained the secrets and capacity to teach an alien knowledge to those that possessed the orb.

That knowledge—never before seen in the world—*was magic.*

The tribal people declared the makers of the crashed “icon” to be gods, and the orb to be a gift from these sky-dwelling deities. With primitive abandon, the tribes established stone menhir circles and dolmen

structures of religious reverence to what history now calls the Forgotten Gods. And so magic and religion began in Talislanta, though they were—as things of this era—performed, revered and harnessed in little more than a primal state.

Years, perhaps centuries, passed. For reasons modern scholars can only guess at, the growing tribe moved their nomadic clans south and left what few primitive hamlets they had established to found a settlement in what is now south-western Aaman. This settlement would eventually rise to become the enigmatic city of *Arcanopolis*, the City of Secrets. In this age, it was merely a walled fortified village by the banks of the Axis River, most likely established where the hunting was plentiful, the fishing was prosperous, and founded in the spirit of keeping other tribes away from the precious orb. These simple tribal folk were the ancestors of the Archaens, the mightiest magicians ever to walk the face of Talislanta, and known to history as the Keepers of the Secret Lore.



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## Hotan's History of the World

In the Primal Age, the magic practised by the tribe was probably an animistic clash of shamanism, nature-based witchcraft and idol worship. With their newfound faith in the Forgotten Gods and the slowly unlocking power of the orb to fuel their rituals, the tribe began to expand into new lands. At first this proceeded much as could be expected, involving little more than savage and small-scale battles between barbarian tribes. The soon-to-be Archaens, with the hubris of many truly faithful and more-developed cultures, referred to the other tribes as the "Sub-Men".

By the end of the first millennium after the discovery of the alien vessel and the orb, the early Archaens had conquered and laid claim to lands as far east as the Wilderlands, and established a second settlement one day destined for greatness, the walled city of *Pbandril*, in what is the modern-day city-state of Hadj. And here, for a time, the dreams of expansion and development died. To the east were no more barbaric Sub-Men tribes, but a new race entirely. And the creatures known as the Drakken did not sit idle when the Archaen warriors came.

## ECHOES OF THE PAST

### THE STONE CIRCLES

In what is now known as Werewood, in the west of Talislanta, travelers can find dozens of dolmens, menhirs and haphazardly-placed stone circles. These are the ancient monuments that the early Archaen tribes people erected to honor the Forgotten Gods, once used in primitive rituals and whatever rites of shamanic reverence the primitive tribes performed.

Carved idols, primitive tools and fallen dolmens have been exhumed in southern Werewood, though what few adventurers risk the perils of the deeper forests have reported a significant increase in stones that still stand. In a region of the Werewood known as Witchwood, the dolmens are rumored to be used by the Dhuna witchfolk and are referred to among their culture as "witch gates".

### THE ALIEN SHIP

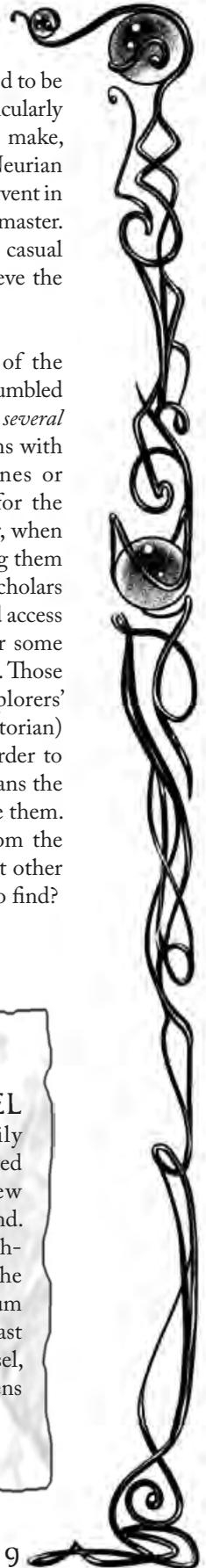
Perhaps the most important piece of evidence in all Talislantan history is, sadly, still undiscovered by any since the ancient Archaens. The alien vessel that the

tribes first came across is now popularly believed to be of extra-dimensional origin; the Sindarans particularly seek to prove that the vessel was of Neurian make, perhaps no small part because they are of Neurian descent themselves. Few other scholars are as fervent in their pursuit of the lost vessel as a Sindaran loremaster. Before the current theory, many scholars and casual students of history alike were content to believe the ship was from a world beyond Archaus.

Any characters that chance across some of the remains of this wondrous artifact have literally stumbled into the discovery of—not just a lifetime—but *several* lifetimes. Pieces of alien metal, unknown items with unfathomable function, unnatural gemstones or materials that may have served a purpose for the vessel...the possibilities are endless. However, when it comes to examining these treasures or selling them on, the explorers will have a hard time. Few scholars have the wherewithal, in-depth knowledge and access to ancient tomes to accurately gauge whether some unknown item really *is* part of the alien vessel. Those that do have the facility to evaluate the explorers' claims (most likely a dedicated Sindaran historian) might be tempted to do anything at all in order to preserve the find for themselves, even if it means the initial finders must be killed in order to silence them. After all, if the Archaen Orb was pulled from the hull of the vessel by primitive barbarians, what other wonders might an enlightened scholar hope to find?

### FRAGMENTS OF THE VESSEL

Pieces of the crashed ship are easily identifiable by the unusual rainbow-colored highlights they emanate. To date, few fragments of the wreckage have been found. The largest discovery was uncovered in southwestern Urag and now resides within the crystal city of Cymril. The Lyceum Arcanum has famously offered vast rewards in the past for authentic wreckage from the alien vessel, with sums of money reaching 10,000 lumens for the largest pieces.



## THE RUINS OF ARCANOPOLIS

As rare as any lore on the Forgotten Age can be, several historical texts agree on one aspect of the City of Secrets' eventual fate; it was razed by the Drakken, who apparently boasted that they didn't leave a single stone standing atop another. It was destined to rise as a vast settlement, but at the fall of the city in the Second Millennium only a few centuries after its' founding, the precious green stone used in its construction was apparently carted away by the conquering Drakken to be used elsewhere. This theory remains little more than the conjecture of historians, but it goes some way to explaining why the ruins of such a sprawling city have never been found.

Wherever the true resting places of this ruined city might be, the Archaen Orb lays there still—or, at least, its shattered remains. Other artifacts at the site are likely to be evidences of the rare green stone used in the city's construction, dolmens, idols and stone altars used by the ancient Archaens in their primitive shamanistic worship, and stone tablets perhaps still showing the writing of the ancient people when they were at the apex of their power before the Great Disaster.

Anyone prowling around the long-lost ruins can also expect to find magic items based on practices of witchcraft and animism, or discarded weapons and armor of the reptilian Drakken invaders.

## THE FALLEN CITY OF PHANDRIL

Standing for two thousand years before its eventual abandonment and destruction by the Sub-Men tribes

in the Third Millennium, Phandril was the second of the Archaen settlements that would eventually rise to greatness from a humble founding in the Primal Age. In fact, if the legends are correct, it put Arcanopolis in shadow; Phandril prospered and grew, while the City of Secrets lasted a mere few hundred years in comparison.

During its long history, Phandril underwent numerous restorations and reconstructions to suit the styles, fashions and architectural aesthetics of successive eras. To gaze upon the city in its infancy was to look upon sandstone polished to beauty by elemental magics. To set eyes upon Phandril at the height of its ascension was to witness an entire city of towers and sky-docks plated with precious metals, so that the entire settlement glittered and shone under the light of suns and moons.

It was apparently a varied and cosmopolitan city, and a home for those who wished to learn and prosper through the acquisition of knowledge. Accordingly, it became renowned for its magicians and enchanters, for almost every magical innovation the Archaens developed was said to come from the Phandre, including the first windships that moored in the beauteous sky-docks of the city's towers.

The only structures to survive the city's eventual destruction were the colossal mausoleum towers that served as mass tombs for the Archaen dead. The Sub-Men marauders clung to superstitions of curses and haunting if they defiled the tombs of the Phandre, evidently believing that misfortune and chaos would fall upon the spirits of their own ancestors. Later ages

### The Orb

Presumably lost to the ages and the savagery of the Drakken, the Archaen Orb – even in fragments – remains the most valuable artifact on the face of Talislanta. Somehow, by a process now lost to the world, the Archaen Orb contained the secrets of magic and was the direct source of the Archaen Codex and the Nine Books of Knowledge.

A relic-hunter that came across a shard of the Orb, let alone the whole and undamaged object, could march into the Lyceum Arcanum and name his price. Consequently, the dangers surrounding the treasure-seekers would be high. The adventurers carrying the artifact would be in possession of the most valuable item in the world, and it is obvious that other factions would attempt to “relieve them of their burden” by means fair or foul.

saw the coming of more “civilized” races to the region that lacked both the morality and superstition to keep them from grave-robbing. The tombs that had stood untouched for centuries were plundered in the New Age when the Phaedrans sold them to the Hadjin for a massive (and private) sum. Many of these towering mausoleums can be found in the present day, though some have toppled to the ground or lean at odd angles

due to erosion or structural damage from the Great Disaster. Around either the tomb-towers or the city remnants, explorers and adventurers can expect to find, whole or shattered Phandre glass sarcophagi, wondrous magical items and even children's toys from the height of the city's greatness, or parts that once comprised an ancient windship.

# THE ARCHAEN ASCENSION

## THE FIRST WAR

Though historians name the Second Millennium as the Archaen Ascension, it was not a clear and unopposed rise to dominance. For the first centuries of the era, the developing Archaens waged war against the reptilian Drakken, though the weaker humans met with little initial success against the numerous and physically powerful lizard-creatures. The First War reached its climactic apex with the Archaen assault upon the Drakken citadel of Golarin. The Watchstone (a mountain spire which had unhindered views of the entire plains region around Golarin) was a traditional

sentry point for the Drakken. It was here that the reptilian sentinels spotted the oncoming horde of Archaen soldiers: enough men to raze the city if it stood without reinforcement.

But the Drakken did call for reinforcements—dragon-riders raced to the fortress-city of Kharakhan and the Archaens were viciously crushed in the pincer movement of two reptilian armies. The First War was over, ending in brutal and bitter defeat as the Drakken poured



across the land in pursuit of the routed Archaens. The final indignity was the destruction of Arcanopolis and wiping all known traces of the City of Secrets from the face of Talislanta. The survivors of the First War fled to Phandril with what precious knowledge and possessions they could carry. The Orb was forever lost, perhaps even destroyed, though the refugees of Arcanopolis carried with them the lore of the alien artifact, transcribed in a tome known now as the *Archaen Codex*.

In Phandril, city of magicians and invention, the Archaen people remained behind towering walls and healed the wounds of the First War. Over the following decades the humans refined their magical arts further and forged a lasting alliance with the Sub-Men tribes based upon a mutual hatred of the Drakken. The alliance was apparently an uneasy one and took a great deal of time to forge, but the end result was the offering of the Archaens' eternal friendship and the rights to the fertile lands of the plains surrounding Phandril. In return, the Sub-Men would raise armies of their own and join with the Archaens in the assault upon the Drakken nation.

And so began the second war; the Last Dragon War.

## THE LAST DRAGON WAR

After an indeterminate number of years had passed, the united Archaen and Sub-Men armies marched against the Drakken. This time the wizards of Phandril were prepared, and wracked the spire of the Watchstone with terrible storms to shroud the views of the sentinels stationed there and prevent dragon-riders from relaying messages to other outposts. With the advantage of surprise and concealed numbers, the invading humanoids stormed the city of Golarin, slaughtering defenders and innocents alike. The Drakken that sought to flee to Kharakhan were hunted down and killed by Sub-Men beast-riders that swarmed around the region after the initial assault.

Within days of Golarin's fall, Kharakhan suffered a similar fate. What few Drakken remained fled the land, apparently by virtue of a land bridge that no longer exists, which once connected the mainland to an unknown and uncharted southern continent.

In a matter of weeks, the Last Dragon War was finished, and the humanoid races were rulers of Talislanta.

### Drakken Relics

The oversized weapons and armor of the Drakken warriors are of little use to humanoids, and the Drakken's lack of magic means that their relics are of no value to arcanologists. However, as curios, these relics can bring up to a thousand gold lumens depending on their condition. The large six-inch coins of beaten silver that served the reptilians as currency can warrant as much as a hundred lumens from some collectors, especially if their condition hasn't marred the dragon imprint pressed into both sides. Though the great glyphstones that once stood as tall as towers are now broken and strewn across the Kharakhan wastes, fragments that still sport the strange indentations of Drakken writing are valuable to many scholars – provided that the discoverer is able to physically bring the piece to the buyer, of course. Lastly, curious "war medals" have also been found; seven-pointed stars carved from 100 carat firegems that seemed to have been attached to great chains and worn around the necks of the giant Drakken. These are valued at the carat weight of the firegem itself.

## THE ASCENSION

Peace grew between the Archaens and the Sub-Men tribes for centuries. Though the barbarians remained primitive and advanced little over the years, the Archaens pioneered new arcane arts such as wizardry, enchantment and alchemy, all the while spreading their burgeoning civilization across the face of the continent. Explorers became colonists, colonists founded settlements, and settlements expanded to become the vast cities of the newly-established Four Nations, as well as Torquar, Jalaad, Ashann, Numenia, Osmar, Kasran and Xambria which existed as independent city-states. This was the true beginning of the Archaen Age, when rapid advances in both invention and magic raised the humanoid races of Talislanta out of their primal and savage past. The Archaen Empire was born, and magical learning became open to anyone who displayed the talent, desire or dedication necessary



to learn the new arts that emerged from the arcane colleges. Enspelled and enchanted items of magical and alchemical construction were commonplace; such was the glory of the growing Empire.

Gradually the belief in the Forgotten Gods began to wane, and cults centered around the worship of a single divine entity began to flourish. The most powerful of these cults were the Numenians and the Torquarans, whose followers would come to rule the rival religious city-states of Numenia and Torquar. The Numenians were idolaters who revered the god Ikon, placing a great deal of belief in the power and holiness of enchanted objects. The Torquarans were black magicians who employed ritual invocation to consort with extra-dimensional entities, summoning “visitors” to provide them with knowledge and power. Each regarded the other as heretical faiths, with the Numenians regarding the Torquarans as deluded fools simpering after the lore of aliens and demons, while the Torquarans considered their enemies as blinded in their strict worship of common objects as divine.

## THE DARK BIRTH

At some point toward the end of the first thousand years of Archaen rule, a powerful occultist who was a member of the royal family of Torquar bore the child of a shaitan named Zahur. The child of this union was a horned, demonic creature and suffered the loathing of all who saw it. History names the creature *Drax*, though no known records tell whether this was the creature's true name or an embellishment of scholars. What is cited clearly in several surviving records is that before it reached adolescence, Drax murdered its mother, took control of her castle and surrounding lands, and elevated itself to the exalted status of monarch. Taking the title Necromancer King of Torquar, Drax studied black and foul arts at the feet of its father Zahur, mastering the monstrous ability to create creatures merged from the bodies of several other beings. Many of the dark-hearted cultists that made up the ruling theocracy of Torquar saw great promise in their new monarch's prowess, and aided the Necromancer King in creating a vast army of magical hybrids. The soldiers of this army were the twisted and maddened results of a magic never seen before in Talislanta; made from the merged flesh and minds of captured Sub-Men, wild beasts and lesser demonic entities, these ravaging hordes were turned loose upon the city-states that shared borders with Torquar.



But darker tidings were on the horizon. Phandril remained aloof from the coming storm, refusing to share its innovations and arcanology. It was in this era that the first windships were designed and saw use in the skies over Talislanta. It was also the era where the Archaen Ascension took another violent turn.

## WAR OF THE FOUR NATIONS

Disputes over territorial boundaries between the rulers of the Four Nations festered and turned into skirmishes. Following the initial bloodshed, the monarchs of the region soon declared open war against each other. Evenly-matched as they were, the city-states plunged headlong into conflict and emerged utterly devastated only a few short months later. Though the War of the Four Nations would irrevocably change the face of Talislanta, it was a brief conflict for all its savagery. In the aftermath, hybrid raiders from Torquar picked the ruined cities clean of all remaining worth, and wiped the land clean of sentient life. There remain to this day, fragments in certain tales told to children and references in historical prose that tell of how Drax delighted in the slaughter.

## THE EMPIRE FALTERS

The Torquarans violated the ancient treaty with the Sub-Men, reclaiming the many thousands of acres of fertile plainsland once granted to the tribes. The Sub-Men, enraged at the betrayal, declared war against all the descendants of the early Archaens.

In the years that followed, Drax was replaced by its apprentice Narishna. Conflicting tales tell of the devil-prince fleeing to another plane of existence after it angered the shaitan hierarchy, simply passing away of age, and in some stories, even being assassinated by Narishna herself who sought the power of the throne. Whatever the truth of the matter, the apprentice's reign was never destined to be a long one. Narishna instigated a pogrom of genocide against all non-Torquaran sentient creatures, claiming them to be inferior species who must be denied the right to evolve further. The Torquaran kingdom became ruthlessly obsessed with genetic purity, killing thousands of the pacifist Xambrians and the Sub-Men who waged war against the treachery of Drax's nation.

## Hotan's History of the World

The Numenians sat idle for perhaps a decade or more before finally taking action against the genocidal armies of Torquar. The ruler of the city-state, archimage Solimorrion I, eventually condemned the actions of Narishna's troops and vowed to bring the Necromancer Queen down. Torquaran necromancers cast a murrain upon the entire region of Numenia, poisoning crops and threatening to starve the people to prevent a more costly war. Solimorrion met with his council one last time, and went to war himself, challenging Narishna personally in magical combat, to prevent any more death and destruction tainting the land.

He succeeded, triumphing in a duel of arcane might that must surely rank as one of the mightiest unleashes of energy in history, and at great personal cost. Narishna died that day, but Solimorrion was never seen again.

And still, through all this, Phandril remained independent and untouched. In fact, it continued to expand, develop and advance. Around this time, the great arcanologist Koraq pioneered the magical path of sorcery, which he shared with all those who showed an interest in his work. Meanwhile, the continent slipped into chaos and disorder, threatening to halt the Archaen Ascension altogether. Numenia, bereft of its arcane ruler, eventually fell to the rampaging Sub-Men. Torquaran society fell apart once the black magicians of the necromancer cult disbanded. Bitter infighting and the death-dealing Xambrian wizard-hunters spelled the end for that particular order. The final doom for the nation of Torquar came when the hybrid armies—now uncontrolled and leaderless—joined forces with the marauding Sub-Men and sacked the city of Torquar itself.

Though Phandril had remained outside any conflict, it played host now to the remaining rulers of the Archaen city-states as they convened a vital meeting. No longer did the rogue actions of the Torquaran nation threaten minor instability; now the Archaen Empire itself stood on the precipice of annihilation. Seven master magicians were elected to serve as the new governing body of the Empire, known to history as the *Archaen Cabal*. These were Koraq the sorcerer, his wife; the sorceress Sylan, the wizard Rodinn, the magician Arkon, the illusionist Cascas, the savant Xanadas and an enchantress whose name remains lost within the pages of history.

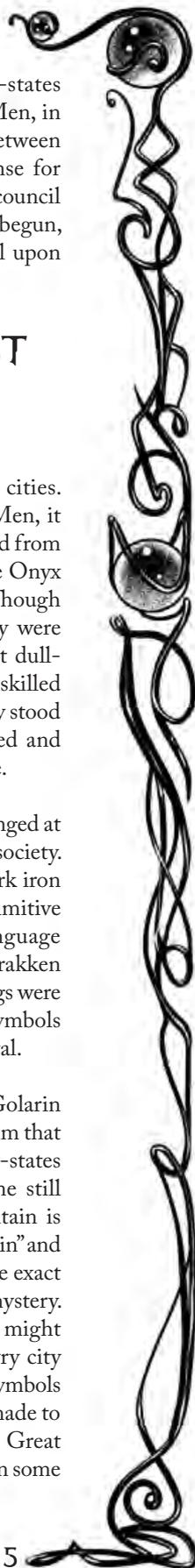
The Archaen Cabal decreed that the city-states would be abandoned and ceded to the Sub-Men, in formal recognition of the ancient contract between the two peoples, and as additional recompense for the depravity of the Torquaran nation. The council also decreed that the Age of the Heavens had begun, and that the Archaens would no longer dwell upon the ground, but live in the sky itself.

## ECHOES OF THE PAST GOLARIN, THE DRAKKEN CAPITAL

Golarin was the greatest of the Drakken cities. Before its razing by the Archaens and Sub-Men, it was an immense cyclopean structure constructed from giant blocks of black porphyry, quarried in the Onyx Mountains and carried to the site by dragons. Though the reptilian creatures that populated the city were utterly bereft of magic, the Drakken were not dull-witted beings and if records are true, they were skilled architects. The stone walls of Golarin apparently stood over a hundred feet in height and were sloped and strengthened to repel any siege engine warfare.

The Drakken culture that the Archaens expunged at its height was a thriving and innovative caste society. The reptilians had developed the ability to work iron into weapons and tools, were students of primitive astronomy, and used a complex written language comprised of many thousands of symbols. Drakken script was three-dimensional; different meanings were indicated by the varying depths at which the symbols were carved into stone or impressed upon metal.

It is not known for certain exactly where Golarin once stood, though some surviving histories claim that one (perhaps even all) of the Four Nations city-states was founded upon the ruins. The Watchstone still stands to this day, though the colossal mountain is mentioned in conflicting tales as “close to Golarin” and “within a days' dragon-flight,” which makes the exact location of the fallen Drakken capital a vague mystery. Any explorers who do manage to find the ruins might chance upon the remains of the black porphyry city walls, silver coins stamped with the serpentine symbols of Drakken currency, discarded iron weapons made to fit inhuman hands, and even the Tomb of the Great Dragon Orrix, whose mummified remains are (in some



### The Saurud

Travelers in the Kharakhan Wastes, where much of the Drakken civilization was once centered before its usurpation, have been known to come across small-numbered nomadic bands of giant reptilian creatures picking through the ruins of fallen settlements or simply eking out an existence on the barren plains. For those few that have witnessed these demi-giants and have a deep knowledge of history, it is all too tempting to insist that these Saurud, whether they are progenitors of the Sauran or not, are clearly the last remaining descendants of the Drakken.

But are they? Few scholars and even fewer adventurer-explorers have the insightful grasp of historical evidence to make the connection, and among those that do, opinion is understandably divided. There exists precious little indication of the Drakken's true biology, but what evidence has survived the ages is conflicting and comes from the pens of different savants, philosophers and scholars. Few agree exactly on any one factor, from the height of these creatures to the number of limbs they possess, and in one instance, whether they are hot or cold-blooded. These Saurud might indeed be the last vestiges of the ancient Drakken, or they could be no more than an echo of the once-great race, descended from their bloodlines but bearing little similarity to the apparently keen-minded and gigantic lizard-men.

historical conjectures) said to lie “beneath the ruins of a dragon-man city.”

## THE FORTRESS—CITY OF KHARAKHAN

According to an unnamed Archaen savant that pried into the history of the Drakken, Kharakhan was reputed to be an eyesore for any creature that gazed upon its walls. Serving the reptilians as a fortress first and a training ground second, the citadel was designed for military purposes and without any thought for

aesthetics. Constructed from durable red-veined rock most likely carted over many leagues from the Volcanic Hills, Kharakhan was spread out across what is now known as the Kharakhan Wastes in a “permanent army camp” layout. Large training halls and armories were ringed by barracks and storage buildings, which were in turn surrounded by earthworks, trenches, low walls and the makeshift buildings erected when overpopulation became an issue. In addition to being unsightly in the extreme, it seems that Kharakhan covered a vast span of territory, with each individual cluster of buildings taking up several acres alone. The exact number of these clusters remains unknown, as little evidence of their existence remains beyond scattered and eroded walls that have only managed to last as long as they have due to the rich red iron ore deposits in the veined stone. Colossal statues of rearing, roaring dragons still mark the gathering places of the vast settlement, though the years have not been kind and the icons are eroded in some cases, missing limbs in others, and in more than one instance, completely reduced to large piles of rubble. Fragments of lore scavenged from the ruins of Drakken settlements seem to suggest that these statue were more than mere icons or decoration, but were supposed to be honored entities that would somehow defend the reptilian creatures from attack. Clearly, if the stories are true, then the stone dragons failed in their duty, though how such a feat would be possible for a society completely bereft of magic is a mystery to all.

Perhaps half of the central citadel still stands in the modern age, though it is a barren and lifeless domed structure that is structurally unsound due to earthquakes and erosion. What is noteworthy about the central dome complex is that the underground catacombs are mostly untouched by the ravages of time and the coming of other civilizations. This immense subterranean system of caverns and tunnels once served as both storage for additional supplies and a vast training ground for Drakken warriors. Though it was looted by the Archaens and Sub-Men when their armies overran the reptilians, it is likely that many relics, curios and items of historical interest remain there, under the earth, waiting for a daring explorer to brave the tunnels that have no doubt become infested with all manner of subterranean wildlife and—if the stories are true—the spirits of long-dead reptilian beings.

### THE FOUR NATIONS

After the fall of Golarin and the rise of the Archaen Empire, the city-states of the Four Nations were founded upon the ruined site of the sprawling Drakken capital. According to some tales, the foundation stones of all four cities were raised from the rubble of Golarin, and the first centuries of construction saw the Archaens using the wreckage of the Drakken city as raw materials. It seems that for some reason now lost to the ages, the four cities were located on the cardinal points of the Golarin ruins. Along with the principal reason for this placement, history has also confused the exact locations of each settlement, so it is unknown which of the four cities was located in the north, south, east and west. Golarin itself spanned hundreds of miles in every direction. With a city that size, it is easy to see how smaller Archaen settlements could so easily rise from the ruins.

Some of the reused back porphyry walls still stand in the modern age, though they are now nothing more than a hollow reminder of ancient wars and Torquaran treachery. Whatever damage the War of the Four Nations inflicted upon the settlements, the hybrid armies of the Necromancer King were certain to pick the bones clean. Ironically, though much of the lore originating from the Four Nations is forever lost to scholars, the sizeable ruins still offer up some of the secrets of the past. The marauding armies of Drax's hybrid creatures were meticulous in their slaughter and the plundering of money, weapons and material valuables, but they ignored more scholarly treasures when they looted the war-torn cities.

The Phaedrans explored the cities in the early part of the New Age, and claimed to discover a surprising number of stone tablets and surviving scrolls that reveal both the mundane and magical lore of the cities. These relics tell of a monarchical system of hereditary succession within the Four Nations, and it is hinted that the four ruling families were all descended directly from the same bloodline. Other tablets tell of the fortified palaces of the rulers, with each boasting underground vaults protected against thieves by magic and supernatural guardians. If this is true and not a mere child's fable of the glory of kings, then it stands to reason that these vaults remain under the earth and stone in the New Age. Phaedran explorers have mounted many expeditions to the various regions, but have found no trace of any way to gain entrance to these hidden subterranean chambers.

### The Nine Books of Knowledge

Once these books graced the personal library of a now-forgotten ruler of the Four Nations. The *Nine Books* contained a complete transcription of the arcane secrets stored within the great orb from which the *Archaen Codex* was also derived. The *Codex* appears in various places through history, as learned men and women seek to protect it from war and disaster and carry it to different places of safety. The *Nine Books*, despite their import and value being above even the *Codex*, were sealed in an underground vault and subsequently lost during the War of the Four Nations.

These priceless artifacts have never been recovered, despite numerous attempts by such interested parties as the Aamanian Orthodoxists, the Rajans, and the Cymrillians, to name just a few. The Lyceum Arcanum has offered a reward of 500,000 gold lumens for the recovery of these ancient texts, and quarter of a million lumens for the ninth book *alone*, which is believed to have contained the lost chapter on sorcery that was never recorded (or somehow deleted) within the *Archaen Codex*.

Relic hunters brave enough to venture into the Beastmen infested region can return home laden with treasure if they explore the ruins of the Four Nations. Even if the tablets are incorrect about the wondrous artifacts they speak of, the ruins are still home to a great deal of discarded utensils and tools of both mundane and magical craft. Valuable ancient lore can be found in the form of preserved scrolls or stone tablets. For those adventurer-scholars with an eye for the greatest treasures, according to the Phaedran who possessed the original tablet, the vaults are said to contain never-before-seen artifacts such as the "blade of the First King, the "gilded tomb of Irkhan", the "elixirs of life and true healing" the *Nine Books of Knowledge*, and a host of other unspecified and lesser treasures.

## TORQUAR

Even the passing of millennia is not enough to completely remove the evil of Torquar from the face of the world. South of the Kharakhan Wastes, the ruins of this malignant and chaotic city-state stand as silent monument to the most sinister and depraved nation in Talislanta history. Modern-day Rajans claim to be descended from the Torquarans, though scholars are divided over the veracity of the claim. Some insist that it is more likely that the ancient diabolists created the Rajan's ancestors as a slave caste.

The Torquaran reputation for indulging in all manner of diabolism, necromancy and demonology is well-founded in the annals of history. If accounts are true, then the city of black magicians and devily even looked the part, restructured and reshaped from its original founding by Drax in order to appeal to whatever twisted aesthetics appealed to the dark whims of the Necromancer Kings. Walls of red-veined black basalt ringed the city, barbed with spikes and ivory horns atop the battlements and parapets. Scholars point to the walls that remain and the spaces where great iron portcullises would have stood, and speculate that just as much of Torquaran's defenses seem to be based on keeping its inhabitants inside as they are designed to keep invaders out. Many smaller sections of the city were walled off into isolated compounds, no doubt to keep slaves or prisoners from escaping.

Little of Torquar still stands beyond a series of crumbling black-stone towers, defaced, blackened statues and irregularly positioned walls. Occultists and relic-hunters have had millennia to pick the bones of the city in the search for forbidden lore, and in many cases the treasures discovered would have better remained forgotten. What artifacts remain in the ruins of Torquar frequently possess lingering curses or dark enchantments. Beside the treasures within the surface wreckage, there exist a great many subterranean tombs, prisons and vaults, where significant items might be found. In addition to any mundane tools at the site, region-specific items that can still be found by keen explorers are ritual tools and weapons (sacrificial daggers, chalices, etc.) torture devices such as spiked manacles or racks, and preserved tablets and tomes dealing with demonic subjects and the shaitan hierarchy.

A disturbing remnant of the past comes in the form of the Essence extractors of the city. While

### Cursed Relics of Torquar

Cursed items have a curious way of seeming all too useful and valuable at first, though their true nature is soon revealed once they have been taken. The arcane hierarchy of this most foul of cities were known to dabble in all manner of black magical practices, from necromancy to demonology and diabolism. The written works and ritual tools employed in their dark rites often contained terrifying curses, imprecations and maledictions, many of which were used to coerce summoned creatures into service or bring suffering to the enemies of Torquaran. Some of the books that still exist today are dangerous to even look at, while the ritual implements are hazardous to touch, and so items from this city-state will have an understandably limited market – though those who care to own such items will usually pay handsomely (and discreetly) for them.

Archaen extractors were magical devices of incredible capability, siphoning energy and transmuting it into types of Essence usable by the magicians of the empire, evidence has come to light that the Torquarans had extractors dedicated to siphoning pain, fear, and grief and turning it into usable magical energy. This method, coupled with the abundant evidence of sacrificial rites to please Zahur and other shaitan, could explain the method by which the victims of the Necromancer Kings were trapped within "soulstones" and offered as gifts to devils. Black magicians in the New Age would pay untold sums for access to items such as these, which would serve as princely gifts to shaitans of any era.

## JALAAD

A paradox among the former bastions of the Archaen Empire, the city of Jalaad has not completely fallen into disuse. Located near the Zaran Mountains, the domed ruins of Jalaad were once the center for scholarly activity in the Empire; housing the greatest number of colleges, universities, libraries and scholar-guilds of any Archaen city. Constructed of uniform white marble and inlaid with blue jade and lapis lazuli, the squat buildings have seen generations of tomb-raiders, explorers, archaeologists and even Za bandit groups camping out in their cavernous halls. Beyond

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shards of rare blue jade or mundane items left behind by the Archaens and Sub-Men, there is little to be scavenged any more.

What is certainly worthy of note is the Library of Jalaad, also known as the Dome of Scrolls, which is a cavernous hall with a breathtaking stained-glass ceiling depicting scenes of great Archaen innovations such as the architecture of other cities and the faces of great magicians of the Forgotten Age. This entire building is protected by powerful ward enchantments and remains almost completely intact. The Dome of Scrolls is inhabited and guarded by a large group of Callidians, descended from a cabal of cryptomancers. These enigmatic beings have endeavored to protect the trove of lore stored in the Library of Jalaad, and any who wish to walk the aisles of the Dome of Scrolls must obtain their permission first. These sentinels take a very grim view of those who attempt any vandalism or theft upon the site, and are ever-wary of the presence of necrophages, who come here to gnaw upon the bones of the dead housed in ancient mausoleums outside the city limits.

### OSMAR

Osmar represents perhaps the richest pickings of the fallen Archaen city-states. The five towers that made up its distinctive skyline still stand in the present day, though they are now home to tribes of Beastmen who claim the region to the east of the Dead River as their territory. Explorers and treasure-hunters that are capable of overcoming the beastmen are likely to find a horde of artifacts and ancient relics from the Archaen Ascension. Unlike many other settlements, the Sub-Men did not take control of Osmar when the Archaens took residence in their sky cities. Some historians cite a long-forgotten curse upon the city for this lack of habitation, while others point to the city's history as a haven for artificers and enchanters, who engineered some kind of spell to seal away the treasures that could not be carried into the sky.

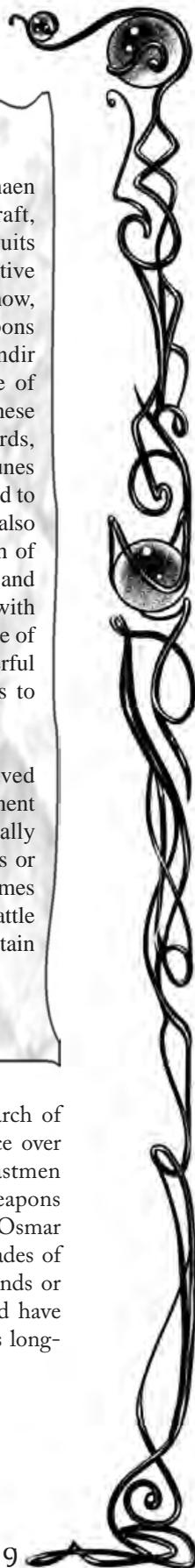
Overrun by beastmen, Osmar today is a crumbling shell of its former glory. The mystically-aligned walls, once laid in the shape of a pentacle to enhance some unknown magical process within the city, have mostly fallen to ruin. Whereas the city was once the primary source of magical weapons, armor and enchanted goods for the ruling Phandre caste of Phandril (and indeed, all of the Empire), it is now a beast-populated

### Blue Iron of Osmar

The Osmarin weaponsmiths of the Archaen Ascension were unsurpassed in their craft, and were renowned for both their fine suits of enchanted battle armor and the distinctive runeswords with blades of blue iron. Even now, the spell-enhanced blades of these weapons are considered superior to the finest Zandir swords, and sell for 2-5 times the price of comparable enchanted weapons. Most of these Archaen Runeswords resemble longswords, and the blue blades are inscribed with runes of magical significance. They are enchanted to cause additional damage up to +5, and were also imbued with as many as three spells, each of which could be used once per day. The level and type of these spells is said to have varied with the designs of individual creators, and some of them were so jealously guarded that powerful ward spells were placed on the weapons to prevent theft.

Battle armor was similarly rune-engraved and enchanted up to +5, with each component custom-built to fit the owner and additionally enhanced with protection against elements or magical attack. Intact suits sell for 2-5 times the market price for equivalent enchanted battle armor, though even helms or breastplates retain a great amount of value.

domain where savages stalk the ruins in search of glorious treasures in order to gain dominance over each other. The curiously well-equipped beastmen often carry outdated and clearly antique weapons or exquisitely-made armor of times past, and Osmar remains a treasure trove for those seeking blades of distinctive Osmaran blue iron, enchanted wands or staves, and magical tools and toys that would have been commonplace in the homes of the city's long-dead residents.



## ASHANN

Perhaps the most visually unusual of the Archaen city-states was the settlement of Ashann, situated in what is now the Wilderlands of Zaran not far north of the nation of Rajinnar. In the speech of the locals, it is simply referred to as “the Old City.” Before the Great Disaster, Ashann was a curiously-constructed settlement of deep-blue basalt, formed in the shape of seven concentric rings that spanned a diameter of just over two miles. The walls were over a hundred feet thick, housing stores, libraries, homes, storage buildings – and in the top layer of each ring– aeries and observatories by which the ancient Archaens monitored the play of the stars in the night sky. Of all the imperial settlements, Ashann was most noted for its astromancers, for it was founded on a site of augural importance, and the unique ringed shape of the city was designed with certain (now unknown) astral significances and divining rituals in mind.

Today, Ashann is the home to wild animals that hunt in the ruins of the ravaged circles, for the rings of the city were reduced to rubble in many places by the Great Disaster. Portions of the rings still stand, and it may be possible to ascertain the exact significance of the once-great structure by calculating where the buildings once stood. The city is also home to the so-called “Wanderers of Ashann” —tall, shrouded figures that pick among the ruins, seemingly searching for something within the walls of the fallen rings. Conflicting scholarly assumptions have also speculated that the Wanderers were once citizens of Ashann, and ghost through the ruins in a grim vigil over the remains of long-dead ancestors.

## NUMENIA

The “city of faith” was built into the side of the southernmost peak of the Maruk Mountains, overlooking what was once a vast rich and fertile plain. In the era of the Archaen Empire, the Numenians were a people of religious devotion and theology, and the temples, cathedrals and monasteries of their city were renowned across the world for their ornate beauty. The high priests of Numenia were likewise renowned for their ability to call upon the Divine in order to work miracles of wondrous power, though it is likely that the passing of time has exaggerated many of these holy magics far beyond their original effect. The most catalogued example of Numenian faith was

apparently the construct called Ikon. This being of worked metal and precious stones was shaped in the image of the Numenian god; Ikon himself, and was described in surviving accounts as “watching over the city of faith” and “able to speak in any sentient tongue”. Other abilities are ascribed to the “giant idol” though it becomes increasingly unclear which have a basis in fact and which are embellishments.

Numenia was damned to decline when the war with Torquar turned malicious and foul magic became involved. The surrounding lands were poisoned by the mages of the Necromancer King, and though Torquar was eventually defeated when the archimage Solimorrion killed Narishna, Numenia was overrun by the Sub-Men soon after in their uprising against the Empire. During the Great Disaster, the city suffered wracking earthquakes and was buried by the leveling of the surrounding mountains. The smashed ruins of Numenia are thought to exist today under the city-state of Maruk, though this is primarily down to the supposed ancestral ties claimed by the Marukan people and their “Numenian forebears.”

Should any explorer chance upon the crushed remnants of the once-beautiful city, breathtaking marble icons, prayer wheels, temple artifacts and the tombs of Numenian Priest-Kings await rediscovery. Most valuable of all would be the construct of Ikon, assuming that the idol has survived intact for all these centuries.

## XAMBRIA

In several ancient texts and various historical sources, the city of Xambria is referred to with awe and admiration as the “Jewel of the Empire”. It was a city renowned for its great beauty and attitudes towards culture, with colleges of musicians, artists and scholars flourishing behind the white marble walls of every building. Lush city parks spilled out into the tree-lined, white-paved boulevards, and large, multi-layered hanging gardens served as the centerpieces and meeting areas for each district. Of all the lost Archaen cities, Xambria remains the one most often seen in artistic interpretations that have managed to survive to the present day.

The Xambrian people were notoriously pacifistic, and had little defense when the city was sacked by the hybrid creations of Torquar. Their magical aptitude was mostly limited to mysticism, which they appear to have learned from contact with the reclusive Ariane,

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if the few remaining records are correct. Upon the city's defeat, thousands of Xambrian prisoners were marched across the plains to be sacrificed in the fire pits of Malngar, in honor of the shaitan Zahur. As the Xambrian people tottered on the brink of extinction, the forces of Torquar attempted to deliver the final blow by returning to Xambria, methodically tearing the city down into rubble, and poisoning the surrounding land with magical diseases and by salting the soil so that nothing could grow in the region again.

### KASRAAN

The city-state of Kasraan was a mercantile hub for the Archaen Empire, despite its far western location near what is now called the city of Danuvia. Kasraan was a wealthy and prosperous settlement, and the related tales speak of "streets paved with gold" and "towers of jade that reached the sky". While it would be an exaggeration to suggest that every resident family was involved in trade and business, it is commonly accepted among research scholars that Kasraan was home to a disproportionate number of courier guilds, trading cartels and merchant alliances. It seems clear that a popular profession in Kasraan was providing escort and transport services between Archaen city-states, and surviving tablets name the leaders of many organizations as "merchant princes".

Initially, trade would have been conveyed in traditional caravans. By the end of the Archaen Ascension and the uprising of the Sub-Men, these wagons were replaced by gigantic armored vehicles forged and built in the shape of metallic land dragons in an attempt to fight off barbarian attacks.

The catacombs under the palatial estates of the so-called merchant princes of Kasraan are allegedly filled with treasures beyond compare, though it remains to



### Kasiran Iron Dragons

These armored conveyances were used extensively during the latter Archaen Ascension to protect trade goods against marauding Sub-Men tribes and wild beasts. The largest known example measured over a hundred feet in length and two dozen feet in height. They were powered by enchanted crystals which apparently required constant replenishment, which would explain why these hulks powered down forever when the Sub-Men rebellion broke out.

A few of these giant artifacts might still lie buried under the rubble of the old cities, but the only complete example rests in repose within the vaults of the Lyceum Arcanum. A Kasiran Iron Dragon in good working order would no doubt be coveted by scholars and collectors alike, and could bring as much as 100,000 gold lumens.

be seen if any of these vaults still exist underneath the ruined wreckage of the surface city. Kasraan lore also states that the rulers were mummified and entombed within their money vaults though the reasoning is unclear. Postulations range from simple greed and superstitious belief that the wealth would transfer to the next life, to the possibility of a powerful curse allowing the dead merchant princes to rise and destroy any who sought to plunder their resting places. These vaults are purported to be sealed by complicated mechanisms requiring no small amount of luck, skill and the right combination of magical "key" items in order to gain entrance.

On the surface, Kasraan is a ruined city with nothing to offer. Underneath, perhaps a thousand fortunes lay untouched.

# THE AGE OF HEAVENS

The Third Millennium of recorded history began with the announcement given by the Archaen Cabal in the city of Phandril. In this meeting, new laws were codified and passed, with the understanding that no spellcaster would violate these ethical guidelines without severe punishment. Most crucial amongst these new rules was the First Law; prohibiting direct conflict between magicians. The Code of Order is listed in various sources as a list of either 13 or 33 laws that would govern the behavior of the mightiest spellcasters, preventing the vast spread of corruptive influence that infected Torquar and went on to drive the Sub-Men into revolt. Directly related to the malice of the Necromancer Kings was the Sixth Law; a decree that the Spell of Summoning was now heavily regulated and elaborate safeguards must be set in place with Cabal-ordained witnesses and advisors present for any contact with demonic entities.

With the decree that the cities upon the ground were to be abandoned, a tumultuous century began with barely suppressed hostilities between the Sub-Men and Archaens as the former waited three generations for the latter to leave the settlements as promised. Within days of the meeting of the Cabal, construction began on the first sky city; Aeon. By the end of the first hundred years of the Third Millennium, the old cities were abandoned and the Archaen people rose above the war-ravaged land of Talislanta. Scattered pockets of dissidents, rebels, exiles and outcasts remained on the ground, to eke out an existence as best they could; deprived of the luxuries and magical gifts of those who now dwelled in the sky. The Age of Heavens had begun in earnest, no longer a declaration but a reality.

Though historians have been known to chronicle this period of the Empire as the Golden Age, it is clear from the surviving writings of the Archaens that the people of the era referred to their time as the Age of the Heavens. Naming aside, the period marked a vast surge in intellectualism, discovery and magical innovation. New forms of magic were created and older arcane arts refined almost to perfection. New sky-cities were created at great speed, aided by the unrivalled sorcerous powers that the mages of the Empire now commanded. Further advances came with each generation. The savant Hotan began to

ponder and unravel the metaphysical geography of the Omniverse, while the illusionist Cascal explored the boundaries of perception and reality. Explorers and brave windship captains ventured across the seas to visit uncharted continents beyond Talislanta, returning with holds laden with unknown gems, exotic beasts and magical herbs and news of other sentient life on Archaeus.

Chief among the other intelligent beings was the contact the Archaens had with the Neurians; an extra-dimensional race whose ship had crashed on the continent of Simbar. These aliens had no knowledge of magic, but were masters of a strange metaphysical discipline called technomancy, which was unknown to the Archaens. They dwelled in Aurantium, a fabulous city where every building was plated with pure gold, and they were skilled in the making of complex mechanisms such as automatons. The Archaen-Neurian alliance grew quickly, and the two peoples began to explore the possibilities offered by inter-dimensional travel.

The Archaens discovered other continents; Celadon and Altarus among them, and established colonies there to further the glory of the world-spanning Empire. The floating citadel of Imperion was created purely for the purpose of studying the life forms indigenous to Celadon, while the settlements of Randun and Kharistan were founded upon the surface of Altarus in order to run "war games" between the two cities. Many Archaens grew to love the thrill of watching the inhabitants of the two cities warring against one another, and their pleasure was magnified by the endless supply of troops in the form of neomorphs; artificial creatures bred in the thaumaturgic laboratories of the sky-cities and the two Altarian settlements.

## THE CITIES IN THE SKY

The exact number of Archaen sky-cities is unknown, because of the difficulty of accurately dating records from the era and the fates of the individual cities after the Great Disaster. They are covered briefly here because (for all their historical significance) there is precious little evidence of their existences in Talislanta



today. Lore regarding the individual architecture and creations of the cities is rare, confusing to modern scholars, and often conflicting in nature.

Even the power crystals that kept the cities aloft are barely mentioned in the tomes salvaged from the era, and any information on these “enchanted engines” would bring a tidy price if offered to the right scholars.



## AEON

Aeon, the first city, was created using thaumaturgical processes; essence accumulators siphoned the very energy of the aether of Archaeus and refined it for use as a raw material in the city's creation. Magic on this scale is unprecedented in the New Age, and Aeon itself apparently *dissolved* during the Great Disaster; the city was reduced to its base elements and simply disintegrated, killing the hundreds of thousands of people that lived there. Scholars have postulated that items of non-thaumaturgical creation might yet be discovered at the site where the city succumbed to the Great Disaster, though even that location is unknown. If it is ever confirmed, it is likely that any remaining items would be in the form of mundane tools, enchanted rune-weapons or memory-crystals, which contain the memories and dreams of the Archaeans and were often given as gifts between friends and lovers.

## LOCUS

Locus was originally the meeting place of the Archaeon Cabal, though records state that a city of great decadence and vice spread around the central dome. The city itself was severed from the world in the Great Disaster and was hurled into the aether by the forces involved in the cataclysm.

## POMPADOS

Pompados was under the dominion of the vain and proud Phandre; the once-rulers of the great city of Phandril. Built to be the twin city of Aeon, Pompados also dissolved in the Great Disaster, shedding all items of non-thaumaturgical make to the Red Desert below. Records tell of many citizens escaping the gradual dissolution, fleeing to windships and making abrupt landings in Mog, Jhangara and even the Thaeccian Isles. The Dracartans are believed to have recovered some of the most precious lore of the city, and possess primitive copies of Essence Accumulators, though many tablets of arcane lore and the *Archaeon Codex* itself have long since been sealed away in the vaults of the Lyceum Arcanum.

## ELANDE

Elande was apparently a city of modest proportion, designed to serve as a retreat for spellcasters and scholars who wished to immerse themselves in the

### Orbs of Arcanalysis

These devices were created by the Phandre of Pompados during the Age of the Heavens and sold throughout the sky-cities. The typical orb resembled a two-inch diameter sphere of transparent crystal and was employed in the manner of a lens. Used in conjunction with the skill Arcanalysis, the orbs were effective in determining the type, level, duration and probable effect of any form of spell or enchantment. Orbs of Arcanalysis functioned with regard to visible or invisible spell manifestations, enchanted artifacts, symbols or any other form of magic. The time required to complete an analysis is ten rounds, with the effective range limited to one foot.

pursuit of arcane arts. It was either ruled by a group called the One Hundred, or for ritual reasons, only a hundred magicians were allowed within the city at any time. Historical records conflict on the matter. Anyone coming across the ruins of Elande would discover a horde of magical lore and artifacts written and fashioned by the greatest scholars of the Archaeon Empire. Some texts from the other cities refer to the "Archaeus Project" taking place here, where the magicians attempted to preserve specimens of every single race in magical stasis for exhaustive study. When Elande began to lose altitude in the Great Disaster, much of the learned citizenry was forced to abandon their great works and flee by windship. Certain tales and stories point to the Baratus massacring many of the fleeing scholars, though this is unfounded by evidence and remains a legend. What seems much more likely is some kind of tie between the survivors of Elande and the floating citadel of Cabal Magicus on the isle of Phantas. The sky-city itself is supposed to have eventually drifted down to crash onto Alcedon, the flying island.

## FARNIR

Farnir remains in legends today because of its curious exports and eventual fate. It was apparently a city with many magicians guilds dedicated to the search for eternal life and beauty, though according to salvaged lore, the buildings themselves were often plain and unadorned. Many of the elixirs that granted the Archaeans longevity and good health were developed

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and refined here, as were the mystic enhancements that altered the bodies of the residents and sculpted them into people of great beauty. Famir itself was supposed to have plunged into a cloud of freezing vapor when the Great Disaster struck, and scholars speculate the entire city and its residents (and, of course, their alchemical laboratories...) remain either trapped in magical stasis or frozen in solid ice many miles under the surface of the frozen land of Narandu.

### EYRITHRIA

Eyrithria is often referred to by remaining lore as the “city of folly”. Apparently the Archaen Cabal – or one of the subsequent incarnations of this august gathering – ordered the construction of a great sky-fortress which would be populated by trained war-mages and soldiers who would serve as protectors of the Empire...despite the fact that the Archaen people held no ground-based territory to speak of and had no enemies capable of assaulting the sky-cities. On the continent of Altarus, where the city is believed to have dissolved in the Great Disaster, there no doubt exists a vast horde of ancient rune-bearing weapons that fell from the sky, gigantic battle dragons of iron and stone, and perhaps even the descendants of the many neomorphic soldiers that served on the city.

### SHALIHAN

Of Shalihan there remains no trace at all. This city was the home of the illusionist and philosopher Cascal, though it was more renowned in the era of the Empire for its decadent pleasure domes where skilled illusion-weavers could make any clients' dreams come true – for an exorbitant fee. Shalihan was constructed of so much artifice and illusion that it is believed the entire city vanished out of existence when the Great Disaster wracked the world.

## ECHOES OF THE PAST

### RANDUN & KHARISTAN

Established on the continent of Altarus, these two neomorph colonies were nothing more than capital cities for the “war games” conducted by the Erythrians. Populated by neomorph soldiers and commanders, each citadel was a fortress bristling with weapons and war engines. Between the two cities, above a blood-soaked swathe of land, the Archaens conducted their tactical games and contests between generals as the

neomorph races slaughtered each other on the plains below. When the Great Disaster wracked the world, the Erythrians were destroyed and the artificially-created beings of Randun and Kharistan were left masterless.

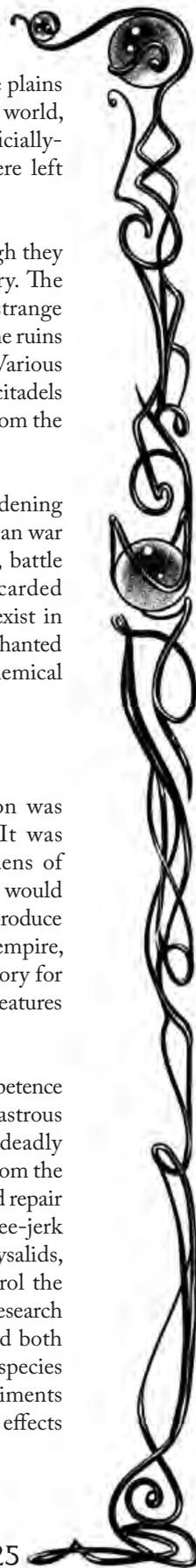
The ruins of both citadels stand today, though they are far from their former impregnable glory. The ruins are now effectively deserted, though strange shadows and shapes can be seen flitting about the ruins when explorers investigate the fallen cities. Various magicians and scholars postulate that the twin citadels emanate virulent, poisoning magics; a legacy from the toxic weaponry used so many centuries ago.

Among the wreckage of this somewhat saddening culture are the massive rusted hulks of Erythrian war engines such as iron scorpions, siege golems, battle dragons and others. Curiously-shaped discarded weapons from long-dead neomorph armies exist in abundance, as do items such as containers of enchanted liquids to be used as weapons of war, and alchemical toxins and gases.

### IMPERION

A modest-sized floating citadel, Imperion was located above the continent of Celadon. It was a research colony established by the Archaens of Pompados with two main factors in mind: it would serve as the principal source of rare herbs, plant produce and exotic animals to sell to the people of the empire, and it would serve as a comprehensive laboratory for the creation of new types of hybrid plants and creatures through the process of biomancy.

Apparently due to mismanagement and incompetence at the highest levels, the operation proved disastrous even in the earliest stages. Specimens of a deadly biomantic hybrid known as manraks escaped from the facility and destabilized the local ecology beyond repair with their predation and breeding. Foolish knee-jerk reactions then caused the creation of the crysalids, another hybrid designed to combat and control the outbreak of manraks. Unsurprisingly, minimal research resulted in chaos among the local regions, and both species ran amok, rendering countless other species extinct in a matter of years. Later failed experiments produced similar “remedies” which had similar effects on the environment.



When the Great Disaster wracked the world, Imperion's levitationals failed and drifted downward, crashing into the land its scientists had long ruined. The survivors of the impact were soon slaughtered by the predatory insectoid manraks that they had unleashed upon the surface years ago. Tales tell that some managed to adapt to a life in the harsh area, though this is extremely unlikely.

Scavengers seeking to pick Imperion's bones could chance across any number of relics that have lain untouched for millennia; biomantic texts, laboratory apparatus, specimens frozen in stasis, enchanted and mundane luxury items – all could still exist, hidden under centuries of plant growth as the land tries to erase all trace of the meddling Archaen scientists.

## AURANTIUM

This city is notable because it was not an Archaen sky-city or colony, but the capital of an alien race that lived on the continent of Simbar. These Neurians, castaways from a distant dimension, had crash-landed on Simbar long before its discovery by the Archaen explorer Nauticus. When he reached the distant continent to the north of Talislanta, he beheld a fabulous city where each building was literally plated with solid gold.

The Neurians were an advanced race of dual-encephalons, and they possessed knowledge of a form of metaphysics completely unknown to the Archaens, which they called technomancy. Using this knowledge, the Neurians had perfected the art of metallurgy, constructing wondrous automatons and other elaborate metallic apparatus capable of feats that the Archaens could only achieve with magic. In turn, the Neurians found magic incomprehensible, though they had developed a mental discipline that allowed them to harness the faculties of their twin brains.

In the name of exploration, the Neurians had constructed submersible vessels crewed by hundreds of humanoid automatons, which they sent forth to probe the surrounding waters for signs of intelligent life and other land masses. These submersibles had not reached Talislanta far to the south, primarily because an intelligent aquatic species known as Hydrans frequently preyed upon them.

## Neurian Automatons

These mechanisms were constructed in a variety of forms, each with a specific purpose. The most common were humanoid in shape, which the Neurians used as servitors. These automatons were used to record data or perform tasks deemed too menial, difficult or dangerous for living beings. Less commonly, automatons were built to resemble other creatures such as steeds, though it was the Archaens who were most fond of curiosities and prestigious items of this sort. A functioning Neurian automaton might be valued at up to 70,000 gold lumens, depending on its capabilities.

Over the course of the Neurian-Archaen alliance, which came about after Nauticus' voyage and the resulting exodus of many scientists to dwell within Aurantium, the two cultures shared many of their secrets. The Archaen end of the deal was kept by the continuous shipping of gold to be used in the expansion and upkeep of Aurantium, by the sharing of windship arcanology, and the pledge to help the Neurians construct a vessel capable of interdimensional travel in order that the aliens might find a way to return to their home. This latter project languished for centuries, mostly in part to Archaen greed and the desire to learn all they could before the aliens ever left this plane. Eventually, two prototype vessels were completed.

When the Neurians predicted the Great Disaster through technomantic analysis, they knew the time to flee the coming chaos was upon them. Though the Archaens, blind to the warnings, remained within Aurantium as it sank below the waves, the interdimensional vessels departed in time to escape the end of the Skyborne Empire and the pains of the world. The Archaens that managed to flee the sinking city of Aurantium likely did so in rafts and seaworthy vessels. The descendents of these survivors are known today as Oceanians. Several Neurian automaton vessels also escaped, and they are known today as the Parthenians, named after the island on which they settled after Simbar sank beneath the waves.

Of the fleeing Neurian vessels, only the following is known. One of the ships is said to have passed into

an interdimensional nexus and disappeared into the Continuum. The other apparently suffered some kind of malfunction and crashed somewhere on Talislanta – most likely in the Northern Sea (now the Lost Sea).

The sunken city of Aurantium is believed to still contain Neurian technomantic apparatuses, automatons and incredibly vast quantities of gold and silver. The Neurian ship that allegedly crashed on Talislanta has never been found, but it is thought to contain a variety technomantic and magical artifacts, enchanted crystals and items of unknown purpose.

# THE AGE OF DECLINE

Just as the Age of the Heavens was triggered by a meeting of the Archaen Cabal, so to was the following millennium, named by historians as the Age of Decline. Sometime in the centuries after the establishment of the sky-cities, hundreds of representatives converged upon the Cabal's meeting in Locus and demanded that the Code of Order be amended and rectified. The proposed amendments were all in favor of granting more freedom and imposing fewer restrictions upon those who wished to experiment with the arcane arts. The art of the era that deals with this dramatic event shows hundreds of robed representatives shouting and pointing at the seven mages of the Cabal, who are seated and appear both serene and saddened in equal measure. No matter the truth of the artists' impressions, what occurred in this meeting shook the Empire from its course of prosperity and innovation, and led the way down the path to eventual decadence and ruin. The representatives of the sky-cities announced that the rulers of each settlement had voted together in order to limit the Archaen Cabal's authority. No longer would the Code of Conduct stifle their creative outlets.

Some legends state that the Archaen Cabal, unmatched in their power, wisdom and experience, resigned their posts in disgust. Others state the unified representatives exiled the Cabal by force, though this seems unlikely and any such stories are probably the result of a misguided chronicler.

The new Archaen Cabal was elected from the ranks of the representatives, and they soon fell into petty infighting and selfish pursuit of magic with various levels of disregard for the safety of the realm. Over the following thousand years, gates were once again opened to other realms without restriction, magicians bred neomorph slave-creatures for their own amusements, and the culture of learning and advancement became one of corruption. It was not a rapid change, but it

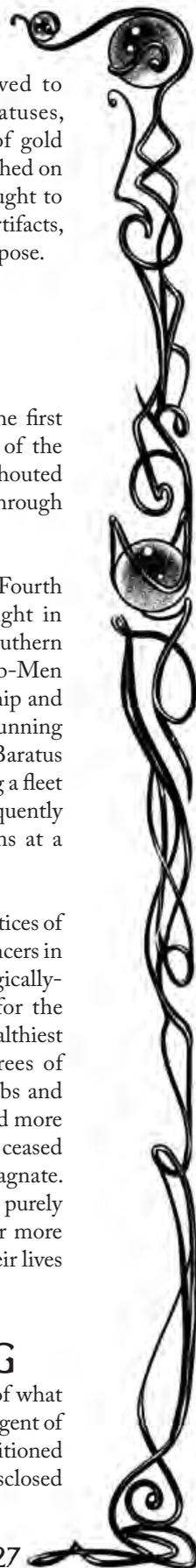
was a definite one. When the members of the first Archaen Cabal spoke out against the worst of the magical horrors being unleashed, they were shouted down by the new authority figures, disgraced through scandal, and in one instance, assassinated.

At some point close to the middle of the Fourth Millennium, an Archaen windship was caught in a raging storm and forced to land on the southern coast of Talislanta. Here a sea-faring race of Sub-Men known as the Baratus captured the stricken ship and forced the crew to teach them the ways of running such a vessel. Over the next few decades, the Baratus became the bane of the Archaen skies, amassing a fleet of captured and jury-rigged windships, and frequently crippling trade between the cities for seasons at a time.

In the following centuries, the decadent practices of Farnir, Shalihan and Erythria bloomed like cancers in the heart of the Empire. Armies of thaumaturgically-born slave-soldiers butchered one another for the amusements of Archaen generals, while the wealthiest of the sky-city folk turned to massive degrees of cosmetic enhancement, or hallucinogenic herbs and illusory indulgences that became more real and more satisfying than real life. The Archaen people ceased to grow and innovate, and now began to stagnate. New inventions and arcane developments were purely in the fields of giving pleasure; satisfying ever more demanding nobility who sought to prolong their lives and their beauty.

## THE LAST WARNING

Toward the close of over a thousand years of what historians now call the Age of Decline, a contingent of Neurians came to the sky-city of Locus and petitioned the Archaen Cabal for a meeting. What was disclosed



at this strange council remains unknown and will likely never be uncovered. Historians and scholars have pieced together their own ideas, but the lore of the era (and the following years) is understandably fragmented at best and non-existent at worst. It seems safe to assume that the Neurians issued a warning about the possibility of a cataclysm devastating Archaeus. Theories as to the exact nature of the event range from the Neurians demanding tribute to appease them from invading, right through to the possibility

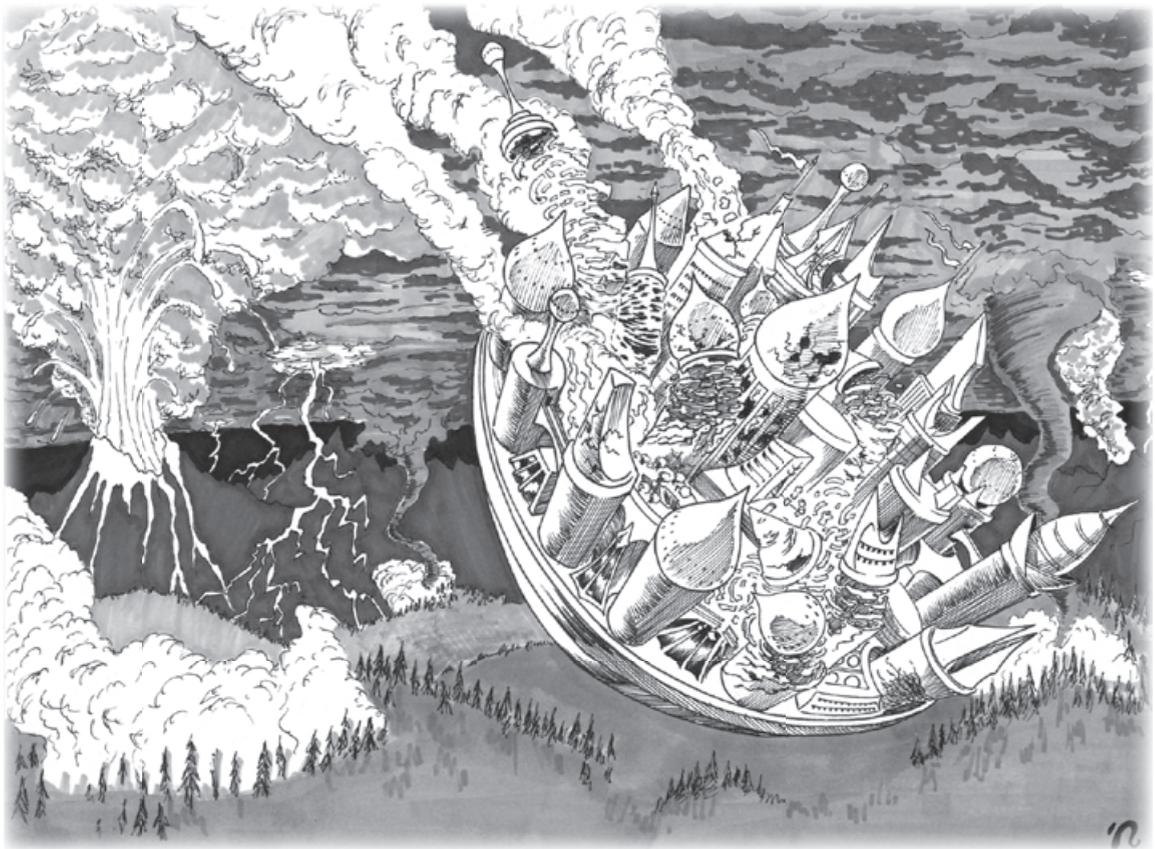
that the unrivalled unleashing of magic in the era had destabilized the dimensional fabric that separated the Archaen reality from other, alternate realities. Some legends also cite that the Neurians were exiled from Archaen lands after this fateful meeting, though the veracity of these tales can never be tested. The Neurians left the sky-city and returned to Aurantium.

A few short years later, the world ended.

## THE GREAT DISASTER

Perhaps the Thane knew what was coming; it might explain why an entire city is hidden under the earth and its inhabitants seemingly put into ritual repose. It certainly lends credence to the possibility that these beings believed they would be safe from the cataclysm and revived one day. Perhaps the Neurians also knew; for such prescience would explain the meeting with the Archaen Cabal and the construction of the Neurian

Arks, which are referenced often in the remaining lore of their people as their last hope of escaping “before the end”. Perhaps many others knew and made efforts to save themselves as best they could in the final years of Archaen dominance. It stands to reason that if they were successful then their descendents live today, carrying on their ancient bloodlines in the new era and remaining unaware of their true heritage.



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The Archaens did not know what was coming, despite their near-infinite power over the world. This lack of knowledge was a failing from ignorance, pride and selfishness, and they paid for their stubborn vanity when the Great Disaster struck and wiped the Empire from the face of Talislanta. The magical cities either dissolved, exploded, crashed or were hurled into space by the wrench of magical force storming across Archaeus. Whatever the exact reason for the Great Disaster, it did not just topple the Archaen people from their pedestal of dominance: it destroyed them utterly. What few survived the dissolution and destruction of the sky-cities were easy prey for the barbaric races and ferocious predators of the ground.

Scholars have pinpointed most of history's most momentous occurrences to this moment; the red sun split in two, burning and boiling planets as the twin suns settled into gravitational balance once more. Seven new moons appeared in the night sky.

## THE TIME OF CHAOS

With the Great Disaster laying waste to the world, the fall of the Archaen Empire and the extinguishing of the light of magical learning, the people of Talislanta regressed and formed primal, barbaric societies. It was an era of ignorance, violence and superstition. The remnants of the Sub-Men tribes battled constantly, warring for food, territory, and sometimes merely out of hatred. The neomorphs and Archaens that had survived the destruction of the Empire were frequently the targets of the Sub-Men hunting parties, and these conflicts sapped their numbers further.

After an unknowable time of bloodshed and violence, a war-leader rose from the ranks of the Sub-Men, calling himself the Tirshata. Quite how this mysterious warrior managed to unite the tribes is unknown, but under his influence the Sub-Men banded together and drove the last remaining Archaens deep into the region now known as Werewood. In this age of turmoil and slaughter, and with no sky-cities or windship fleets overhead, the Sub-men had finally conquered all of Talislanta. But their relative glory was short-lived.

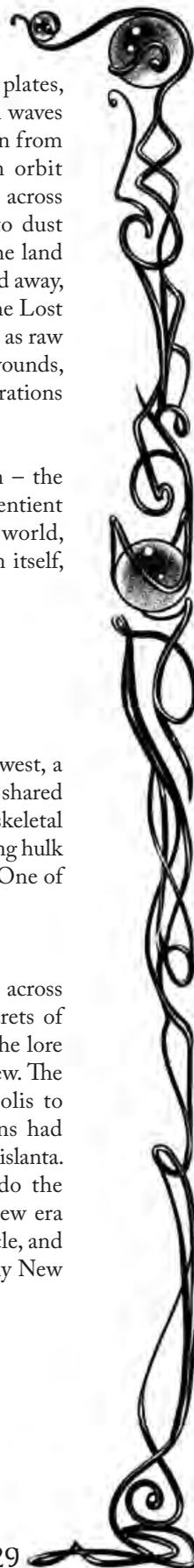
When the Tirshata (whom historians name as female or male depending on the source) vanished without a trace, the Sub-Men scattered once more

Continents were jarred from their tectonic plates, with Simbar plunging beneath the cold ocean waves for all time, while the land of Alcedon was torn from the world and cast into the atmosphere in orbit around Archaeus. Magical unleashings raged across the face of Talislanta, breaking mountains to dust and forming new crags where the plates of the land smashed together again. The North Sea drained away, leaving an arid crater that is known today as the Lost Sea. Climactic changes swept across the world as raw energy bled out of the world from invisible wounds, which also created many mutations and aberrations among living beings.

No matter the cause, no matter the reason – the world as it was had been destroyed. And as sentient beings emerged from the wreckage of the world, having survived the destruction of civilization itself, the dark age of Talislanta began.

and took to battling one another. Far to the west, a nomadic band of primitives who unknowingly shared bloodline-descent from the Phandre, located skeletal remains of a crashed windship. Within the rotting hulk lay many treasures of the sky-city Pompados. One of the artifacts was the *Archaen Codex* itself.

Just as the Archaen primitives had chanced across the crashed alien vessel and claimed the secrets of magic from its bones, these barbarians took the lore of magic with them and started the cycle anew. The ancient Archaens had constructed Arcanopolis to house their greatest secrets, and their actions had commenced the first age of civilization upon Talislanta. Within time, these new primitives would do the same, founding Phaedra and ushering in a new era of enlightened thought. History came full circle, and the Age of Chaos slowly gave way to the Early New Age, also called the Phaedran Age.



# THE NEW AGE

## THE RISE OF PHAEDRA

Historians cannot predict the exact year when the New Age of Talislanta began, but there is an irresistible symmetry to the tale all the same. Most current thought places the beginning of the New Age at the founding of the Phaedran city-state, ushering in a new era of civilization, enlightenment and rediscovery of the forgotten lore.

It is one of history's great ironies. Phandril had fallen millennia ago, yet destiny's turning wheel had presented the primitive descendents of the city's once-great ruling caste, the Phandre, with the chance to rise with a new civilization. From this clash of fate was born the city of Phaedra at the beginning of the New Age.

The Phaedrans revived the study of the arcane arts, though sexist practices within the new order excluded women from many positions of magical authority (and in some cases, from learning the art entirely). The Phaedrans codified laws, established systems of government, set up the notions of free speech and organized religion...and from the ashes of disaster arose a new time of lore and learning. Lost secrets were rediscovered and forgotten stories were retold. The dark age of Talislanta was truly fading in the light of enlightenment, and as the generations passed, the Phaedrans controlled the powers that the Archaeans themselves had once mastered. The Phaedrans prospered and expanded. Soon, with the extension of their dominion over what is now known as the Western Lands, the Phaedran Empire was officially recognized.

With the development of so many faiths and religious paths, strife soon took hold of segments of the Empire. The rival Orthodoxist and Paradoxist cults rose and gained prominence, though their close balance in popularity effectively prevented either from claiming outright sway over the Phaedran people. A power vacuum in the monarchy, coupled with the warring religious cults prompted a group of experienced wizards to step in and halt the conflict before it could further destabilize the Empire and erupt into civil war. The Phaedran Council of Elders

(as was the magician cabal's public name) restored order by placing a moderate upon the imperial throne to hold the rank of Wizard King. They chose Kabros, once an apprentice of the famous Mogendrake and now regarded as a magician of great ability and versatility in the art of diplomacy. Kabros was not a foolish man; he saw the Phaedran Empire was on the verge of collapse and warned the Council of Elders that though he would endeavor to save the imperial state, he was confident in the eventual end of the Phaedran rise.

He was all too correct. Twenty years later, religious uprisings and riots gripped the capital of the Empire, and Kabros resigned with a stirring speech given to the Council. He informed them that the end was coming; coming soon, and that they were all advised to flee before the ruling caste – still referred to as the Phandre – were brought down as scapegoats. It is believed that Kabros left that very day, heading for the Thaecian Isles. He was never seen again.

Foolishly, the Council of Elders ignored their ruler's warning and attempted to rule the empire in his stead, by appearing in public disguised as the departed Wizard King. This ruse lasted only a decade, before the Orthodoxists seized the opportunity amongst all the confusion and assumed control of the government. Dissenters, agitators and opposing recruiters were rounded up and imprisoned in the penal colony of Gao-Din. The Paradoxists responded by literally attacking the government district of Badijan, and in the resulting chaos the Library of Badijan was burned to the ground. In this moment in history, in one dark day of religious conflict, most of the lore of the Phaedran magicians was lost forever. And so began the Cult Wars, a series of bloody coups and skirmishes that would last four hundred years and serve as the death knell for the once-great Phaedran Empire.

This great period of tumult in the West saw mass migrations as entire peoples were forced to flee the violence or chose to relocate to avoid the possibility of violence. The Aeriad, originally from the Phandril Forest were driven north and east by crusading Orthodoxists while the Dhuna and Sarista peoples migrated north into the wilderness of Silvanus and

Werewood. Similar waves of refugees settled the land around modern-day Arim, Maruk Danuvia, Hadj and the Seven Kingdoms city-state of Cymril.

### HORDES OF THE EAST

In the waning years of the Time of Chaos, a race descended from neopmorph stock (although likely interbred with Sub-Men and even Archaen descendents during the Time of Chaos) had been eeking out an existence in what is today the land of Harak. During the Age of Chaos the Mazdaks, like the Quan, Mandalans, and the now extinct Eryth, were an otherwise insignificant tribe. Pushed by other tribes and geography into what is modern-day Harak, the Mazdaks were a warlike and combative race. Were it not for the early New Age black magician Drugalia, the Mazdaks would have been little more than footnote in the history if that chaotic age.

Drugalia had barely completed his Rites of Manhood when he found himself lost in the eastern mountains of his homeland. Seeking shelter from the weather, he secreted himself in one of the many caves perforating the mountain range. As the weather worsened, he was obligated to light a small fire near the mouth of the cave in order to stay warm. The weak, flickering firelight revealed horrific carvings on the walls, ceiling, and even floor of the cave. These unnatural images, carvings and alien runes—which would have frightened the life out of a normal youth—piqued Drugalia's curiosity, as he was no stranger to bloodshed and other atrocities. Upon further exploration of the rear of the cave, the boy found a black iron door set in the rear wall. Behind this doorway he found a small, vault-like room. On a black pedestal carved with sinuous, repulsive figures, he found a large, iron-bound book, which he immediately began to investigate. Several days later, he emerged from the cave, a sinister, dark look in his eyes.

Upon his return, he wasted no time in displaying terrible powers. At the raise of his hand, awful, winged shadows would surround his victims and quite literally tear them to shreds, most no larger than a man's hand. The elements were his to command, and he could summon storms, blizzards and lightning simply by commanding the elements to produce these effects. While the Mazdaks were not a magic-using people, their shamans knew that this magic was unnatural. There were no material components, no

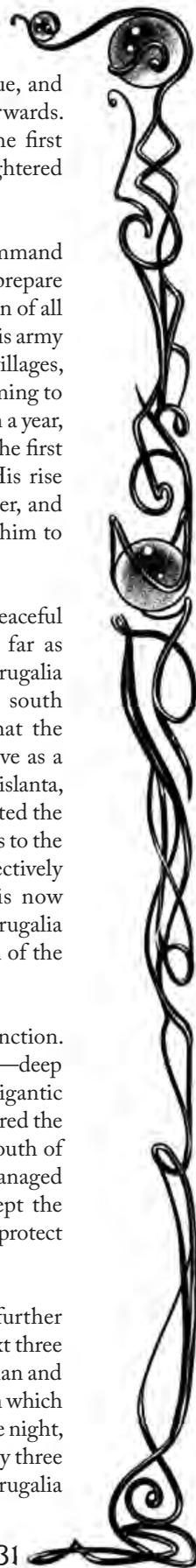
long incantations spoken in an ancient tongue, and no apparent fatigue on Drugalia's part afterwards. Unfortunately for the shamans, they were the first target of Drugalia's campaign, and were slaughtered before discovering the source of his power.

In a mere few hours, Drugalia had taken command of his clan, and immediately ordered them to prepare for battle. Drugalia would become the chieftain of all the clans, and no one would stand in his way. His army was frightening to behold: charging towards villages, winds howling, storms raging, the shadows coming to life and attacking of their own volition. Within a year, Drugalia was the sole ruler of his people, and the first and only black magician of the Mazdaks. His rise to power was so rife with torture, rape, murder, and other atrocities that some scholars even liken him to the ancient Torquarans.

He turned his attentions north, and the peaceful Mirin soon found themselves retreating as far as the western shores of the Sea of Ice before Drugalia suddenly decided to lead his armies to the south instead. It is fortunate for the Archaens that the Mystic Mountains and the Volcanic Hills serve as a natural barrier running the entire breadth of Talislanta, for these impassable peaks were all that prevented the Mazdaks from invading the fledgling city-states to the west. As it turned out, the Mazdaks were effectively funneled south by these peaks, into what is now known as the Kang Empire. It is here that Drugalia began his campaign to make himself chieftain of the known world.

He slaughtered the Vajra almost into extinction. Even after they retreated—bloodied and beaten—deep into the bowels of the earth, he summoned gigantic earth demons to hunt them down. They butchered the Quan just as efficiently, forcing them to flee south of the Inland Sea. Somehow the Mandalans managed to survive, as did the Mondre Khan, who kept the Mazdaks at bay well enough to unintentionally protect the Ispasians.

The bloodthirsty Mazdaks never moved further south than the Inland Sea, as they spent the next three decades in constant battle with the Mondre Khan and the Kang. In fact, it was thirty years to the day in which Drugalia came to power that he was taken in the night, dragged kicking and screaming from his tent by three winged figures of inhuman shape. Without Drugalia





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to lead them, the Mazdaks quickly wiped themselves out, battling to fill the void left by their dread chieftain. And, while many searched for it, none could find the unholy iron-bound tome which had conferred upon Drugalia such great and terrible powers.

Meanwhile, two other civilizations were on the rise. The Mazdaks were ultimately helped into extinction by the Quan barbarian tribes, at about year 48 of the New Age. Within a century, the Quan ruled an empire mightier than Phaedra's, populated by the warrior Kang, the mining Vajra, the seafaring Sunra, the mercantilist Ispasians, and the philosophical Mandalans. Only the Mondre Khan sub-men remained unconquered.

Meanwhile, the nomadic Dracartans stumbled upon a cache of ancient tablets in the heart of the Red Desert. The knowledge gained—supposedly a boon from their reclusive god, Jamba—gave the Kingdom of Carantheum the secrets of thaumaturgy, including the ability to create red iron from the sand which surrounded them. They erected the City-state of Dracarta in the central desert, which became a major commercial center.

### DEVELOPMENTS IN THE NORTH

In the frozen Northlands of Talislanta, the Mirin tribes erected their first cities, Myr and Rhin, under the direction of their Snow Queen. Despite the pressures of a constant war against the Ice Giants of Narandu, the Mirin kingdom of L'Haan developed an advanced culture based on the science of alchemy. Due to the cold and its remoteness, however, L'Haan remained isolated from the other Talislantan states.

The gradual but irresistible advance of the Ice Giants—a race which appeared in Talislanta after the Great Disaster, and which brought arctic cold with it as it advanced to new territories—displaced other civilizations of the North. Farnir, one of the few Archaean city-states to survive the Great Disaster in any form, fell to the onslaught of the Giants. Another northern race, the Ur, fled to the south. Conquering the despicable Darklings and uniting with the avian Stryx, the refugees founded the Kingdom of Urag. Shortly thereafter, they began to ravage their new land of its mineral resources.

### THE UNION OF THE SEVEN KINGDOMS

The rise and fall of the Phaedran Empire had an effect far beyond its own borders. Exiles, driven East by the early conquests and the later civil war, founded such diverse nations as the Kingdoms of Vardune and Cymril (in the Seven Kingdoms), and the Wilderlands city-states of Hadj, Maruk and Danuvia. The end of the second century of the New Age brought with it a threat which changed the course of Talislantan history—a unified Beastmen army, surging out of the Plains of Golarin under the leadership of a brilliant and charismatic general, Tyranus.

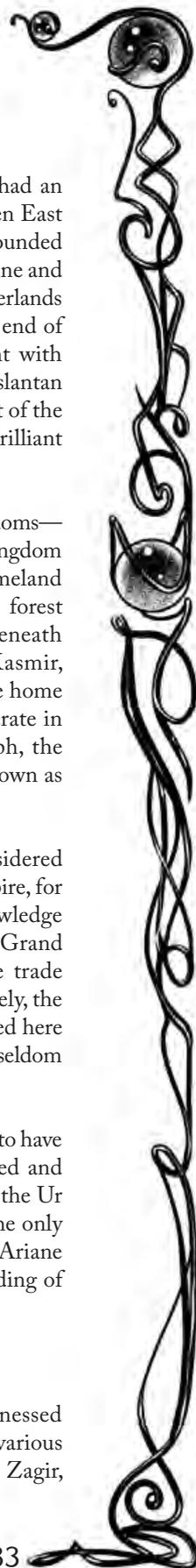
In order to survive, seven of the western kingdoms—Cymril, city-state of the exiled Phandre; Taz, kingdom of the Thrall warriors; Sindar, the mesa homeland of the dual-brained Sindarans; Vardune, the forest kingdom founded by the Aeriad; Durne, beneath which live the subterranean Gnomekin; Kashmir, kingdom of the money-lenders; and Astar, the home of the peaceful Muses—were forced to cooperate in a defensive war. After their eventual triumph, the military coalition became a political union known as the Seven Kingdoms.

The Seven Kingdoms might best be considered the spiritual descendant of the Phaedran Empire, for it has become the primary guardian of knowledge and culture on the continent. Likewise, its Grand Army and fleets of windships maintain the trade ways, allowing commerce to prosper. Fortunately, the intolerance of the ancient Phaedrans is replaced here with a degree of cultural and religious tolerance seldom matched elsewhere on the world of Archaeus.

For a time, the nations of Talislanta appeared to have reached a political balance. The Quan attacked and failed to conquer the barbarous Harakin, and the Ur were repulsed by the Wildmen of Yrmania. The only developments of note were the alliance of the Ariane of Tamaranth with the Gryphs, and the founding of the first settlements in Jhangara.

### THE DEATH CULTISTS

The fourth century of the New Age witnessed the rise of another power: the Rajans. The various sub-races of Rajans—the Rajanir, Shadinn, Zagir,



Aramut, and the mongrel Vird—fled to the steppes of southeastern Talislanta during the wars of the Mazdak Empire, but remained hostile and divided.

In the third century of the New Age, the Rajans allied with the Shadinn giants and brought the Zagir and Aramut tribes under their dominion, but the union was precarious at best—the subject tribes were prone to revolt, and the Rajan chieftains often squabbled among themselves.

This changed in the year 390 N.A., when the necromancer Urmaan rose to power among the Rajanin. The Rajan leader had somehow learned the secrets of the arcane art of Necromancy, and he taught the magical rites to those who would follow him.

Urmaan treacherously attacked and conquered his Shadinn allies, then led the united Rajan tribes in the subjugation of Virdinnar. After erecting the fortified Holy City of Irdan, the Necromancer decreed one final attack: the conquest of Carantheum. When the Rajans were repulsed, Urmaan vowed revenge but the mage mysteriously disappeared shortly afterward.

After the death of Urmaan, a cabal of Rajanin Necromancers founded the Black Mystic Cult of Rajaninnar as a tool through which to rule the Rajan nation. The cultists promoted a religion which worshiped Death, and which taught a virulent form of fanatical intolerance toward other races and deities. The nation of

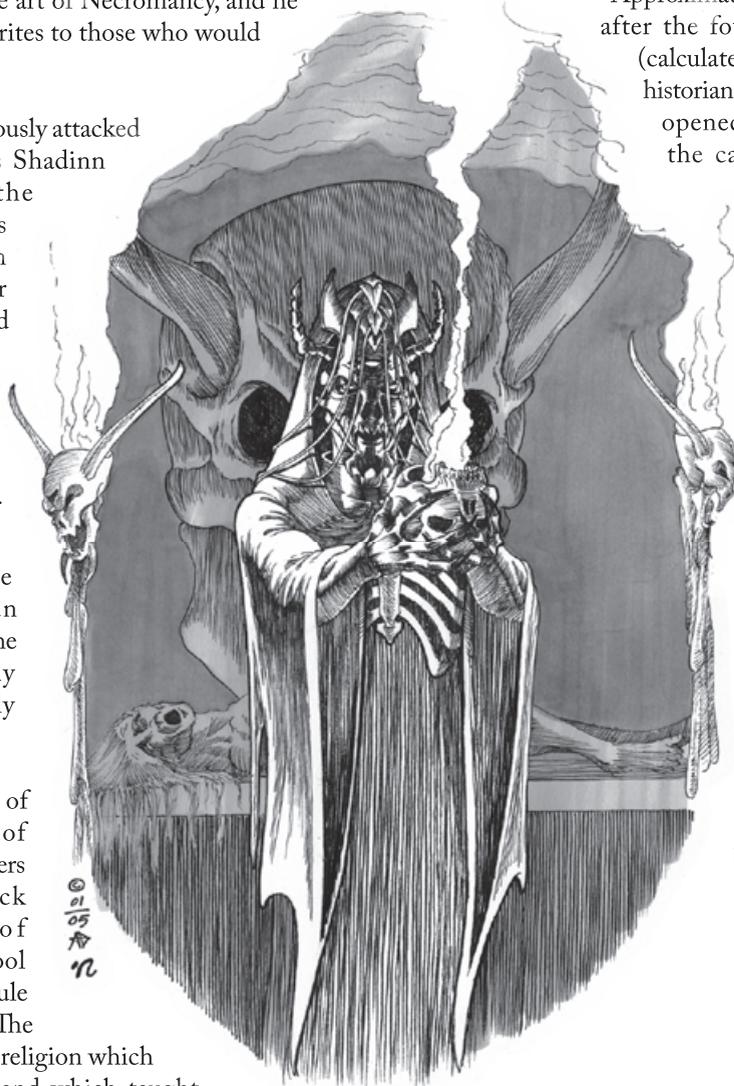
Rajaninnar is currently one of the greatest threats to the stability of modern Talislanta.

## A NEW AGE OF DISCOVERY?

Little has changed politically in the two centuries since the founding of Rajaninnar. The balance of power seems to be proven by the record of failed conquests—the defeat of an Ice Giant advance at the hands of Ariane mystics in 493 N.A.; the failure of the Ur to conquer the Arimites in 553 N.A.; and the defeat of Imrian raiders by the Grand Army of the Seven Kingdoms, in 570 N.A.

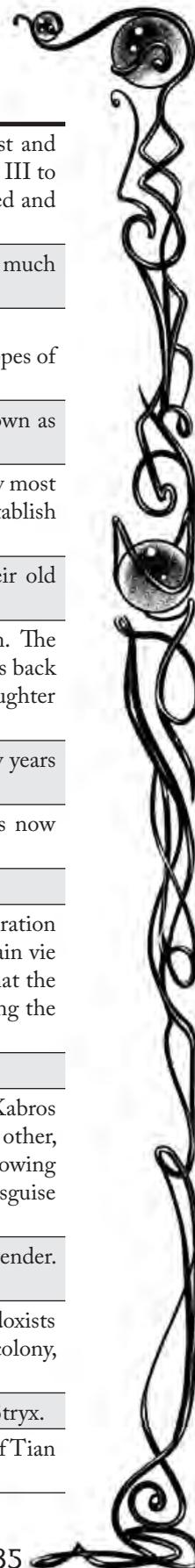
Approximately six hundred years after the founding of Phaedra (calculated as 603 by modern historians) Cymrillian wizards opened a sealed vault in the cavernous basement

complex under the Lyceum Arcanum (Talislanta's premiere college of magic). There they discovered the Archaen Codex, which had been hidden centuries ago by one of the Phandre, who had become the first Wizard King of Cymril. With the rediscovery of the book, fate's wheel spun once again, and a new Age of Discovery has begun.



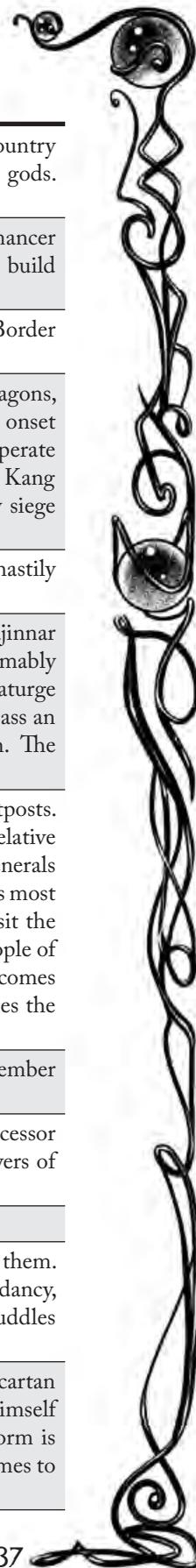
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YEAR	EVENT
1	Beginning of 'The New Age'- The city-state of Phaedra is established. The Orthodoxist and Paradoxist cults vie for control of the new state, but moderates choose the wizard Soliman III to be the first ruler of Phaedra. A period of lasting prosperity follows, lasting some hundred and ten years.
13	Under the rulership of the black magician Drugalia, the Mazdaks, begin the conquest of much of the Eastern Lands.
21	The Mirin of L'Haan build the ice cities of Myr and Rhin. The Mazdaks drive the Kang from the Greylands. The Kang, in turn, migrate into the steppes of Kangir, displacing the Rajan, Aramut and Zagir tribes.
23	The Rajan tribes settled on the west slopes of the Jade mountains in the region now known as Rajinnar.
29	The nomadic Dracartan tribes settle in the Red Desert, a region considered inhospitable by most other peoples. In the same year they discover vast deposits of red iron. Djaffir merchants establish a trade route to Phaedra and work is begun on the city of Dracarta.
48	Mazdaks finally kill each other off, leaving the barbaric Quan tribes in control of their old territories.
67	The Darkling hordes of Urag, fleeing the Ur clans, invade the territories of the Gnomekin. The Gnomekin hide underground until daybreak, then emerge in force and drive the Darklings back to their own shadowy lands. Called the One Day War, the incident promotes considerable laughter amongst the Gnomekin for months to come.
71	Soliman III, ruler of Phaedra, succumbs to old age. A period of mourning lasting twenty years is decreed by his successor, the magician Damon.
77	Phaedrans annex territories occupied by the Aeriad, who flee to the forests of what is now Vardune.
82	The Quan conquer the Vajra.
91	End of the twenty years mourning in Phaedra: Damon decrees a twenty-year period of celebration to follow, but is clapped in irons and branded a lunatic. Orthodoxists and Paradoxists again vie for power, but the sorcerer, Kabros is chosen to rule Phaedra. Privately, he tells friends that the city-state is on the verge of collapse, and advises against making long-term plans regarding the acquisition of property, among other things.
97	Imrian vessels raid the Dark Coast for the first time, taking many slaves.
101	Religious uprisings rock Phaedra on the city-state's hundredth anniversary. The Sorcerer Kabros resigns as ruler. In a stirring speech to his supporters, primarily magicians, wizards, and other, sorcerers, Kabros advises them to consider "an exit, and a hasty one at that." By the following morning, he is sipping nectar on the Isle of Thaecia. Fearing for their lives, his advisors disguise one of their number as Kabros, successfully maintaining this ruse for over eleven years.
107	The Quan, using Vajra engineers and laborers, dam the River Shan, forcing the Sunra to surrender. Using Sunra vessels, the Quan take the Mandalan city of Jacinthe just one month later.
112	Kabros' advisors, their trickery finally uncovered, are forced to flee for their lives. The Orthodoxists seize control of the state, ordering dissidents to be incarcerated in the wilderness penal colony, Gao-Din. Beginning of the Cult Wars with the Paradoxists.
119	The Ur clans of Urag conquer and enslave the Darklings, then join forces with the avian Stryx.
122	The Quan bribe the Kang warchieftains, and establish the Quan Empire. The capital city of Tian is built by conquered Mandalans and Vajra, and the empire begins to prosper.



YEAR	EVENT
133	The penal colony of Gao-Din is abandoned by the Phaedrans, and the rogue city of Gao is established soon afterwards.
148	The Phandre, a race of magicians exiled from the city-state of Phaedra, establish the free state of Cymril. Treaties are signed with the Thralls of Taz and the Gnomekin of Durne. The Farad establish a settlement in Faradun.
158	The Arimites build the ramshackle mining installation of Shattrra and declare it the capital of the nation of Arim.
161	Za bandits and Beastmen contend for the border regions of Zaran.
176	Ice Giants attack L'Haan, but are driven back by the Mirin, who have discovered the secret of making adamant.
188	Mandalan mystics escape from the Quan Empire and flee into the Opal Mountains. Most are slain by Harakin tribesmen and frostweres, but a few survive the journey and discover the Temple of the Seven Moons in Xanadas. The Farad build, the port city of Tarun.
193	Beastmen launch attacks against the settlements of the Sindarans and Kasmirans. Beginning of the Beast Wars.
207	The Dracartans of Carantheum rediscover the lost art of thaumaturgy.
222	The Kasmirans, Sindarans, and Aeriad sign treaties with the Cymrilian alliance. At the last minute, the Muses of Astar also decide to sign, and the confederation of states known as the Seven Kingdoms is established. The Beastmen beat a hasty retreat back across the Plains of Golarin.
231	Armies of the Kang drive the Nagra tribes out of the Quan Empire.
237	The Arimites, who have become wealthy by supplying black iron to the warring Phaedran cultists, build the citadel of Akbar.
245	Gryphs from the forests of Tamaranth, suffering from a plague of gange, are cured by the magics of the Ariane. The Gryphs never forget this act of kindness from the strange folk of the maze city, vowing to remain always the protectors of the Ariane race.
267	Imrian slavers attempt to sack the rogue city of Gao, but are repulsed. Hereafter, the Sea Rogues harass Imrian vessels at every opportunity,
292	Sea Nomads build the floating city of Oceanus.
300	Jhangarans build crude settlements at Karansk and Tabal.
318	The Ur clans invade Yrmania.
321	Shabul, King of Arim, is slain by Revenant Cultists.
334	The Ur, mired in a long and pointless war with the Wildmen of Yrmania, withdraw in disgust to their homeland.
350	Irnrian slavers first encounter the Black Savants of Nefaratus. After losing many vessels, the Imrians strike a secret deal, and are thereafter allowed to pass through Nefaratan waters by specified routes only. Beginning of slave trade with the Quan Empire. The Mirin of L'Haan repulse an invading army of barbaric Harakin in a fierce battle that lasts for three days and nights.
366	Thousands die in a bloody sea battle waged by opposing cult forces for control of the Phaedran Gulf. Hereafter, the gulf is known as the Sea of Sorrow.
383	Armies of the Quan Empire plunge north into Harak, hoping to establish a safe route to L'Haan, which is rich in blue diamonds and adamant. Fierce bands of Harakin, mounted on winged dractyls, oppose them every step of the way. Finally, the Kang commanders order their forces to withdraw convinced that the prize is not worth the effort.

YEAR	EVENT
400	Xanadas, the great mystic founder of the Temple of Seven Moons and father of the country Xanadas, leaves his followers, vowing on his deathbed to return after visiting with the gods. Beginning of "The Long Wait."
404	The Rajans conquer the Aramut, Zagir and Shadinn tribes and are united under the necromancer Urmaan after a series of drawn-out desert campaigns. Employing slave labor, the Rajans build the fortified citadel of Irdan.
422	Kang forces turn back an army of Witch folk from Chana. Beginning of the Quan Border Wars.
432	Saurans from the Volcanic Hills invade the Quan Empire. Mounted on armored land dragons, the Saurans advance slowly but inexorably towards the capital of Tian. Only the early onset of winter stops the Saurans, the cold weather forcing them to return to their more temperate homeland. Immediately following this disastrous incident, the Emperor of Quan orders his Kang commanders to undertake the swift construction of fortified border outposts and heavy siege engines as insurance against further assaults.
433	The Sauran armies return in the spring, but are unable to penetrate the Kang's new and hastily constructed defenses. Dismayed, the Saurans return to the Volcanic Hills.
444	Sheiks of the Djaffir bandit tribes arrive in Carantheum. They report that Urmaan of Rajinnar is amassing an army of slave warriors along the southern borders of the Wilderlands, presumably in preparation for an assault on the citadel of Dracarta. Abas the Gray, a Dracartan thaumaturge noted for his quirk wit, tells the Djaffir he would appreciate Urmaan better were he to amass an army of slave girls instead." Not amused, the Djaffir hurl Abas out a window to his death. The Dracartans get the point and promise to keep a close watch on the situation.
445	Armies of the Rajans launch an attack on Dracarta, the southernmost of Carantheum's outposts. The Dracartans, warned in advance by the Djaffir sheiks, annihilate the Rajan armies with relative ease. When news of the crushing defeat reaches Irdan, Urmaan has his entire staff of generals boiled in oil. Urmaan then disappears, never to be heard from again. Arjan, one of Urmaan's most gifted students, uses the incident to his advantage, claiming that Urmaan has gone to visit the entity known as Death, from whom he seeks advice and guidance on how to defeat the people of Carantheum. The idea so catches the fancy of the gullible Rajinnar populace that Death becomes the nation's patron "deity." A morbid cult springs up around the high priest, who becomes the first Khadun or mystic ruler of the Rajans.
451	The Seven Kingdoms build the Seven Roads, encouraging trade between each of the member nations.
476	Death of the first Khadun of Rajinnar by unknown causes. A new Khadun claims his predecessor has "gone to seek Urmaan. The Rajan death cultists are thereafter known as the "Followers of Urmaan."
480	Independent city-states of Danuvia, Maruk, and Hadj are built by Phaedran exiles.
493	Ice Giants enter the forests of Tamaranth and find the Ariane High Masters waiting for them. Employing their potent magics, the Ariane hasten the often slow process of spiritual ascendancy, enabling the invading Ice Giants to immediately enter into their next incarnations as puddles of water.
500	The Rajans, led by the Khadun Thados himself, attack Dracarta in force. Routed by Dracartan duneships, the Rajans are torn to pieces as they flee madly across the desert sands. Thados himself is captured alive and plated with red iron by Dracartan thaumaturges. His statue-like form is displayed in the capital of Carantheum, where it decorates the Royal Palace. The battle comes to be known as the Massacre at Dracarta.



## YEAR

## EVENT

512	Exhausted after four hundred years of continuous warfare, the Orthodoxist and Paradoxist cults declare a truce. After a brief council, they agree to divide the old Phaedran territories into two separate nations. Zandu, to the west, becomes home to the Paradoxists. Aaman, to the east, is occupied by the Orthodoxists. Construction is begun on the Great Barrier Wall.
519	The Great Barrier Wall Is completed; the Zandir and Aaman work together to erect this massive structure in only seven years.
538	Fierce Mangar corsairs begin to harass the dragon barques of the Quan Empire.
553	Ur clans from the fortress city of Krag pour into the gorge at Akbar but are unable to penetrate the Arimites' strong defenses. They fall back to make new plans.
570	Imrians raid Mog for slaves, and sail upriver as far as Astar in search of Muses. They find an army of Thralls from Taz instead, and are driven down the Axis river and into the Azure Ocean. In the same year a large contingent of Imrians attempt to take the Isle of Thaecia, but are easily repulsed by the magics of the Thaecian enchanters.
600	Tamerlin writes his Chronicles of Talislanta.
601	A new Wizard King is elected by popular decree in Cymril. He is known for his liberal policies, and is viewed with great distaste by the arch-conservative Tanasian ethnic minority.
602	Imrian slavers annex the Isle of Batre.
603	A trio of Tanasians attempts to restore the old regime to power in Cymril. They fall when the Lyceum Arcanum comes in support of the Wizard King. The Lyceum's secret archives are opened, and the Tanasian's discredited. Nymandre is tried and convicted of treason; he is placed in stasis and imprisoned in an impermeable orb. Ebonarde feels to parts unknown, while Naryx of the Gloved Hand disappears – some say he is hiding in the jungles of Chana.



# A TRAVELER'S GUIDE TO TALISLANTA



To the neophyte traveler or explorer, the Talislantan continent and its surroundings present nearly unlimited opportunities for discovery and adventure. Conversely, the possibilities of disaster are at least as numerous, particularly for those unfamiliar with the many unusual races, cultures and creatures native to this realm. The foreigner is best advised to avoid incautious behavior at all costs; keeping a keen eye out for signs of trouble, tactfully acceding to the customs and beliefs of the natives (no matter how odd or irrational these may seem), and maintaining a degree of civility and decorum in public places. Traveling in groups of trustworthy companions, wielding cogent magics, and/or carrying concealed weapons on one's person are also advisable, unless one prefers trusting all to luck. Other factors which may be of interest to the prospective Talislantan traveler are listed below, as follows:

**Currency:** The gold lumen, minted to traditional specifications by most of the civilized nations on the continent, is the standard coin of the realm. A single gold lumen is equivalent in value to ten silver pieces. or one hundred copper pieces.

**Roadways:** Beyond the walls of even the largest Talislantan cities one often finds little but wilderness and intractable terrain. In many such regions, safe and reliable roadways are practically non-existent, a situation which can turn even the most mundane seeming journey into an exercise in survival techniques. Particularly unsafe is the so-called Wilderlands Road, an ancient and decrepit affair which runs from the eastern border of Kasmir (of the Seven Kingdoms)

through the Wilderlands of Zaran and the desert kingdoms of Djaffa, Carantheum, and Rajinnar. Traveling the Wilderness Road is best done in the company of a large and well-armed caravan, this due to the presence of Beastmen, Za bandit gangs, and other malicious predators.

In the west, the old Phaedran Causeway is better patrolled, if somewhat haphazardly maintained. The Causeway runs from Zandu through Aaman, terminating at the western border of the Seven Kingdoms. A modest toll is charged at the Great Barrier Wall, which separates the two rival nations of Aaman and Zandu.

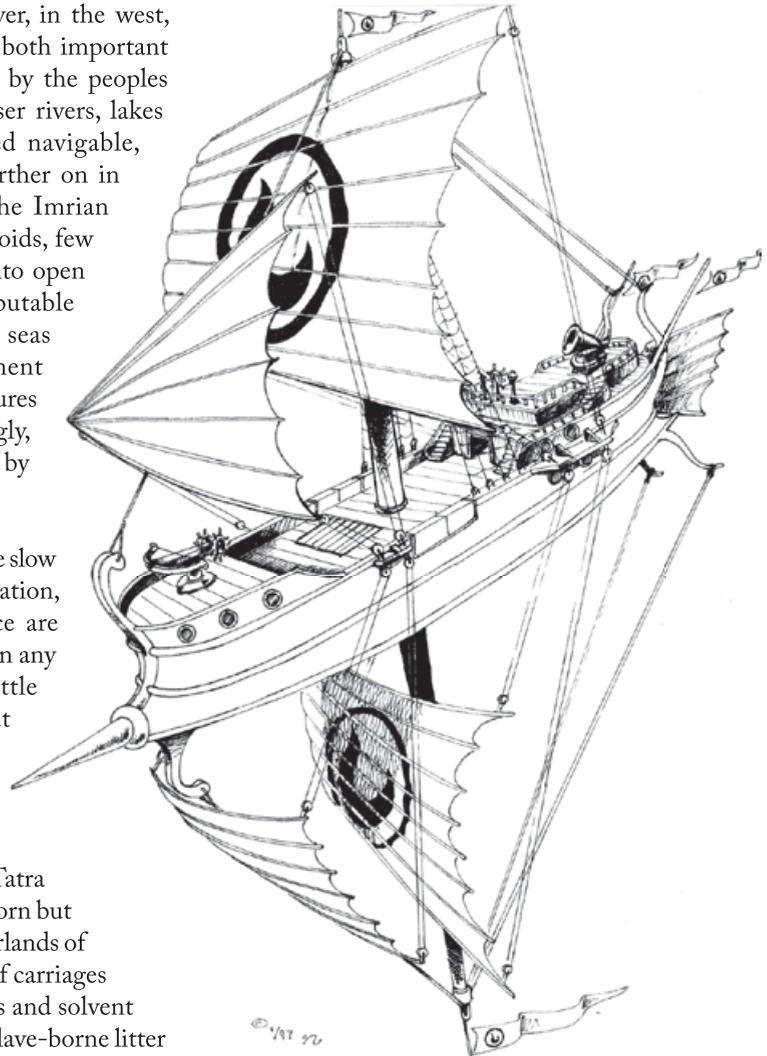
The Seven Kingdoms has its own system of roadways, known as the Seven Roads. Aside from its rather unimaginative acronym, the system is of good quality, at least by Talislantan standards. Delays are to be expected at all border crossings, the addlebrained rulers of this confederation of minor city states being unable to coordinate such things as tolls, detours, curfews, and so forth.

The Emperor's Road, which winds its way through the eastern territories of the Quan Empire, is the only thoroughfare on the continent which offers a semblance of security and convenience on a regular basis. Designed and built by subjects of the Quan, the roadway is always well maintained. Foreigners must pay a prohibitive toll of five gold lumens at all bridges and city gates, a stricture intended to discourage traveling musicians, peddlers, and other undesirables from traipsing about the Empire.

*Seas and Waterways:* The Axis River, in the west, and the River Shan, in the east, are both important waterways, and are used extensively by the peoples of these regions. A number of lesser rivers, lakes and inland seas are also considered navigable, and are covered in greater detail further on in the text. With the exception of the Imrian slavers, a race of amphibious humanoids, few Talislantan sailors dare to venture into open waters, a phobia not entirely attributable to mere superstition. The various seas and oceans surrounding the continent virtually teem with dangerous creatures and roving Corsair bands. Accordingly, most Talislantan sea vessels navigate by hugging the coastline.

*Modes of Conveyance:* Aside from the slow but reliable expedient of pedal ambulation, many forms of overland conveyance are available to the Talislantan traveler. In any fair-sized city, there is generally little difficulty in obtaining a mount at reasonable cost. Swiftest of steeds are the creatures called Silvermanes, followed by their cousins, the Snowmane and Greymane. In arid or desert climes, the Ontra, Batra, or Tatra are most suitable. Land lizards, stubborn but powerful quadrupeds from the Wilderlands of Zaran, are best suited to the towing of carriages or wagons. Those of discerning tastes and solvent finances may prefer the comfort of a slave-borne litter or palanquin. In Carantheum, dune ships and land barges are quite popular.

Various types of water craft, some reasonably priced, are available in many parts of Talislanta. Barges and flat bottomed skiffs are ideal for navigating rivers and lakes, reed boats or makeshift rafts often sufficing in places where larger craft cannot go. The finest sailing ships are probably the Dragon Barques of the Quan Empire built by the subject Sunra peoples. The Imrians' Coracles, drawn by giant Kra, are seaworthy but difficult to manage. The Zandir, Aamanians and Farad make serviceable galleys, though these require large teams of slaves to man the oars. The capabilities of the ominous sailing vessels of the Black Savants, like their mysterious owners, remain largely unknown.



Where methods of land and water travel fail, there is always the possibility of obtaining passage on a windship. Both the magicians of Cymril (of the Seven Kingdoms) and Phantas know the secret of making these wondrous vessels, which traverse the air as sailing ships do the water. They are so costly to make and maintain, however, that few can afford to own such magnificent craft. Only slightly less expensive are crested dragons, which make fierce and loyal steeds if captured and trained while still young. Ungainly and foul-tempered, Dractyl can be found amidst the wastelands of Harak. As the bloodthirsty Harakin tribes also dwell here, it is easy to rationalize not making the long and arduous journey to this isolated region.

## THE REGIONS OF TALISLANTA

Geographers divide the Talislantan landmass into ten districts, each of which shares certain characteristics or qualities. These regions are:

### THE WESTERN LANDS

The states which formed out of the self-destruction of ancient Phaedra, Aaman and Zandu, are absolute opposites. The Aamanians are Orthodoxist cultists, devoted to a strict worship of the deity Aa, while the Zandir are Paradoxists, resistant to any attempt to regiment their lives. Silvanus, the home of the gypsy Sarista, is considered somewhat of a wilderness preserve by the Sultan of Zandu, but the northern woodlands of Werewood are justly feared by Zandir and Aamanian alike. The Kingdom of Arim, nestled in the heights of the Onyx Mountains, is a nation of miners held in thrall by the tyranny of the Revenant Cult, a secret society.

### THE SEVEN KINGDOMS

This western nation, composed of seven very different races and societies, continues to thrive politically and commercially. The Seven Kingdoms is a beacon to exiles and refugees who appreciate its standards of tolerance, and its Lyceum Arcanum is the foremost institute of the arcane arts on the continent.

### THE WILDERLANDS OF ZARAN

Practically the opposite of the Seven Kingdoms, this wilderness in central Talislanta is an ungoverned district still blighted by the effects of the Great Disaster. Ruins litter the sands and wastes, where the Za bandits, Kharakhan Giants, the Saurud, and other militant tribes raid caravans and one another for the goods needed to survive. The only outposts of civilization are the city states of Hadj, Danuvia and Maruk, and the trade fortresses (Akmir and Karfan) maintained by the Seven Kingdoms.

### THE EASTERN LANDS

The Quan Empire remains firmly entrenched in the East, though experts disagree as to whether it is poised to invade Carantheum or Rajinnar, or if the decadent Quan are about to be ousted from power by

one of their subject races. To the south, the jungles of Chana are divided among three strange and sinister tribes. In the north, the cold-hearted Harakin remain unchallenged in their desolate homeland. Somewhere in the northern mountains lies the Temple of the Four Winds, from which the Savants of Xanadas are said to document the affairs of the continent. To the west of the Empire lies the hostile terrain of the Volcanic Hills, where dwell such hostile races as Saurans, Raknids and Satada.

### THE DESERT KINGDOMS

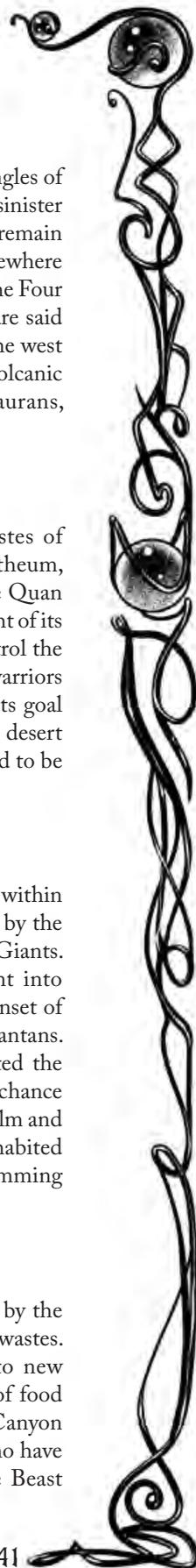
The nations which inhabit the sandy wastes of central Talislanta are bitter enemies. Carantheum, which lies astride the trade route between the Quan Empire and the Seven Kingdoms, is at the height of its commercial success. Its fleets of duneships patrol the deserts against the incursions of the fanatic warriors of Rajinnar, which has never retreated from its goal of subjugating the Red Desert. Djaffa, a small desert nation of nomad tribes (some of which are said to be bandit clans), remains an ally of Carantheum.

### THE NORTHERN REACHES

The threat which dominates the north lies within the Kingdom of Narandu; a frigid-land ruled by the enigmatic Ice King and his minions, the Ice Giants. Narandu's slow but inexorable encroachment into neighboring territories, bringing with it the onset of an arctic climate, remains a threat to all Talislantans. The Mirin of L'Haan have successfully resisted the Giants for centuries, but alone they have no chance to reverse the tide. In the east, the Shadow Realm and the Sinking Land are twin mysteries, one inhabited by shadowforms and the other by mud-swimming Snipes.

### THE CENTRAL REGIONS

Urag, depleted by centuries of despoilation by the Ur clans, is a barren land polluted with toxic wastes. Soon, the Ur must again try to expand into new territories, to replenish their depleted stores of food and natural resources. Across the Dead River Canyon live the Beastmen of the Plains of Golarin, who have remained disunited since their defeat in the Beast





## Hotan's History of the World

Wars centuries ago. Tamaranth is a sylvan forestland, shared by the winged Gryphs and the Ariane, a race possessed of extraordinary mystical abilities.

### THE SOUTHERN RIM

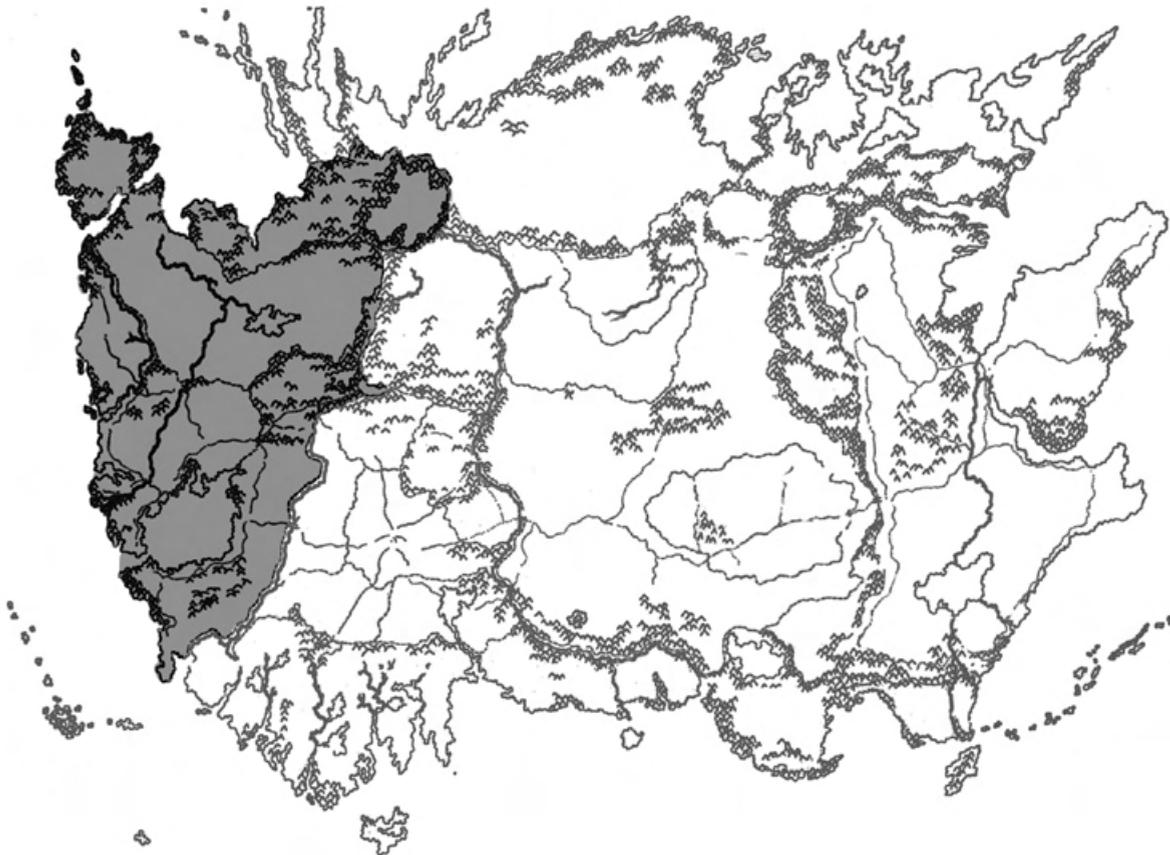
The southern coast of Talislanta is a tropical land where jungles and swamps predominate. The three western nations are differentiated primarily by the races which dwell within them: Jhangara is home to the primitive Jhangaran tribesmen; Mog is the land of the Mogroth, the slow-moving sloth-beings who dredge the swamps for amber; and the Dark Coast is the habitation of the agricultural Green Men, the brutish Moorg-Wan, and the fierce Ahazu tribesmen. Three islands are of particular interest: Gao-Din, the Phaedran penal colony which has become a pirate stronghold; Imria, the home of the Imrian slavers; and Batre, the isle from which come some of Talislanta's

most beautiful women. In the east is Faradun, a nation where unscrupulous monopolists control the price of all trade goods and services from their fortified city of Tarun.

### THE FAR ISLES

The final geographical district of Talislanta consists of two island chains, on opposite sides of the continent. The Crescent Islands, in the east, include the homelands of the Mangar Corsairs, the peaceful Sawila, and the Na-Ku cannibals. Adjacent to the end of the chain is Nefaratus, the mysterious island of the mages known only as the Black Savants. The Thaecian Islands are in the west, and are inhabited by such races as the Parthenian seafarers, and the cultured Thiasians and Thaecians. South lies the isolated isle of Phantas, where the flying castle of Cabal Magicus bears witness to the lost arts of the Archaean sorcerers.

## THE WESTERN LANDS





## AAMAN

Aaman is a land of low hills and wooded glens, bordered to the east by the Axis River, and to the west by the Sea of Sorrow. Once part of the Phaedran Empire, Aaman became an independent state at the conclusion of the long and bloody Cult Wars which pitted the Orthodoxists against the Paradoxists of neighboring Zandu.

### THE AAMANIAN

A stern folk, the Aamanians are tall and straight of bearing. They have skin the color of cinnabar, with sculpted features and deep green eyes.

As required by the arch-conservative tenets of Orthodoxy, Aamanians refrain from individualistic behavior. Only the most modest attire is deemed permissible—colorless smocks, robes designed to conceal the figure, and caps of starched linen. In order to promote the Orthodoxist ideal of “oneness in body and spirit,” Aamanians use an extract of the bald nettle plant to remove all facial and body hair, thus achieving a sameness of appearance.

### THE ORTHODOXIST CULT

The doctrines of Orthodoxy center around the Aamanians’ patron deity, Aa (also known as “Aa the Omnipotent,” “Aa the Omnificent,” and so forth).

The tenets of the cult are recorded in a series of iron-bound volumes, collectively known as the Omnival. The first volume contains the revelations which Aa supposedly granted to the founders of the cult, and the subsequent tomes were written over the course of many generations by the ruling theocrats. The Omnival purports to reveal the secret knowledge of Aa; the answers to all questions and mysteries; the correct manner of achieving ordered thought; and 100 proscriptions against infidels, heretics and witches. According to the Aamanians, “What the Omnival does not teach, the true Orthodoxist need not know.”

### CUSTOMS

Strict adherence to the inflexible tenets of Orthodoxy strangulates life in Aaman. Conditioned from childhood to conform to acceptable patterns of speech and behavior, Aamanians converse mainly in clichés and axioms. Disagreement with Orthodoxist doctrine is considered tantamount to heresy, and results in most unpleasant consequences. Intoxicants and public merriment are considered the domain of infidels, and are expressly forbidden.

The Aamanians have a rigid caste system based upon the acquisition and accumulation of spiritual purity, which they measure in terms of mana.

## Hotan's History of the World

At the head of the theocracy is the Hierophant, the celibate high priest of the realm, who possesses unlimited mana. The Hierophant is entrusted with sole curatorship of the Omnival, and thus wields absolute power. At his decree, the book of scripture may be expanded to include such strictures and observances as he sees fit to impose upon the populace.

Serving the Hierophant are the Monitors, each of whom serves as the ruling prelate of an assigned district. The Monitors are responsible for awarding mana to those worthy of advancement in status, and to withdraw it from individuals judged to be unworthy. Only Aamanians who have earned a minimum of 1,000 aalms (points) of mana can aspire to the lofty position of a Monitor.

Next in status come the Aspirants. These individuals are divided into ten orders, separated by 100-aalm increments. (Thus, an Aspirant of the First Order must possess a minimum of 100 aalms of mana, an Aspirant of the Second Order must have at least 200 aalms, and so on.) Aspirants of the Tenth Order vie for promotion to the status of Monitor, though few can attain such an exalted position.

Individuals who have no mana are considered Pariahs, with a status comparable to that of an infidel. Slaves are Pariahs as well, and have even fewer rights – they are the property of the state.

Advancement in status is a preoccupation of the Aamanians, who believe that their position in the Orthodoxist hierarchy at the time of their death determines how they will fare in the afterlife. Accordingly, the attainment of mana is considered to be of primary importance.

The most reliable method of gaining mana, provided one can pay the high cost of tuition, is to enter the priesthood and study to become an Archimage or Warrior-Priest. Temples and monasteries offering instruction can be found in any city in Aaman.

A less costly means of attaining enlightenment is to enlist in the combat ranks of the Theocratic Order, the militant arm of the Orthodoxist Cult. Attired in shining white armor (actually, black-iron plate-mail covered with glossy white lacquer), Knights of the Theocratic Order serve as protectors of the realm, under the direct command of the Hierophant. They are employed as officers in all branches of the

regular army and navy. Other members of the Order serve as specialists: Witch Hunters hunt down and persecute “enemies of the faith” (witches, warlocks, and other so-called heretics who do not share the Cult’s narrow-minded views). Inquisitors preside over rituals designed to purge unorthodox desires from penitents’ hearts—methods that resemble what others might call torture.

Some members of the cult find it easier to simply purchase mana, by making donations to one of the many Temples of Aa found in Aaman. The going rate for this form of enlightenment is 100 gold lumens per aalm of mana—a not-insubstantial price, even considering the purported benefits to the soul.

Because few Aamanians can afford to acquire mana by such convenient means, the most popular way to achieve elevated status is to undertake a pilgrimage to one of the cult’s officially sanctioned holy places. In order of esteem, these are: the Well of Saints, which lies within the Volcanic Hills; the Watchstone, situated amidst the Plains of Golarin; the Red Desert of Carantheum; and Faradun’s Sea of Glass. Returning with some item or substance native to the holy place is required in order to gain the recognition of the Monitors, who must verify all such claims.

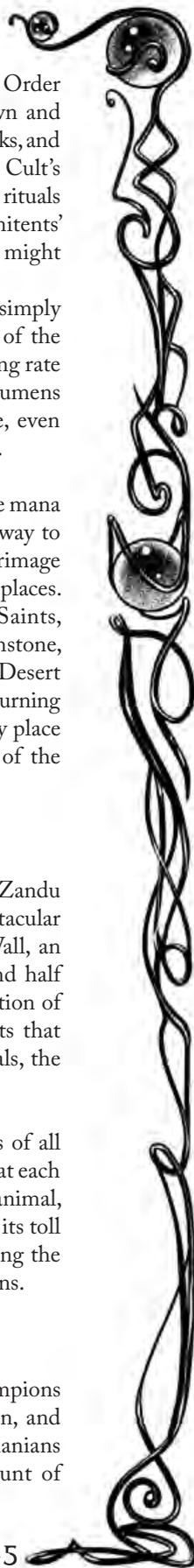
### THE GREAT BARRIER WALL

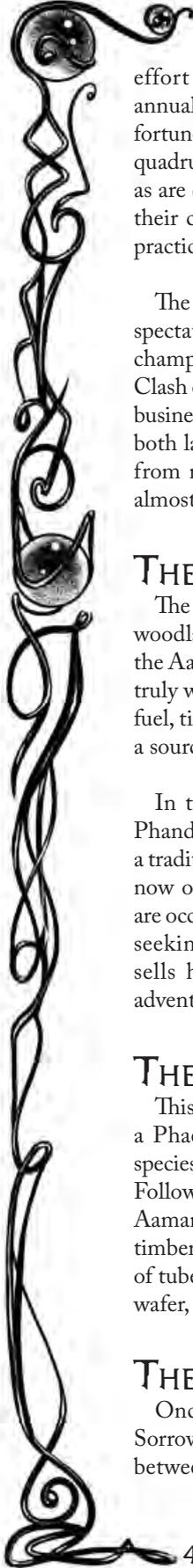
Stretching the entire length of the Aaman-Zandu border is perhaps the most bizarre and spectacular structure in the region: the Great Barrier Wall, an immense stone structure 60 feet in height and half as wide at its base. It was built as the culmination of the Cult Wars, the series of religious conflicts that pitted the Orthodoxist Cult against their rivals, the Paradoxists.

The Great Barrier Wall is open to travelers of all races and nationalities, though a toll is charged at each of its three gates (one gold lumen per person, animal, or conveyance). Proprietorship of the wall and its toll facilities are determined on a yearly basis during the annual event known as the Clash of Champions.

### THE CLASH OF CHAMPIONS

This yearly contest of skill pits two great champions against one another: one representing Aaman, and the other representing Zandu. Both the Aamanians and the Zandir expend a considerable amount of





effort searching for a suitable champion for the annual match, the outcome of which is worth a small fortune in revenues. There are a few minor restrictions: quadrupeds are barred from competing in the event, as are demons of any sort. The Aamanians insist that their champion be male, and a Believer. Otherwise, practically anything goes.

The contest is held atop the Great Barrier Wall, with spectators on both sides applauding their country's champion. People from many lands come to see the Clash of Champions, bringing a substantial amount of business to the innkeepers, ship-owners and vendors of both lands. Betting is always brisk, and pick-pockets from neighboring regions regard the event with an almost religious reverence.

## THE PHANDRIL FOREST

The dreaded monsters known as shathane prowl this woodland, which perhaps explains the reluctance of the Aamanians to visit this region. The last of Aaman's truly wild woods – the others having been leveled for fuel, timber or farmland – the Phandril Forest is also a source of revenue for the Orthodoxy.

In the pre-Phaedran era, the first refugees from Phandril buried their dead in these woods, beginning a tradition that lasted for centuries. The old cemeteries, now overgrown, still litter the interior. These tombs are occasionally sought out by Orthodoxist plunderers seeking relics, and the local Monitor sometimes sells high-priced exploration permits to foreign adventurers.

## THE MONASTIC HILLS

This ancient region of gently sloping hills was once a Phaedran forest preserve, where countless exotic species of birds and beasts were allowed to roam freely. Following the winding down of the Cult Wars, the Aamanians cleared much of the woodland for fuel and timber, and planted acres of provender plant – a type of tuber from which is derived a bland but nutritious wafer, the staple food of Aaman.

## THE SEA OF SORROW

Once known as the Phaedran Gulf, the Sea of Sorrow was renamed following a disastrous sea battle between the navies of Aaman and Zandu, during

which thousands perished. Ships from many lands now ply these waters, headed to and from port cities in Zandu and Aaman. Salvagers scour the sea-bottom for sunken treasure and other valuable items of lost cargo.

## THE CITY OF ANDURIN

The site of Aaman's largest military installations, Andurin is also an important staging area for trade with the Seven Kingdoms. The city is the home of several monasteries for infantry and cavalry knights, maintained by the Theocratic Order. Orthodoxist pilgrims often stop here to visit the Abbey of Andurin, where acolytes are trained in the tenets of Orthodoxist dogma.

## THE PORT CITY OF ARAT

This large port city served as an Aamanian naval installation during the Cult Wars. The facilities are now crowded with Aamanian merchant vessels, which sail along the coast from the Aaman Canal (leading through Aamahd all the way to the Axis River) in the north, to the settlement of Alm in the south. Aamanian sailors will not normally venture beyond these areas, fearing that to do so will Invoke the disfavor of Aa the Omnipotent.

## THE IRONWORKS AT AABAAL

A settlement located in the forested highlands of western Aaman, Aabaal is renowned primarily for its ironworks. Here Orthodoxist cult relics are made, fashioned from black iron by a cloistered order of artisan-priests. The craftsmen of Aabaal are forbidden to deviate from the traditional designs and forms approved by the Hierophant, and are noted for their reclusive habits.

## THE FLAGELLANTS OF ALM

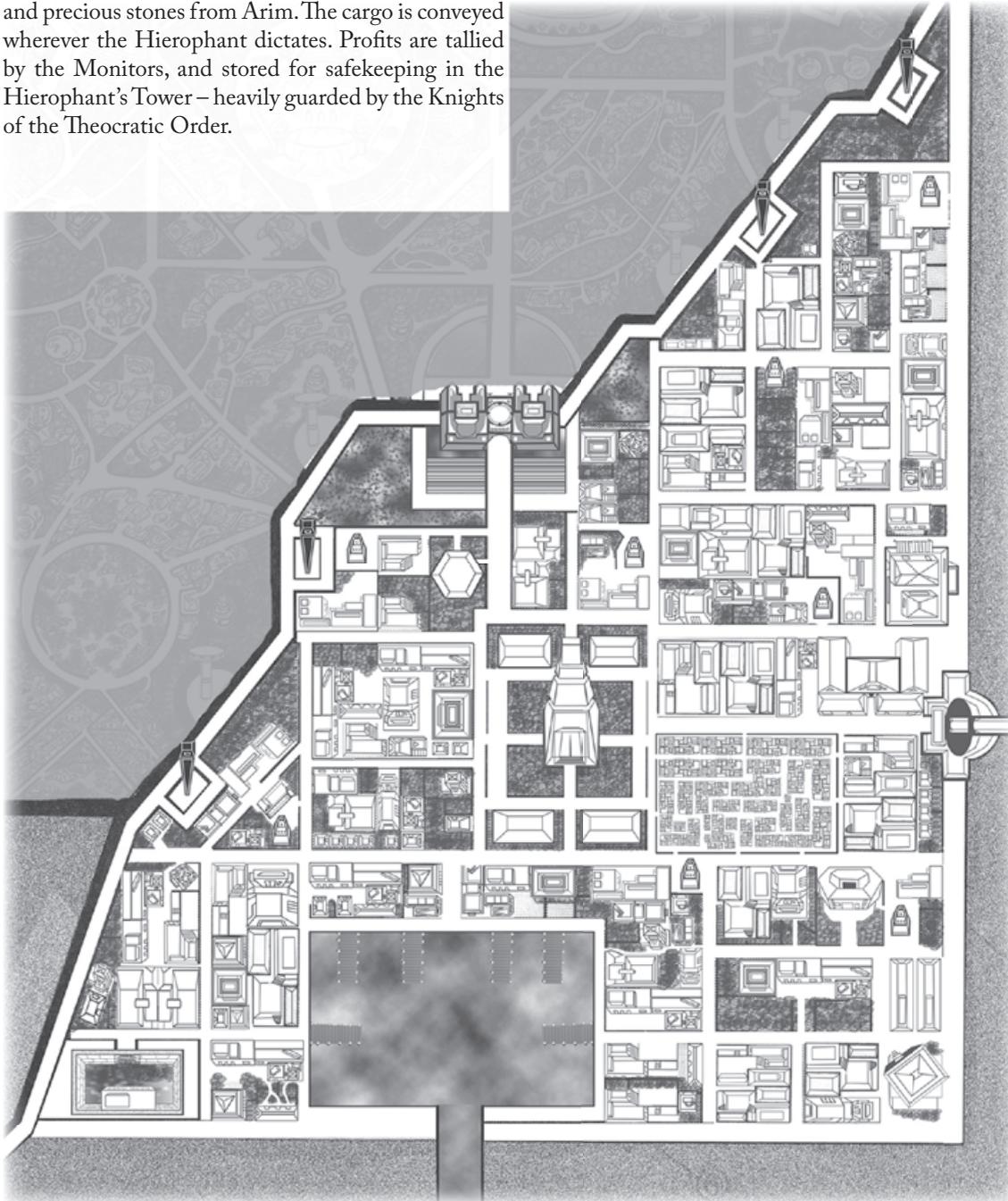
Alm is a small village situated in the forested highlands along the southwestern coast of Aaman. An especially fanatical order of Orthodoxists, known as the Flagellants, founded this settlement. They can sometimes be seen wandering the roads of Aaman, beating themselves with ritual flails and chanting Orthodoxist slogans.

## THE CAPITAL CITY OF AAMAHD

The capital of Aaman, Aamahd is the center of all Aamanian trade, commerce and culture. The Hierophant lives here in a mighty tower of ivory-colored stone, attended by his most trusted advisors.

Far below, thousands of low-ranking Aspirants and infidels toil, loading wagons and canal barges with ore and precious stones from Arim. The cargo is conveyed wherever the Hierophant dictates. Profits are tallied by the Monitors, and stored for safekeeping in the Hierophant's Tower – heavily guarded by the Knights of the Theocratic Order.

The cities of Aamahd and Zanth were both built upon the wins of Badijan, the former capital of the ancient Phaedran Empire, reduced to rubble in the later stages of the Cult Wars. Aside from their close proximity on the map, the two cities have practically nothing in common.



## A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO AAMAHD

*"I would sooner contract an incurable case of pubic lice than spend even a minute in the sanctimonious confines of Aamahd!"*

*- Amor, Bodorian Maestro*

### THE POPULACE

As of the 1st of Ardan, precisely 69,364 inhabitants dwell within Aamahd, for detailed records of the population are kept, and updated constantly with each new birth and death. Aamahd is an unwelcoming city, for although it trades with the Farad, Arimites, and Djaffir, it prefers to conduct such dealings outside its own borders, the better to avoid contaminating its populace by contact with infidels (i.e. anyone who is not a worshipper of Aa). Needless to say, foreign visitors are heavily policed and monitored, and segregated from the populace for the most part.

### HISTORY

Following over four centuries of savage conflict between the Orthodoxists and Paradoxists during the Cult Wars, a truce was finally called after the bloody sea battle that would see the Phaedran Gulf renamed the Sea of Sorrow. In 512 N.A. the rival factions that had ruined the Phaedran Empire, agreed to divide the nation in two, forming Aaman and Zandu. Work was

### WITCHES WORK THROUGH IDLE HANDS

The Orthodoxist cult firmly believe it is important that every adult Aamanian has some work to occupy themselves and provide a distraction from sinful thoughts (for such thoughts lead to actions according to the Omnival). As a result, all unemployed Aamanian adults are given work to perform, such as whitewashing buildings, scrubbing temples, sweeping pavements, and in return receive lodgings and a square meal every day. This also means that Aaman is totally free of beggars, has very little in the way of conventional crime, and is remarkably clean.

### THE WALLS HAVE EYES

The All-Seeing Eye icons that are found everywhere throughout Aamahd (including those inside residential blocks), also serve a purpose beyond mere decoration: They constantly remind Aamanians that Aa is always watching, and more importantly that the Monitors might be as well, for an untold number of the icons are actually viewing devices of one kind or the other.

begun on the Great Barrier Wall, as black stone was mined and hauled from the Onyx Mountains, with the aid of the Arimites. In 519 N.A. the Great Barrier Wall was completed, neatly bisecting Phaedra, and running through the center of the one-time capitol, Badijan. The Aamanian half of Badijan became the focus of strenuous rebuilding atop the existing sewers, and the Holy City of Aamahd was the result.

### VISIONS OF AAMAHD

#### A VIEW FROM AFAR

A patchwork of rolling farmland surrounds the stern white walls of a large city. Stark against the surrounding fields, the great walls encompass stout, uniformly block-like structures, each rigidly organized and positioned. White clad pilgrims scatter across the city's black causeway, as wagons bearing produce trundle to and fro.

#### AT THE GATES

Worn slabs of ebony stone form the aged Phaedran causeway that leads to the imposing city walls, entering through a forbidding gatehouse of perfectly square construction. Two 20-foot rectangular gates of studded black iron, each bearing half of a vast embossed eye, stand closed within the gatehouse. Several units of Aamanian soldiers stand before the gates, vigorously checking all that enter or leave, only opening the gates to those that pass their scrutiny.

#### THE CITY STREETS

Arrow-straight roads of gray slate criss-cross the city between monotonous whitewashed buildings roofed with dull slate. A 10-foot pillar of white stone is set at every corner, topped with a carved Eye of Aa.

## Hotan's History of the World

Shaven-headed Aamanians solemnly and slowly walk the streets, clad in shapeless white garments, women walking behind their men. All is surprisingly quiet, and interactions are brief and formal.

### AAMAHD AT NIGHT

The ghostly white streets of Aamahd are eerily silent at night, deserted save for the patrols of cult guards.

Curfew is enforced throughout all of Aaman's settlements, and only those on sanctioned cult business (or assigned to patrol the city) are permitted to wander the streets between sundown and sunrise. This further controls the populace, and drastically reduces levels of crime.

### THE TYPICAL DWELLING

#### AN EXTERIOR VIEW

An uninspiring rectangular block, indistinguishable from its neighbors, stands near the road, 100-foot square, and 40-foot tall. Square windows gaze out of the white walls at routine intervals, and the slightly sloping roof is clad with gray Arimite slate. Three identical plain wooden doors permit entry on the ground, while an unrailed staircase zigzags up each side, permitting entry to the upper dwellings.

#### THE INTERIOR

The wooden door opens into a spartan white interior with a 10-foot high ceiling. There is no ornamentation save for the cult-approved icons displayed proudly on the sills of the apartment's three windows. The floor and walls are bare cold stone, and illumination is provided by crude iron candleholders in each wall. The 30-foot square apartment is split into nine equal-sized, square rooms.

##### - The Male Communal Room

The main entrance opens into this room; one of the only three with a window. It is bare, except for a fireplace and handful of utilitarian wooden stools.

##### - The Female Communal Room

This room is identical to the Male Communal Room, save that the stools it contains are notably lower.

##### - The Shrine

Centermost of the apartment's nine rooms, the shrine bears a central pillar running from floor to ceiling, carved repeatedly with Aa's symbol.

### TAX, RENT, AND WASTE DISPOSAL

Tax within Aaman is high, although it is actually termed "Cult Donations", with all citizens paying a blanket 80% tax. Conversely, rent costs are low, with each individual paying a mere 1 s.p. per week for lodging (monies that again go directly into the cult's coffers, for they own all the property in Aaman). The same sewer that services Zanth (see pp.XX) also runs beneath Aamahd.

### GENDER SEGREGATION

Although Aamanian society is male-dominated - and women are not permitted to join the cult proper, with the exception of the Hospitaller Nuns - women are not treated as inferiors. However, gender segregation is practiced extensively, ostensibly to reduce carnal temptation on both sides. This is also why women are not permitted to enter the male-dominated clergy. No distraction from "oneness with Aa" is permitted. Women may, however, work in any common profession, although they always wear gloves, veils, and heavy, concealing white clothing when working in public.

##### - The Male Parent's Bedroom

A simple wooden cot with white linen sheets, wooden stool, and wooden wardrobe are all that distinguishes this room from the others.

##### - The Female Parent's Bedroom

Identical to the Male Parent's Bedroom, except that the mattress is placed on the floor rather than a cot.

##### - The Male Children's Bedroom

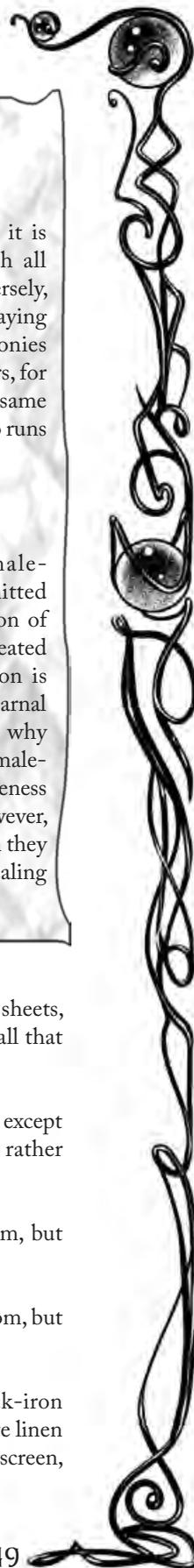
Identical to the Male Parent's Bedroom, but with several smaller, lower cots.

##### - The Female Children's Bedroom

Identical to the Female Parent's Bedroom, but with several smaller mattresses.

##### - The Bathing Room

Central to this room is a crude black-iron bathtub, wooden table bearing rough white linen towels and astringents, a wooden dressing screen, and a toilet of stone.



### - The Kitchen

A black iron stove dominates this room, and iron utensils are hung on wall hooks. A wooden larder contains a cask of water, a batch of dried wafers, a sack of provender roots, and some tough salted durge meat.

## PLACE OF AUTHORITY

### TOWER OF THE HIEROPHANT

#### (MAP KEY #1)

Looming over every structure in Aamahd, this square monolith bristles with black-iron spikes, and towers 250-foot in the air, capped by a huge Eye of Aa. Windows stud the tower at regular intervals, each shaped like an All-Seeing Eye. A wall covered with spikes and barbs encircles its grounds, enchanted Eye icons peering out in every direction from atop it.

### TOWERS OF THE MONITORS

#### (MAP KEY #2)

These square, freestanding, 50-foot alabaster towers

### HEART OF THE TOWER

The Hierophant's Tower serves many cult-purposes, beyond its function as residence of the Orthodoxist Cult's leader. The top two levels serve as his personal dwelling, while several levels under that accommodate the vault of the Omnival, his bodyguards, attendants, and advisors respectively. The lower levels are devoted to a vast scriptorium and library, vaults containing precious (and dangerous) artifacts and treasures, and finally, his servant's and palace guard's quarters.

### THE HIEROPHANT

Stern, wrathful, and vital, Omnus I, Hierophant of Aaman, is a powerful and intimidating giant of a man. Following his harsh directives, Aaman is making greater efforts to convert or cleanse infidels, and guard against the hated Paradoxists of Zandu.

are each topped with a single large Eye of Aa, and serve as the abodes of Aamahd's Monitors. Each Monitor holds the position of prelate in his assigned district, and oversees the administration of aalms and caste levels for those citizens in his purview, as well as controlling those measures to monitor the citizenry.

### HALLS OF PENANCE (MAP KEY #3)

Windowless, and ominous, this block-like structure squats amid its surroundings, standing a mere one-story high, with a vast Eye of Aa depicted in relief on each wall. Thick iron doors bear Eye icons, a multitude of locks, and spike-like studs. The single visible level contains the records of all of Aamahd's citizens and visitors, as well as those austere rooms that serve for the interview and indoctrination of new converts. Many lower levels descend beneath the cold earth, and are filled with the sterile cells, and torture chambers, used to hold and "enlighten" the more intractable heathens and sinners.

Newly depilated converts and individuals accused of impropriety are absolved of their sins in the Halls of Penance. The methods employed vary greatly, and include dunking (in deep wells), flogging, and beating with wooden staves. Those sinners of a more recalcitrant nature face more prolonged forms of absolution, and the Inquisitors assigned to the Halls of Penance are quite creative, particularly as regards the extraction of confessions from tight-lipped infidels and heretics.

### KEEP OF THE UNREDEEMED

#### (MAP KEY #4)

Surrounded by a sturdy white wall topped with iron-spikes and inward-looking watchtowers, the Keep of the Unredeemed serves as Aamahd's slave and concentration camp. Two barracks serve to house the slave-masters and guards, while spiked iron grates in the grounds lead down into three levels of dismal and unlit cells.

Aamanian law is extremely harsh, and although regular crime is all but non-existent, crimes against the Orthodoxist cult (real or perceived) are more common. These include failure to show proper respect and deference to superiors, failure to show reverence worthy of Aa, and vulgar displays of public emotion. Punishment typically involves a brief visit to the Halls

## Hotan's History of the World

of Penance. Severe crimes of any variety, such as rape, violence, blasphemy, lewdity, and dancing, are punished by protracted torture and execution.

### MILITARY BASES

Mace of Aa Monastery (map key #5)

Brutal and utilitarian, this large citadel of ivory stone is the sequestered monastery and seminary of Aamahd's Warrior-Priest contingent.

### FIST OF AA MONASTERY

(MAP KEY #6)

This huge crenellated fortress of bleached stone is the barracks and training ground of the Aamahd's sizeable soldiery, and is simple and severe in construction.

### VENGEANCE OF AA MONASTERY

(MAP KEY #7)

This small sturdy hall adjacent to the Mace of Aa Monastery serves as the base of operations and abode of Aamahd's Witch Hunter contingent, each of whom receives martial training in the Mace of Aa Monastery, and Invocation training in the Gaze of Aa Monastery

### THE GATEHOUSE FORTRESS

(MAP KEY #8)

Surrounding the city's fearsome iron gates is a stout alabaster fortress that flanks and tops it. An interior portcullis is only lowered during troubled times. Two units of 20 soldiers, each lead by a warrior-priest, police all individuals wishing to enter or leave the city, while another two units are stationed in the fortress at all times.

### THE GREAT BARRIER WALL

(MAP KEY #9)

60-foot high and 30-foot thick, this awe-inspiring black structure looms above the city and stretches beyond, vanishing into the distance, running from the border of Arim to the Sea of Sorrow.

### TOWERS OF AA'S WATCHFULNESS

(MAP KEY #10)

Located every 1,000-foot along the Great Barrier Wall (closer in the city of Aamahd itself), these stark and angular towers of alabaster stand 70-foot high, each manned by a unit of 10 soldiers and 5 crossbowmen who have a barracks in the tower. They keep constant watch on the border with Zandu in shifts. A magical All-Seeing Eye orb in each tower is used to communicate directly with the Monitors in the event of an enemy assault.

### EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

HALLS OF FAITH (MAP KEY #11)

This extensive pillared hall is filled with rows of pews, and carved all over with Orthodoxist symbology inlaid with trceries of black enamel. Cult members gather here with their peers to meditate, discuss doctrine, and learn of the latest decrees of the Hierophant. Archimages are on hand to assist the faithful in committing to memory cherished phrases from the Omnival.

### GAZE OF AA MONASTERY

(MAP KEY #12)

This small walled complex of temple-like white halls and residential blocks serves as Aamahd's Archimage monastery, wherein aspiring clergy undergo their long and harsh tutelage in both ritual, doctrine, and invocation. Once a potential acolyte has entered these walls, they will not be permitted to leave them again until they either fail or leave as fully trained Archimages. Those Archimages who are unable to find a position in a temple or other cult-run establishment, are expected to travel and spread the creed of Aa.

### MUSEUMS & LIBRARIES

HALL OF AA'S MEMORY (MAP KEY #13)

Amongst the most ostentatious of Aamahd's constructions, this museum is roofed with a pyramid of white slate, its levels supported by white marble pillars, and interior walls graced with friezes depicting notable events in cult history. Orderly rows of glass cabinets display the bones and garments of great martyrs, weapons used by great cult heroes to slay



heretics, early icons, and so forth. The top floor of the museum serves as a small monastery for Aamahd's Reliquarians. Admission costs 5 silver pieces.

## PLACES OF WORSHIP

### TEMPLE OF ASCENSION UNTO AA

#### (MAP KEY #14)

This ivory-colored temple is built precisely 200-foot square, and 100-foot in height. Square stone pillars support the pyramidal roof of white slate, and tall rectangular windows provide light from without. Regular iron braziers light the interior of the great empty hall that forms the center of worship, at the end of which is a white marble altar overlooked by a large silver Eye of Aa. The impassive Archimage, Aagar, and his retinue of underpriests, acolytes, and devotees, maintain quarters behind the main hall.

### TEMPLE OF OMNIFICENT AA

100-foot square, and 100-foot in height, the Temple of Omnificent Aa is a study in perfection, with every white block made to the exact same dimensions, every perfectly square window, the exact same size, and mirrored on each wall. With four identical doors leading in from each exterior wall, the main hall is supported by four pillars, and a square altar stands in the middle, an eye of Aa on each face. The resident Archimage, Aaqa, is known for his soothing, almost seductive speeches, and great success in winning converts.

### TEMPLE OF AA'S OMNIPOTENCE

Unique among Aamahd's temples, the Temple of Aa's Omnipotence has no walls, the roof being supported instead by two perfect rows of square columns. The local Aamanians attend here without fail, irrespective of weather, prepared to endure all for their faith in Aa. The painfully thin Archimage, Aahaus, cries the need for control, abstinence, and sacrifice in the name of Aa.

### TEMPLE OF ALL-KNOWING AA

Raised on a square dias of ten steps, this temple is Aamahd's smallest, being a mere 50-foot square, and 50-foot high. Ten doorways lead into the white marble interior supported by ten square pillars. A simple podium stands at the end of the hall, over-looked by a silver Eye of Aa. Archimage Aapren leads the local faithful in repetitive mantras of cult slogans.

### TEMPLE OF AA'S OMNIPRESENCE

This temple is simple, austere, and severe, with no decoration except for the single large "Eye of Aa" carved on its altar. The charismatic Archimage, Aazron, makes his stirring sermons here, emphasizing that Aaman must root out its own sins before it can concentrate on the infidel.

### TEMPLE OF ALL-SEEING AA

Every available foot of space in this temple has been decorated with a recurring "Eye of Aa" motif, making it appear slightly unnerving. The eyes gaze out, unblinking, from every wall, pillar, floor, and ceiling. Even the altar itself is carved to resemble a single great eye. Archimage Aaval raves with paranoia, his rants about constant vigilance drawing many of Aamahd's more fanatical worshippers.

### TEMPLE OF AA'S OMNISCIENCE

Unadorned but for a single vast "Eye of Aa" on the interior of each of the temple's four walls, the Temple of Aa's Omniscience is notable in the fact that it lacks an altar. The studious Archimage, Aadan, stalks amid the worshippers at his temple, confronting them personally, and whispering Aa's creed in their ears.

### TEMPLE OF ALL-MIGHTY AA

Stern and bold in construction, the Temple of All-Mighty Aa stands alone, modeled after the fortress-like Mace of Aa Monastery. Its interior decorated with friezes depicting Aamanian warriors slaying infidels, the militant Archimage, Aacas, exhorts the faithful to crusade against the infidel.

### MAJESTIC CATHEDRAL OF AA

Resembling a titanic temple, the Majestic Cathedral of Aa serves as the temple of Aamahd's high caste members on those holy days of especial significance, and services here are given by the Hierophant himself. The huge main hall contains a raised dais surrounded by a solid silver altar over which a great silver Eye of Aa levitates, inlaid with ebony and ivory, and bearing a crystal iris that glows with fierce white fire. The many pillars of white marble are inlaid with black enamel iconography, and an enchantment serves to project the speaker's voice throughout the hall.

## MARKETS & BAZAARS

### SQUARE OF THE DEVOTED

#### (MAP KEY #14)

This square expanse of white paving serves as the public square, and it is here that outside traders may set up their stalls under the strict scrutiny of cult auditors who ensure that all produce meets cult regulations, and all costs are regulated. Several stone platforms and a deep well stand at the center of the square.

The stone platforms at the center of Aamahd's Square of the Devoted are used exclusively for public executions. Even the nearby well is used for public executions by drowning. Aamanian citizens watching such "events" are expected to stand in orderly lines, and watch without motion, sound, or joy, only briefly clapping at the end of the execution.

## TRADERS,

## ARTISANS & MERCHANTS

### BOUNTY OF AA, PILGRIMAGE SUPPLY

Located adjacent to the Pilgrim's Rest hostel this immense stone warehouse - owned and administrated by the cult - offers all the cult-approved items that an individual undertaking a pilgrimage or crusade could possibly desire: travelers' raiment, maps, wagons, burden beasts, rations, Orthodoxist icons, weapons, armor, slave bearers, etc. Costs are x2 standard. A trio of Archimages supervises the operation.

### MERCANTILER'S DISTRICT

This area is filled with row upon row of small, identical white-washed stores, each differentiated solely by the wrought iron sign that is displayed above the door. Many goods and services are available here, such as limners (selling white lacquers), alchemists (astringents, bleaches, and depilatory elixirs), clothiers (cult vestments only), tanners, millers, blacksmiths, masons, carpenters, potters, and so forth. None dare sell their wares unless the designs and materials have been approved by the cult, and all prices must be set by the cult.

## INNS,

## TAVERNS & RESTAURANTS

### PILGRIM'S REST

This cult hostel has been converted from two adjacent resident blocks, with the space that would have run between them, now featuring a basic stone stable. Each room bears a crude wooden cot, small table, and a large Eye of Aa carved in the ceiling. Costs for both food and board are somewhat above average.

### INFIDEL'S REST (MAP KEY #21)

Walled off from the rest of the city, and heavily patrolled and monitored, this uninspiring complex contains a converted residential block, stable, and courtyard. Any non-Orthodoxists that wish to board in Aamahd are only permitted to stay at this cult-run establishment. All of Aamahd's laws apply here, and its drafty rooms, poor stabling, and monotonous comestibles are available at inflated prices (x3 standard).

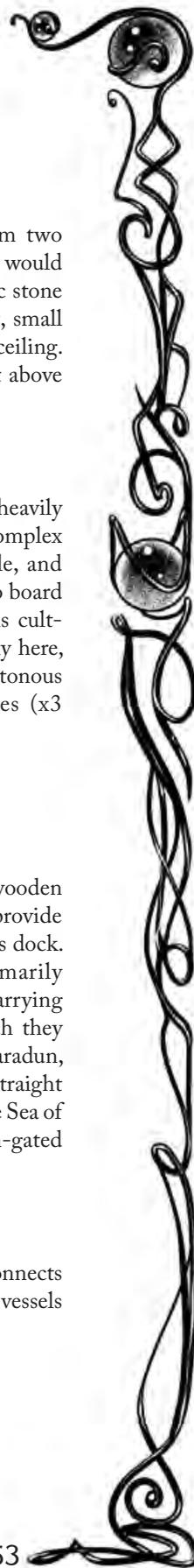
## TRANSPORTATION

### DOCKS (MAP KEY #15)

Orderly, clean, and well-maintained, stout wooden piers, and frameworks of block and tackle provide docking for up to a dozen vessels in Aamahd's dock. Aamanian military ships, and traders, primarily native, arrive and depart from this point, carrying slaves, articles of iron, and other cargo, which they trade internally, and with the merchants of Faradun, Arim, and Imria. The dock is reached via a straight man-made waterway that leads inland from the Sea of Sorrow, and enters the city through a great iron-gated archway in the south wall.

### AAMAN CANAL (MAP KEY #16)

This 60-foot wide man-made waterway connects Aamahd's dock to the Sea of Sorrow, allowing vessels to sail inland to dock at the capital.



## MISCELLANEOUS

### CEMETERY OF AA'S EFFULGENCE

#### (MAP KEY #17)

Resembling nothing so much as a mammoth block of white marble, 100-foot high, this mausoleum bears no windows or adornment of any kind, save for the open arches that regularly pierce its base, each topped with an Eye of Aa. The interior is filled with level upon level of shelves, each bearing the iron or silver placards that bear the names, castes, and aalm-totals of each of Aamahd's dead. Higher caste and rank guarantees that the individual's placard is located on a higher level. Recognized martyrs, including those who died during the Cult Wars, are commemorated on the top level.

### BENEVOLENCE OF AA MONASTERY

Surrounded by a stout wall, this complex contains a large two-story vaulted hall topped with a steep roof of gray slate, and two smaller residential blocks, all with tall rectangular windows. The main vaulted hall contains four large hospital wards of curtained cots, and the offices of the Hospitaller Nuns who run this cult-provided medical establishment. The two smaller residential blocks serve as the accommodation for those of the Hospitaller Order, and the grounds are strictly patrolled.

### HALL OF PURITY

This large and dull square structure is painted in blinding white, and permeates a strong astringent odor. Gender-segregated levels feature innumerable black-iron bathing tubs of depilatory elixir and astringent, as well as rack upon rack of harsh towels, and rows of changing screens. All of Aamahd's residents are expected to avail themselves of this free cult-provided service, at the first sign of any hair growth anywhere on their bodies.

### HALL OF AA'S MERCY

This dour orphanage is a converted residential block, with each of the two lower floors housing a single large dormitory of cots (one dormitory for each gender), and the top floor consisting of the residences and offices of those few Hospitaller Nuns who run the orphanage. Constant sermons and lectures, reinforced by harsh treatment, serve to control and indoctrinate

the unfortunate children. Despite this harsh treatment, the orphans are clothed, sheltered, and well fed, many eventually moving into positions within the Orthodoxist cult itself.

### TOLL GATES (MAP KEY #18)

Supported on either side by solid black pillars of gargantuan proportion, three unadorned and monumental gates of copper, 30-foot in height, directly link Aamahd and Zanth through the Great Barrier Wall's only opening. Each gate is operated and overlooked by a gatehouse located within the great flanking pillars. Standing directly above the central of the three gates is a small stone platform: the site of the annual Clash of Champions.

### CLASH OF CHAMPIONS PLATFORM

#### (MAP KEY #19)

The annual Clash of Champions takes place on this large stone platform that stands directly over the central tollgate of The Great Barrier Wall. The stone platform is 20-foot in diameter, perfectly level, and has no safety barrier. Incautious combatants can be forced off the edge to plummet to injury or death. It is considered a particular coup to cause a vanquished foe to fall amongst their own supporters.

### STADIA OF AA'S CHOSEN

#### (MAP KEY #20)

This white stadia is 100-foot square, with numerous rows of stone steps, providing seating for spectators at the annual Clash of Champions. Order of seating is arranged according to rank and aalm-levels; with higher ranks getting seating closer to the Platform. Only those of Aspirant caste or higher are afforded space in the stadia. Hawkers selling cult-approved paraphernalia stand at regular intervals amid the stands. It goes unused throughout the rest of the year.

## NOTABLE CITIZENS

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, rivals (friendly or otherwise), or encounters:

*Aamalak - Wrathful Archimage*

Heavy-framed and portly, Aamalak is an imposing



figure, and his deep sonorous voice is inspiring. His fiery sermons at the Temple of All-Mighty Aa are extremely popular, and his hatred of infidels knows no bounds.

*Aakrid - Servant at the Infidel's Rest*

The sniveling little Aamanian known as Aakrid, is a member of the serving staff at the Infidel's Rest. He delights in threatening foreign infidels far more powerful than he is, and has been known to frame or blackmail those that displease him.

*Aatril - Honorable Warrior-Priest*

Powerful, charismatic, and handsome, Aatril is a

dedicated and honorable warrior, who commands loyalty in all those he commands. However, his sense of honor is so deep that should he be called to choose between duty and honor, it is likely that honor might well prevail.

*Aandan - Paranoid Monitor*

Aandan is gripped by paranoia, despite his vaunted position, for he harbors deep feelings of lust that wrack him with guilt, and he fears one of his fellow Monitors might well discover his inner turmoil. Even more fearful to him is the fact that he might lose control some day. Because of his overriding fear, he performs his monitoring duties with zeal almost unmatched by his peers.

*Aash - Sly Witch Hunter*

Friendly, open, relaxed: All are terms that any but the most astute might use to describe Aash, but such traits are merely a charade and lure, for few Aamanians are so calculating, ruthless, cruel, and utterly relentless. Pity the witch or sinner that falls into Aash's clutches.

*Aamsha - Hospitaller Nun Acolyte*

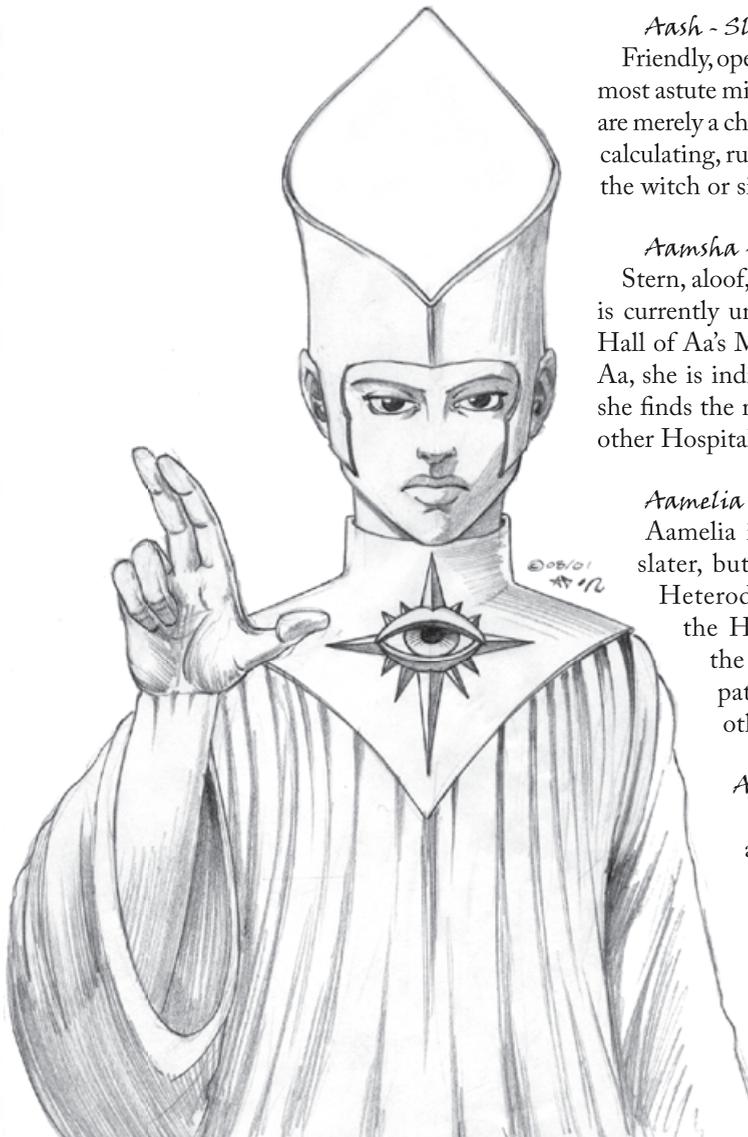
Stern, aloof, and painfully thin, the young Aamsha is currently undergoing her medical training in the Hall of Aa's Mercy. Despite her willingness to serve Aa, she is indifferent to the suffering of others, and she finds the more concerned approach displayed by other Hospitaller Nuns to be most displeasing.

*Aamelia - Heterodoxist Conspirator*

Aamelia is the young daughter of a low caste slater, but was recently recruited as part of a Heterodoxist cell, and her association with the Heterodoxists has opened her eyes to the injustices of her people. She is now patiently, and painstakingly, looking for other potential recruits.

*Aamog - Brutish Slave Master*

Peeling skin bleached white with astringents, the muscular and thuggish Aamog squints and leers at his charges, and demands that they recognize his superior intellect and attractiveness. He particularly hates Gnomekin, and finds their friendly manner and faith in Terra to be more than enough reason for him to flog them ceaselessly.



## ARIM

Arim is a land of rough and irregular hills, interspersed with grassy steppes and thickets of stunted oak and briar. To the north lie the dark peaks of the Onyx Mountains; to the east is Lake Venda, source of the great Axis River, fed by countless mountain streams and brooks. West lie the forbidding forests of Werewood; along the northeastern frontier, the towering Cliffs of Bahand fall away into the Darklands of Urag.

### THE ARIMITES

The people who live in this grey and windy realm, known as the Arimites, are a dour and moody lot. They are swarthy of complexion, with long black hair and dark, deep-set eyes. The men tend to be gaunt and wiry, with hatchet-like features; the women, heavy-set and lacking in charm. The customary mode of dress in this region consists of sackcloth garments, animal-hide boots, and bulky fur vests, accented with wristbands, ear-rings and knives made of black iron.

### CUSTOMS

The Arimites are a humorless people, most of whom live hard lives as miners of the country's considerable mineral wealth. They have no love of song or dance, but favor chakos, a fiery liquor brewed in black-iron

kegs. Abuse of this potent intoxicant is widespread in Arim, especially among the overworked miners, who seek escape from the tedium of their existence.

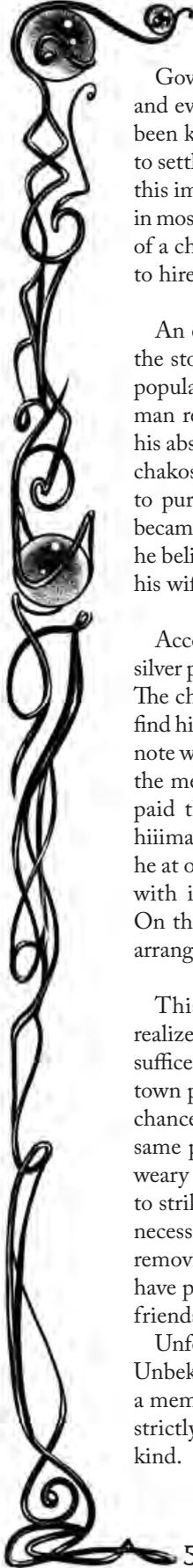
Even discounting the influence of chakos, various forms of pathologically deviant behavior seem to be ingrained traits among these folk. Accordingly, the Arimites have a reputation in other lands as cutthroats, an assessment which experts say is not without merit.

### THE REVENANT CULT

A secret society that specializes in a wide range of covert and often deadly activities, the Revenant Cult may be hired to carry out almost any act of vengeance, including arson, theft, muggings, extortion, and even slander. Murder-for-hire is probably the cult's most lucrative line of business.

Anyone who can afford their fees – which range from as little as ten silver pieces to over 100,000 gold lumens – can obtain the services of the cult. This is done by the simple method of posting a notice in some public place. The prevalence of the cult is such that a Revenant, attired in customary night-grey cloak and veil, will perform the desired service by the following day.





Government officials, common laborers, merchants, and even jealous lovers and irate housewives have all been known to employ the services of the Revenants to settle disputes or avenge affronts. The popularity of this impersonal means of seeking redress is such that, in most parts of Arim, the mere shaking or brandishing of a change purse is considered suggestive of a threat to hire the Revenants.

An example of this unusual custom is provided in the story of the hillman and the chakos merchant, a popular Arimite folk tale. As the story goes, the hillman returned from hunting to find that his wife, in his absence, had come into possession of a full cask of chakos. Having left his mate with funds insufficient to purchase such a quantity of liquor, the hillman became suspicious of the local chakos merchant, whom he believed might be seeking to gain the affections of his wife by plying her with valuable gifts.

Accordingly, the hillman paid the Revenants ten silver pieces to perform a mischief upon the merchant. The chakos dealer awakened on the following day to find his wagon bereft of its wheels, with an anonymous note warning against further indiscretions. Outraged, the merchant guessed the identity of his enemy, and paid the Revenants 20 silver pieces to poison the hillman's favorite steed. This so upset the hillman that he at once gave over 50 gold lumens to the Revenants with instructions to have the merchant thrashed. On the next day, the chakos merchant made similar arrangements for the benefit of his hated rival.

This was the final straw for the hillman, who realized that only the death of his enemy would now suffice to bring their feud to a conclusion. While in town posting a notice for the Revenants, the hillman chanced to meet the merchant, who was there for the same purpose. The two antagonists, too bruised and weary to fight, and nearly bankrupt of funds, decided to strike a compromise: each contributed half the fee necessary to have the hillman's wife assassinated, thus removing the source of their differences. Relieved to have put an end to their dispute, the two men parted friends.

Unfortunately, neither ever saw the other alive again. Unbeknownst to either man, the hillman's wife was a member of the Revenant Cult, whose followers are strictly forbidden to do harm to one of their own kind.

## THE FORBIDDEN

### CITY OF AHAZAND

The Forbidden City of Ahrazand is home to the ruler of Arim, a reduse known as the Exarch. Here in this lofty mountain retreat, the Arimite lord lives in seclusion, surrounded by a retinue of bodyguards, concubines and royal wizards. Shipments of gold, gemstones and provisions are brought here by caravan once each month. Aside from this, the capital city is closed to outsiders – the Exarch governs the country through his subordinates in Shattrra and Akbar. The monarch does not dare to set foot outside of Ahrazand, for fear of being assassinated by Revenants.

## THE TRADING POST

### OF SHATTRRA

The mining and trade center of Shattrra is located on the banks of the Axis River. It is a filthy place, crowded with ramshackle wooden tenements and covered in a perpetual haze of smoke and soot. Raw black-iron ore is brought here to be smelted down into ingots and shipped by barge or caravan to Aaman, Zandu, the Seven Kingdoms, and beyond.

Shattrra is visited primarily by miners and ore traders, though grey-skinned mongers from Faradun do a brisk trade in slave girls, courtesans and concubines – women of grace and beauty are a rare commodity in Arim. The secretive Revenant Cult is believed to have its base of operations here.

## THE ONYX MOUNTAINS

Rich in black-iron and silver – as well as emeralds, garnets, sards, carnelians, and beryls of passable quality – the Onyx Mountains are dotted with caves known to contain moonstones of immense size and impeccable color. Cliff-dwelling Stryx, bands of Darklings from nearby Urag, and the fearsome Nocturnal Strangler haunt these environs, dulling the enthusiasm of many would-be prospectors. The highlands are also home to exomorphs, yaksha and herds of equus.

## THE CLIFFS OF BAHAD

In the eastern Onyx Mountains, these precipitous cliffs have long protected Arim from invasion by the Ur clans to the east. They rise over 300 feet in height,



and are nearly impossible to scale. Bands of Stryx once lived in caves here, but were smoked out by the Arimites.

## THE CITADEL OF AKBAR

A formidable military outpost which stands at the mouth of a deep gorge, Akbar bars incursions by the clans of Urag into the land of Arim. Its walls are over 40 feet in height, and are studded with 50-foot towers mounted with fire-throwers. No less than 10,000 Arimite soldiers, archers, scouts and artillerymen man this massive installation. The fortress also serves as a center for trade, and is occasionally visited by Jaka hunters, Djaffir merchants, and Farad slave-mongers.



## THE DRUHKS

The wooded hills and mountains of central Arim are the domain of the fierce Druhks tribes – bestial sub-men of violent temperament. Similar in stature to the Arimites, the tribesmen dress in the skins of wild beasts, stain their hair and bodies with the purple juice of wild mountain berries, and wield stone war dubs and Jagged-edged bone daggers.

### CUSTOMS

Druhks are decidedly unfriendly, finding great enjoyment in skinning alive individuals who trespass into their lands. Among these folk, mercy is considered a sign of weakness, and compassion is virtually unknown. Their Songs of Fear and Death are said to strike madness in those who hear them.

The tribes range in size from a few dozen individuals to several hundred. Druhks build no permanent dwellings of any kind, ranging instead as nomads throughout the central portion of Arim. Their warriors (both male and female) ride wild greymanes also dyed purple with berry juice – a most unusual sight.

## LAKE VENDA

Source of the Axis River, Lake Venda lies at the foot of the Onyx Mountains in Adm. Fed by numerous small streams and brooks, its waters are cold and dear.

Despite its seemingly peaceful appearance, the lake is avoided by the Arimites, who say it is accursed. According to legend, Lake Venda is inhabited by nine great Shaitans. They supposedly live in the wins of an

ancient sunken city, and prey upon unwary sailors and fishermen. Each is said to possess a fabulous treasure – one of the Nine Keys of Knowledge, or one of the Devil Rings of Orlax, depending upon which of the many conflicting accounts one wishes to believe.

The Druhk tribes which inhabit the surrounding hills claim to give the legend little credence, but nevertheless, the tribesmen shun the wide and watery expanses of Lake Venda in favor of the shallows around the shore.

## THE BROWN HILLS

The home of the Jaka for untold centuries, the Brown Hills are so named for the sepia-toned forests that cover its terrain. Aside from the Jaka, this region is home to all manner of wild beasts, ranging from the benign silvermane equus to such ferocious predators as omnivrax and yaksha. Stories persist of the treasured creations of an Archaen enchanter who once lived near this area still existing somewhere in the secluded hills and valleys of the area, but the Jaka work to turn back the perennial treasure-seekers who venture this far north.

### THE JAKA

The Jaka are a race of intelligent humanoids whose features resemble a cross between man, wolf and panther. They are a striking people, with sleek black fur, a silvery-gray mane, and blazing green eyes. Most stand about six feet in height, a certain lithe muscularity being a common trait of all members of this race.

### CUSTOMS

The Jaka are solitary beings, sullen and introspective in nature. Hunters of predatory beasts by trade, they prey upon werebeasts, yaksha, and other carnivores, selling the hides and fangs of these creatures to merchants in Arim, Zandu and Aaman. They are skilled riders, employing lightweight shortbows to good effect from the backs of their mounts (typically, greymanes or snowmanes).

Though considered barbaric by the people of the western lands, the Jaka are a complex and cunning folk. They are canny traders, and possess the keenest senses of all the humanoid races. Unsurpassed as

trackers, Jaka are much in demand as scouts, hunters and guides. A few also possess some talent for the taming of wild beasts, an ability which once caused the Jaka's ancestors to be known as "the Beastmasters of the Northern Woods."

The Jaka trace their history back through oral traditions to the Time Before Time. During these most ancient of days, they claim, one of the Forgotten Gods gave birth to the Jaka race and gave them providence over all the wild beasts of the world. This deity, whom the Jaka call Jakar, Lord of the Beasts, is also listed amongst Archaen histories as being one of the Forgotten Gods and is there called the Beast-God. The Archaen biomancer Thaumaste of Pompados recorded in his notes that the Jaka are the descendants of a race he names the Feroids whom he claims fathered the modern Jaka, Beastmen, and Mondre Khan. For their part, the Jaka consider themselves to be a free and civilized race and any comparison to the various Sub-Men tribes, such as those previously mentioned, is considered a grave insult to these noble creatures. Such insults are regrettably common however as the bestial appearance and nomadic life of the Jaka often leads civilized Talislantans to presume that they are barbaric by nature.

Although they tend to be loners, Jaka are also unfaltering and devoted companions whether to a chosen mate or a working partner. They expect the same treatment however and woe to those who would seek to cross a Jaka for the same lifelong devotion they share with those they respect is as passionate as the hatred they bear for those who betray them.



The Jaka do not erect permanent settlements, instead living free in the wilds, moving from place to place with the various migrations and wanderings of the various animals of the area. Most Jaka dress in toughened leather clothing made from animal hides, with simple but functional arm and leg bracers when expecting a need for armor. Jaka do group together

in bands numbering between seven and fifteen individuals. Each of these groups, called a Pride by the Jaka, exists primarily for child-rearing. A Pride may claim an area of territory that they will tenaciously hold and defend for a season or more. As most Jaka females only give birth to two litters of twins in a lifetime, most Prides are not permanent affairs.

## KHAZAD

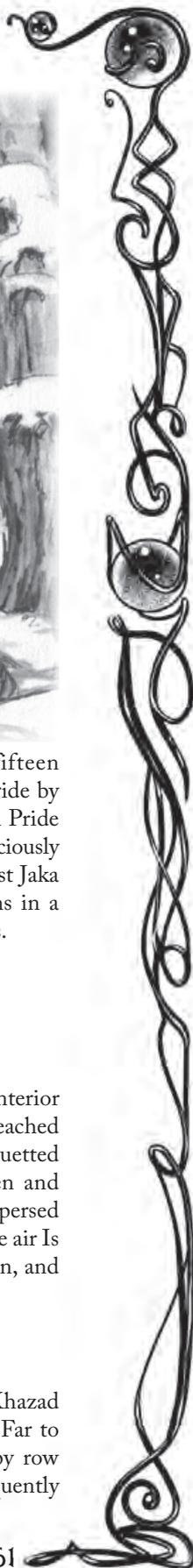
A strange and largely unknown realm, Khazad is located at the furthest northwestern reaches of Talislanta. Practically inaccessible to all but the most determined travelers, its terrain is foreboding: A line of precipitous cliffs runs the length of its western coast, and a ridge of mountains extends along its eastern borders. To the north lie fields of ice and snow; beyond this is the Midnight Sea, where sailors fear to go. The waters of the Gulf of Silvanus, rock-strewn and perilous, deny easy access from the south.

As a result of these impediments to travel, much of what is known of Khazad is based upon the rare accounts of wandering Sarista gypsies and the few hardy adventurers who have survived journeys to this

isolated area. According to their accounts, the interior of Khazad is less than inviting. Patches of bleached and barren oak stand like skeletons, silhouetted against a dreary purple-and-grey sky. Broken and irregular lines of hills dot the landscape, interspersed with moors, quagmires and stagnant ponds. The air is heavy with the stench of moldering vegetation, and exudes an unsettling, ancient quality.

### THE LOST KINGDOM

Scattered throughout the region known as Khazad are the ruins of a long-forgotten civilization. Far to the north are vast burial grounds, denoted by row upon row of age-worn stone markers. Less frequently



encountered are mausoleums of pitted stone, engraved with arcane symbols of obscure origin. Though some sites have been plundered of their hidden secrets, most are unexplored.

The remains of a man-like race, entombed in massive sarcophagi of strange design, have been found in some of the ancient crypts. Some individuals – apparently those of importance – were buried wearing gold funerary masks of frightening aspect. In the less elaborate tombs and graves, similar masks of silver, copper, tin, and lead have been unearthed. Though the purpose of these artifacts is unclear, scholars at Cymril's Lyceum Arcanum believe the masks were intended to ward demons or evil spirits from the bodies of the deceased. The value of the metal used in the making of these masks is believed to have been a measure of the wearer's social status or cult ranking.

The brass urns found in the tombs of this region are especially popular with collectors. Sealed with paraffin, these artifacts sometimes were used in ancient times to imprison bottle-imps or to safekeep the corpse-dust of departed wizards. Prized by curio collectors and necromancers alike, these relics bring high prices.

Unfortunately for those who would explore the tombs of Khazad, necrophages haunt the region, craving fresh corpses in preference to the dry bones of the long dead. Malathrope prowl the moors, as do omnivores from the Serpentine Mountains. Wind Demons, though far from common, are sometimes known to leave their larvae in the hollows of dead gall oaks in this area.

## NECRON – THE CITY OF THE DEAD

There is a legend to the effect that a vast complex of ruins lies in far-northern Khazad. Referred to as Necron on several ancient maps, the ruins are called the "City of the Dead" by the Sarista. Here, or so the gypsy legend goes, an entire city and all its inhabitants lie buried beneath the ground; the former residents of the metropolis all supposedly having been mummified and interred in stone sarcophagi.

Very little reliable information is available regarding this archaic necropolis or its people. Some scholars postulate that they were the seafaring race whose ships

are known to have plied the waters of the Midnight Sea in bygone times. Some of those who support this theory cite the legend of an underground waterway which leads to Necron from some point along the northern coast of Khazad.

## THE SERPENTINE MOUNTAINS

These peaks stand like shadowy sentinels along the southern border of Khazad. The uppermost heights are haunted by yaksha; the lower, by ghosts, banes and grues.

Where the mountains reach the western sea, sheer 200-foot cliffs ring the coastline of Khazad. Of interest to scholars of the occult are the giant diabolical visages carved into the cliff-sides along portions of the coast, which some believe represent various members of the Shaitan hierarchy. A particularly odious clan of horned devil-men makes its home in the mouths and eye-sockets of these immense stone effigies, complicating attempts to study the cliffs at close range.

Further south lies Walling Mountain, a high, twisting spiral of grey basalt. The peak derives its name from the dismal groaning sounds which seem to originate from its uppermost reaches. Most scholars attribute these noises to wind and the mountain's unusual configuration. A few cite an ancient Phaedran legend, which states that the great archimage, Soliman, imprisoned a treacherous Shaitan somewhere within a northern mountain. Those who lend credence to this tale say that the awful wailing noises are the sounds made by the giant chained devil, lamenting its fate.

Two waterways penetrate the mountains from east and west, so that Khazad has only the smallest of borders with the southern region of Werewood. The western waterway is the Gulf of Silvanus; the eastern and most treacherous body of water is known as the Straits of Khazad.

Perilous, rock-strewn, and supposedly infested by sea monsters, the straits are considered unnavigable except in the late fall, when ice-going craft can be employed to skim across the frozen waters. The dark vessels of the Nefaratans sometimes frequent the region, though for what reason, few care to hazard a guess.

## THE NORTHERN ISLANDS

A chain of four bleak and frozen islands leads northward from the northern coast of Khazad. in order from south to north, these are: Phantom Island, Morbid isle (of which nothing is known except for its name, as recorded on ancient charts), Coven Island, and the isle of Lost Souls.

Phantom Island, forlorn and deserted, is rumored to be haunted by shadow wights (or perhaps shadow wizards). No one knows for certain, nor do many scholars seem eager to resolve this minor mystery. Ships from Nefaratus have also been reported in the waters off the island —another excellent reason to avoid the place, as far as most folks are concerned.

Bleak and deserted in appearance, Coven Island is a little more than a mound of stone riddled with caves, crevasses and tunnels. According to some historians, the isle once served as a hiding place for Dhuna witches and other mages seeking to avoid persecution by the Orthodoxists of Aaman and their Witch Hunters. It is not known if the island is currently inhabited.

The frozen Isle of Lost Souls is purportedly inhabited by the night demon Thanus and a number of his followers. it is said that the demon has a penchant for collecting souls, which his assistants gather by night and bring back to his island lair. Thanus then stores the “lost souls” in enchanted amberglass vials, which he keeps for his amusement on a shelf .



# SILVANUS

Silvanus is a woodland region located to the west of the Necros River and the forests of Werewood. It is also bordered by the deep-blue expanse of the Azure Ocean, which is traversed by fishing vessels of many nations—Zandu, Gao-Din, Imria, Parthene, and Faradun—as well as the ships of Orthodoxist Witch Hunters pursuing heretics. Sea dragons are not unknown in coastal waters, and storm demons may be encountered during the fierce storms of the spring and fall.

Unlike the dreary and fell territories of its eastern neighbor, Silvanus and its wooded glens are scenic and relatively tranquil. Fields of meadow grass offer respite from the forests, and cool streams converge amidst thickets of silver-beech, carpets of moss, and quiet ponds.

## THE SARISTA

Among the few folk known to frequent this region are the Sarista, a nomadic race of indistinct origin. The gypsies are built along slender proportions, and have skin the color of rich topaz, dark eyes, and jet-black hair.

They are partial to ear bangles, facial tattooing, and all types of gaudy raiment. The men sport capes, berets, tight-fitting hose, sashes, and high boots, while the women prefer all manner of sultry and seductive attire.

## CUSTOMS

The Sarista are a people of diverse qualities. Some are loners who make their living as peddlers, mercenaries or vagabonds. Others, notable for their skill at witchcraft, live in secluded wilderness regions. The majority of these folk are gregarious, fond of traveling in gypsy caravans, carrying all that they own in wagons or on the backs of burden beasts.

Sarista roam the Western Lands and beyond, stopping in cities and villages along the way to raise money by their performances. In such places, the gypsies are renowned for their talents as folk healers, animal trainers, fortune tellers, acrobats, dancers,

puppeteers and thespians...or as mountebanks, thieves and tricksters, depending upon one's point of view.

The discrepancy of opinion regarding the Sarista may be attributed to their mysterious customs, traditions and history. The Sarista have their own language, a version of the common TailsIan tongue which allows the speaker to convey hidden meanings by the use of subtle gestures and inflections.

The tribes do not keep written records of any sort, but rely upon the elder Sarista to raise their offspring and teach them the secret lore of their people. These studies consist primarily of minor folk magics, herb lore, and "Sarista culture"—a euphemism held to be roughly equivalent to the less-flattering term, "thievery." By age seven, a Sarista child knows every woodland trail in Silvanus by heart, and has a comprehensive understanding of so-called Sarista culture.

Sarista religion revolves around two obscure demigods: Fortuna, the lovely but fickle goddess of luck, and the grim entity known as Death. They revere Fortuna but mock Death, whom they strive to cheat at every opportunity.

The history of the Sarista consists of a baffling collection of anecdotes, fables and bawdy ballads. Some scholars believe them to be a people displaced during the time of the Great Disaster. Others claim they are descended from the numerous bandits who roamed these woods before the rise of the Phaedran Empire.

## FLORA AND FAUNA

The woods of Silvanus are rife with wood whisks and colorful insects such as the crystal moth. Roots and herbs known for magical or healing properties are common. Two plants of particular note are found here: whisperweed (which often tells the most astonishing secrets) and needleleaf (an obnoxious, needle-throwing succulent).



## THE NECROS RIVER

These sluggish black waters run from the mountainous borders of Khazad southward, finally emptying into Zantium Bay. Issuing from some underground source, the Necros smells vile and is believed to be tainted by black magic. So much as a single sip is said to bring on terrifying nightmares.

## THE VALLEY OF FORGETFULNESS

The Necros River runs through this densely-forested vale, which falls partly in both Werewood and Silvanus. Late in the evening, silver-grey mists rise upward from the river and hang over the valley. Individuals who breathe these vapors purportedly suffer partial or even total memory loss, the duration of which may last from one to ten days. Werebeasts and banes prowl the slopes of the valley, where the bodies of convicted felons were interred in the time of the Phaedran Empire.

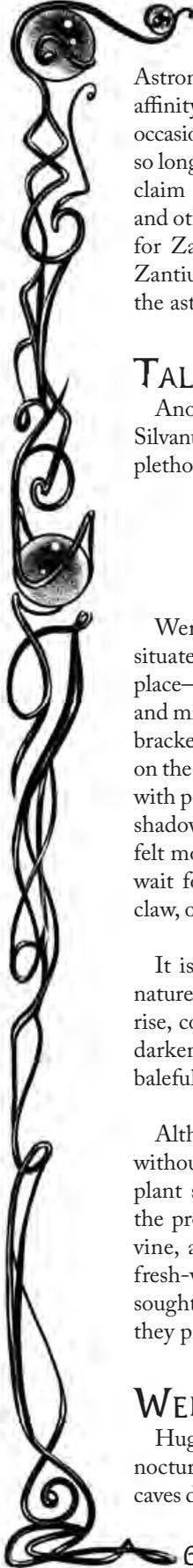
## THE DIRE WOODS

This dark and dreary region occupies eastern Silvanus, and is overgrown with thornwood and hangman's tree, all hung with strands of grey-black spidermoss. The woods receive their name from their awful inhabitants, which include ghastrs, malathrope and necrophages, to name but a few. Legends of hidden treasure, supposedly buried here by an extinct race of seafaring marauders, go largely unheeded.

## CASTABULAN

A rocky isle located off the western coast of Silvanus, Castabuian is fringed with copses of tangle-wood and stunted gall oak. A cabal of blue-robed astromancers resides on the island, and has erected an eccentric "observatory" constructed of roughhewn timbers and stone.

Descendants of a group of Phantasians whose wind-ship crash-landed on the isle in the year 447, the



Astromancers of Castabulan have developed a close affinity to the forces of nature, which they have had occasion to experience first-hand since being marooned so long ago. They monitor changes in the weather, and claim to be able to predict storms, droughts, tides, and other meteorological phenomena. It is customary for Zandir captains sailing to or from the port of Zantium to send a messenger to Castabulan, seeking the astromancers' advice and augery.

## TALISANDRE

Another small island which lies off the coast of Silvanus, Talisandre is a virtual paradise, populated by a plethora of wild flora and fauna. A race of xenophobic

Men, known as the Azir, lives in this idyllic setting. They know nothing of the civilized world, a condition which they have adopted by choice – visitors from the outside world are greeted with fusilades of stones, and told in no uncertain terms to depart the Azir's island refuge.

## THE GULF OF SILVANUS

This narrow and winding inlet between Silvanus and Khazad is considered unnavigable, due to the presence of maelstroms and unpredictable crosscurrents. Ancient sea dragons are believed to sleep in the depths, another reason why Talislantan sailors prefer to steer clear of these waters.

# WEREWOOD

Werewood is a dark and tangled forest region situated to the north of Zandu. By day, it is an eerie place—tendrils of grey moss hang from its gnarled and misshapen trees, suspended above thick swards of bracken, toadstools and molds. Were-rooks, perched on the limbs of rotting spider-oak trees, assail travelers with pointed remarks and morbid prophecies. Strange shadow-forms prowl the undergrowth, their presence felt more than seen. Other creatures, less withdrawn, wait for victims to approach within reach of talon, claw, or fang.

It is in the evening hours, however, that the true nature of Werewood is fully revealed. Clouds of mist rise, cold and dank, from the forest floor. From the darkening woods, mournful howls issue forth: the baleful cries of Werebeasts on the hunt.

Although Werewood is a perilous place, it is not without redeeming qualities. Many useful herb and plant species thrive here, including such rarities as the prophet tree, shrinking violet, tantalus, contrary vine, and cleric's cowl. Quaga—a large species of fresh-water mollusk – dwell in brackish ponds, and are sought after for the rare, violet-colored pearls which they produce.

## WEREBEASTS

Huge and horrid in appearance, these creatures are nocturnal by habit, and seldom venture from their caves during the daylight hours. By night, Were-beasts

can no longer control their hunger, and must feed. Only minimally intelligent, they hunt in small packs, and generally attack anything that moves. They are noted for their cruelty, and often torture their prey.

## BANES

More sinister than Werebeasts, Banes are black as polished obsidian, and are nocturnal by nature. These vile man-like beings have pointed fangs and eyes that glow in the dark like burning embers.

Banes are vampiric, and feed on warm-blooded prey of all sorts. They possess the uncanny ability to mimic sounds of any kind: they can produce animal calls, imitate voices, and even repeat magical spells and incantations. The deadly creatures are exceedingly swift, but are capable of moving with great stealth. Their intelligence borders on the diabolical. It is fortunate that they are few in number.

## MANDRAGORES

Perhaps the most unusual denizens of Werewood are the plant creatures known as Mandragores. About three feet in height and vaguely man-like in form, mandragores stand rooted and immobile throughout the day. During this time they resemble common woodland plants, though it is said that individuals skilled in Botanomancy or herb lore can detect otherwise.



When darkness falls, Mandragores uproot themselves and set out to hunt for prey, which they capture with nets of vines and grasses. Their luckless victims are bound and then buried alive. In time, the decomposing bodies fertilize the soil, thereby providing nourishment for the Mandragore population.

## WEIRDLINGS

Also found in various parts of Werewood are the diminutive creatures known alternately as Weirdlings or Wish-Gnorls. Bent and gnarled in form, these shrivel-faced, man-like beings are both odd and eccentric. They are known to amass great fortunes, which they horde in garishly-decorated underground burrows.

According to legend, if a Weirdling is caught, he must give over his treasure or grant his captor a wish (hence their nickname, Wish-Gnoris). To demand both treasure and wish, or to cause harm to a Weirdling, is said to invalidate the contract.

Fortune-hunters have long searched Werewood for Weirdlings. The beings sometimes roam about at night, stealing other creatures' valuables and scavenging for

lost or buried treasure. Despite their rumpled, almost comical appearance, the creatures are nimble and elusive – even banes cannot catch them if they have room to maneuver.

Locating a Wish-Gnorl's burrow is said to be a much more efficient way of capturing these strange little creatures, as their lairs seldom have more than a single entrance. Those who seek Weirdling lairs are advised to be wary: the creatures jealously guard their treasures and wishes, and often ward their burrows with dangerous tricks and traps.

## CASTLEROCK

A high promontory of jagged basalt overlooking the Straits of Khazad, Castlerock is situated on the northern coast of Werewood. The mount is a natural stone fortification, and may in fact have been utilized for such purposes during the Forgotten Age. It is thought to be a roosting place for wind demons, and is avoided by sensible beings.

## THE DREAD FOREST

This dense and tangled region lies adjacent to the Necros River. It is a favorite haunt of ghosts,



necrophages and the like, and so is generally avoided, except by certain varieties of pseudo-demon – most notably, fiends, who seem in some unknown manner to be drawn to the ancient ruins which lie scattered throughout this region

## GNORLWOOD

The Forest of Gnorlwood is located in the south central region of Werewood, adjacent to the Zandir border. It is one of the oldest woodlands in Talislanta, its once-tall trees now stooped and withered with age. The softly sloping hillocks are home to the Gnorls, an ancient race of smallish, gnarled manlike beings whom some believe to be related to Gnomekin and Weirdlings.

Gnorls live in underground nooks, typically situated in woodlands. They are skilled in an ancient form of witchcraft known as rhabdomancy, the “art of divin

Ing secrets.” Gnorls collect secrets, which they gather by various means, including communing with spiritforms. Some earn a living by selling, buying and trading secrets; others as healers who offer their services in exchange for secret knowledge. The Gnorls

of Gnorlwood are generally reclusive by nature – a reasonable attitude, as the surrounding woods abound with banes, mandragore, and giant, shaggy-haired humanoids known as shathane.

## MORDANTE’S DEEP

This forested region derives its name from the legendary black magician, Mordante, who is believed to have lived here for a time after fleeing Faradun. (Legend has it that he was pursued by Xambrian Wizard Hunters.) Supposedly, his castle still stands – covered by vines and creepers, and haunted by ghosts and wind demons.

## THE MUSHROOM FOREST

Located in northern Werewood, the Mushroom Forest is a murky region rife with giant fungi, toadstools and molds. It is inhabited by numerous hostile organisms as well, including grues, pseudomorphs and scavenger slimes. Despite this, Dhuna and Gnorls sometimes come here to gather certain rare varieties of fungi. The Mushroom Forest is an especially eerie place by night, when the entire region is suffused in a weird, phosphorescent glow.

### GREEN LAGOON

A swirling quagmire, the Green Lagoon is a sinkhole into which the waters of the eastern Sascasm are slowly and irresistibly drawn. Many creatures visit to drink from the Lagoon, including banes, werebeasts, malathrope, ravengers, and shathane. More than a few fall prey to skalanx, aquatic demon-olds which lurk below the surface, anchored by their tails to the roots of massive swamp trees.

### THE SARDONYX MOUNTAINS

Stretching from east to west, these mountains form a natural border between Yrmania and Werewood. The lower-lying regions up to the timberline are thick with grey baobab and tanglewood. Kite-winged batranc soar above the clouds, safe from the depredations of yaksha, exomorphs and tundra beasts. Rumors persist that deposits of gold can be found in the easternmost regions.

### THE SASCASM RIVER

Originating in northern Werewood, the Sascasm River divides into two channels. The western Sascasm runs through Zandu before emptying into the Azure Ocean, and the eastern Sascasm is drawn into the Green Lagoon. Skalanx and river kra live in these waters, which are also infested with metal-scaled fish, called chang.

### THE PHAEDRAN TOMBS

At one time, it was the fashion among the wizards of ancient Phaedra to be buried along the banks of the Sascasm. According to the style of the day, the magicians (whose modern descendants are the Koresian and Tanasian mages of Cymril, in the Seven Kingdoms) made arrangements to be interred in odd mausoleum-like structures. The interior decor of these edifices was often made to resemble an elaborate sitting room, dining hall or bedroom, according to the wizard's preference in leisure-time activities.

The mummified body of the late wizard, dressed in lavish garb and propped-up in some appropriate pose, added the finishing touch to the burial chamber. Though grave robbers have stripped many of the tombs of their wares, it is probable that a number of these crypts remain undiscovered, overgrown with weeds, vines and mosses.

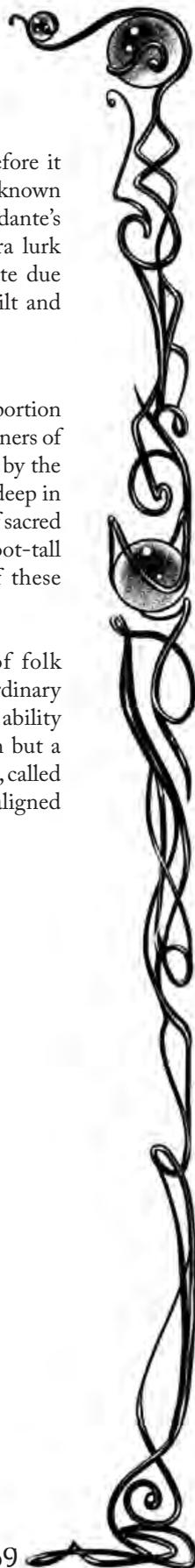
### THE WEEPING RIVER

The upper stretch of the Sascasm River, before it branches into eastern and western channels, is known as the Weeping River and originates near Mordante's Deep in northern Werewood. Giant river kra lurk in these waters, which are difficult to navigate due to tangled vegetation and accumulations of silt and mud.

### WITCHWOOD

This woodland region, located in the eastern portion of Werewood, is home to the Dhuna – practitioners of witchcraft, who fled here to avoid persecution by the Aamanians following the Cult Wars. Hidden deep in these woods, the Dhuna discovered a number of sacred groves, each containing a circular ring of 10-foot-tall runestones. The witches settled near one of these groves, where they remain to the present day.

The Dhuna practice an ancient form of folk magic, and are said to possess certain extraordinary attributes, not the least of which is the reputed ability of witchwomen to capture a man's heart with but a single kiss. The Dhuna live in communal groups, called covens. There are seven known covens, each aligned with one of the Talislantan moons.



# YRMANIA

An untamed wilderness region, Yrmania lies to the west of the barren ice fields of Narandu. Hemmed in by mountains along its frigid southern borders, this land features a widely divergent mixture of terrain: rocky hills, stretches of coniferous forest, solitary peaks, tundra, and the treacherous badlands, studded with cliffs, ravines and sinkholes. In eastern Yrmania, the flat plain of the Lost Sea stretches for miles on end.

## THE WILDMEN

The sparsely-wooded badlands of central Yrmania are home to the strange folk known as the Wildmen. Bestial in appearance, they have sharp fangs, nostrils like slits, and dark, deep-set eyes. The savages wear

their shaggy hair in braids and dreadlocks, daubed with various colored pigments. For clothes, the Wildmen employ rude loincloths, as well as arm- and leg-wrappings made from strips of hide from the animals they prey upon.

## CUSTOMS

As travelers into their territories have found, the Wildmen (and Wildwomen) of Yrmania are aptly named. They are as vicious as mad demons, and prone to fits of seemingly mindless behavior—in the heat of battle, Wildmen have been known to suicidally leap off cliffs or rock ledges, turn upon each other, or simply attack anything in their path (including trees,



## Hotan's History of the World

bushes and other inanimate objects). The savages have been known to attack large, well-armed parties without the slightest hesitation or provocation. The shamans—few of whom seem to possess any actual magical abilities—are said to be even more unstable than the common tribesmen.

In combat, the Wildmen wield the *r'ruh*, a sharpened stone blade affixed to a long leather thong. Swung over the head at great speed, *r'ruh* emit a *singing* sound which is intended to strike fear in the hearts of the Wildmen's foes.

As far as anyone knows, the savages have no settlements, but simply travel about from place to place, stopping temporarily when they become tired or bored. Rival clans often fight each other, a situation which has proved useful in keeping the otherwise prolific Wildmen and their growing population within reasonable limits. None of the tribes will enter the Sardonyx Mountains which lie to the south, since it is their superstition that the jagged peaks are the teeth of a gigantic earth-monster which the Wildmen call Yrman.

The sub-men sometimes launch raids into the Brown Hills, though seldom to any great profit. The Jaka, mounted on swift steeds, generally keep their distance and harry the Wildmen with their short bows until the invaders tire of the futile exercise.

### THE CULT OF THE MAD GOD

The Wildmen of Yrmania revere Manik, a mysterious entity referred to in certain scholarly texts as "*the Mad God*." Little is known of their religion other than fanciful speculation, such as reports that Wildmen shamans (both male and female) mate with the hideous creatures known as yaksha—a claim which is obviously the height of absurdity.

More acceptable are reports of the Wildmen's use of skullcap, a bone-white variety of parasitic mushroom. A lethal toxin when ingested by most Talislantan races, the mushroom does not seem to harm the Wildmen, who have evidently developed an immunity to the substance's deadly effects. Under the influence of this drug, the savages are totally without fear and even seem to be immune to pain, and continue to attack with savage bloodlust though riddled with scores of wounds.

### GEOGRAPHICAL HIGHLIGHTS

The Desolate Hills, in far-northern Yrmania, are largely uninhabited save for yaksha, tundra beasts, and the ungainly creatures known as lopers. Semiprecious stones can reportedly be found in low depressions throughout the hills, a factor which occasionally draws would-be prospectors to this region.

This sparsely-wooded Badlands of eastern Yrmania are home to the Wildmen. Yaksha, muskronts and tundra beasts inhabit the rugged hills, ravines and tanglewood groves of this wilderness.

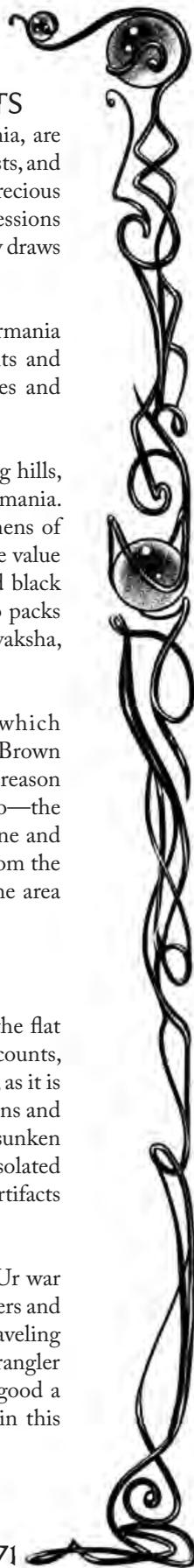
Yrman's Woods range throughout the rolling hills, irregular bluffs, and deep gullies of central Yrmania. The trees are old, gnarled and stunted specimens of spider-oak, withergall and tanglewood, of little value as timber. Some claim that veins of silver and black iron run through the wooded hills. So too, do packs of two-headed tundra beasts, mated pairs of yaksha, and herds of vile darkmanes.

The open expanse of Yrmanian Bay, which penetrates between Yrman's Woods and the Brown Hills, is seldom frequented by ships for the reason that there would be little purpose in doing so—the Yrmanian Wildmen are notable for their insane and unpredictable behavior, and Night Demons from the nearby Midnight Isles are reputed to infest the area in numbers.

### THE LOST SEA

Along the eastern borders of Yrmania lies the flat wasteland known as the Lost Sea. By all accounts, this area does indeed appear to be a dry seabed, as it is littered with the ancient skeletons of sea dragons and other aquatic monsters. Some claim that half-sunken sea vessels of unknown origin can be found in isolated places, many purportedly containing fabulous artifacts and treasures from a lost age.

As Wildmen bands, Darkling hordes, and Ur war parties sometimes traverse the Lost Sea, explorers and entrepreneurs should exercise caution when traveling in these lonely parts. The fearsome nocturnal strangler is reputed to be found here also, which is as good a reason as should be needed for not dallying in this region.



# ZANDU

Zandu is a land of gentle hills and sparse woodlands, shifting to deep forests along its northern borders. To the east lie the southern stretches of the Onyx Mountains of Arim; to the south, the rocky shores of the Sea of Sorrow.

In the interior, groves of blue pomegranates and quince flourish, fed by numerous small tributaries of the Sascasm River. The undeveloped northern and coastal areas are dotted with ancient stonework towers of varying design, built prior to the fall of the ancient empire of Phaedra. These fortresses once served as wilderness outposts or sanctuaries for traveling merchants, but most are now in ruin. Some are known to be occupied by solitary spell-casters, who find isolation most suitable to their peculiar needs.

## THE ZANDIR

The people of Zandu bear a marked physical resemblance to the Aamanians, both being descended from copper-skinned Phaedran ancestors. Unlike their Orthodoxist neighbors, however, the Zandir are a colorful folk renowned for their lack of inhibition.

## CUSTOMS

The Zandir are fond of music, dance and all manner of stimulating pastimes. They enhance their features with vividly colored pigments, adorn their hair with silver bands, and dress in flamboyant apparel—velvet blouses and trousers, capes of silken brocade, curl-toed boots or slippers, and so forth. The womenfolk practice the quaint custom of hiding their faces behind decorative fans, giving the impression that they are shy and demure. This is hardly the case, as male visitors to Zandu often discover. Zandir men are even less subtle, and in other lands are widely regarded as lechers and philanderers. The people of this land regard romance as a fabulous game, to be played constantly.

The Zandir have retained the unique and diverse ethnicity of their forebears, the Phaedran imperials. The populace includes numerous minority groups and factions, including the Causidians, formerly a class of law-makers, now employed as legal advisors, diplomats and scribes; the Certaments, a class of professional duelists; the Zann, who effect a deliberate contrariness regarding any issue; and the Serparians, who are professional beggars.





Zandir culture is complex and many-faceted. The best musicians and artists are rewarded with appointments to the Sultan's retinue, and wizards are also esteemed – particularly Zandu's Charlatans, the seers of the Paradoxist faith, though many who claim sorcerous powers are actually scoundrels.

## THE SULTAN

Zandu's ruler wields absolute, unquestioned power over all his subjects. All citizens are theoretically equal, and therefore equally subject to the whims and moods of the Sultan of Zandu, which sometimes run to the extreme. Unlike the Hierophant of Aaman, the Sultan is far from celibate. Zandir custom allows men to take as many wives as they can afford, and the ruler of Zandu is a very wealthy man.

Zandir laws are generally lax. A popular local saying notes that "what no one sees, no one knows." So long as thieves exercise a certain amount of discretion, the authorities usually "look the other way." Accordingly, petty theft is rampant, particularly in the larger dtles, such as the capital of Zanth.

On the other hand, criminals who make the mistake of attracting too much attention can expect to be dealt with severely. Convicted thieves may be tortured, chained to a pillory and placed on public display, or banished into the depths of Werewood. The worst crimes are punishable by any of a wide variety of gruesome and slow deaths, inflicted by the legendary creative Zandir executioners.

The Sultan personally judges cases during the morning hours, and determines the appropriate verdict for each as the mood suits him. On a good day, he may allow offenders to go free after a brief lecture on morality; on a bad day, the Zandir executioners have their hands full. Imprisonment in the wretched dungeons of Zanth suffices as punishment in the rare instances when the Sultan can come up with no more creative form of punitive action.

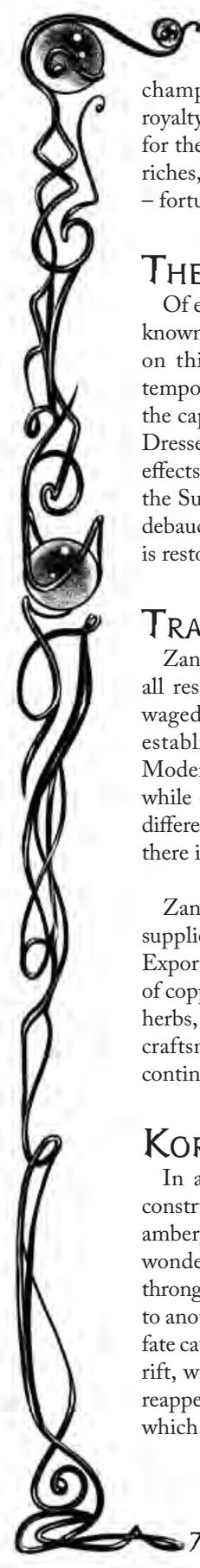
Prisoners may spend days or even weeks awaiting an audience with the Sultan, who is often lax in the completion of his duties. Individuals accused of committing a crime are allowed to hire Causidians to represent their interests. Arrangements must be made through the jailors, who customarily charge a healthy "finder's fee" for their services.

## THE CULT OF PARADOXY

The Zandir are Paradoxists, professing to be mystified by the nature of their own existence. The tenets of the Zandir "religion" are perhaps best explained in the Paradoxist text, *The Book of Mysteries*, a lengthy tome filled with 100,000 questions – and no answers.

## THE CLASH OF CHAMPIONS

Of great interest in Zanth is the annual Clash of Champions, held atop the Great Barrier Wall between Zandu and Aaman. Each year the Sultan sends out dozens of his wizardly advisors to scour neighboring lands in search of suitable candidates. The eventual



champion, chosen by tournament, is treated like royalty until the day of the match. It is customary for the Sultan to shower a victorious champion with riches, fame and glory. There is no reward for losing – fortunately, the vanquished rarely survive.

## THE NIGHT OF FOOLS

Of especial importance to the Zandir is the festival known as the “Night of Fools.” Held once each year, on this evening virtually all of Zandu’s laws are temporarily rescinded. From sundown to sunrise, the capital is transformed into a veritable madhouse. Dressed in ludicrous costumes, and reeling from the effects of opiated wine (provided free of charge by the Sultan), the Zandir spend the evening in revelry, debauchery and mayhem. On the following day, order is restored.

## TRADE AND RELATIONS

Zandu is diametrically opposed to Aaman in nearly all respects. For many centuries the two countries waged ceaseless war against each other, until the establishment of the Great Barrier Wall Treaty. Modern relations between the former antagonists, while overtly peaceful, are still far from cordial. The differences between their cultures remain extreme, and there is no love lost between the two peoples.

Zandu has strong trade ties with Arim, a major supplier of black iron, copper and precious stones. Exports from the Paradoxist nation include utensils of copper and brass, exotic fragrances, spices, narcotic herbs, fine wines, and opals. Blades made by Zandir craftsmen are held in high regard throughout the continent, and are popular trade items.

## KORAQ’S MOUNTAIN

In ancient times, the great sorcerer Koraq had constructed on this mount a fabulous manse of eleven amberglass towers, in which he kept his collection of wonders, curiosities and amazements. Harassed by throngs of curious sightseers, the sorcerer finally retired to another dimension, taking all he owned. A quirk of fate caused his manse to become trapped in a temporal rift, with the result that Koraq’s abode occasionally reappears for several hours at a time on the mountain which now bears the sorcerer’s name.

## CONJUROR’S POINT

This rocky peninsula is named for the legendary magician, Cascal, who kept a small cottage here in ancient times. A homonculus, left untended in one of Cascal’s vats, supposedly escaped when the magician was away and laid waste to his home. The inhabitants of nearby Zantium claim that this creature still lives on Conjuror’s Point, and blame the homonculus for almost any occurrence for which there is no ready explanation, including incidents of missing persons, lost articles, and acts of violence.

## THE ZANDIR MOORS

This area of verdant knolls, flatlands and bogs is notable for its numerous exotic varieties of wildflower, from which are derived costly scents, essences and enchanted philtres. The rare everblue starfire is valued at over 1,000 gold lumens. Aspiring botanists and fortune-seekers are advised to beware of malathrope and bog devils.

## THE WOODLANDS OF ZANDU

This forested area was razed by torch-wielding Orthodoxists during the Cult Wars. The Paradoxists restored the area after the war, according to their own eccentric designs – they created a forest preserve, resplendent with groves of quince, blue pomegranate, incense tree, and succulent barb-berry. Manmade streams and ponds dot the mossy terrain, interspersed with copses of spice tree and giant fern. Acreage has been reserved for the pleasure of the Sultan of Zandu, who is said to be an avid avirwatcher. A troupe of Zandir swordsmen always accompanies the Sultan’s entourage, conferring protection from the woodland’s exomorphs, malathrope, and poisonous, metallic-scaled vipers.

The fortified border outpost of Zandre houses a contingent of Zandir scouts, and is adjacent to an old stone bridge which spans the Sascasm River. It is frequented by hunters and traders, as well as the fishermen of Zann, who sail their small skiffs up the Sascasm in order to sell their wares at the outpost.

### THE PHAEDRAN CAUSEWAY

Constructed during the reign of the Phaedran emperors, this roadway stretches across Zandu from Zir to the Aamanian border at Zanth. The causeway is indifferently patrolled and is often in need of repair.

### THE CITADEL OF ZADIAN

This fortress is situated amid the central coastal region of Zandu. A sizable contingent of Zandir troops is stationed here, including units of ontra-mounted lancers and archers, swordsmen and women, and border scouts. The citadel stands atop a hill overlooking the rich estates, vineyards and groves of Zadian's wealthy aristocracy, who live much in the manner of feudal lords.

### THE SEA PORTS

A small Zandir coastal settlement, Zantil is built on a peninsula jutting into the Sea of Sorrow. There is a lighthouse here which serves as an aid to ships navigating the rocky waters. In addition, a red beacon—produced by torchlight reflected through a ruby crystal—warns vessels of the presence of giant sea scorpions, which occasionally enter the area via the Phaedran Straits; by day, bellows-horns sound the alert as well.

The port of Zir is where Zandir warships were constructed during the Cult Wars. The shipyards now primarily turn out merchant vessels, and Zir has become a haven for Zandir freetraders. Ships head from here to such exotic locales as Thaecia, Batre and Faradun—some take on passengers or cargo here, while others await repair.

The narrow waterway adjacent to Zir is known as the Phaedran Straits, and is utilized by ships bound to the Sea of Sorrow from the open sea. This was the site of many a terrible battle during the Cult Wars, and not a few Aamanian and Zandir vessels lie on the bottom. Jagged rocks along the coast render the passage hazardous, particularly in foul weather.

Westernmost of Zandu's seaports, the walled settlement of Zantium lies near the terminus of the Sascasm River, on Zantium Bay. Timber, costly perfumes, and exotic plants and beasts from the Zandir Moors are the chief exports. Trackers come to the trading post to sell hides and captured animals.

Located on the western coast of Zandu, Zann is notable primarily for its stubborn and contrary citizens. The Zann rarely agree with others, and are rude and highly opinionated by nature. Most are fishermen, boatmen, or woodland guides. Local streams are thought to be tainted by the Necros River, which may go far to explain the curious behavior of the Zann.

### THE CAPITAL CITY

The capital of Zandu, Zanth is a beautiful city of copper spires, minarets and arched causeways. Like Ammahd, the capital of Aaman, Zanth is built upon the ruins of the ancient Phaedran city of Badijan. At the conclusion of the Cult Wars, the Great Barrier Wall was built through the center of the rubble, and the two nations each built new capitals on their portion of the wins.

The Sultan lives in Zanth, in a fabulous palace thinly layered with silver and gold. A second, adjacent palace houses the Sultan's wives, which some claim exceed 4,000 in number.

### A VISTOR'S GUIDE TO ZANTH

*"Whoever said that, 'with great freedom c-comes great responsibility', had obviously never visited Zanth."*

*- CHIK CHIK, GREEN AERLAD CREATIVIST*

### THE POPULACE

Although around 100,000 inhabitants cram the streets of Zanth at any one time, the actual population is incredibly difficult to ascertain. No official records are kept, and no one bothers to even consider the number of Serparians, Sarista gypsies, and other transients and unfortunates who fill the city's ghettos or live and die on the streets.

As the most open and exotic city on the continent, Zanth sees a veritable armada of foreign traders and visitors arrive and depart, night and day, from around the continent (with the obvious exception of Aaman).





## HISTORY

Like Aamahd, Zanth was established on the former Phaedran capital of Badijan, although it retained much more of the original architecture, including the former Phaedran Sorcerer-King's Palace, now the palace of His Illustrious Primacy and Grand Potentate, the Sultan of Zandu.

The most notable recent event in Zanth's history was the Great Conflagration of 601 N.A. that engulfed and gutted a small district of residences near the city's docks. Allegedly started by Heterodoxist revolutionaries, the fire raged out of control for six days and nights. Before any reconstruction could begin, the city's Serparians quickly inhabited the ruined structures. Citing lack of funds and interest

in reclaiming the site, Zanth's citizens simply named the area the Serparian Slum, and left the Serparians to live there.

## VISIONS OF ZANTH

### A VIEW FROM AFAR

Gentle moors of grass, scattered with banks of vibrant flowers, small pockets of elegant forest, and wind-worn outcrops of black stone, sweep around a great, walled city. The tops of elaborate and eclectic towers peer over the stone walls, sunlight glinting off their pointed domes of copper and brass. Carts, wagons, and a stream of people make their way to and from the city's great gates, dwarfed by the gatehouse towers that stand on either side of the causeway.

### AT THE GATES

The ancient Phaedran 60-foot wide causeway, is formed from an infinite number of thin black slabs, many cracked and worn with use. A gatehouse of ebony stone, built as an expansion of the city's 30-foot walls, looms over the roadway. Two 20-foot, rectangular gates of brass, elaborately etched, stand permanently open between the towers. The walls thicken slightly as they rise from their 10-foot thick base, making them slope outwards.

### THE CITY STREETS

Lanes of dirt teem with a bustle of people in exotic, flamboyant, outrageous or negligible attire; waves of clashing colors, assailing the eye. Buildings of every description jostle for space, plain jet stone contrasting with painted walls, carved archways, and glinting domes of copper. Beggars dress in colorful scraps, and several children in threadbare rags watch the masses appraisingly.

### ZANTH AT NIGHT

The streets of Zanth still teem with activity as the veil of night descends, inebriated revelers staggering across the streets bearing torches and lanterns. Others swagger noisily with swords at their hips, while prostitutes croon from alleyways, beggars hunker in doorways, and ne'er-do-wells go about their nightly endeavors.

### ROMANTIC CRIMINALS

Burglars and highwaymen have a romantic image in Zandu, and the greatest acquire near mythical status as folk heroes. While a few certainly promote and affect a suave, cool, and dashing image, dressing for effect and bearing such *nom de plumes* as The Nighthawk, Silver Saber, or CatDrac, most are simply brutal thugs who care less for appearing stylish than they do about the unfortunates they violently assault or rob.

### THE TYPICAL DWELLING

#### AN EXTERIOR VIEW

A broad, squarish building of worn black stone gradually broadens as it rises three-stories to a height of 25-foot where it flattens off. Atop the flat roof, two circular towers of black stone rise another 20-foot; each topped with a pointed copper dome. Stained glass windows dot the main building and tower at irregular intervals, some square, some arched, some round, others triangular. An oval archway, fitted with a stout door bound with copper and black iron, opens onto the main street. Long, narrow alleyways separate the building from its neighbors, littered with garbage and debris.

#### THE INTERIOR

The main entrance opens into a narrow hallway, leading to a small stairwell, and lined on either side with several apartment doors. Interlocking tiles line the floor, and the walls are painted with elaborate scenes illuminated by a few torches and a skylight far above.

##### The Apartment

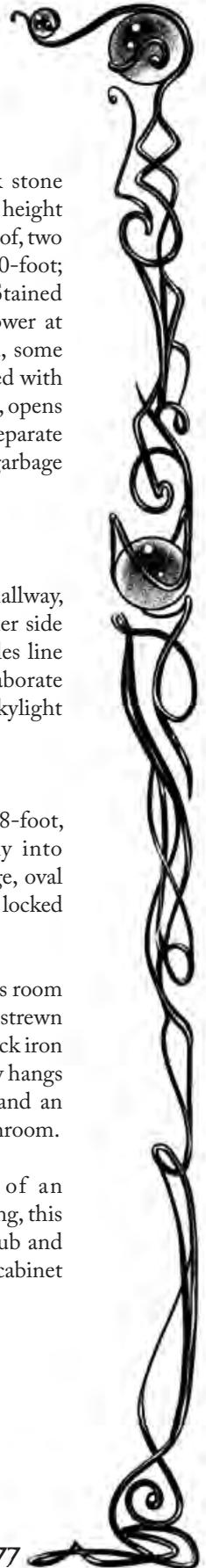
A locked wooden door leads into an 18-foot, square apartment, separated diagonally into two triangular rooms. Only a single, large, oval window opens into the apartment, securely locked from the inside.

##### The Main Room

Lit by the apartment's only window, this room contains an untidy bed, an ornate trunk strewn with clothing, a small closet, and a tiny, black iron stove in the corner. A sphere of amberglow hangs suspended from the ceiling by a chain, and an arched doorway leads through to the bathroom.

##### The Bathroom

Constantly lit with the radiance of an amberglow sphere hanging from the ceiling, this room contains a simple washbasin, bathtub and toilet of black stone, along with a wooden cabinet and small mirror.



## WASTE DISPOSAL

The ancient sewage network that serviced ancient Badijan runs under both Zanth and Aamahd, serving both cities. Infested with urthrax, aramatus, and other vermin, it is believed that some individuals use the sewers to go back and forth between the cities unseen. The Serparians know some of the only routes, and even inhabit certain safer and cleaner portions of the sewer. However, they will not enter many areas, whispering that “things from beyond” lurk in the darkness, and that terrible rituals are held there, dedicated to gods of fell aspect.

## PLACES OF AUTHORITY

### THE OUBLIETTE (MAP KEY #2)

Archaic and ominous, this vast cuboid structure of windowless black rock stands a mere three-stories high, but extends seven-stories below ground. Riddled with foul, lightless cells, and torture chambers that Aamanian Inquisitors would envy, it is claimed that the lowest levels were sealed off centuries ago, and that unspeakable acts were performed therein. Few criminals incarcerated here ever live to see the light of day again.

## PUNISHMENT

Zanth’s gaolers and torture-artists are famed for their creative cruelty, and few individuals survive their ministrations for long. Those poor souls that do are often broken body and mind, their gibbering screams echoing along the Oubliette’s dark corridors. Magicians who commit crimes are swiftly executed in public; a fate deemed preferable to incarceration.

## PALACE OF HIS ILLUSTRIOUS PRIMACY AND GRAND POTENTATE

### (MAP KEY #1)

Commonly called “The Sultan’s Palace”, this fabulous structure sits in huge circular grounds, and consist of a vast rectangular building, topped with three magnificent towers, and with three great, stepped verandas, supported by twisted archways in the style of ancient Badijan. The entire structure is thinly layered with silver and gold, the grounds replete with canopied terraces, fountains, walkways, and topiary gardens. The interior boasts lavish aviaries, solariums, spiral stairways, superior works of art, and luxuriant furnishings.

## PALACE OF THE BLESSED HOURI

### (MAP KEY #3)

Located directly next to the Sultan’s Palace, this smaller, but similar structure, thinly plated in silver and brass, is set within the same grounds, featuring a single veranda, and four smaller, slender towers. The Sultan’s harem of 4,000 wives, plus half as many eunuchs, handmaidens, and servants dwell here. Around 600 of the Sultan’s offspring are tended in a nursery therein.

## WARD TOWERS

These three-story structures of basic black stone are all capped with copper domes, and house a contingent of 20 swordsmen who ostensibly patrol the surrounding area, keeping the peace and enforcing Zandu’s (few) laws.

## MILITARY BASES

### THE CHROME CITADEL(MAP KEY #4)

This mighty fortress has walls 30-foot in height and 10-foot in width, thinly plated with silver chromium. The enclosed grounds include a three-story semicircular tower of shining silver, housing the commanders of Zandu’s complete military, and a dozen black stone barracks and stables for Zanth’s own military contingent of 1,000 swordsmen and graymane cavalry.

### THE GATEHOUSE (MAP KEY #5)

Flanking the city's great brass gates are twin towers of black stone, three-stories high; an extension of the city's ebony wall containing a secondary portcullis of black iron, overlooked by thick hollow walls containing murder holes. 20 swordsmen guard the entrance and collect tolls, while another 20 swordsmen and archers are stationed in each tower at all times. A toll of 1 s.p. per individual, beast, and cart, is charged on entry and exit (only Zandir are exempt from this toll).

#### LAW ENFORCEMENT AND JUSTICE

Zanth's law enforcement is lackluster, corrupt, and inept. The wardens are easy to bribe, and usually have "arrangements" with the local criminal element. Distinguished by their black attire (uniquely cut, embroidered, tailored, etc. for individuality), they make infrequent patrols in units of four. Their investigative abilities are negligible, but they are skilled fencers. They only make any real attempts to enforce the law in the wealthier areas. As a result, mob justice and vigilante activity are quite common in Zanth, and the private hire of Certaments, and even Revenants, to punish transgressors, are frequent occurrences.

### THE GREAT BARRIER WALL

60-foot high and 30-foot thick, this awe-inspiring black structure looms above the city and stretches beyond, vanishing into the distance, running from the border of Arim to the Sea of Sorrow.

### TOWERS OF ETERNAL VIGILANCE (MAP KEY #6)

Located every 1,000-foot along the Great Barrier Wall (closer in the city of Zanth itself), these brutal towers of jet stand 70-foot high, each manned by a unit of five swordsmen and five archers who have a barracks in the tower. They keep constant watch on the border with Aaman in shifts. A magical horn in each tower is to be sounded in the event of an enemy attack, and anyone attempting to scale the wall from either side will be used as target practice. Each tower is unique in shape: round, square, oval, triangular, trapezoid, hexagonal, and so on.

## EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

### CAUSIDIAN GUILDHALL (MAP KEY #7)

This triangular hall is painted with abstract designs in every shade and hue of blue, and features a great door of copper inscribed repeatedly with Zandu's laws (such as they are). The interior is comfortable, if decidedly functional, with numerous small studies, and a single central hall with wooden pews and a speaker's rostrum.

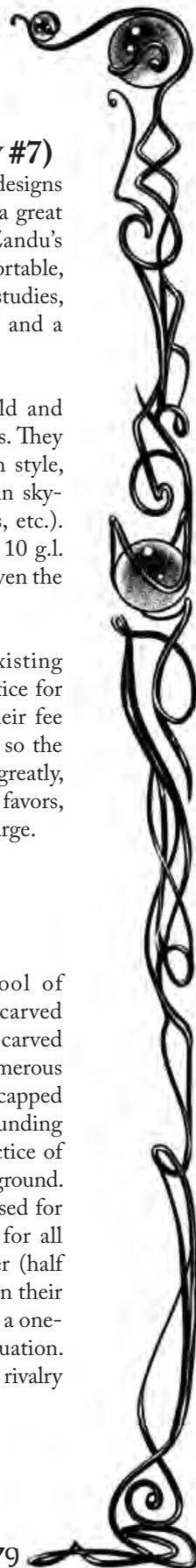
Causidians form a loosely organized guild and social club of litigators, diplomats, and scribes. They are recognized by their blue attire (although style, shade, fabric, and hue vary greatly, from plain sky-blue, to marbled indigo, or patchwork blues, etc.). Their services may be obtained for a price of 10 g.l. per day - more if the Causidian has garnered even the slightest reputation.

Prospective Causidians must find an existing Causidian willing to take them as an apprentice for a year. The Causidian is free to negotiate their fee with their prospective student as they see fit, so the cost involved in obtaining the tuition varies greatly, and might also include menial work or sexual favors, instead of, or in addition to, any monetary charge.

### PALAESTRA OF THE BLADE

#### (MAP KEY #8)

The most famed and prestigious school of swordsmanship in Zandu, the Palaestra is carved from black stone, with the figures of warriors carved in bas-relief on every surface, and features numerous small practice halls, and a single grand hall capped with a brass dome. Extensive grounds, surrounding the main building, are used both for the practice of mounted swordsmanship, and combat on open ground. A single, large tower stands in the grounds, used for urban fighting practice. Tuition is available for all levels of skill, and costs 200 g.l. per semester (half for citizens of Zandu). Zandir who wish to join their military do not have to pay, but must enlist for a one-year term of duty immediately following graduation. Rambunctious fencing students have an intense rivalry with the local Wardens.





### PARADOXIST SEMINARY (MAP KEY #9)

Crafted in the shape of a broad black tower, topped with a single stained-glass window shaped like an eight-pointed star, this establishment is Zandu's erstwhile center for the study of Paradox - in actuality a school for magicians, charlatans, and self-styled seers. A large, adjacent dome (heavily warded) is used for the practice of magic. Cult doctrine is taught, along with wizardry (primarily conjuring and illusion), and certain performing and thieving talents. However, the curriculum and faculty are so hopelessly disorganized that graduates may not have acquired any appreciable skills at all. Tuition is 100 g.l. per septemester (seven weeks); halved for Zandir citizens.

Despite their varied skills, magical talents, and admitted bafflement with the nature of reality, charlatans are taken seriously in Zanth, and are often asked to give blessings to new births, provide advice (always in the form of a conundrum), and perform wedding ceremonies and funerary rites. While they don't charge for these services, those asking for their services must make a "donation" to the charlatan in accordance with just how flamboyant her performance was.

Unfortunately, some Charlatans are all too eager to exploit their official status, giving false advice (or advice that benefits them), and inspiring fear by threatening to curse those that displease them. A very rare few have even formed highly dubious cults for brief periods.

### FLAMBOYANT SOLDIERY

All members of Zandu's military must have acquired certification in swordsmanship from the Palaestra. While such documents are easy to forge, their unique, flamboyant fighting style is not.

Zandu's soldiers are allowed to design their own individual uniform, but must display their unit's crest prominently, usually on a cloak, tunic, or armband. They are permitted to question orders, and make suggestions to their superior officers. Rank distinctions and awards in Zandu's military are amazingly complex, with ranks indicated by the number of stars, crescents, and crossed blades (in copper, then silver, then gold) on the individual's left breast.

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Charlatans are recognized by their combination of brocade cloak and curl-toed boots, although the style, etc, of these, and all their other apparel, varies greatly.

## MUSEUMS & LIBRARIES

### IMMEMORIUM

Formed by seven completely different towers, each painted a color of the rainbow, and interconnected with arched walkways, the Immemorium is Zanth's museum. Contained within are great works of art, displays of cultural items from across the continent, and Paradoxist artifacts from the Cult Wars, as well as tomes by such Phaedran luminaries as Kabros, Thystram, and Sassan. Admission costs 5 s.p. each, and security is paranoid, including skilled guards, alarms, and traps, both magical and mundane.

## PLACES OF WORSHIP

### ENIGMA TABERNACLE (MAP KEY #10)

Zanth's only "temple", the Tabernacle is a large monument of veined quartz from the Crystal Mountains. Standing atop a circular plinth of 25 stone steps, the Tabernacle is 150-foot in diameter, and 100-foot high, with 500 slender pillars filling its entire area, topped with a gold-plated dome. No services are held here and no clergy are in attendance. Zandir come here as the mood takes them, to read the pillars, each of which is carved with countless unanswered questions. The monument is a favorite trysting place among lovers.

## MARKETS & BAZAARS

### BIZARRE BAZAAR (MAP KEY #11)

This open area of interlocking black paving is frequented by traders from many lands: Gnomekin crystal merchants, Aeriad horticulturists, Kasmiran trapmages, Cymrilian enchanters, Farad slave mongers, Sarista fortune-tellers and street performers, Jaka trappers, Zandir spice traders, Arimite ore-dealers, and many others. The stalls, ablaze with torchlight, are busy into the night, as are the numerous pickpockets and con men.

### PRODUCE OF ZANTH

Spices, exotic fragrances, narcotic herbs, fine wines, opals, and utensils of copper and brass can all be purchased in Zanth for prices up to 25% less than normal. Fine dueling swords can be bought in Zanth as well, although discounts are only given on bulk purchases. Haggling is lively and flamboyant in Zanth.

### FREEDOM IN CHAINS

Despite Zandu's espousal of personal liberty and freedom, slavery and slave trading are legal, and regrettably common, in Zanth. While few but the wealthiest individuals own personal slaves, many unfortunate slaves (due to poor luck, circumstance, or criminality) are forced to labor in the nation's opal mines. Slavery in a nation whose creed is freedom? Yet another paradox say the Zandir.

## TRADERS, ARTISANS & MERCHANTS

### AREOLA IMBROGLIO

This circular shop is painted in a patchwork of clashing colors, and surrounded by a dozen identical doors, only one of which is real. Dusty and dim, it is cluttered with magical paraphernalia, alchemical ingredients, and scattered copies of Paradoxist literature (including several editions of the cult manifesto, the *Book of Mysteries*). Prices for any of the eclectic shop's contents vary greatly.

### DEVILS' BANE BRASS

Completely covered in interlocking disks of copper and brass, this shop produces and sells common utensils of copper and brass, including plates, cutlery, tankards, belt buckles, lengths of chain, and even basic jewelry, such as bangles and torcs. Quality and price are typically low to average, but ordered pieces are of good quality, often with basic decoration, and are of 1.5 x standard price.



### ESSENCE OF LIFE, SPICE EMPORIUM

This large, unadorned black building contains dozens of small, open casks filled to the brim with spices it buys in bulk. Entry costs 1 s.p., and customers are given several small paper bags (each capable of holding no more than 0.5lb of spice), and a scoop to select what spices they want. The bags are checked on exit, and the customer charged. Prices are low (x 0.6 average), but customers are watched constantly to ensure there is no theft.

### FINESSE

This small copper dome, ringed by 10 slender minarets, is Zanth's finest costumer. Specializing in masks, elaborate costumes, and other stylish apparel in the finest of materials, it also sells fine fragrances, and employs some of the most skilled body painters. Most apparel and fragrances are available at x2 standard prices, and made-to-order outfits can cost several times this. Body painting varies in cost according to detail and size (20-200 g.l.).

### GRAND ESTATES

Consisting of a single opulent office in a wealthier home, this establishment is owned by Samarr, a wealthy Zandir merchant who sells parcels of land, refurbished manses, and abandoned tower keeps. Most of these properties are situated along the northern border or ocean coast - not exactly preferred locations, though the low prices (5000 to 50,000 g.l.) are not unappealing.

### OPULENCE

Its etched black walls polished to a smooth sheen, this shop sells jewelry of remarkable detail and unique design from any metal or gemstone. Prices are high (x2), and opals a specialty.

### ROBALO'S

Scenic vineyards surround the hexagonal gardens of this elaborate mansion and distillery; one of the country's most respected wineries. Robalo's offers excellent vintage wines at reasonable cost. Weekly tours of the vineyards cost 1 s.p., and are a popular attraction, the free samples contributing to the general lack of sobriety in this area.

### SECOND SKIN

Painted in bright emerald and scarlet, this hole-in-the-wall shop can only be entered via a dingy side alley. It sells furs, hides, and leathers of the best quality from nearly every kind of animal on the continent, and also makes surpassing custom clothing and fetish gear from such materials (at costs x3 standard). Their lapis lazuli suede boots, and serpis leather coats are very popular.

### ZELADO'S

Zelado blades are considered the finest on the continent, and Zelado iron is always of excellent grade. This small, converted apartment block contains a dozen forges, and has been run by the Zelado family for many generations (the family inhabit the gilt-capped towers above the forges). Prices are x2 standard (x3 or higher for custom work), but the quality is beyond compare.

### ZENITH

This tiny shop is located in the top two floors of a single, slender tower that stands 40-foot high, the lower half of which contains nothing but an elaborate spiral staircase permitting access to the shop above. Lit by several dozen colored irregular windows, and topped with a twisting copper dome, this shop sells softer drugs and beautifully crafted water pipes, hookahs, and pipes at modest prices (x 0.8 standard).

### PARKS

#### THE MARVELOUS MENAGERIE (MAP

#### KEY #14)

Set atop a vast verge of grass, enclosed by a high iron fence, the Menagerie is a combination zoological garden and park. Paths of stone form a circuit that passes over a dozen enclosures, aviaries, aquariums and cages of intricate design, wrought in black iron and toughened glass. Exotic beasts from around the continent are kept here, cared for by Jaka beastmasters. Admission at the gates costs 1 s.p. per person.

## INNS, TAVERNS & RESTAURANTS

### THE CAGED SKANK

This popular bar is unremarkable, save for the small spherical cage that hangs just inside the entrance. The cage is inhabited much of the time by a skank called Grinch, who enjoys making lewd remarks, and telling tales of dubious veracity. His high pitched singing often accompanies the inn's musical entertainment. Prices and quality are average, but the atmosphere is relaxed and congenial.

### EXQUISITORIUM

This high-class, members-only restaurant, has numerous elegant towers capped in gold, interconnected with delicate, carved arches. The atmosphere and decor are rich, tasteful, and restrained, with Bodorian musicians providing musical accompaniment to the meals. Security is strict, as is the dress code (only the most expensive and fashionable garments are permitted), but many of the city's most influential citizens dine here. Costs are astronomic (x10 standard). How anyone becomes a member is a well-kept secret.

### FLASHING BLADES

With its name, and the crossed sabers that hang above the doorway, it is easy to guess that the clientele of this inn comprise of swordsmen and Certaments. Furniture of colorful hardwoods fills the bar, marred by the strikes of many duels. The place has a swaggering atmosphere, full of dedicated carousing, tall tales, and hot-tempered duels. Prices are 10% above average (to help offset property damage costs), quality is fair, and house wines abundant.

### THE GREATER SUN

This middle-class tavern features a spherical sign of wrought iron and etched crystal, lit from within by a constantly burning fire. Quality is good, but prices are 1.5 x standard. Many of the city's artisans, merchants, magicians, and Causidians frequent here, dictating that much of the inn's gossip centers around current prices, the quality of imported materials, etc.

### CERTAMENTS AND DUELING

Duels are perfectly legal in Zandu, but must follow certain established protocols. Firstly, a formal challenge must be made (though the exact nature of this varies), along with the nature of the duel (to the death, to first blood, to surrender). The challenged party then names the time and place for the duel (it can be anywhere both parties can access, at any time within two days of the challenge). Each party is permitted two weapons (such as a dagger and saber, or greatsword and garde), with magic counting as a single weapon. Magical weapons, etc. are permitted: if your opponent has them and you do not, that is merely your misfortune. Crowds always gather, and wagering can be swift. In fact, many Certaments make their living by challenging people and wagering on the outcome themselves. The challenged party may always refuse to duel, but must make a public apology to the challenger if they do so, and face mockery by any Zandir nearby.

### THE LESSER SUN

Located directly across the street from The Greater Sun (see above), this basic, working-class tavern features a small spherical sign of wrought iron, lit from within by dozens of amberglow spheres. The prices and atmosphere are cheap, rude, and cheerful (x0.75 normal), and the customers are mainly lower class-laborers.

### THE LUCKY SHAITAN

With a sign depicting a Shaitan in ménage a trois with two naked women, it should come as no surprise to learn that this seedy bar includes a striptease platform and lap-dancers. However, the dancers are strict professionals, and will not involve themselves with patrons. Admittance costs 1 g.l. per person, though prices for food and drink are average.

### MANSE OF THE SUBLIME MYSTERIES

This splendid inn and tavern has been converted from an old Phaedran mansion of black stone, three-stories high, with numerous rooms and bars, decorated with colorful and diaphanous curtains, drapes, and velvet furnishings. All who enter must wear a mask of one sort or the other, adding a certain mystique to the atmosphere. Bodorian musicians, thespians, and acrobats, provide jocular entertainment. Quality is above average, as are the prices (x2 standard).

### QUICKSILVER

This moderate, single-story building of black stone, topped with a copper minaret, features an open kitchen behind a bar, and dozens of stools, and is open 24 hours a day. It specializes in creating quick meals, served in paper baskets. A single serving of Zash - herby provender fries, with a spicy sauce filled with chunks of meat, mushrooms, or other vegetables - costs a mere 2 s.p. and is served hot within two minutes of ordering.

### WEREWOOD TAVERN

With a wooden sign carved with a disturbing face, a truly diverse clientele frequents this inn and tavern: Arimite knife-fighters, Jaka manhunters, Zandir charlatans and thieves, with a few swordsmen thrown in. Fare is reasonable in price and quality. The large common room holds contests of strength, skill, and magical prowess. Private booths are available (1 g.l.) and frequently used by certain disreputable types for greater secrecy.

### DENS OF INEQUITY

#### ANAAS

This luxurious pleasure palace is run by a Batrean paramour called Aleana (see Tal10, pp. 264). 55-foot in height, this trapezium-shaped establishment of delicately carved jet stone, contains six stories, and a variety of facilities, including an indoor pool, saunas, private jacuzzis, nymphariums, and a rooftop topiary garden enclosed with glass. All manner of tasteful,

erotic entertainment is featured, along with the best wines and food, although prices are exorbitant (x10 normal).

### BLISS

This oval building is topped with a ring of six brass-capped towers, and painted over every surface with whorls of color. Each of its many rooms is filled with silk cushions, and any drug is available here at costs only 20% higher than normal. The air is an intoxicating haze. Candies and spiced wines are offered to inebriated customers, who always seem willing to pay the high cost (x 2) for the proffered comestibles.

### CHAOTIC EXOTICA

Located in a disused and sealed off section of Zanth's sewers, this establishment is only accessible



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via a small, nondescript tower above. Frequented only by the most jaded citizens, Exotica offers prostitutes and live-sex shows featuring (but not limited to) nearly every race, species or animal on the continent. Every fetish is catered for, however outrageous or twisted... for a price (x2, rapidly rising higher as any requests become more outrageous). Admission alone costs 10 g.l.

### LAVATIONS

This large, hexagonal building, topped with a wide dome of stained glass, contains an array of public and private baths, and massage parlors, offering rubs with scented oils and tonics, as well as other, more stimulating services. Admission costs 1 g.l. A public bath costs 1 g.l.; a private bath 5 g.l.; a massage, 3 g.l. Other services are arranged privately with the desired "masseuse".

### PANDAEMONICUS

More commonly called "The Pit", this vile drug den is frequented by Zanth's most desperate and wretched drug addicts, such as heavy users of k'tallah. Located in the Serparian slum, it resembles a run-down, derelict tower, its dome long stripped of copper. Costs are average, and the managers will accept barter (including stolen goods). Rumor has it that the establishment is secretly run by a high-ranking Monitor in neighboring Aaman.

### PHALLUS

This four-story tower is plated completely with brass, and topped with a shaped copper dome, which lends the establishment a form very suggestive of its nature as a brothel featuring male-only prostitutes. Popular with a good number of female patrons from Zanth and elsewhere, Phallus also has a substantial number of male clients. Only the most well-endowed (and skilled) male prostitutes are employed here. Costs are 1.5 x standard.

### RISQUE

The city's premier casino, this elaborate black stone building is covered with copper filigree, and topped by a dozen copper minarets. Several huge halls contain many tables and comfortable chairs, and all games of chance are offered here. The decor is kitsch, and the attractive male and female service staff wear nothing

but a flamboyant cape of translucent gossamer. Cheating is par for the course. Admission costs 5 g.l.

## TRANSPORTATION

### DOCKS (MAP KEY #15)

Zanth's docks are a filthy clutter of stout wooden piers, frameworks of block and tackle, and disused packing crates, providing docking for up to a dozen vessels. Zandir freetraders arrive and depart from this point, carrying shipments of spices, copper and brass articles, and fine Zandir blades which they trade along the Southern Rim, in exchange for goods from the Thaecian Isles, Faradun, Cabal Magicus, Oceanus, and Jhangara. The dock is reached via a sinuous man-made waterway that leads inland from the Sea of Sorrow, and enters the city through a great iron-gated archway in the southwestern wall.

### ZANDU CANAL (MAP KEY #16)

This 60-foot wide man-made waterway connects Zanth's dock to the Sea of Sorrow, allowing vessels to sail inland to dock at the capital.

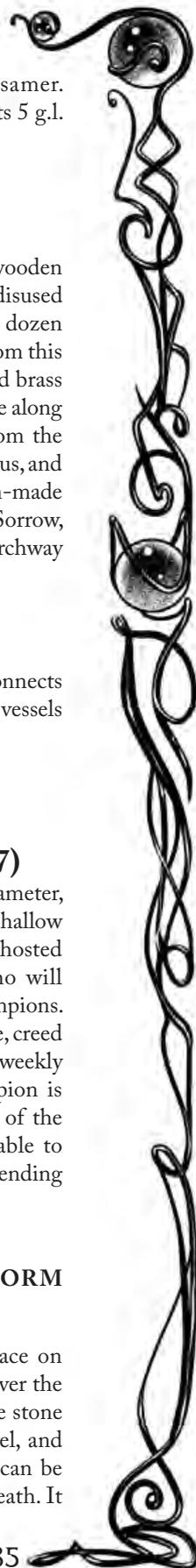
## MISCELLANEOUS

### ARENA OF VICTORY (MAP KEY #17)

This black circular arena is 100-foot in diameter, with stepped rows of seating surrounding a shallow pit, 20-foot in diameter. Weekly battles are hosted here; a process of elimination deciding who will represent Zanth at the annual Clash of Champions. The competition is open to warriors of any race, creed or nationality (except Aamanian), and each weekly victory is worth 1000 g.l. The overall champion is accorded status commensurate with a prince of the realm by the Sultan himself. Seats are available to spectators at costs of 1, 10, and 100 g.l. (depending on proximity to the center).

### CLASH OF CHAMPIONS PLATFORM (MAP KEY #18)

The annual Clash of Champions takes place on this large stone platform that stands directly over the central tollgate of The Great Barrier Wall. The stone platform is 20-foot in diameter, perfectly level, and has no safety barrier. Incautious combatants can be forced off the edge to plummet to injury or death. It



is considered a particular coup to cause a vanquished foe to fall amongst their own supporters.

### TOLL GATES (MAP KEY #19)

Supported on either side by solid black pillars of monolithic proportion, three unadorned and monumental gates of copper, 30-foot in height, directly link Zanth and Aamahd through the Great Barrier Wall's only opening. Each gate is operated and overlooked by a gatehouse located within the great flanking pillars. Standing directly above the central of the three gates is a small stone platform: the site of the annual Clash of Champions.

The country whose representative wins the annual Clash of Champions is awarded proprietorship of the wall for one year, including the right to collect toll revenues through the Toll Gates. By mutual agreement, the toll may not exceed 1 g.l. per person, animal, or conveyance.

### SARISTA GHETTO (MAP KEY #20)

Formerly a public park, this area is enclosed by a crumbling circular wall, the grassy interior segmented by arched black walls radiating from a central hub paved with black stone. Now taken over by Sarista gypsies, their colorful wagons, tents and campfires are scattered throughout the area. Many Zandir come here to have their fortunes told, buy gypsy charms, or watch them perform. The Sarista have affiliated themselves with the Serparians, and pay the usual due to the Sultan of Beggars.

### SERPARIAN SLUM (MAP KEY #21)

Consisting of the fire-gutted, skeletal remains of 17 buildings overlooking an open area of barren ground, the Serparian Slum is strewn with refuse; crude lean-tos abutted to the buildings' walls. Zanth's Serparians (beggars) live here in abysmal squalor. According to popular belief, the Sultan of Beggars dwells at the secret heart of the slum, overseeing the allocation of prime begging territory, and the running of a citywide network of thugs, thieves, and information gatherers.

### SILENT NECROPOLIS (MAP KEY #22)

50-foot high, with five levels and an underground crematorium, this huge black structure is shaped like a stretched oval, painstakingly etched, carved, and

inlaid with copper depicting the luminaries of the Ten Thousand. Two vaulted open arches lead inside. Each level is filled with row upon row of black stone shelves bearing brass funerary urns; white marble slabs set into the walls inscribed with the names of Zanth's dead. The bottom floor is dedicated to the untold thousands of Paradoxists who died during the Cult Wars.

### STADIA OF CHAMPIONS (MAP KEY #23)

These immense walled 40-foot structures contain 13 steps each, built to afford seating to spectators viewing the Clash of Champions. The top step is canopied, and reserved for individuals of importance and wealth from Zandu and beyond, each paying 100 g.l. for the privilege (spyglass included). Vendors hawking Zash, alcohol, and spyglasses (25 g.l. each) circulate freely during the annual event, as do pickpockets. The stadia go unused throughout the rest of the year.

### NOTABLE CITIZENS

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, rivals (friendly or otherwise), or encounters:

#### *Captain Zirago Vey - Zandir Sea Captain*

When in port, Captain Vey is one of the more colorful figures in the dockyard. His brass arm, an enchanted relic of ancient origin, is adept at flinging knives and slapping barmaid's bottoms - Zirago says it has a mind of its own. His ship, the Fountain of Dust, regularly risks the voyage to the Dark Coast, returning with a variety of rare goods.

#### *Cilia Aquatine - Batrean Paramour and Sultan's Wife*

The Sultan's newest wife and current infatuation, Cilia affects an aquatic look, dressing entirely in seashells and braided seaweed, and having her green-dyed hair magically coifed so that it seems to be moving in a current. The Sultan has no idea that Cilia was once an Arimite's paramour, or that Revenant agents are seeking for her.

#### *The Saffron-Masked Wizard - Zandir Charlatan and Burglar*

The identity of the master of ceremonies at the Manse of Sublime Mysteries remains unknown, though speculation matches him with the Sultan of Zandu, several well-known mages, or even the Hierophant of Aaman on holiday! He is actually Nighthand, a Zandir charlatan who leads a number of 'other lives' - including one as a daring burglar.

## Hotan's History of the World

### *Joyila Orto - Zandir Causidian*

This begemmed and necklaced older Causidian, pudgy with the rewards of a successful legal practice, now dedicates his time to serving the poor at minimal charges - in fact, he almost forces himself upon his clients. His obsession with fairness outweighs his loyalty to those he defends, as he has been known to "accidentally" betray convicting confidences.

### *Ustreyra - Famed Zandir Escort*

Although notably overweight, Ustreyra is still attractive, and has gained fame as one of Zanth's most skilled escorts and prostitutes. It is said that she can pleasure a person like no other, and given her huge popularity among Zanth's wealthier citizens (both male and female), the rumor might well be true; it is certainly acknowledged that her charms are abundant. Despite her public profile, Ustreyra is a sensitive and warm-hearted individual.

### *Sarissimi - Sarista Rogue*

This flirtatious and irascible gypsy spends every winter in the Zanth ghetto, working with the animals she performs with during her summer tour. The highlight of the act is a trained urhound, which bounds from the back of one ogriphant to another through a ring of fire. Her mascot is a sarcastic ravier named Octar.

### *Wyleth - Zandir Charlatan and Dean of Enticement*

A young man of pallid complexion and weak constitution, Wyleth is the Paradoxist Seminary's Dean of Enticement. It is said that he can, for a price, manipulate the heart of the most aloof or remote person. Oddly enough, he is believed to live alone in a hilltop manse, and has no known romantic entanglements.

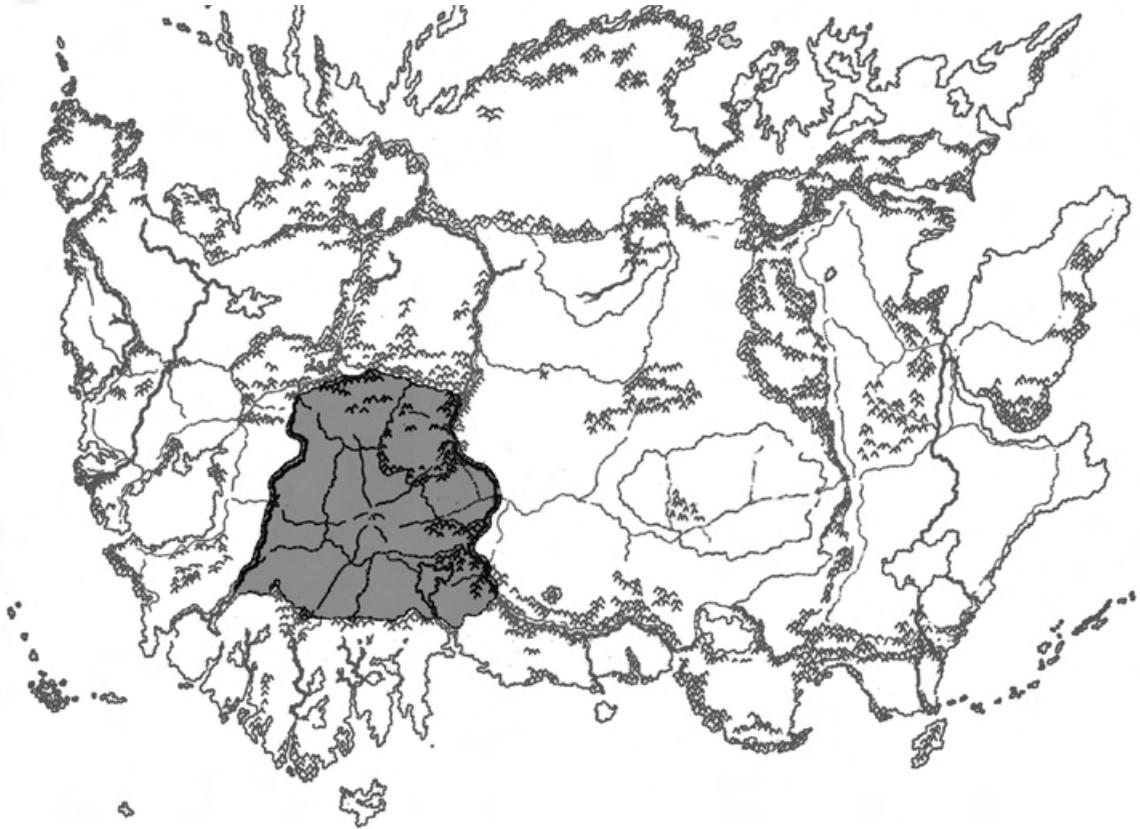
### *Kar Vlasi - Zandir Swordsman Unit Leader*

Crude and lewd, Kar is entrusted with breaking in troops new to the Chrome Citadel. She constantly challenges her soldiers to new achievements in order to earn glory: stealing the pennant of another unit, clandestinely raiding into Aamahd, or patrolling the worst sections of Zanth after midnight. Her troops gave her the nickname "Old Mangonel" in reference to her looks.

### *Natromo - Zandir Serparian (Forsaken)*

Although only 13 years of age, Natromo has lived his entire life on the streets of Zanth, having been abandoned by a mother he never knew. Savvy and mature beyond his years, he projects an extremely cynical but artful demeanor, hiding the fact that he deeply cares for those Forsaken younger than he. A truly skilled pickpocket, he considers himself fortunate that he hasn't had to sell himself to survive.





## THE SEVEN KINGDOMS

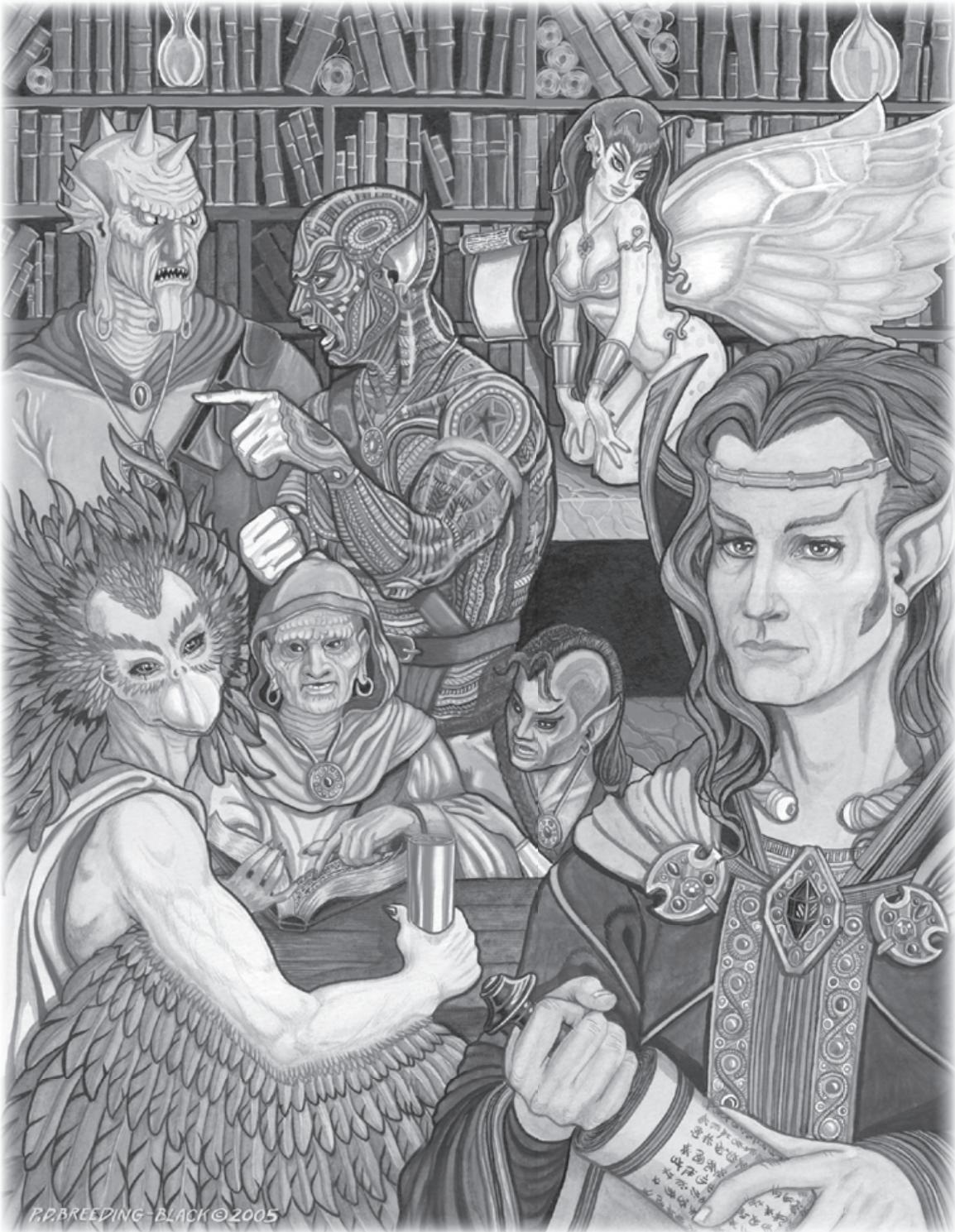
The Seven Kingdoms may not lie at the geographical center of the continent, but that doesn't stop it from being the heart of civilization on Talislanta. The freedoms enshrined by this commonwealth of semiautonomous states attract all kinds of people, from curious visitors to eager immigrants.

Established during the New Age by the descendants of various peoples displaced by the Great Disaster, the territories now designated as the Seven Kingdoms were once separate nations, each ruled by its own king and distrustful of the others. It took a nearly fatal threat from outside—the invasion of the Beastmen (at the close of the second century N.A.)—to unite the disparate societies.

Today, the Seven Kingdoms is ruled by the Council of Kings which is composed of the rulers of the separate states. Each kingdom has its own national color, and retains all the customs and traditions peculiar to its inhabitants. The Seven Roads link the capitals, and are a vital east-west link for the trade caravans of Talislanta.

A superb national army of mercenaries, small but well-trained, guarantees the liberty of the commonwealth. The Grand Army comprises seven regiments and a fleet of windships, plus barge-fort squadrons on the Axis River. A separate organization, known as the Legion of the Borderlands, mans three vital outposts on the fringes of the Wilderlands.

The land ranges from the rocky, desert wastes of Sindar and Kasmir to the dense forests of Astar and Vardune; from the tropical jungles and swamps of Taz to the lightly-wooded open country of Cymril. The Axis River forms the western border, keeping the Aamanians at bay. The waterless Dead River canyon performs the same function in the east, discouraging the raids of bandits and Beastmen. The mountains of southern Urag, and the dense swamps and mountains along the borders with Mog and Jhangara, likewise provide protection on those frontiers.



# ASTAR

Astar is a land of sylvan glades, lakes and streams, interspersed with fields of bright meadow blossoms. Here dwell the last of an ancient and enchanting race of beings known as the Muses.

## THE MUSES

Nymph-like creatures believed to be of magical origin, the Muses are the most beautiful of the manlike races. Their bodies are slender and lithe, their features delicate and exquisitely fashioned. They dress in translucent gowns, shaded in hues complementing the colors of their skin, hair and butterfly-like wings: pastel blue, turquoise, violet and rose, to name just a few.

## CUSTOMS

The Muses of Astar are by nature flighty and irresponsible. Most seem content to lay about, dreaming secret dreams, sipping the nectar of flowers, or gazing at butterflies, birds, and Muses of the opposite sex.

In actuality, Muses are natural telepaths, able to communicate by means of thoughts and images. All Muses possess this unusual ability, the range and scope of which increase with practice. They can sense the strong emotions of others, broadcast and receive thoughts, project mental images, sense the presence of



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## Hotan's History of the World

living beings, and even influence others' emotions. As a consequence of their ability to mind speak, Muses have come to regard common speech as rude and unaesthetic.

The Muses live in small villages, seldom larger than a half dozen elaborately-woven huts, scattered throughout the length and breadth of their Enchanted Grove. They possess a natural talent for all artistic pursuits, but create only when struck by inspiration. Though some few of a curious bent become adventurers, most Muses are quite content to spend their entire lives in Astar.

They don't seem to have a government, at least not in the sense that other societies do— the Muses draw straws once each month to determine who represents their nation at the Council of Kings in Cymril. The holder of the short straw is crowned king or queen, as the situation dictates. The national color of Astar is azure, probably for no good reason, but possibly in honor of nearby Lake Zephyr.

## THE WHISPS

The other, sometimes forgotten residents of Astar are the Wood Whisps. Diminutive creatures of elemental power, they dwell with the Muses in the Enchanted Grove. Their magical powers, shrewd natural cunning, and ability to fly keep them safe from harm. They know all the secrets of the woods in which they live, but seldom reveal their wisdom to outsiders.

Mischievous and tormentive to others, the Whisps actually serve as friends and guardians to the much larger Muses – their “Big Friends.” Each Muse commune is associated with a Whisp clan, and whenever a Muse leaves the safety of Astar to venture into the world, one or more Whisps accompany him.

## LAKE ZEPHYR

This scenic body of water is a favorite trysting place of the Muses. Diaphanous-winged crystal moths, Water Whisps, and many colorful species of avian and aquatic creatures are common to the region, as are less benign creatures such as skalanx.

On the far eastern banks of Lake Zephyr is a docking facility, comprised of a number of ornate wooden barges tethered together and moored to the shore. Here, Dracartan merchants come to trade sweet crystalline powders and Thaecian nectar to the Muses. In return, they are allowed to take drinking water. Thaumaturgists transmute the liquid into solid form, load the ten-foot-square blocks onto their wagons, then begin the long trip by caravan and land barge to the Red Desert and Carantheum.



# CYMRIL

*“First among equals”* within the Seven Kingdoms, the Kingdom of Cymril is a rich land ruled by the descendants of an ancient race of magicians.

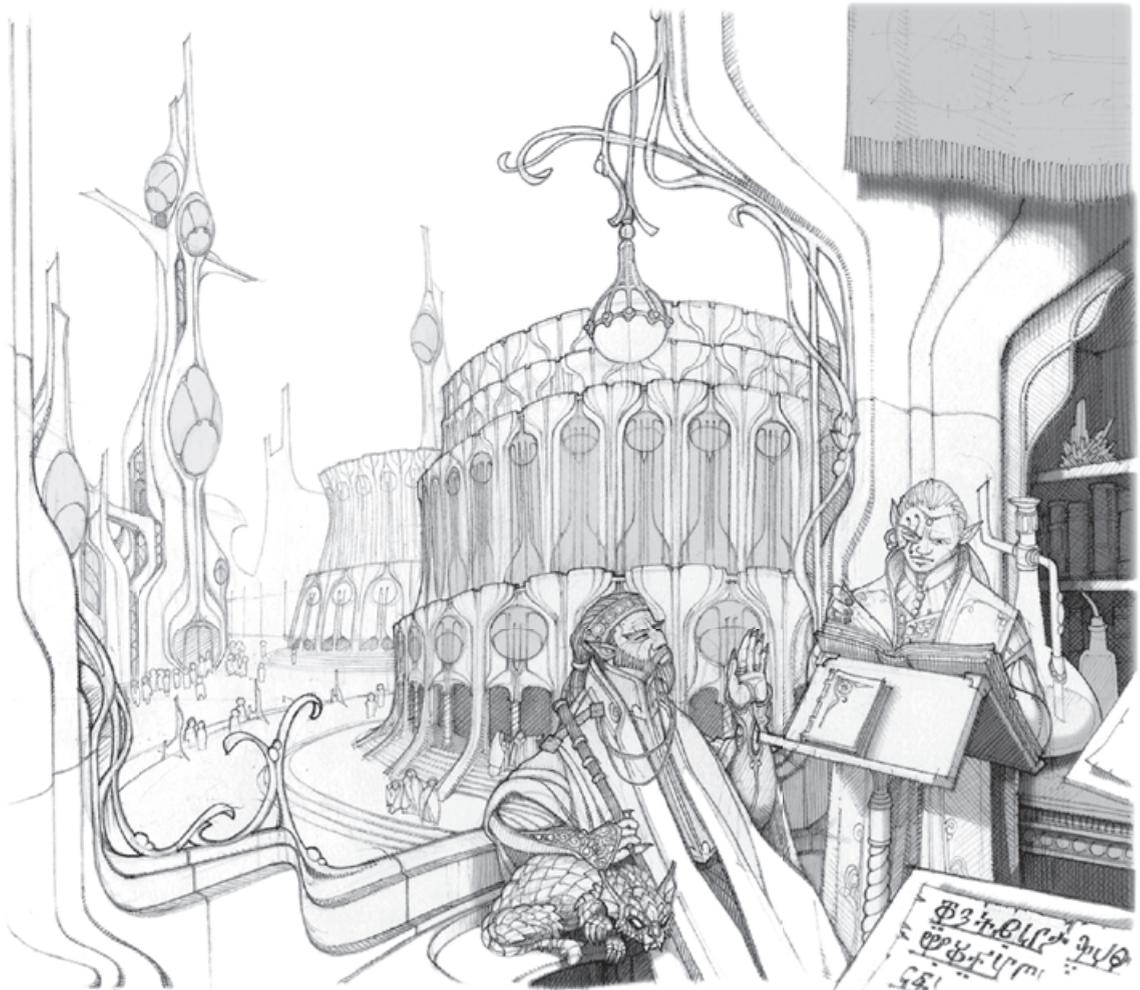
Sweeping hills and light forest dominate much of the Cymrilian countryside, which is largely uninhabited. The greatest part of the population lives in the enchanting City of Cymril, a metropolis of convoluted spires and archways constructed almost entirely of green glass. The city is divided into six districts (“hextants”) around a hub of scenic parklands.

Cymril is the continent’s leading supplier of magical wares, and of such commodities as ambergiass and

aquavit. Being at the nexus of the Seven Roads means that caravans from many lands pass through here.

The kingdom is also the center of Talislanta’s windship industry. The secrets behind the construction of levitationals and gossamer sails are carefully guarded by the powerful Windship Guild. The Air Men of Cymril man the sky fleets, and have a reputation for adventurous derring-do.

The city is also known for the Lyceum Arcanum, Talislanta’s foremost institute of magic. Here the Cymrilian magicians learn their arts, creating wondrous potions, powders and other magical adjuncts.



## THE CYMRILLANS

Three different peoples dwell in the kingdom, all descended from the Phandre—a race of wizards and mages exiled long ago from the now-defunct Phaedran Empire (located where Aaman and Zandu now rule).

The Koresians are the dominant sub-race, and are also known as “Cymrilian.” Tall and slender, they have pale green skin and hair, with golden eyes and placid features. They have few prejudices regarding fashion—all types of exotic apparel are in vogue, though their mages continue to favor the high-collared cloaks worn by their ancient ancestors.

Once the ruling class among the Phandre, the Tanasians comprise Cymril's other sub-race. They proved disloyal during the Beast Wars, and many were exiled into the woodlands. The few Tanasians who remain in the citystate are regarded with some suspicion, but are respected for their mastery of the more obscure of the arcane arts.

The third Phandre sub-race left the citystate long ago, protesting against the discriminatory practices of the Wizard King—both the Koresians and Tanasians have skin of pale-green hue, while the Pharesians are of a darker lime-green shade. They are now nomadic peddlers, traveling the continent but regarding the woodlands of Cymril as their home.

## CUSTOMS

All Cymrilian are enamored of magic in any of its myriad forms. Most citizens own a lesser talisman or two, and there is a brisk trade in minor charms, elixirs and potions. There is always a market for enchanted items and magical tomes in Cymril, particularly those of ancient origin.

Though practicing magicians make up less than one-tenth of the populace, the ruler of Cymril is always a mage. Usually the most capable of Cymril's spell-casters, the Wizard King is elected by popular vote, and serves a term of three years.

Once each year, the city of Cymril hosts the Magical Fair, a colorful two-week spectacle attended by folk from all across Talislanta. The magical competitions are especially fascinating to view (from a safe distance, that is.)

## A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO CYMRIL

*“Cymril is open, diverse, and enamored of arcane lore. It is damned of course.”*

*- Aaslan, Aamanian Witch-Hunter*

## THE POPULACE

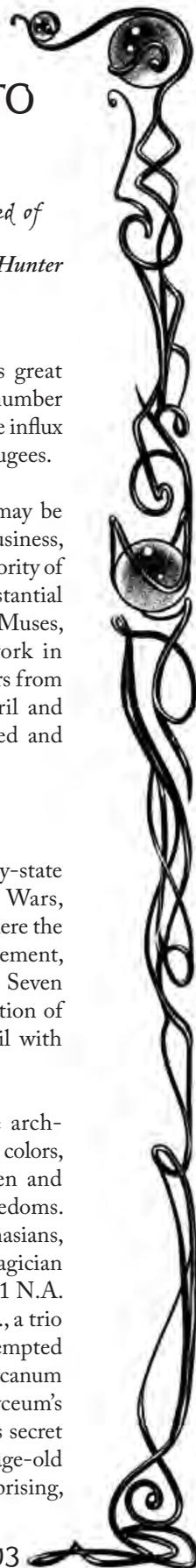
Approximately 49,000 people inhabit this great metropolis on a permanent basis, though the number can swell by several thousand due to the massive influx of foreign traders, diplomats, travelers and refugees.

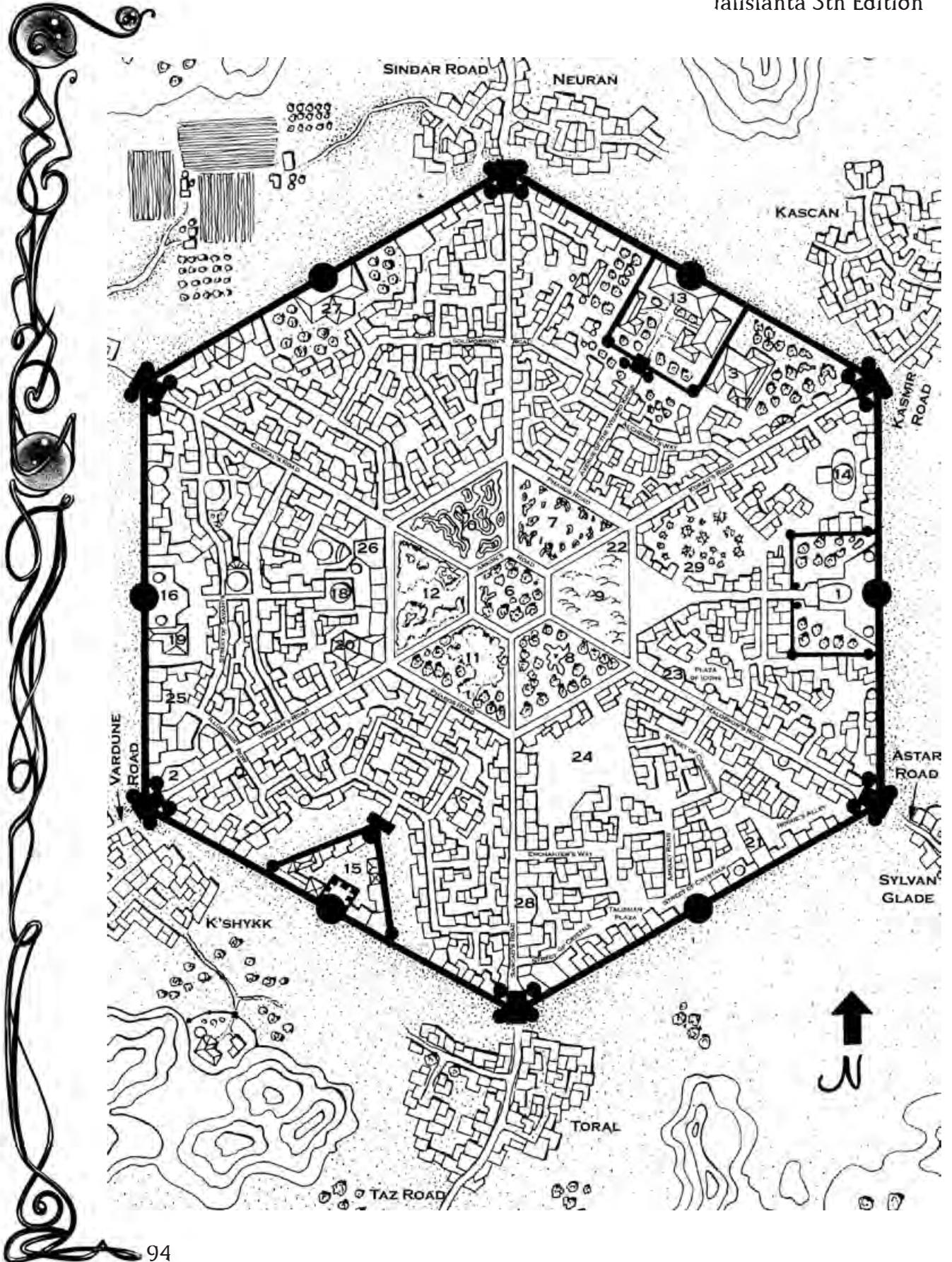
Beings from around the entire continent may be found in this cosmopolitan hub, engaged in business, trade, or simply sightseeing. While the vast majority of the stable populace is Cymrilian, there is a substantial minority group of Thralls, Aeriad, Gnomekin, Muses, Kasmirans, and Sindarans who live and work in Cymril. Mixed with a healthy dose of foreigners from beyond the confederation, this makes Cymril and its inhabitants among the most open-minded and accepting on the continent.

## HISTORY

The Phandre, magicians exiled from the city-state of Phaedra in 148 N.A., during the Cult Wars, established the free state of Cymril, settling where the city itself now stands. After 300 years of settlement, Cymril was prospering as a city-state, and the Seven Roads (actually six, the seventh being the section of the Underground Highway that links Cymril with Durne) were finally constructed in 451 N.A.

Ruled during much of its history by the arch-conservative Tanasians, Cymril's only permitted colors, both in construction and apparel, were green and yellow, and laws were stifling to personal freedoms. As corruption became apparent among the Tanasians, the populace elected Azradamus, a master magician of known liberal views, as Wizard-King in 601 N.A. Seeking to reassert their influence in 603 N.A., a trio of the Tanasian's most powerful magicians attempted to instigate a coup, failing when the Lyceum Arcanum came out in support of Azradamus (the Lyceum's one-time Chief Administrator). The Lyceum's secret archives were opened, bringing to light many age-old scandals regarding the Tanasians. A popular uprising,





### WATCH YOUR SPELL—CASTING.

Visiting spell-casters would do best to understand the magical laws of Cymril. While low-key and frivolous spellcasting is acceptable, and even encouraged (to make life easier, provide entertainment, etc.), the unregistered use of offensive spells, the Dark Arts (such as Demonology, Diabolism, etc.), and any unpermitted or unregistered summonings are strictly prohibited. Permission should always be sought at the Lyceum Arcanum and done through official channels. Furthermore, necromancers must get a license to practice from the Lyceum Arcanum (a procedure that costs 500 g.l., and requires an extensive and rigorous interview process during which the individual must state clear and good reasons why they should be granted the license, and what they intend to do with it).

Magical crimes are regarded as among the most heinous, and are punished severely. Only the most extenuating of circumstances are acceptable, and then, only if no other option was adequate. Those who seriously break these laws can easily find themselves banished to a none-too-pleasant dimension. Despite these strict prohibitions, Cymril has no specialized procedure for detecting unauthorized magic use, relying instead on investigation, witnesses, etc. as it does with all other crimes.

supported by the Wizard-King, swept the Tanasians and their supporters from power, imprisoning many, and forcing others to flee to foreign lands. Of the three Tanasian magicians who led the attempted coup, Nymandre was convicted of treason, placed in stasis and imprisoned in an impermeable orb, Ebonarde fled to parts unknown (some say Rajinnar while others say Werewood or even the far-off lands of L'Haan), and Naryx of the Gloved Hand disappeared entirely.

Since the Tanasians were ousted, many of the old traditions and proscriptions have fallen out of vogue. The obsession with the color green has given way to an avid appreciation of multichromaticism, and Cymril has been rapidly rebuilt to embrace this fact.

Unfortunately, while Cymril is enjoying something of a rebirth, many of the exiled Tanasians continue to plot against the liberal Azradamus and his supporters, and sporadic Tanasian terrorism provides a threat against which Cymril is most vigilant.

## VISIONS OF CYMRIL

### A VIEW FROM AFAR

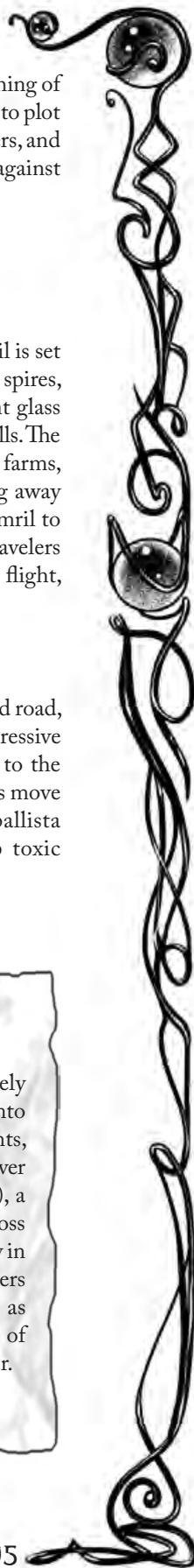
A great hexagon of variegated crystal, Cymril is set amid sweeping hills of grass. Many elaborate spires, archways, promenades and domes of iridescent glass fill the area encompassed by the city's mighty walls. The surrounding land is a patchwork of picturesque farms, vineyards and country estates, gradually falling away to woodland and forest. Six roads connect Cymril to the other kingdoms, bustling with trade and travelers from across the continent as a windship takes flight, bound for locations unknown.

### AT THE GATES

Vast twin gates tower 30-foot above the broad road, forged from single pieces of black iron. Impressive walls of pitted yellow-green porphyry extend to the distance, 50-foot high and half as thick. Figures move atop this massive barrier, manning heavy ballista emplacements, or standing ready to dump toxic alchemicals on foolish invaders.

### NO SLAVES

Slavery is prohibited in Cymril, and largely considered abhorrent. Any slaves taken into Cymril must be freed from any constraints, magical or mundane, immediately, or the slaver will face a hefty fine (upwards of 500 g.l.), a period of several days detainment, and the loss of the slave if discovered (a strong possibility in Cymril). Even without slaves, those members of races infamous for their slavery, such as Imrians, may find themselves the subjects of prejudice concealed beneath a polite veneer.



## THE CITY STREETS

The streets are vibrant with activity, the inhabitants a riot of color and fashions. Ornate equus-drawn carriages, transport those that need to cover large distances, or those that find walking tedious. Many-hued hexagonal slabs of stone interlock to provide walkways bordering a central street of dirt, while a myriad of skyways, balconies, overlapping terraces, and bridges of crystal twist amid the towers above. Every hue and shade of color can be seen on tower, inn, archway or habitation, a chaotic clutter surrounding side streets and the arrow-straight track that heads towards the heart of the city.

## CYMRIL AT NIGHT

Cymril's crystalline architecture glows with the light from within, diffuse radiance softly displaying all the colors of the rainbow. Like a majestic, but abstract, stained glass window when viewed from afar, Cymril is a bustle of activity even at night, as those who can afford to do so, make their way amid the city's innumerable nightspots.

## THE TYPICAL DWELLING

### AN EXTERIOR VIEW

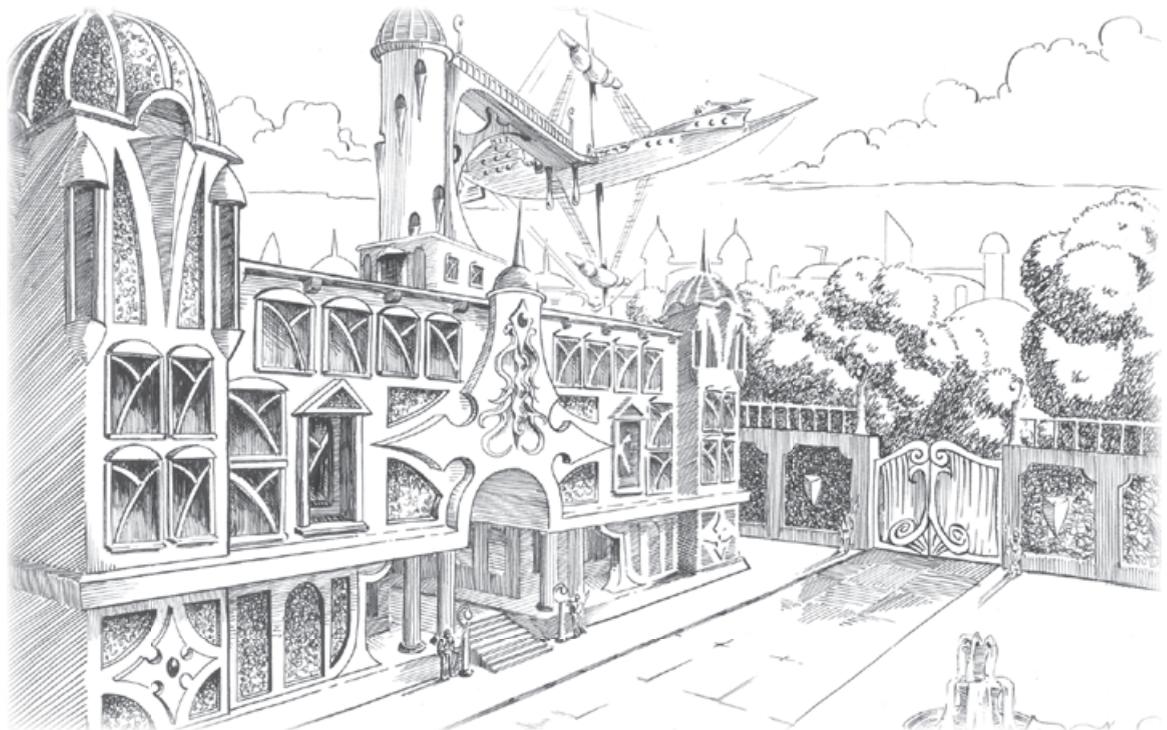
A broad circular tower of multichromatic opaque crystal reaches for the sky, studded with circular windows. It adjoins a broader spiral tower of clashing colors with triangular windows, and an elevated walkway of almost transparent crystal winds its way around them both. An ornately carved double archway opens into the tower of apartments.

### THE TOWER INTERIOR

The first floor is a shaded circular garden, with flowers and a small artificial pond enclosed by colored marble tiles. A central staircase spirals upwards.

#### The Apartment

The doorway opens into a circular apartment some 30-foot in diameter, separated into four equal rooms with 7-foot high ceilings. A circular crystal window opens into each room, draped with colorful silks. The walls are heated, providing a comfortable temperature all year round, and several scintilla stand in elaborate holders, providing adequate illumination.



## The Living Room

A curving lounger of padded land-lizard leather is covered with scatter cushions. A low table of polished and colored crystal occupies the center of the room, flanked by several soft, high-backed armchairs. The floor is composed of opaque crystal, covered with one or two woven rugs.

## The Bathroom

A carved crystal bathtub occupies this room, filling with warm water on command, using alchemical heating agents from a small reservoir at its base, and drawing moisture from the air outside the tower. A crystal toilet stands to one side, using alchemical sprays to break down wastes, remove unsavory odors, and clean the posterior.

## The Kitchen

An alchemically-fuelled crystal stove stands against the wall, flanked by cupboards of opaque crystal carved directly into the walls of the tower itself. A coolbox of crystal stands to the side, containing foods flash-frozen with a cheap Blue Havoc derivative. A simple moisture condenser provides all the inhabitant's water.

## Bedroom

A semicircular feather bed follows with carved crystal posts and scatter-cushions occupies half of the room. A crystal wardrobe carved into the tower itself features a full-length mirror. A small make-up table stands to one side.

While this represents the typical abode of the average citizen or couple, you can expect such apartments to feature numerous personal touches and affectations that reflect the aesthetic interests and occupations of the inhabitants. Families get larger apartments with one or two extra bedrooms. Wealthier individuals, most notably wizards, add many esoteric decorations and ornaments, shelves of books, and bizarre artifacts, typically composed of rarer and more expensive materials.

## PLACES OF AUTHORITY

### CITY JAIL (MAP KEY #2)

One of the city's few stone buildings, this squat, unadorned building is a block, two-stories high, containing no windows, and a mere 48 holding cells. Each cell contains two sturdy cots and little else, and a full eight of the cells feature extensive counter-magic

glyphs, wards and force-barriers to accommodate spellcasters. The cells are well guarded, but primarily serve to hold unruly citizens overnight while they cool off and sober up.

### CONSULATE (MAP KEY #5)

This large, austere, two-story structure of marbled turquoise crystal is luxuriously appointed with quarters and offices for ambassadors from each of the Seven Kingdoms, and also boasts separate facilities for visiting dignitaries and their entourages, including private grounds of tree-shaded promenades and grassy glades. Security is extremely strict.

### COUNCIL OF KINGS (MAP KEY #1)

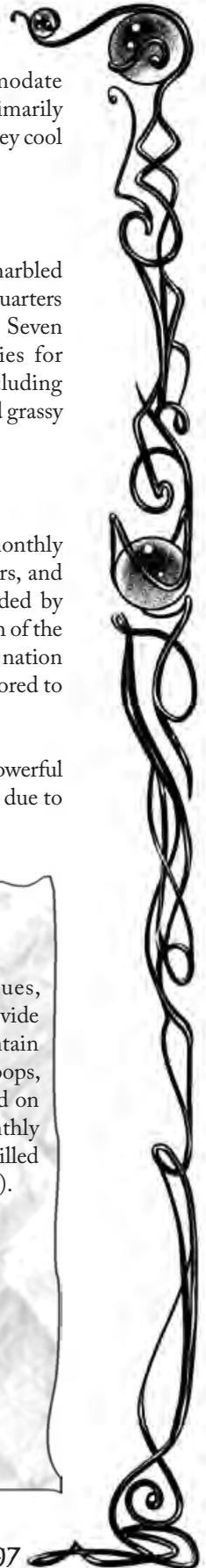
This building serves as the forum for the monthly meeting of the Seven Kingdom's various rulers, and consists of a white seven-sided hall, surrounded by seven adjoining accommodation buildings. Each of the seven adjoining structures is the color of the nation whose king and entourage it houses, and is tailored to appeal to members of that specific culture.

The current ruler of Cymril is Azradamus, a powerful magician who is purported to be 200 years old due to a regular ingestion of seven secret essences.

## TAX

Cymril collects extensive tax revenues, enabling them to keep the city clean, provide their repair and sanitation services, maintain their institutions, field and train their troops, watchmen and windships, etc. Tax is based on the individual's or company's average monthly earnings, and is collected every month by skilled Kasmirans (accompanied by Thrall guards).

Earnings per month	% Tax
up to 15 g.l.	10%
up to 30 g.l.	15%
up to 60 g.l.	20%
up to 120 g.l.	25%
up to 240 g.l.	30%
up to 480 g.l.	35%
beyond 480 g.l.	40%



## LAW ENFORCEMENT

The City Watch is a well-trained and professional body, with a good reputation for handling trouble in an expedient manner. The Watch Commander (who is also the City Legion's Commander) resides in the Citadel, but has little to do with the routine of law enforcement. Each Station is governed by a single Watch Captain who reports directly to the Watch Commander. Each Watch Captain commands 12 Sergeants, each of whom leads a squad of five men. There are always four patrols on duty at any one time in each sector. The Watch is comprised of Thralls and Cymrilian Swordsmages, although each Station also employs the services of three Sindaran investigators.

## THE HALLS OF JUSTICE (MAP KEY #3)

This simple seven-sided building of opaque indigo crystal is two-stories high. The lower floor consists of seven courts that deal with civil and criminal cases. The upper floor is a single large court, presided over by seven judges (one from each kingdom) that handle disputes arising between the member nations.

## HALL OF RECORDS (MAP KEY #14)

This tall, spiral tower complex of dark polychromatic crystal consists of 8-stories of offices, housing Cymril's civil servants and records, including tax collectors, assessors, litigators, and all records pertaining to tariffs, trade duties, real estate holdings, legal registrations, and so on.

## PALACE OF THE WIZARD KING (MAP KEY #13)

This palace is composed of a 250-foot high central building, with delicately carved arches, surmounted with slender and elegant towers, and surrounded by seven adjoining smaller buildings, each of which is surmounted by seven spires. Canopied terraces lead into the surrounding grounds, and scalloped balconies adorn every window. The entire palace looks as if it has been hewn from a single huge piece of emerald crystal,

carved with delicate filigree, and lightly marbled. The grounds feature many fountains, statues and footpaths, the entirety of which is surrounded by a great wall, massive wrought-iron gate, and extensive patrols by veteran swordsmages in ceremonial armor.

## MILITARY BASES

### THE CITADEL (MAP KEY #15)

This 50-foot high single-tower fortress of green stone adjoins directly to the SE wall's sentinel tower. Full barracks, training grounds and stabling facilities are located at its base, providing facilities for over two thousand Thrall, Blue Aeriad and Cymrilian mercenaries. It also serves as the headquarters for the City Watch. Two walls, forming triangular grounds, enclose the entire complex.

### SENTINEL TOWERS

These three-story round towers, each 50-foot high, are constructed of the same stone as the city's outer walls. Each houses a pair of Arimite fire-thrower siege weapons, 20 artillerists, and 30 thrall heavy cavalry, who often patrol the outlying roads. Mangonel lizards are stabled in underground bunkers at the tower's base.

### WATCH STATIONS

Each of Cymril's six sectors has one of these two-story outposts, housing that sector's Watch contingent. The stout towers are constructed of thick, dark opaque crystal, and provide offices for the Watch captains and investigators.

## EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

### COLLEGE OF LAW (MAP KEY #17)

Located adjacent to the Halls of Justice the College of Law resembles a scaled down version its neighbor, standing a mere one story high, and is only half the length and width. It serves as a university and guildhouse for arbitrators and legislators, many of which are available for hire at costs of 50 g.l. per day or more. A mere 40 students are enrolled here each year for a legal course that takes two years, and costs 400 g.l.

### LYCEUM ARCANUM (MAP KEY #16)

This famed institution consists entirely of verdant crystal and stands 40-foot high, with a clashing array of pillars around its circumference. Two great iron portals allow entrance, although they are extensively warded and guarded. Talislanta's premier institute of arcane studies, the Lyceum Arcanum contains numerous classrooms and laboratories, workshops, archives and vaults, as well as lecturer accommodation. Three upper levels house the accommodation, classrooms and lecture halls, while two subterranean levels house laboratories and vaults. The Lyceum offers classes in every known magical field except for Diabolism or Demonology Invocations, as well as classes on esoteric lore, and performs research and experimentation at the behest of Cymril's government. Tuition costs 500 g.l. per septemester (seven weeks), or 50 g.l. for Cymrilian citizens. Entrance requirements are strict.

## MUSEUMS & LIBRARIES

### MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES

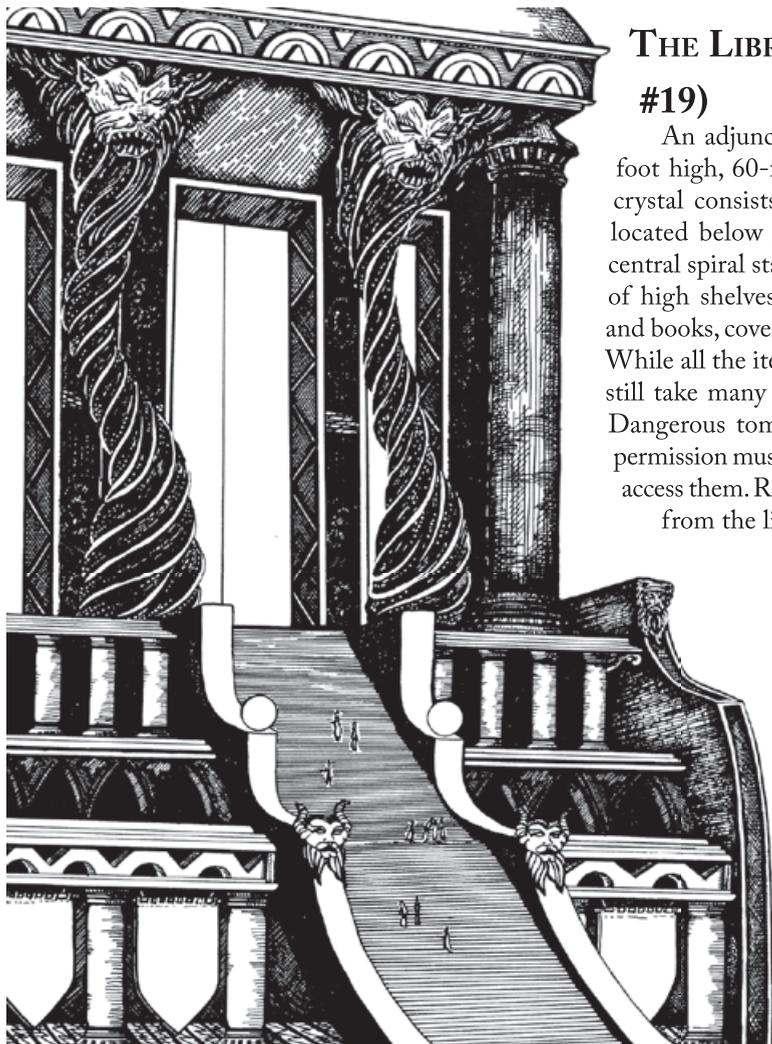
#### (MAP KEY #18)

This structure of jade crystal stands 36-foot high and is one of the oldest in the city. Vast carved pillars surround the entire building, and large double doors permit entrance. The interior consists of three-levels containing exhibition halls filled with countless cases displaying antique artifacts, many of which date back to the Forgotten Age, including items from the ancient civilizations of Elande, Pompados, Sharna, Phandril, Xambria and Torquar. Needless to say, all the exhibits are heavily warded and extensively guarded. Several subterranean levels house artifacts that are being repaired, identified, or are too fragile or dangerous to display.

### THE LIBRARY OF CYMRIL (MAP KEY

#### #19)

An adjunct of the Lyceum Arcanum, this 60-foot high, 60-foot diameter circular tower of lime crystal consists of nine floors, three of which are located below ground. Each level is reached by a central spiral staircase, and lined with row upon row of high shelves, with thousands of tablets, scrolls, and books, covering nearly every conceivable subject. While all the items are extensively catalogued, it can still take many days to track down a specific tome. Dangerous tomes are kept in a warded vault, and permission must be given by the Lyceum Arcanum to access them. Research materials may not be removed from the library without special permission.



## PLACES OF WORSHIP

### CATHEDRAL OF THE MAGISTER

#### (MAP KEY #20)

Soft colored lights glow within the green crystal walls of this imposing temple. Standing 35-foot in height, and built like a seven-pointed star, each point is a hall of pews spaced evenly around a large central hall containing a circular rostrum and pulpit. Carved runes of magical significance adorn every surface.

### REPOSE OF THE TEN THOUSAND

#### (MAP KEY #21)

See DENS OF INIQUITY

### TERRA'S GROTTO (MAP KEY #22)

A gentle slope of rich, dark soil descends into a womb-like cavern. A scattering of natural crystals glow in the shade, providing warm illumination. A small sinuous tunnel links this cavern to the Gnomekin Market.

### THE RIGHTEOUS TOWER OF AA

#### (MAP KEY #23)

A small fortress-like tower of bleached white stone topped with a great carved eye. Harsh angles predominate, and the interior is spartan, save for a large unblinking eye carved into the wall opposite the entrance.

## MARKET'S & BAZAARS

### THE BAZAAR (MAP KEY #24)

The Bazaar is a huge open-air market frequented by traders from all over the Seven Kingdoms and beyond, and is open from sun-up to sundown every day of the year. Stalls bearing every conceivable product (and more than a few that aren't) can be found here. Haggling is lively, and many citizens spend at least a few hours here every week purchasing various groceries and knick-knacks. Watch patrols are commonplace around the market, but it still pays to be wary of the inevitable pickpockets and charlatans.

### THE MAGICAL FAIR

The Bazaar also serves as the site of Cymril's annual Magical Fair: a two week long pageant starting on the 1st of Phandir, celebrating the founding of the free kingdom of Cymril.

### CYMRILIAN PRODUCE

Magical items and the materials to make them are cheaper in Cymril. Plant and animal ingredients are up to 20% less than in other areas; gemstones used in alchemy are sometimes 5-10% less. Potions, powders and elixirs can, with haggling, be brought down 10% or more. Many magical items that would be available nowhere else on the continent will be available in Cymril, although prices remain stable due to demand. Magical trinkets are always available at fair prices.

Many narcotics are legal in Cymril but heavily taxed. Prices will be 20% to 30% more: the more severe the drug the higher the tax. Any glass item will be up to 30% less than elsewhere. Due to a high variety in demand, any one garment in Cymril may cost significantly more or less depending on how fashionable the item is or recently was. Although yesterday's fashions are cheap, they might get one ridiculed.

The Bazaar also serves as the site of Cymril's annual Magical Fair: a two week long pageant starting on the 1st of Phandir, celebrating the founding of the free kingdom of Cymril.

### GNOMEKIN MARKET

Located directly under the Bazaar, the Gnomekin Market is a large cavern complex, lit with numerous glowing crystals, and dealing exclusively in Gnomekin produce. Vast tunnels lead off along the Underground Highway. Prices here are always fair. As such, it is considered offensive to try and haggle with the Gnomekin merchants. A single small tunnel connects directly with Terra's Grotto.

## TRADERS, ARTISANS & MERCHANTS

### AMBERGLASS BOUNTY

An adjunct of the Lyceum Arcanum, this unadorned, warehouse-like structure of vibrant orange crystal deals in all sorts of magical and alchemical supplies, which it purchases in bulk. Animal, vegetable and mineral ingredients abound, as do common magical and alchemical mixtures, parchments, writing paraphernalia, alchemical apparatuses, and various crystal containers. Prices remain average despite the bulk purchasing, due to high demand.

### BLADE HAVEN ARMORY

This shop features a sign consisting of two swords, welded together on an iron shield. This shop and forge deals in weapons and armor of all varieties, and is run by a Thrall Smith, and Cymrilian Swordsmage. Common weapons and armor of good quality are plentiful. Items can be forged of black, red or blue iron. In addition, items can be decorated with scrollwork, filigree or enamel for a reasonable fee (50% plus of the item's value, depending on detail, size, and materials involved).

### CARTOGRAPHICA

Located right next to the wind-docks, Cartographica is the best archive of maps on the continent. Hundreds of maps are piled on row upon row of dusty shelves in no discernable order. The owner is a Sindaran with a passion for maps and has been dealing in them for decades.

### GEARS AND MECHANISMS

This shop is composed of blue rutilated crystal, and a small clockwork automaton above the door, proclaims "Gears and Mechanisms!" every 30 seconds in a tinny voice. This workshop contains an automated forge run by a pair of Yassan technomancers, and numerous mechanical marvels are proudly displayed, including clockwork children's toys, useful tools and gadgets, and even basic prosthetic limbs. Costs are high, and custom pieces can be made on demand given sufficient notice.

### THE HOOKAH

This small, hole-in-the-wall shop features a large hookah above the doorway, which billows scented, colored fumes on a continuous basis. It specializes in selling soft recreational drugs - the most popular of which is Draiva's Dreamy Smoking Tobacco—and alchemical enhancements such as pigment or glitter powder.

### ALCHEMICAL HIGH

Most drugs are legal in Cymril, but heavily taxed and the most dangerous drugs, such as k'tallah, are still illegal. Magically tailored drugs, made locally and sold without taxation, are a problem for the City Watch.

### KOLMIRANA'S

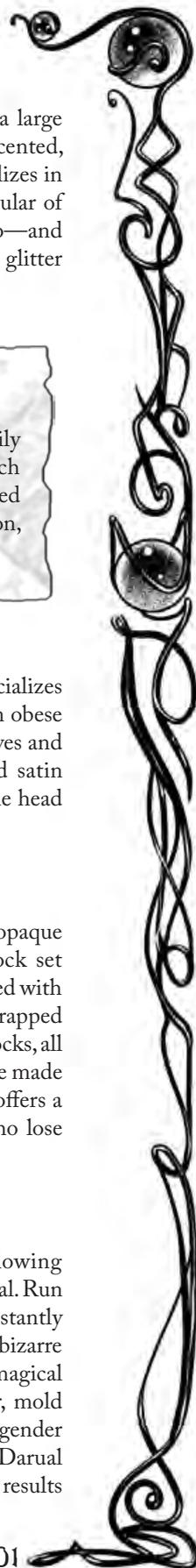
This small, turquoise crystal pawnshop specializes in magical items and trinkets. Kolmirana is an obese female Cymrilian with silver skin, turquoise eyes and long gold hair, usually dressed in bejewelled satin robes. It is rumored that she is a fence, and the head of a city-wide underworld ring.

### LOCK AND KEY

This stout windowless structure of thick, opaque purple crystal, features a massive iron padlock set above a sturdy iron door which is literally riddled with keyholes. Housed within sturdy, locked and trapped display cases are numerous fiendish traps and locks, all for sale. In addition, keys, traps and locks can be made to order by the Kasmiran owner, who also offers a lock-opening service for those individuals who lose their keys (25 g.l.).

### METAMORPHOSIS

This salon consists of a small, faintly glowing twisted, two-story tower of marbled black crystal. Run by the famed Darual the Morphosite (who constantly alters his entire appearance and even gender, in bizarre ways), this establishment employs the latest magical enhancements to change skin and hair color, mold facial features, lacquer and shape hair, disguise gender and age, etc. It is currently in vogue to allow Darual to "do his own thing" with a makeover, and the results



are often astounding. Wealthy clients from Cymril, Hadjistan and Zandu make frequent visits. Costs range from 100 - 1,000 g.l.

### MORTAR AND PESTLE

This reputable establishment offers powders, potions and other alchemical mixtures of good quality at reasonable rates, and also offers to analyze unknown mixtures at a cost of 10 g.l. The exterior of the shop has been coated with a glittering umber alchemical, and the interior is draped with orange silk, as appeals to the Sindaran proprietor.

### MYRMIDIAN'S MESSAGES

This establishment is one of many that provides a messaging service unique to Cymril. A message written on origami parchment (see sidebar) is placed within a magical sphere, the size of two fists, and then told a name and address within Cymril. The ball will roll to that address, and then repeat the name of the person in a high-pitched voice until someone acknowledges they are that person. The service costs 3 g.l. per message, plus the cost of origami parchment if necessary.

### SERAZZIO'S

This slender, tapering three-story tower is composed of rose crystal, shot through with swirls of various colors. It is the best tailoring facility in the Seven Kingdoms, dealing in all manner of exotic costumes, both antique and modern, and will custom-make clothing to order. Every cloth known across the continent can be found here.

### SIGIL

Sigil is a curiosity shop of the highest order, its ramshackle shelves literally brimming with odd knick-knacks, strange paraphernalia, and weird artifacts. It is widely rumored that nearly anything can be found here if someone spends enough time digging through the uncatalogued mess, from Khazad sarcophagi to old stuffed dolls, from pickled body parts to magical artifacts of unusual power or unknown purpose. Sigils are carved in bas-relief on every available surface, both inside and out.

### TAZIAN TATTOOS

This small parlor displays a hanging sign of a colorful thrall, and features boards displaying innumerable artistic designs, any of which can be tattooed. While an aged thrall does work here, the parlor's best tattoo artist is a female Sarista, whose works are said to be truly breathtaking and vivid. Prices range from 1 g.l. for a small, simple, monochrome tattoo, to several hundred g.l. for large, vivid, colorful tattoos that use magical pigments.

### WILDERLANDS EXPEDITIONARY

This immense warehouse and stable complex offers mounts, dray beasts, wagons, and equipment such as ropes, tents, foul-weather clothing, and even small skiffs, at reasonable prices for average to good quality.

### PARKS

Cymril's many parks are favored places of relaxation on fine days, and are especially popular among homesick ex-patriots. Needless to say, they are also popular with courting couples... and individuals of a voyeuristic nature.

### CYMRIL PARK (MAP KEY #6)

Green crystal tile paths weave amid a rainbow of colors - the flowers, bushes and trees perfectly sculpted from multi-hued glass. An inspiring statue occupies the center of the park, cut from emerald glass, celebrating Pharos, the first Wizard King of Cymril.

### DURNE PARK (MAP KEY #7)

Shadowed cavern mouths lead into a network of grottoes and tunnels. Clusters of mushrooms glow with soft purple phosphorescence, reflecting in the sweeping gardens of amber crystal formations. A life-size statue of warm amber depicts Sabo Orabio, the Gnome-King who lead his people to victory over the Darkling hordes of Urag.

### ASTAR PARK (MAP KEY #8)

Lush fields of grass cloaked with rainbow-hued wildflowers border a crystal-clear pond, recreating Lake Zephyr on a smaller scale. Copses of supple willow line the banks, dipping their leaves into the waters. A statue of a beautiful, but long forgotten, male

## Hotan's History of the World

Muse stands in the middle of the pond, carved from lavender-blue stone and entwined with flowers.

### **KASMIR PARK (MAP KEY #9)**

A windowless stone tower stands surrounded by undulating dunes of golden sand. Stout and strong, it contains the great gold statue of Abn Kadan, the wealthiest merchant in Kasmiran history. Few have ever seen it, for it is under lock and key, warded by devious trap mechanisms. The key is held by the senior Kasmiran councillor.

### **SINDAR PARK (MAP KEY #10)**

Dusty paths wind sinuously between 15-foot high mesas and rugged spires of sandstone and basalt. A 14-foot statue of dark basalt represents Nadir Salu, master collector and inventor of Trivarian.

### **TAZ PARK (MAP KEY #11)**

A tall, thick wall of clear toughened glass surrounds Taz Park, serving to prevent any of the dangerous fauna from escaping into the city. A single entrance with a double gate of iron is warded to prevent unintelligent beasts passing it, and guarded by a pair of veteran Thralls. At the heart of this miniature jungle is a lacquered iron statue of Mace, legendary Thrall commander and hero of the Beast Wars.

Given Taz Park's dangerous flora and fauna, it is widely avoided by all but the brave and foolhardy, and as such only Thralls frequent it with any regularity. However, a small group of jaded thrill-seekers have also been known to frequent the park, although a number have never returned.

### **VARDUNE PARK (MAP KEY #12)**

Greenery is in abundance across terraced gardens, and grassy embankments smothered in flowers. Copses of trees form shaded archways over the elevated walkways of woven vines that connect above the central garden. A huge viridia tree stands there in perpetual bloom, carefully tended over centuries to resemble the great Botanomancer, Viridian.

## **INNS, TAVERNS & RESTAURANTS**

Cymril's various inns, taverns and restaurants are said to be among the most diverse on the continent,

although the risk of attack by a magically animated meal is vastly overstated.

### **THE EYRIE**

As tall as a four-story building, this inn is actually a single large hall of sky-blue crystal, the interior of which features numerous hanging hammocks, platforms, tables, and elevated walkways of woven living vines, at various levels. Catering exclusively to Aeriad, the cuisine, décor and communal accommodation seldom appeal to other visitors.

### **FOUR-WINDS TAVERN**

Located adjacent to the wind-docks, the Four-Winds tavern and inn is actually the converted shell of an old windship, complete with a mast sporting a billowing sail of silver silk. The lower-hold has been converted into a large, well-appointed bar, the upper hold into a number of small, moderately furnished rooms, and the upper deck is used as a terrace. The clientele is composed almost entirely of dockworkers and windship crews.

### **THE GREATSWORD**

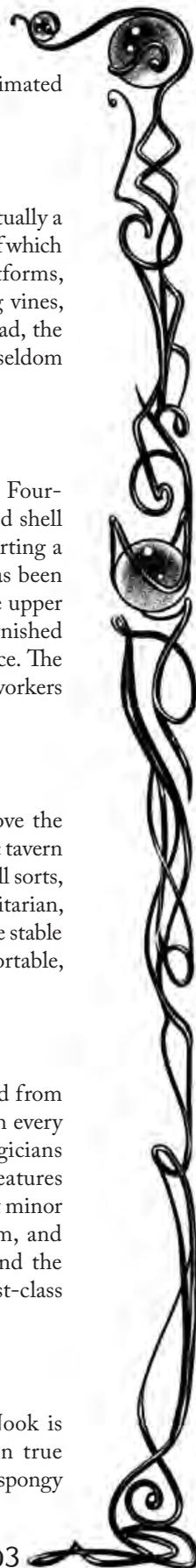
A blunt greatsword hangs from chains above the double doors that enter this spartan, militaristic tavern and inn that caters to professional warriors of all sorts, especially Thralls. The décor is tough and utilitarian, the food is hearty, and the drink is strong. Ample stable facilities are provided, and the rooms are comfortable, if sparsely furnished.

### **THE IRIDESCENT PENTACLE**

This five-sided inn and tavern is constructed from blocks of enchanted crystal that shimmer with every color imaginable. Catering primarily to magicians and other spellcasters, this establishment features large glyph-covered pillars that prohibit all but minor spells. Private booths, a large common room, and rooftop terrace provide substantial seating, and the accommodation, service, food and drink are first-class in all regards.

### **THE NOOK**

Located in the Gnomekin Market, the Nook is a subterranean tavern and inn, furnished in true Gnomekin style. Rough-hewn caves lined with spongy



moss and lit with softly-glowing crystals serve as accommodation, and a large central cavern serves as a common room and bar, providing Gnomekin fare. While crafted at larger than Gnomekin dimensions, most humans find it slightly cramped, although the prices are fair.

### THE SHIFTING SANDS

This sprawling tent complex serves as an inn and tavern catering primarily to travelers from the desert kingdoms of Kasmir, Djaffa and Carantheum. Rooms feature scatter cushions of fine silks, and exotic dancers form the entertainment. Mocha is the drink of choice, and honeyed dates are a speciality. Hot tubs are provided for a modest fee, and there is extensive stabling for mounts, wagons and drays.

### THE PACIFIC PAVILION FOR CONJECTURE AND CONVIVIALITY

Commonly known as the Sindar Pavilion, this inn and tavern is frequented by scholars, antiquarians and curio-dealers of all varieties, including Sindarans. A large complex of wooden platforms, and an intricate framework of wooden poles, support orange and sienna colored cloth walls of alchemically treated fabrics. Furnishings are of smoothly polished woods, and the cuisine and entertainment (including trivarian) are decidedly Sindaran.

### THE WRETCHED URTHRAX

This dimly lit tavern is filled with the haze of smoke, and stench of cheap beer. By far the most dangerous establishment in Cymril, it is frequented by ne'er-dowells of every stripe, from hard-bitten mercenaries, to thieves and other assorted riff-raff. Needless to say, the City Watch take a keen interest in the patrons, although only the desperate take any interest in the cuisine.

### DENS OF INIQUITY

#### AMOROSA

A lavish, almost palatial structure, Amorosa is decorated with many tasteful erotic friezes carved into its walls, both inside and out. The furnishings and rooms are on the decadent side of opulent, and this establishment offers all manner of erotic diversions for males and females of many races, albeit at near extortionate prices.

### CHANCES

This subdued establishment is easily overlooked, save for the large, glowing crystal pentadrille piece that hangs above the doorway. The interior of this casino is tastefully decorated, and security is strict. Various sums are wagered on games of pentadrille, quatrillion, trivarian, and zodar, with in-house spellcasters and observers ensuring that any cheating, magical or otherwise, is minimized.

### CHICANERY

A radiant magical hologram floats in the air above the twin, carved circular portals of this emporium, proclaiming "Chicanery". This establishment offers the experience of superbly crafted illusory realities of whatever the client desires, from highly unlikely sexual encounters, to virtual battlegrounds, or travel through bizarre or non-existent landscapes. Prices range from 50 g.l., to well in excess of 10,000 g.l. depending on complexity and duration.

### EIDOLON

This unremarkable building bears no signs or decoration, and the stout door remains closed at all times. A private club providing a comfortable, social atmosphere for its members, Eidolon offers numerous drugs to its clientele, although it deals primarily in euphorica. Only those who are on the registered list of members are allowed entrance, and security, both in the form of traps, guards, and magical wards, is excessive. Membership is by invite only.

### MAGIQUE

The most popular of Cymril's nightspots, Magique is a large, six-story club, topped with a spiral-carved dome. Carved all over with intricate runes, the hues of color within the club's walls shift continuously. The clientele are generally young, affluent and fashion-conscious. Numerous musicians of various nationalities provide entertainment throughout the building, accompanied by illusory light shows. Scattered tables and seats surround each story's dance floor, and intoxicants of all varieties, from alcohol to mild drugs, are available at the bars. Admission is 10 g.l. and any trouble is swiftly dealt with by the veteran Thrall bouncers.

### REPOSE OF THE TEN THOUSAND

This building consists of a cluster of narrow towers, each linked to the other and topped with a pointed dome. Innumerable life-size figures of Zandu's Ten Thousand saints are carved in bas-relief on the outside walls. This temple offers the "enlightenments of Zandir Paradoxy", primarily in the form of excessive intoxicants, sexual dalliances, spicy food, dance, and musical entertainment.

### ZEPHYR

A large lilac dome covers this nympharium, the interior of which is a sylvan glade, complete with trees, pools, and flower-covered carpets of grass. While the dome is opaque from the exterior, the roof is completely clear from the interior. Visitors are immersed in Muse culture, engaging in various sensual pursuits with the male and female Muses, enjoying telepathic projection shows, musical performances, and partaking of the subtle and delicate Muse cuisine. Admittance costs 30 g.l.

## TRANSPORTATION

### WIND-DOCKS (MAP KEY #25)

The government-controlled wind-docks consist of four large construction and repair warehouses, a seven-story office tower of opaque green, and the wind-dock itself: a 250-foot high tower of rutilated rainbow crystal. The wind-dock sprouts branch-like docking platforms at regular intervals throughout its height and circumference, lending it the appearance of a bizarre tree when numerous windships and windriggers are docked. Six large magical disks at the heart of the tower serve to raise and lower cargo, crew and passengers as they arrive or disembark.

The Wind-Docks were originally owned by the Four Winds Trade and Travel Company, but they were brought out by the Cymrilian government following the Farad-Rajan incident. The Cymrilian government has assumed control of all windship production and docking facilities, thereby maintaining tighter control over the arcanology and its secrets.

Cymril's windships are the quickest, but most expensive way to traverse the continent. Common port-of-call include Zanth, Dracarta, Hadj, Hadran, Danuvia, Nankar, Vashay, Tor and Kasmir. Less

frequent trips include Aamahd, Al Ashad, Tarun and Caprica; most other places will require a chartered ship to go to. Cymrilian windships never go to some places for varying reasons. These include mountainous Arim; the weather of L'Haan is too severe; the airspace of the Kang Empire beyond Hadran is forbidden and Raj is a hostile nation.

Traveling on a windship is a rough experience. Quarters are cramped, food is poor, the weather is often harsh, and sickness is common; much like a seagoing vessel. Attacks from aerial creatures such as wind demons and ravengers and the occasional bout of aberrant weather also pose a danger.

### RUBY LIGHTNING COACHES

Cymril's most famous coach company, Ruby Lightning Coaches are recognizable by their luxuriant decor. Rich, colorful hardwoods are beautifully carved in the likeness of nymphs, and embellished with artful paints, and the interior of each equus-drawn coach is covered with lush, crimson velvet. They have several dozen coaches running at all times of the day and night, waiting at all of Cymril's major nightspots and tourist attractions. A single journey to any location in Cymril, costs 5 s.p. per person, and each coach can accommodate 4 passengers. The company is run by a committee of coach drivers, and a few equus representatives.

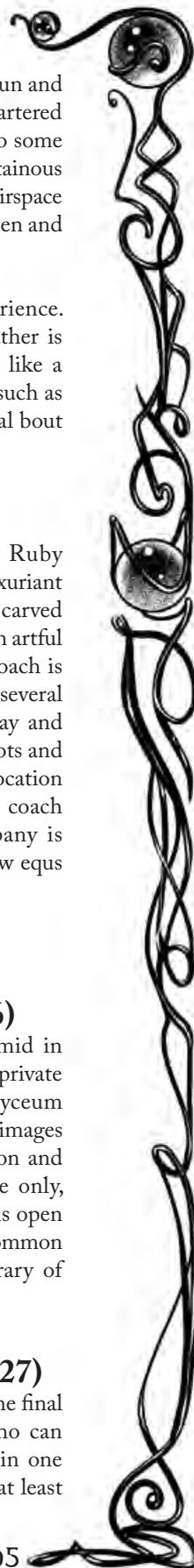
## MISCELLANEOUS

### ARCANUM SOCIETY (MAP KEY #26)

This simple and austere three-story pyramid in classic emerald houses the Arcanum Society: a private club that includes many lecturers at the Lyceum Arcanum, as well as esteemed wizards and archimages of various nations and nationalities. Admission and membership are by invite and majority vote only, following a strict interview process. The club is open to either gender, and maintains a comfortable common room, superb observatory, and excellent library of magical writings.

### CYMRIL MAUSOLEUM (MAP KEY #27)

This 250-foot edifice of glaucous crystal is the final resting-place of many Cymrilians. Those who can afford it are encased in glass, and displayed in one of the mausoleum's many cubicles. This costs at least



2,000 g.l. ranging up to 20,000 g.l. depending on the quality, color, and opacity of the crystal used. The majority of Cymril's deceased are thrown into the Void at the Sanitation Center following a brief ceremony.

### SANITATION CENTER

This large oval building of opaque white crystal houses the city's waste disposal and cleansing services. A large central hall contains a heavily warded portal to the Void through which all Cymril's waste produce and garbage is disposed. In addition, numerous secluded funerary rooms are located adjacent to this, performing the necessary rites for Cymril's departed, before the body is lowered into the Void.

### TAZIAN ARENA (MAP KEY #28)

This enclosed 50-foot diameter arena of crimson crystal features three tiers of benches, and can hold several hundred spectators. The weapons used are blunted or padded, reducing the chance of mortal injuries by a significant degree. Bouts are fought every evening, and admission is 1 g.l. Wagering is brisk.

### THE VAULT

This windowless stone tower serves as a moneylender's and bank, run by several Kasmiran associates. Security is perhaps the strictest in all of Cymril, with many hidden traps, spy-tubes, and numerous iron doors. Foreign currency can be exchanged here for a 10% surcharge, and loans can be applied for with a minimum 30% interest rate. In addition, money and valuables can be deposited for safekeeping for a fee of 5% per month.

### THE CARAVANSARY (MAP KEY #29)

A sprawling tent-complex serving as an inn and tavern, the Caravansary caters to travelers from the desert kingdoms of Djaffa, Carantheum and Kasmir. The atmosphere is casual—customers recline on silken cushions, and are attended to by veiled serving girls bearing trays of honeyed dates, skewers of roasted meat, and palm wine. Silver cucurbits of steaming-hot mochan, a dark and stimulating beverage popular throughout the Desert Kingdoms, are imported directly from Djaffa after each year's harvest.

The tents contain three large common rooms, numerous small suites, and a half dozen baths. Outside

are extensive facilities for the stabling of beasts, with additional areas for wagons and drays. Farad merchants enter the Caravansary at their own risk. Prices are slightly above average.

### THE SUBURBS

Surrounding the city are many small farms, vineyards, and country estates. Most of these are owned by Green Aeriad, who work the land with exceptional skill. The fruits of their labors are transported by wagon to Cymril, though a small percentage of the crop is sold at roadside stands.

Thrall Warriors mounted on mangonel lizards patrol the roads leading to Cymril. Pharesian peddlers, bandits, troupes of Bodor Musicians, Djaffir merchant caravans, Sarista gypsies, and the occasional lone itinerant wizard may also be encountered along these thoroughfares. Outside each of Cymril's gates are small villages populated primarily by non-Cymrilians.

Neuran is a small community comprised mainly of Sindarans. The building of this suburb are largely Sindaran cloth tents although several wooden and stone buildings also exist. Neuran house many alchemical shops and is known to be the home of a growing sect of Sindarans known as the Neurians who are unhappy with the existing status quo in the Seven Kingdoms.

Kascan is populated primarily by expatriate Kasmirans. While this suburb houses many small banks and moneylenders, the majority of Cymril's established financial institutions are housed within the City proper. The majority of Kasmiran's who call Kascan home are among the less successful Kasmiran entrepreneurs in the City. Kascan is also rumored to be the headquarters of Cymril's thieves guild.

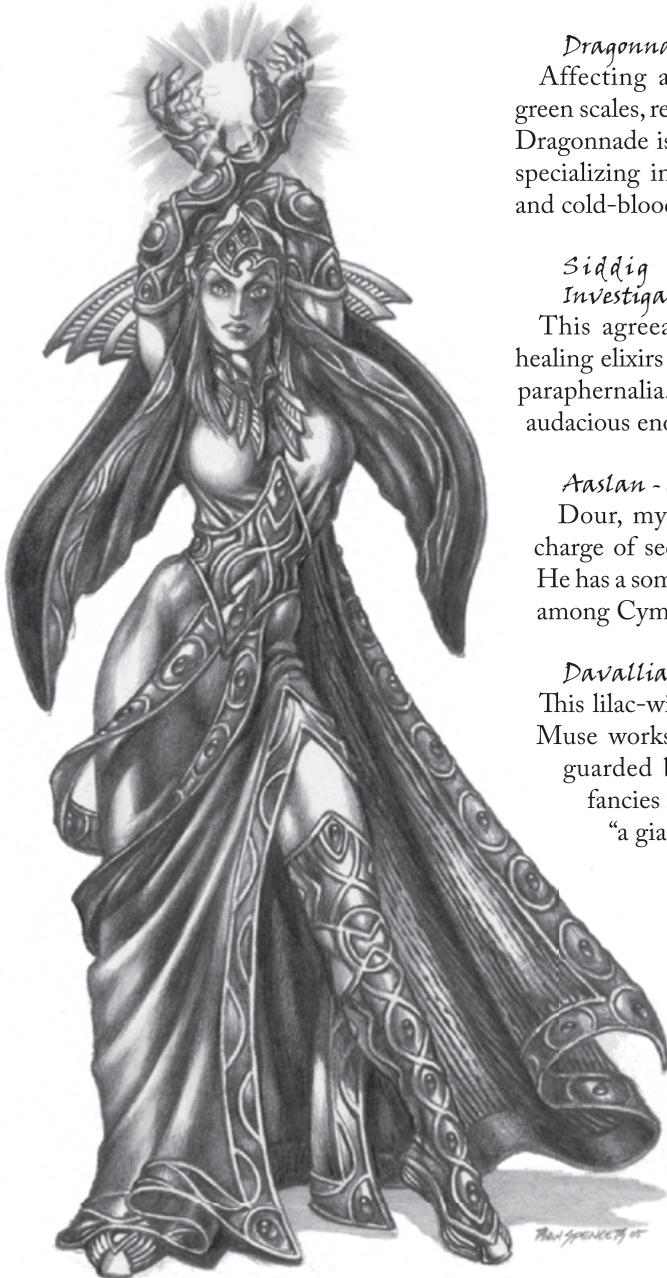
Sylvan Glade is lessa suburb than a well groomed park. It house several gossamer pavillions that serve as the home to dozens of Muses and their Whips companions while in Cymril. Most Muses chafe under the confines of the City and prefer to lodge in Sylvan Glade instead.

Toral is a the home of many of Cymril's city guards and military officers. It is populated mainly by Thralls and visotrs will find many excellent armorers and weaponsmiths in Toral not to mention gladiatorial

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stables, mercenary companies, bodyguards and artillerists.

K'shykk is the Aeriad suburb. Within many Green Aeriad practice their arts and as a result, wandering through K'shykk is not unlike a stroll in one of Cymril's parks.



## NOTBALE CITIZENS

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, encounters, or rivals (friendly or otherwise):

*Abo Enabia - Daughter of Terra and Inn Keep*

Priestess of Terra's Grotto, proprietor of The Nook (see pp. XX), and mother of 12, this beautiful, middle-aged Gnomekin always has time for those in need, regardless of race or creed.

*Dragonnade - Rogue Cymrilian Pyromancer*

Affecting a vaguely reptilian appearance, with green scales, red eyes, and red hair shaped into a crest, Dragonnade is also a thief and professional assassin, specializing in arson. He is by turns hot-tempered and cold-blooded.

*Siddig Fadeel - Sindaran Watch Investigator*

This agreeable Watch Investigator also creates healing elixirs in his spare time, and collects medical paraphernalia. He secretly admires those criminals audacious enough to try and outwit him.

*Aaslan - Aamanian Witch-Hunter*

Dour, mysterious and imposing, Aaslan is in charge of security at The Righteous Tower of Aa. He has a somewhat sinister and nefarious reputation among Cymril's citizenry.

*Davallia - Muse Entertainer*

This lilac-winged and beautiful, if absent-minded, Muse works in the Zephyr nympharium, and is guarded by a wood whisp named Migg who fancies himself a great warrior, and states he is "a giant among wood whisps!"

*Talis - Lecturer at the Lyceum Arcanum*

Talis is Department Head of Natural Magical Studies at the Lyceum, and is approaching 40 years of age. He affects a semblance reminiscent of earth, with grass-like hair. He is often found meditating in any of Cymril's parks.

*Ka-Ree - Blue Aerial Scout*

Ka-Ree is a young, highly-strung member of Cymril's legion. She is often reprimanded for leaping off public buildings, and spends her off-hours in The Eyrie. She fights with a dart-thrower in each hand.

*Tempestus - Veteran Marine*

Tempestus is a veteran Swordsmage and aeromancer, more at home aboard a windship than on the ground. This gruff and friendly marine has ashen hair, silver skin, a sword that glows like lightning, and clothes that roil with dark clouds.

*The Awesome Axe - Thrall Gladiator*

This heavily scarred, peg-legged Thrall is the current champion of the Tazian Arena. A specialist in Tazian combat and wrestling, he was forced to leave the military when he lost his left leg below the knee.

*Azi al Din - Kashmir Trapsmage and aspiring burglar*

This young, highly adept Kashmir runs the highly successful Lock & Key establishment. Sociable and excitable for a member of her culture, she has romantic dreams about becoming a notorious burglar.

*Jaelistian - Hellacious Cymrilian Student*

Jaelistian (Jael to his friends) is a student at the Lyceum, studying wizardry with a strong emphasis on illusion-craft. He is also a notorious practical joker and rogue. His appearance is angelic, with gold skin, sapphire eyes, glowing white hair and robes.

*Savrille - Pharesian Peddler*

Savrille is approaching his fiftieth year of life, and has seen more of Talislanta than most could hope to see in a lifetime. World-weary and wise, he is semi-retired, often spending his evenings spinning tales in various taverns.

*Maralico - Associate of the Arcanum Society*

One of the Society's youngest members, Maralico is the daughter of a Cymrilian Swordsmage and Zandir Duelist. Born and raised in Cymril, this softly-spoken Aeromancer is one of the continent's acknowledged experts on avian fauna.

## DURNE

Durne is a land of grassy knolls, gently rising hills, and sparse woodlands. There are no rivers, and few lakes. The only visible "settlements" are the timber watchtowers of the Seven Kingdoms' Grand Army, and a rude military encampment on the banks of the Axis River.

The Forest of Ironwood occupies the western portion of the kingdom. The steel-grey ironwood trees are much favored for use in heavy construction, since the wood is nearly as tough and resistant to damage as black iron. Only the presence of malathrope and shathane above ground, and giant land kra in the subterranean ways beneath, deter those who would exploit this resource.

Given the lack of any sign of habitation, the casual traveler might be surprised to discover that this land does not lie unclaimed – rather, its possessors merely dwell below ground.

## THE GNOMEKIN

A race of diminutive man-like beings, the Gnomekin average just over three feet in height. They have nut-brown complexions, muscular bodies, and wide-eyed, cherubic features. Both the males and females have a crest of soft black fur running from the center of the forehead to the small of the back. Despite their small size, the Gnomekin of Durne are quite strong, and are as agile and sure-footed as mountain goats. Their language sounds much like the purring of cats.

## CUSTOMS

Gnomekin are a warm and friendly folk, possessed of an almost childlike innocence. Their families are close-knit, and often quite large; it is not uncommon for a Gnomekin couple to have a dozen or more offspring.

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The earth goddess Terra is revered by the Gnomekin as their benefactor. They are not much for dogmas and formal ceremonies. Simple worship and prayer services are conducted in sacred caverns by the female priestesses of the Great Mother.

Durne is ruled by a hereditary monarch known as the Gnomeking. He is responsible for seeing that fair prices are received for the goods produced by his people, which are delivered on the Underground Highway to Cymril once each month. Additionally, the Gnomeking is commander-in-chief of the country's small but feisty army, the Fellowship. The cooperative nature of the Gnomekin keeps political strife to a minimum. The national color of Durne is brown, the favored color of Terra.

### TUNNELROCK

The only entrance to the Subterranean City is through a craggy mound of stone known as Tunnelrock, honeycombed with winding passageways and tunnels. The Gnomekin fashioned the elaborate network of passages, an unknown number of which lead to their underground city 50 miles to the southwest. The rest terminate in deadfalls, bottomless shafts and cul-de-sacs. The purpose of the maze is to baffle unwanted intruders seeking access to the Gnomekin capital. Without the benefit of a map

or Gnomekin guide, it is practically impossible for outsiders to find their way through Tunnelrock.

### THE SUBTERRANEAN CITY OF DURNE

Capital of Durne of the Seven Kingdoms, the Subterranean City of Durne lies some 200 feet below ground. The settlement consists of numerous moss-lined cave dwellings (called nooks), connected by a complex network of tunnels and underground lakes and streams. Large caverns are used for the growing of mushrooms and tubers, while the lakes serve as hatcheries for several species of subterranean fish and mollusks. The Gnomekin also grow crystals, which are useful in the making of scrying devices and Cymrilian amberglass.



☩☩☩☩☩



## A VISTOR'S GUIDE TO THE SUBTERRANEAN CITY OF DURNE

*"They live in caves and subsist on raw mushrooms and roots? How disgustingly primitive! Small wonder the little savages are so stunted."*

*- Her Bountiful Magnificence, Hasse-Jalour, Hadjin Diplomat*

### THE POPULACE

Durne is home to the entire Gnomekin populace, with the exception of those serving in the Seven Kingdom's military and a few ex-patriots. With a population of 263,000 calling it home, the Subterranean City of Durne is a vast, multi-layered warren of tunnels unnavigable by any save the Gnomekin themselves.

### HISTORY

According to Gnomekin mythology, they have lived in the Subterranean City since Archaeus was formed, as the tunnel network was their first gift from Terra, following their birth as a race. Of the noteworthy events in Durne's history, perhaps the most notable was the One Day War of 67 n.a. when the Darkling hordes of Urag, fleeing the Ur clans, attempted to invade the Subterranean City, only to be soundly beaten and routed within a day of engagement.

### VISIONS OF DURNE

As Durne is a sprawling network of tunnels and caves some 200-foot underground, it cannot be viewed in any conventional sense, nor can it be seen in its entirety. It must be viewed one location at a time.

The thousands of nooks inhabited by the Gnomekin extend up to a mile around, below, and even above Terra's Womb: a huge cavern at the heart of the city, creating an indecipherable maze, interconnected by tunnels.

*No map is provided here due to the 3D topography of the subterranean city. Instead, important and typical sites are detailed, along with a description of their location comparative to each other.*

### THE TYPICAL DWELLING

As the typical Gnomekin family usually exceeds 10 members, they share what living space they have available in a very communal, open way. As a result, there is little of the desire for privacy or sense of shame over such things as nakedness that typifies other cultures.

### AN EXTERIOR VIEW

Phosphorescent fungi cling to the tunnel walls in irregular patches, glowing wanly. A warm, inviting amber glow fills the end of the tunnel.

### THE NOOK INTERIOR

The tunnels that lead to Gnomekin nooks open directly into the Heart Room (see below). Nooks have no doors, though some families hang rugs of woven moss over their entrances. There is no typical number of rooms in a single nook, though there is never more than one Heart Room. Usually there is one bedroom for every three family members. Rooms might lie adjacent to, above, or below each other, but all connect directly to the Heart Room.

#### The Heart Room

This 20-foot diameter, 5-foot high cave is the nook's communal room. Several beautifully sculpted clusters of crystal placed at the center of the cave give off a rich amber glow. A soft, thick carpet of moss covers the entire floor. Stalagmites of various sizes have been sliced off just above the floor, providing seats and tables.

#### Bedroom

Thick moss covers the floor of this small cave, lit by a single cluster of fungi growing in a recessed alcove. Several shallow recesses in the floor are lined with extra thick moss, providing comfortable bedding.

#### Larder

Unlit and bare, stone shelves are piled high in this tiny cave, displaying mushrooms, tubers, roots, fish and lichens. A crystal tub in the corner contains fermenting mushroom ale, and a small natural spring provides fresh water.

#### Toilet and Washroom

This tiny bare cave contains two covered crystal tubs. One is used as a toilet, while the other contains fresh water for washing with. Towels of woven moss are used to scrub and dry.

### PLACE OF AUTHORITY

#### SERVITOR'S NOOK

Located at the end of a small, unremarkable tunnel connected to Terra's Womb is Servitor's Nook: the dwelling of the King and Queen of Durne. It is no different than any other nook, such is the humble nature of Durne's rulers.

There are no guards at Servitor's Nook, as no Gnomekin would even consider bothering the King and Queen unless the need was dire. However, any nearby Protectors (and there is always a unit in Terra's Womb) will prevent non-Gnomekin from disturbing the King and Queen unescorted and without an extremely important reason.

Servitor's Nook is so named because the King and Queen of Durne firmly believe they are but servants of Terra and Her people. The current King is Taro Orabio, a middle-aged, veteran Protector who lost his right arm during a skirmish with Satada. His wife, Queen Geo Orabio is a canny Crystalomancer who spent 30 years trading at Cymril. They live in Servitor's Nook with their 19 children.

#### OPEN ARMS NOOK

Up another small tunnel adjacent to Servitor's Nook (see above) is a nook specially enlarged and furnished to house visiting dignitaries. Fitted with a carved wooden door, and civilized furnishings such as carpets and beds, it is almost ostentatious. Despite this attempt to make visiting VIPs comfortable, it is still a rare event that any choose to visit Durne.

#### CAVE-CELLS

Located at the center of a maze of tunnels down near The Deep Waters are 10 small cave-cells. Each bare cave contains nothing but a layer of moss, and can hold two human-sized prisoners comfortably. Extremely thick stalactites and stalagmites form interlocking bars of stone. A large boulder wedged into place forms the door for each cell. Guards are posted when a criminal is incarcerated.

### MILITARY BASES

#### TUNNELROCK

The only normally visible sign of the Subterranean City, Tunnelrock is a 150-foot spur of rock on the surface of Durne. Riddled with small, Gnomekin-sized tunnels and passageways, it leads by tunnel directly to the city itself which is located some 50 miles to the southwest. Several veteran units guard Tunnelrock at all times, and many of the passageways are extensively trapped.

#### SENTINEL POSTS

Located in strategic positions throughout the city and surrounding tunnels are Sentinel Posts. Stone platforms are carved into the tunnel walls at various levels and padded with moss. A unit of six Protectors maintains vigil from these vantage points, aided by a Crystalomancer at the most dangerous posts.

A trained tunnel-runner is located at every Sentinel Post, and is dispatched at the first sign of serious danger, speeding off along tunnels to warn neighboring Sentinel Posts and nooks. These runners form a vital communication network for Durne's defenses.

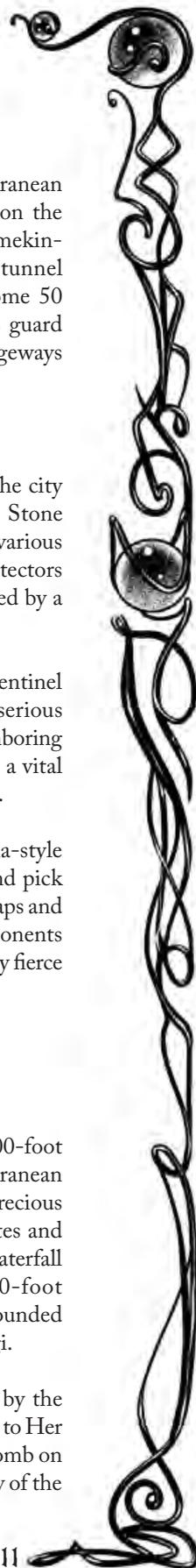
Gnomekin Protectors are masters of guerilla-style combat, using hit-and-fade tactics to harry and pick off invading forces, as well as creating tunnel-traps and caving-in unimportant tunnels, crushing opponents and sealing off entrances. They are also extremely fierce and doughty fighters in face-to-face combat.

### PLACES OF WORSHIP

#### TERRA'S WOMB

This enormous cavern, 70-foot high and 300-foot in diameter, sits at the very center of the Subterranean City. The cavern walls glisten with veins of precious metals, gemstones and crystals. Huge stalactites and stalagmites form a veritable forest of stone. A waterfall thunders down from the ceiling into a 30-foot diameter pool in the center of the cavern, surrounded by thick banks of moss and incandescent fungi.

Terra's Womb is held with great reverence by the Gnomekin. While they hold impromptu prayers to Her in any Crystal Grotto, they gather at Terra's Womb on the 30th of Drome to celebrate the Anniversary of the One Day War, and raise their voices in song.



## CRYSTAL GROTTOS

These small natural caverns of varying size are found throughout Durne. Each glows softly with the rainbow light of hundreds of natural crystal formations, many of which are sculpted into delicate or fantastic shapes. Local Gnomekin often come to these Grottoes to contemplate life or sing to Terra.

When a Gnomekin dies she is buried in a Crystal Grotto where her friends and relatives gather to sing. A crystal cluster is then planted in the soil above the body, where it grows, tended and sculpted for many generations.

While no Gnomekin would dream of despoiling Terra's Womb or any of the Crystal Grottoes, the same cannot be said of outsiders. Anyone found attempting to steal any crystals or gemstones from such sites is immediately imprisoned in a cave-cell, soon to be expelled.

## PARKS

### GROTTO PARKS

Laced with numerous small streams, pools and tiny waterfalls, Grotto Parks are used as places of rest and play by local Gnomekin, and dozens can be found throughout the city. Floors and thick banks of moss provide soft footing, and copses of large luminescent fungi - some as large as trees - make wonderful playgrounds.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### FARMS

Farms are found throughout Durne, and usually take the form of vast, wide caverns. Fields of whitecap mushrooms are planted and harvested here, while others grow various crops of edible tubers, all fertilized by the city's waste. Numerous other farms have been dedicated to the growth and cultivation of crystals of various hues and colors, the majority of which are exported to Cymril.



## Hotan's History of the World

### THE DEEP WATERS

The largest cavern in the Subterranean City, the Deep Waters is fully a mile in diameter, and 100-foot in height, located at Durne's lowest level. Occupying most of the cavern is a fathomless, shadowy lake of cold freshwater. In the shallows are numerous hatcheries where the Gnomekin raise edible fish and mollusks.

Despite The Deep Water's calm surface, it is home to many dangerous predators. Octomorphs and Renders both inhabit its cold depths, and sometimes rise to the surface, attempting to raid the hatcheries. For this reason, the Gnomekin fish-farmers are armed and several units of Protectors patrol the lake's banks.

### NOTABLE CITIZENS

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, relatives or possible encounters.

#### *Beo Omono - Protector Instructor*

Beo is regarded as friendly and humble, even among Gnomekin. A Protector of advancing years, his mane is starting to gray, but his eyes and wits remain keen. He is a well-loved Instructor.

#### *Omi Domino - Child-like Crystalomancer's Apprentice*

Playful in the extreme, Omi is still a child at heart, exuberant, wide-eyed and innocent, with far too much energy. She is just learning to harness magic and finds the sensation rather giddy.

#### *Mono Nomino - Concerned Tunnel-Runner*

Despite his important and dangerous profession, Mono is concerned for any Gnomekin who would want to leave the security of Durne. His brother, Abi, was killed while adventuring.

#### *Bimi Monobo - Mushroom Farmer*

Bimi has been mushroom farming for most of her life, and takes delight in producing some of the most aromatic mushrooms, such as purple puffballs. Although modest, she takes quiet pride in the fact that her skills feed Terra's people.

#### *Oolo Bibino - Daughter of Terra*

Compassionate and understanding, the gray-haired Oolo has been alive for longer than any Gnomekin can remember. She has acted as midwife for many hundreds of Gnomekin births.

#### *Gomo Babino - Armorer*

Notably overweight for a Gnomekin, Gomo isn't the sharpest tool in the box, but he is skilled, exuberant, friendly, and irrepressible. Crafting scale armor using the metallic scales of the Render, he always has a slight fishy aroma, even though he tries to keep as clean as possible.

#### *Puk - Darkling Daredevil*

Puk has an adventurous streak, and enjoys sneaking into Durne to steal pretty baubles. He even plays practical jokes on stationed Protectors, such as covering the hilts of their blades with sticky resin.



# KASMIR

An arid region, Kasmir is bordered to the south by the Jaspas Mountains and to the east by the Wilderlands of Zaran. It is a harsh land, uninhabited save for a few hardy species of reptilians, desert palms, and the folk who dwell here.

## THE KASMIRAN

Short and lean, the Kasmirans have odd-looking, shriveled features, and skin the color of weathered mahogany. They dress in hooded cloaks, loose robes and sandals, and exhibit a suspicious attitude toward outsiders.

The Kasmirans are a wealthy people, though how they acquired their fortune is unknown; some say they were once partners of the Djaffir. Whatever their history, the Kasmirans are renowned throughout the continent as misers, and as crafty negotiators.

## CUSTOMS

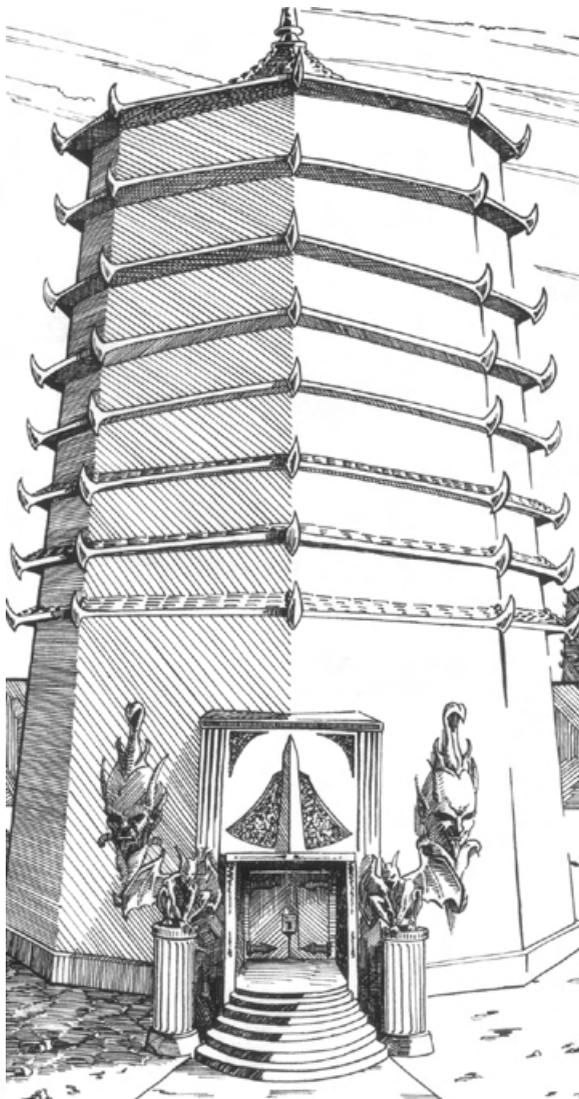
Money-lending is the business of the kingdom. Kasmir money-lenders and auditors are unexcelled in their craft. They finance caravans, deal in large quantities of trade goods, and lend money to fund ventures of many different sorts (typically at somewhat high rates).

The Kasmirans are also known for their wizards, who turn their arcane skills toward the construction of the most ingenious and elaborate locks and security devices.

The society of the desert dwellers revolves around the Old Families. Each clan is led by a Patriarch, who coordinates the activities of his extended family through strict control of the clan's purse strings.

The ruler of the Kasmirans, known simply as the King of Kasmir, holds his Job only as long as the Patriarchs feel he effectively represents their best interests. Should he fail to live up to their expectations, the King is beheaded and a new ruler chosen. For this reason, the position of king is one which few Kasmirans aspire to, despite the high pay and numerous perquisites. The national color of Kasmir is purple, an elegant hue popular among all the people of this land.

The money-lenders do not condescend to perform manual labor, preferring to hire foreign laborers for such tasks. Maruk, free Monads and Arimites are the chief immigrants, but individuals from almost every land are drawn here to seek work. The other foreigners commonly seen in the kingdom are the Thrall mercenaries who comprise Kasmir's army.



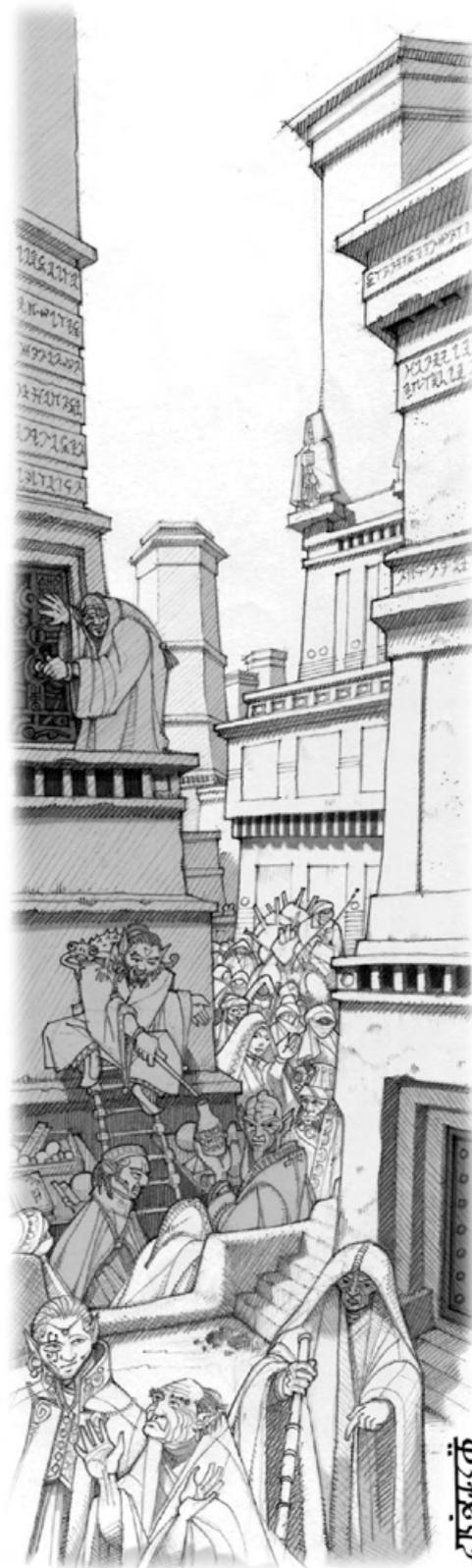
## THE CITY OF KASMIR

The capital of Kasmir is the City of Kasmir, an important center for commercial and financial ventures of all sorts. The Kasmiran work and live in windowless stone towers, intended to safeguard their considerable stores of wealth. Their servants live in shacks outside the city.

Built on the ruins of a forgotten city-state, the City of Kasmir long ago outgrew its ancient walls. but the Patriarchs refuse to spend money to erect new, larger fortifications. Instead, the Kasmiran crowd themselves ever more tightly within the same space. The streets are little more than alleys, running In every direction and at every angle.

## KASIR

West of the capital lies the wealthy Kasmir settlement of Kasir, notable for its wizards, who are considered unsurpassed in skill. They are no doubt aware of their reputation as trapsmiths, which is evidenced by the exorbitant fees which the mages charge for their services (a minimum of 100 gold lumens per day, plus expenses). Kasir is also a regular stopping point for caravans traveling the Seven Roads.



# SINDAR

This is a land of towering mesas, suspended arches, and other strange configurations of time-worn stone, bordered to the east by the barren canyons of the Dead River. Sindar is rich in minerals – including copper, tin and silver, plus an abundance of quartz crystal, marble, basalt, and certain semi-precious stones. Underwater springs and geysers provide a plentiful supply of water for the beings which inhabit this land: hostile satada, land kra, and the strange race known as the Sindarans.

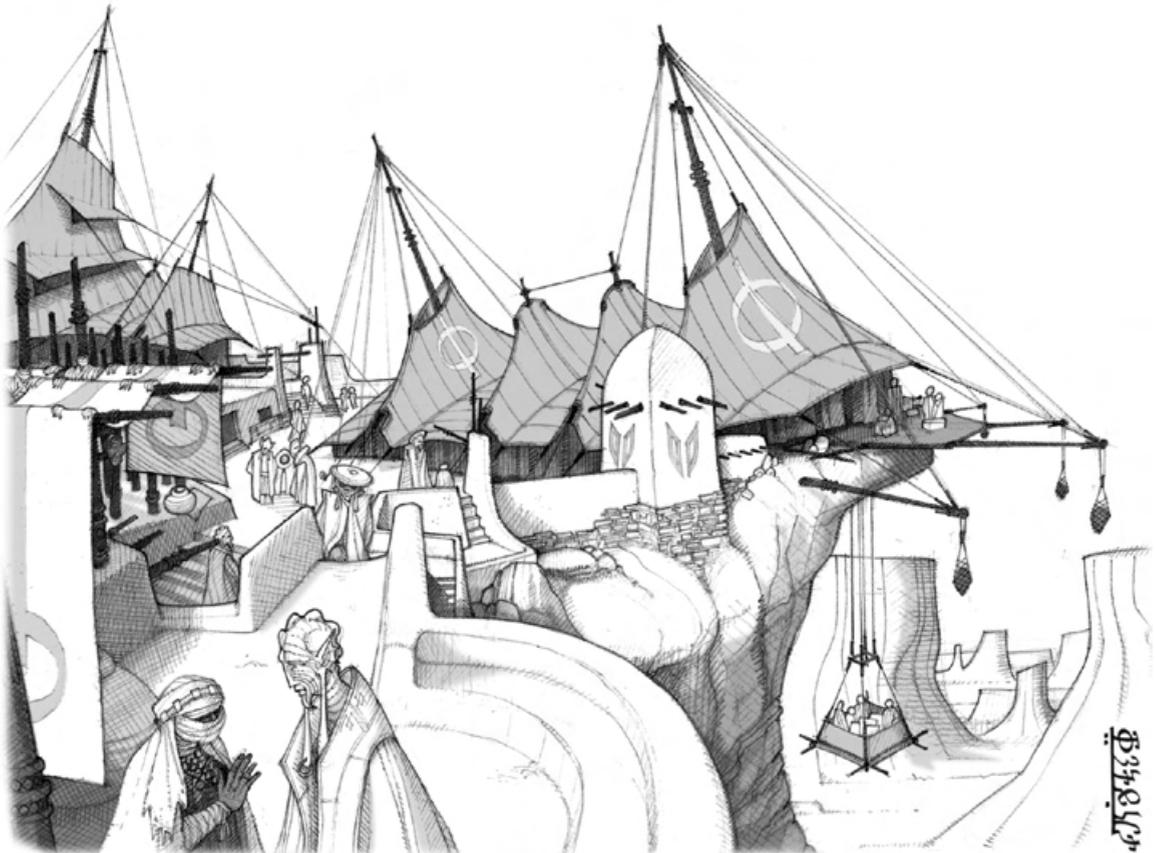
## THE SINDARANS

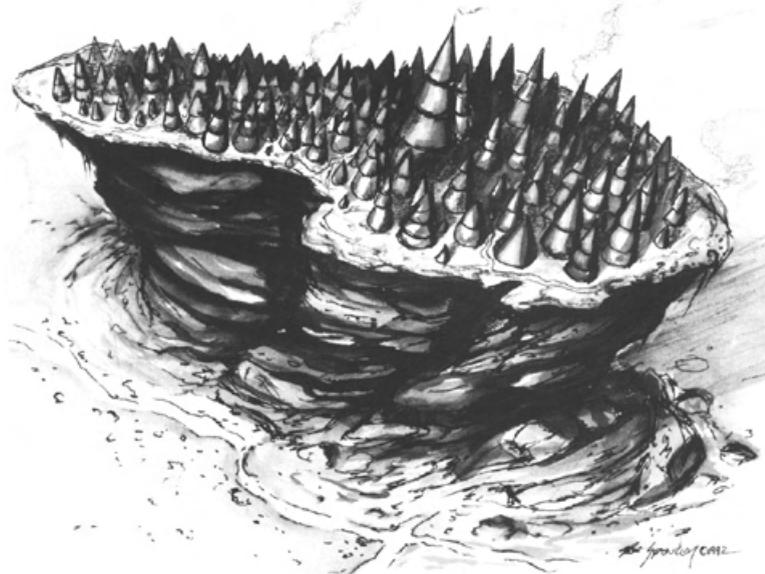
A race of dual-encephalons (meaning: double-brained) of unknown origin, the Sindarans bear little resemblance to any other man-like species native to

the continent. They stand over seven feet in height, emaciated in build, with wrinkled, sandy-colored skin. All Sindarans have a row of horn-like nodules running from the crown of the head to the back of the neck, and a curved spur of cartilage protruding from beneath the chin.

## CUSTOMS

The people of Sindar are renowned as collectors, antiquities being especially favored by these folk. To finance their collections, Sindarans concoct various types of alchemical mixtures, which they export for sale in Cymril. The rationale for the Sindarans' interest in collecting is not known, though some suspect that by doing so they hope to solve some mystery, or perhaps to unearth lost secrets of the Forgotten Age.





When not preoccupied with their collections, Sindarans enjoy playing Trivarian, a complex game which the single-brained races find Incomprehensible. The game is something of a national obsession, second only to collecting. The drinking of Skoryx, a potent liquor of ever-shifting taste sensations, is also a favored Sindaran pastime.

The Sindarans live in mesa-top communes composed of elegant tiered structures, each built around a structure of carved stone blocks and hardwoods imported from Vardune and Taz. Gossamer curtains, dyed various shades of orange and burnt umber, serve as the walls of the Sindarans' pavilions. Blowing gracefully in the warm breezes, the curtains provide a measure of privacy while retaining a feeling of wide-open spaces.

Communication between Sindaran communes is possible by means of large reflective crystals, mounted on tripods and used to flash coded messages from one-outpost to the next. At night, giant lanterns provide light to signal by.

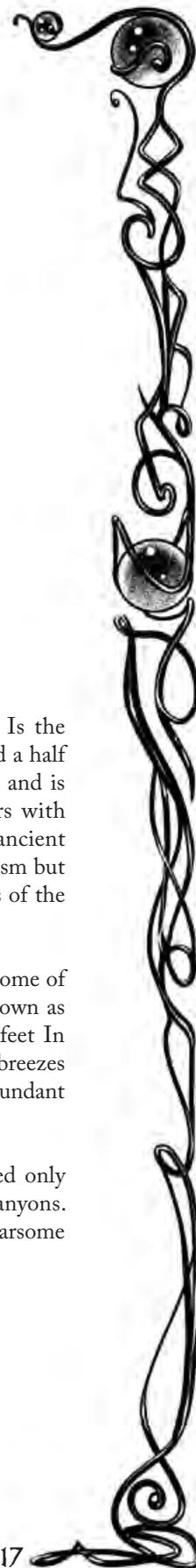
The ruler of Sindar, called the Nadir Absolute, is the country's most skilled Trivarian player. Every third year, a five-day Tournament is held to determine the best player in the land, who also assumes the ruler-ship of the kingdom upon receiving his championship. The national color is orange.

## THE CITIES

The largest Sindaran settlement, Nankar Is the capital of Sindar. The city extends for two and a half miles across the flat crown of Nankar Mesa, and is a magnet attracting merchants and scholars with an interest in alchemy. Nearby stands the ancient Nankar Bridge, spanning the Dead River chasm but seemingly leading nowhere except the wastes of the Wilderlands.

The second major city of Sindar is Nadir, home of the kingdom's foremost Trivarian players (known as "nadirs"). Built atop a mound of stone 200 feet in height, the settlement is favored for its cool breezes and splendid view. A natural geyser provides abundant water.

Sahar is little more than an outpost, famed only for the moonstones found in the nearby canyons. Unfortunately, chasm vipers, satada and the fearsome opteryx also dwell among the ravines.





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Bred for combat, most Thralls desire no other life than that of a soldier. Many serve as protectors of the Seven Kingdoms, serving in the Grand Army or the various individual kingdom armies; other Thralls work as sentinels, caravan guards, and bodyguards.

The basic unit of Thrall society is the tribe, led by a chieftain and various officers of war. Each village is a fortified camp, with log palisades, warehouses for supplies, and communal barracks. Narrow trails link the villages – the only paved road in the kingdom is the highway leading to Cymril.

The Thralls are ruled by an individual known as the Warrior King (or Queen, as the case may be). The position is open to challenge by duel once every year during the Tournament of Challenges, the winner of the fierce competition becoming the next ruler of Taz. The national color of the kingdom is a blood-red shade of crimson.

### TARG SWAMP

A sodden marshland overgrown with mosses and trailing vines, Targ Swamp is located in the southern jungles of Taz. The bog is a favorite hunting ground for Thralls of the nearby settlements, who come here to sharpen their combat skills against bog devils, swamp demons and batranc, all of which are found here in large numbers. Individuals less enamored of such forms of “sport” tend to avoid Targ Swamp.

The Thrall community of Targ lies on the western fringes of the swamp. Like most Tazian settlements, the city comprises a number of simple stone dwellings set within a walled enclosure. The local Thralls bear tattoos which are predominantly yellow and green in color.

### TRANG

Located in the eastern jungles on the border with Astar, the city of Trang is built on a hilltop which contains a rare entrance to the Underground Highway. Individuals hailing from this city generally bear tattoos which favor the colors of red and blue.

### THE FORTRESS OF TOR

A fortified communal complex, Tor serves as the capital of Taz. Situated in the midst of the jungle, the city consists of a number of squat, rectangular

structures built of stone blocks, surrounded by two thick walls and a defensive network of interconnected towers. Mangonel lizards, greymanes and marsh striders are maintained in stables for military use.

## A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO TOR

*“Thrall settlements are strong, practical and ultimately dull. Much like the Thralls themselves.”*

*–Orkim, Orgovian Trader*

### THE POPULACE

Home to just over 10,000 Thralls, Tor is the capital of Taz. It is largely typical of many Thrall settlements, save for the fact that it is several times larger, houses an inn and citadel, and is the seat of the Tazian monarch. It sees a surprising amount of traffic, primarily from trad-ers within the Seven Kingdoms, but also from outside interests hoping to contract Thrall mercenaries and guards.

### HISTORY

According to Thrall tattoos, which detail the events of great note in their clans' histories, Tor was founded “when the creators abandoned their Warriors in the wake of the Great Disaster, and, harried by the Land-Borne, the Warriors made their home in the inhospita-ble swamps, where only the brave would set foot”. First, and most mighty of the Thrall settlements in Taz, Tor was also the first to offer its services as a merce-nary supplier, and the first to send troops to the Border-lands. In 148 n.a., Tor became the focus of the Thrall nation, as representatives from Cymril and Durne vis-ited the Warrior-King, Ramm, and proposed an alli-ance. Quick to see the strategic benefits in such an alli-ance, Ramm signed the Thrall

### COSTS & TAXES

Thralls do not pay for their barracks, food, basic equipment or weaponry. The community is entirely self-sustaining. However, all Thralls employed outside Taz tithe 20% of their earnings to the nation itself, without complaint.



nation to the confederation, and is now honored in the tattoos of all Thralls.

## TRADE

Thrall settlements are largely self-sufficient. Thrall Hunters stalk the surrounding jungles, and the jungle itself is a source of building materials, medicinal herbs, dyes, and the roots used to brew Fire-Ale. The Thralls waste nothing, and any excess provisioning is stored for emergencies or sold to traders. Using the funds generated by this, as well as the substantial monies generated by their mercenary work, they purchase substantial quantities of black iron, and some grain. They have no interest in luxury goods.

## VISIONS OF TOR

### A VIEW FROM AFAR

Steaming walls of jungle crowd the road. A stout fortress of rough stone 20-foot high and covered with vines squats in a large clearing. A wide, deep trench filled with wooden stakes surrounds it, and square gates of solid black iron stand within the walls. The wooden stakes that fill the pit around Tor are soaked in pitch, and easily ignited with an incendiary arrow, forming a deadly wall of flame.

### AT THE GATES

The gates stand 15-foot high with 8-foot thick walls. Through the gates is yet another wall the equal of the first, complete with a second set of gates. Towers cover the outer wall and Thralls patrol the wall tops.

## THE CITY INTERIOR

A large area of dirt enclosed by the walls is covered with innumerable low, long barracks of stone, rough stables and foundries. A squat tower serves as a final redoubt. Thralls train on several large rectangles of dirt near the center of the settlement.

## TOR AT NIGHT

Lit with flickering torchlight, Tor is plunged into darkness, the silence pierced with the cries of nocturnal jungle beasts. Even in the depths of the evening, the brooding fortress is a hive of activity, as vigilant Thralls patrol the walls, and others engage in night-time maneuvers.

## THE TYPICAL DWELLING

### AN EXTERIOR VIEW

A long barracks of stone, 8-foot high, is roofed with sheets of corrugated iron. A broad door of thick, iron-bound wood provides an entrance, and the few windows are shuttered, illumination provided by torches set in iron wall brackets.

### THE BARRACKS INTERIOR

Four rows of plain cots line the hall on either side of a central walkway, providing bedding for 100 Thralls. A simple chest for personal belongings stands at the foot of each cot. Torch brackets line the walls.

#### The Bathroom

Adjoining the main barracks is a bathroom separated with a wooden partition. Four large barrels of water, each capable of holding four adult Thralls, serve as baths.

#### The Toilet

A small stone room just outside the barracks has several stone-lined holes in the floor, each of which connects to a rudimentary sewage system.

#### The Mess

A large square hall at the end of the barracks contains several roasting pits, and numerous cut sections of log to serve as seating. Kegs of Fire-Ale are stacked in a corner.

## PLACES OF AUTHORITY

### THE CITADEL

20-foot high and occupying 10% of the city's interior, the citadel is a stone tower fortress and redoubt. The Warrior King or Queen is barracked here in the top level of the tower. Spartan quarters are also provided for visiting VIPs. Subterranean barracks and armories are provided for 3,000 Thrall warriors, should the outer walls ever be breached, and lower levels store the city's excess provisions.

## MILITARY BASES

### BARRACKS

Each barracks of 100 Thralls consists of 15 units of four infantry; four units (two light, two heavy) of

## Hotan's History of the World

5 cavalry; 10 scouts (hunters); five war-medics; and one captain. Several Thralls do the smithing for their barracks, while others are detailed to supply duties as needed. Each barracks also houses a single Rite-Master (although several infantry will be serving apprenticeships under him or her).

Rite-Masters are aged, veteran Thralls who act as the tribe's historians, storytellers, and tattoo-artists. They oversee the rites of Naming and Passage, as well as officially recognizing each Thrall's accomplishments, and ensuring the tribe's tattoos are up-to-date.

### BARRACKS OF THE UNNAMED

Identical to the other barracks, these buildings house the community's young. Young Thralls are trained by retired veterans.

Thrall children are placed in barracks as soon as they are weaned. They have no tattoos or names until their 6-year period of training is over. Their Rite of Passage involves various team and individual events of a martial nature intended to demonstrate their prowess to the

Rite-Masters. They are then presented with garb and a greatsword, and tell the assembled onlookers what they wish to be called. Over the following few weeks they are inscribed with tattoos reflecting their tribe, name and rank.

### TRAINING FIELDS

Little more than large areas of dirt, Thralls perform weapon drill, training and combat sports on these fields throughout the day, every day.

### SENTRY TOWERS

Each of these slim towers stations four active Thralls at any one time. They feature many slots for crossbow fire, chutes to dump boiling oil on invaders, and a heavy ballista emplacement on top.

### STABLES

Simple long halls like the Thrall barracks, these house the nearby barracks' mounts, including graymanes, marsh-striders, and mangonel lizards.



## MARKETS AND BAZAARS

### THE SQUARE

The dirt square at the center of Tor serves as a market of sorts. It is here that trade goods are loaded and unloaded. Arimite merchants trade large quantities of black iron here, in exchange for excess provisioning, and Aeriad traders from nearby Vashay, sell grain and provender.

## INNS, TAVERNS, AND RESTAURANTS

### EN-GARDE

This two-story inn is the only establishment of its kind in Tor. Of the same construction style as the Thrall bar-racks, it caters exclusively to non-VIP foreign visitors. It provides simple rooms, stabling and a basic bar. Costs are high (x2) for anything but roasted meat and Fire-Ale. Thralls do not frequent here. A retired Zandir duelist called Zarathas runs En-Garde, paying 10% tax to the Thralls. He left Zandu following an unfortunate run in with a pair of Revenants.

## TRADERS, ARTISANS, AND MERCHANTS

### FOUNDRIES

Each of these small foundries serves a particular bar-racks, forging their weapons, armor and tankards as need be.

## TRANSPORTATION

### WINDSHIP DOCK

Constructed of iron-bound timbers, this stout tower stands next to the Citadel, and permits up to two windships, or four smaller air vessels, to dock.

## CITIZENS OF NOTE

### *Taka - Ancient Thrall Rite-Master*

This aged, stern individual has outlived many of her kin and seems to continue living out of sheer stubbornness. Although weakened by age, her mind is still keen, although her body is a mass of scars that aches terrible when the weather changes.

### *Kaz - Thrall Instructor of the Unnamed*

Kaz has a strong reputation for being firm and fair, but often seems slightly morose. He survived to retirement unscathed, only to lose his left hand when a heavy crate fell and crushed it. Slightly embittered by this event, he has nonetheless gone on to become a respected instructor, and has affixed a wicked mace-head to the stump of his wrist.

### *Tir - Taciturn Thrall Light Cavalryman*

A veteran of the Borderland's Legion, Tir is usually withdrawn and quiet, far more comfortable in the company of his graymane steed than with outsiders. He seldom speaks, but his war-cry is chilling when he gallops into battle.

### *Rama - Thrall Hunter and Marksman*

As gregarious a Thrall as anyone is likely to meet, Rama's skill with a short bow is nothing short of astounding, and is celebrated in her tribes tattoos for the time she stood her ground before a charging behemoth, and felled it with a single arrow. Despite her love of company, she revels in the solitude and quiet that are required while out hunting.

### *Kash - Inexperienced Thrall War-Medic*

Kash has only recently completed his training and faces the world with a little too much eagerness and desire for battle. Although experience may temper his outlook, his instructors consider him too brash, although they admit that his skills are needed.

### *[ ] - Unnamed Thrall*

A mere six years of age, this unnamed female Thrall is close to reaching full maturity, and absorbs her military lessons with all the innate talent and understanding that a Thrall is born with. Unadorned with tattoos, she is already stronger than most sentients, and her fighting skills would already put many non-Thralls to shame. She hopes to join the ranks of the heavy cavalry.

### *Raz - Thrall Blacksmith*

Mighty, even among the ranks of his Thrall kin, Raz works tirelessly, pounding the black iron in his forges, creating utilitarian, but well-crafted weapons of war, and suits of garde. In battle he wields a great warhammer with apparent ease, and demonstrates even more appreciation for Fire-Ale than do many Thralls.

### *Kata -Thrall Artillerist*

Kata mans one of the great ballista that stands in Tor's tower, and does so with professional skill. Although she recognizes the necessity of her position, she feels more comfortable in the thick of melee, and more at peace wielding her greatsword than firing great bolts at distant targets.

### *Kor -Veteran Thrall Heavy Infantry*

Clad in full garde of red iron, Kor is a veteran of the Borderlands, and leader of a unit of heavy infantry. Completely silent and calm, even in the heat of battle, Kor has the great respect of all those that serve under him, and has earned fame as a true exponent of Tazian combat.

## WARDUNE

A densely forested region bordered by the Axis River to the west, Vardune is divided into two great woodlands.

Northwood is home to the Blue Aeriad, as well as herds of wild greymanes, solitary malathrope, and dreaded forest grues. Giant viridia plants grow wild here, along with violet creepers, tanglewood, sorcerer trees and ironwood.

Southwood is the residence of the Green Aeriad. Here, countless exotic species of plants, shrubs and trees are found, including viridia, yellow stickler, green lotus, shrinking violet, tinsel tree, dryad bush, and many more. Exomorphs and bog devils stalk these woods.

## THE AERIAD

Formerly a race of sky-roving hunters and gatherers, the Aeriad are a race in the process of devolving from an avian to a ground-dwelling state. Their vestigial wings, once used for flying, have atrophied from disuse. For many Aeriad, these appendages are more decorative than functional.

There are two sub-species of Aeriad: Green Aeriad, who seldom exceed five feet in height; and the taller and more aggressive Blue Aeriad. Both species are slender and frail in stature, with skin which glistens with a metallic sheen.



A crested cox-comb of feathers adds to the distinctive appearance of these beings. By contrast, their manner of dress is simple and austere, typically featuring a short tunic and a cape of plain viridian linen.

## CUSTOMS

The race of Aeriad became refugees when their ancestral homeland was annexed by the forces of the (now defunct) Phaedran Empire. The survivors settled in the Forest of Vardune, building a number of small settlements along the eastern banks of the Axis River.

The Green Aeriad adapted well to their new home. Determined never to flee before another invader, they refined the art of Botanomancy so that they could groom the forest itself to defend them. They also learned to read and write in Talislantan script (as well as the Aeriadn bark-rune alphabet) in order to obtain wisdom from books. However, the Green Aeriad have pledged to never abuse this knowledge (as they believe the ancient Phaedrans did).

The Blue Aeriad, governed primarily by instinct, continue to retain certain of the barbarous ways of their ancestors. They are larger and stronger than the Green Aeriad, and better gliders. Many of them serve as mercenaries within the Grand Army of the Seven Kingdoms.

The ruler of Vardune is the River King, who may be either a Blue or Green Aeriad. He (or she) is elected by the Great Council of the Aeriad, which is composed of representatives from each of the Aeriad clans. The national color is aqua-blue.

## VALANIS

A fortified river port situated in Northwood, Valanis is the largest Blue Aeriad settlement. Here are docking facilities for the dozens of Aeriad barge-forts which patrol the Axis River. Scouts and trackers sometimes come to Valanis to hunt grues—hostile quasi-elementals which pose a considerable danger to the viridia crop. There is a bounty of 500 gold lumens for every grue killed or captured within the territorial boundaries of Vardune.

## THE RIVER CAPITAL

Vashay is the capital of Vardune, and is renowned as a source for useful herbs and plants. Situated on the banks of the Axis River, the settlement consists of numerous tiered dwellings constructed of woven vines within the trees themselves. Vashay's most important crop is a giant species of pod-bearing viridia. Boats made of dried viridia pods ply the river alongside the larger barge-forts of the Blue Aeriad. The Vashay Bridge spans the Axis River and leads to the Western Lands.



## A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO VASHAY

*"The sylvan habitation of Vashay is a truly admirable and exemplary demonstration of how an enlightened civilization can coexist peacefully with the very forces of nature, without unduly disturbing the local environment and ecological balance, and thereby causing the ruination of same, but I would most assuredly refrain from recommending it to those sentient prone to uncontrolled perambulation during that unconscious state of rest and recuperation known as 'sleep'".*

*- Taj Monas, Sindaran Collector*

### THE POPULACE

Capitol of Vardune, and the largest Aeriad settlement, Vashay is located in Southwood, and is predominantly populated by Green Aeriad as a result. Nearly 150 great viridia trees make up the foundation of the city, occupied by close to 1,200 Green Aeriad, and perhaps 300 Blue Aeriad.

One of the continent's major agricultural centers, Vashay is the source of many food exports throughout the Seven Kingdoms and Western Lands, and also serves as a vital trade route to and from the Western Lands, via the Bridge of Vashay that spans the Axis River. Many travelers pass through Vashay, and many of the vessels that traverse the Axis River, to and from the Arimite port of Shattra, often dock at Vashay for provisions.

### HISTORY

Originally inhabiting the forestlands of what is now Aaman, the Aeriad were forcibly annexed in 77 n.a. as the Phaedrans consolidated their empire. The Aeriad were forced to flee eastwards over the Axis River, there to settle in what is now the nation of Vardune. Determined to prevent such an event occurring again, the Blue and Green Aeriad immediately began to establish permanent settlements, along with governing bodies, the Blues settling Northwood, and the Greens, Southwood. Vashay was established, and grew slowly, the Bridge over the Axis River being constructed following the collapse of the hated Phaedran Empire in 110 n.a. In 222 n.a. representatives from both

Vashay, and the Blue Aeriad settlement of Valanis, formed treaty and alliance with Cymril, Sindar, Kasmir, Astar, Durne, and Tor, thereby forming the Seven Kingdoms.

### VISIONS OF VASHAY

#### A VIEW FROM AFAR

The glittering waters of the Axis River meander gently beneath a huge suspension bridge of worn timbers and artfully woven vines, hanging suspended from four mighty viridia trees, each towering above the river and bridge, bursting with foliage. Aeriad ply the waterway in barges of living viridia, and small, pod-like skiffs. Awesome barge forts, their tree-masts topped with lush foliage, patrol this watery border of the Aeriad nation. Wagons and travelers cross the bridge. The far bank dips to the waters, wooden docks lining its edge, a magnificent forest filling the horizon, a latticework of elevated walkways and dwellings just visible among the boughs, flocks of avir skimming the canopy.

#### ON APPROACH

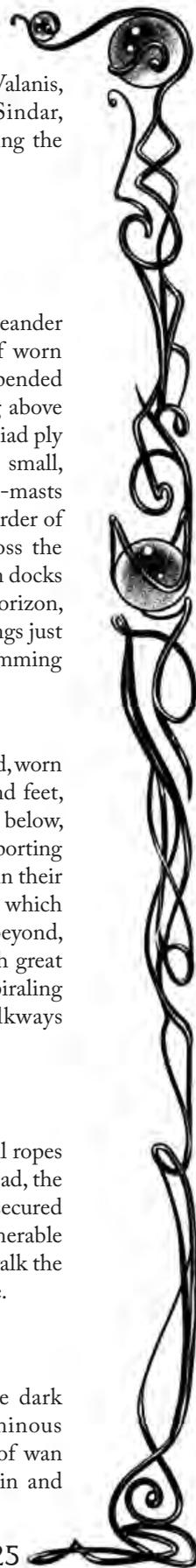
The timbers of the bridge are sturdy and broad, worn smooth by the passage of countless wheels and feet, and the air is filled with the burble of the river below, and the gentle cries of avir. The viridia trees supporting the bridge bear woven huts, like strange fruits in their branches, surrounded by many perches from which Blue Aeriad watch vigilantly. In the forest beyond, wooden ramps lead up from the earth to each great tree, several huts arrayed on each, walkways spiraling up around each trunk, and suspended walkways crossing the canopy like a vast web.

### THE CITY STREETS

Narrow walkways of wood and living tendril ropes swing softly in the shade of the canopy overhead, the rich soil visibly far below. Wooden platforms secured to the trunks of the viridia trees support innumerable domed dwellings, as Green and Blue Aeriad walk the bridges, or glide gracefully from place to place.

### VASHAY AT NIGHT

Moonlight filtering in shafts through the dark canopy, Vashay is cast in shadow, the luminous blossoms of lantern plants providing points of wan radiance in a spectrum of colors, from within and



## SLEEP AND SEATING

Like avir, Aeriad prefer to sleep “standing up”, gripping a branch or pole with their feet. They also prefer to sit in such a position, and although they can sit in the manner of most humanoids, are less comfortable doing so. They also avoid sleeping in a prone position if possible, not just for reasons of comfort, but because doing so often messes up their plumage, making it impossible to glide without grooming first.

without the many dwellings. Only the rustles and cries of nocturnal creatures contrast with the relaxing sound of the river.

## THE TYPICAL DWELLING

### AN EXTERIOR VIEW

Soaring 100-foot into the air, the viridia tree’s tough-barked trunk is affixed with wooden platforms at three stages, each supporting a simple dome-shaped huts of living vines, woven over a trellis, flowering with a rainbow of color and delicate fragrance. A sturdy wooden ramp leads from the forest floor to the lowest of the huts, while a spiral stairway, built around the tree’s trunk, permits access to the upper two dwellings. The uppermost hut is connected to its closest neighboring trees by several elevated walkways. Each hut has a low archway for an entrance, and one or two circular openings that serve as windows.

### THE INTERIOR

Decorated solely by garlands of flowers growing on the inside of its living walls, the hut would otherwise be simply and utilitarian. Four short perches thrust up from the floor, providing seating and bedding, while woven pouches suspended from the ceiling around the walls, hold the family’s belongings. Gourds of vinesap and water stand in one corner, next to a basket of fresh fruit and nuts. A net hangs suspended from the ceiling, the scintilla within provided adequate light.

## PLACES OF AUTHORITY

### THE GREEN COUNCIL

Standing at the center of Vashay, the Green Council resembles a typical Aeriad dwelling in all respects save size, being four times larger. Of the three tiers of abodes on this viridia tree, the lowest and uppermost are guard quarters, where Blue Aeriad sentinels are stationed to prevent intrusions during council gatherings. The Green Council Chamber itself features nine perches set around a table of crafted living viridia wood. Southwood’s nine Ministers meet here to govern development and issues affecting Southwood.

Each Green Council Minister, a respected and elected elder, governs a single of the following aspects of Southwood’s society: Agriculture, Botanomancy, Law, Defense, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Religion, Trade, Wildlife.

### TOLL TREES

The two viridia trees that support the Bridge of Vashay, on Vardune’s banks, are also toll and sentry stations, each sheltering five barrack huts, and numerous perches. 20 Blue Aeriad guards are stationed at each tree, to collect tolls and repel any hostile elements. The toll is 1 s.p. per sentient, and 5 s.p. per wagon.

## MILITARY BASES

### RANGER BARRACKS

Clustered like nuts around the trunks of four viridia trees stationed around the perimeter of Vashay, these barracks are actually comprised of a pair of huts on each tier of each tree, making 24 huts in total, housing a full compliment of 96 Blue Aeriad Rangers. 32 Rangers are on patrol around Vashay’s perimeter at any one time.

### RIVER PATROL BARRACKS

Built in the boughs of a pair of viridia trees that overlook the River Patrol Docks, these inornate dwelling huts serve as barracks for the four twelve-strong crews of Blue Aeriad Boatmen stationed in Vashay.

### RIVER PATROL DOCKS

Located just upriver from Vashay’s civilian docks, these large, ironwood wooden docks are replete with

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block and tackle winches used to transfer heavy loads. The dock is large enough to support Vashay's four barge forts, at least one of which is docked at any one time, while the other three patrol the Axis River along the edge of Southwood.

### SENTINEL PERCHES

Concealed at strategic points around Vashay, all of which offer clear visibility of paths into Southwood, these perches are used as watch points by the settlement's patrolling Rangers. Each is equipped with a living drum grown from the bark and wood of the tree itself, to be furiously beaten at the first sign of any trouble.

## EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

### VIRIDIAN HALL

Suspended between three viridia trees, Viridian Hall is Vashay's botanomantic institution, wherein prospective Botanomancers are taught their craft under the wise and strict guidance of established elders. Resembling nothing so much as a single huge dome dwelling with many doors and windows, the dome itself resembles the bud of a single great flower, petals just starting to unfurl. This stunning creation hangs from three vast interwoven tendrils that grow

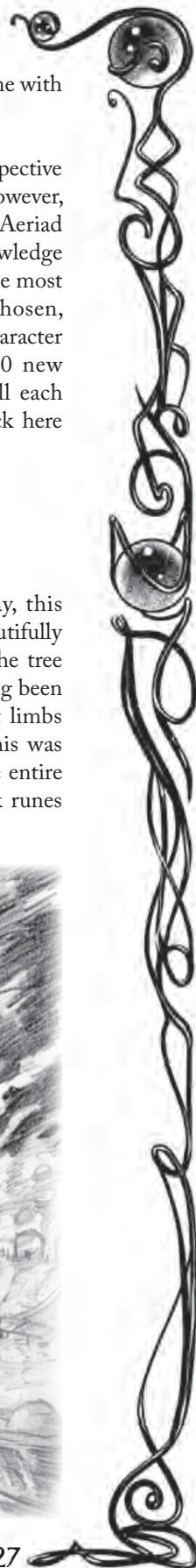
from the base of the great flower and intertwine with the trees around it.

As Botanomancers serve Aeriad society, prospective students are schooled free from of charge. However, the entrance requirements are strict, for the Aeriad consider the possession of this magical knowledge as both a great gift and responsibility. Only the most intelligent and dedicated candidates are chosen, and only then if they are deemed of good character after many grueling interviews. A mere 20 new Botanomancers are enlisted at Viridian Hall each year, a tiny fraction of the hopefuls that flock here every year.

## MUSEUMS & LIBRAIRIES

### FIRST TREE

Standing proud near the heart of Vashay, this solitary viridia tree stands at the center of a beautifully maintained clearing, filled with lush grass. The tree itself far exceeds all other viridia in size, having been tended by generations of Botanomancers, its limbs gradually coaxed to create a serene form. This was the first viridia tree grown in Vashay, and the entire history of the settlement is recorded in bark runes around its trunk.



## PLACES OF WORSHIP

### TREES OF LIFE

Scattered throughout Vashay, these great temples are located at the very tops of span-oak trees, obscured from below by dense foliage. Each is a large empty dome, its walls composed of entwined garlands of flowers, its roof open to the skies above. Aeriad Creativist ministers hold services in these structures, in which the assembled Aeriad raise their voices in song towards the sky.

## MARKETS & BAZAARS

### CANOPY FAIR

This monumental wooden platform is 200-foot in diameter, and stands low in the canopy, connected to six surrounding viridia trees. Winches surround the perimeter, allowing goods to be lifted or lowered, while wooden ramps and rope ladders lead to the ground below. The platform often teems with activity during the daylight hours as Aeriad merchants and farmers, both from Vashay and the surrounding villages, trade their wares with each other, and those traders who visit from the Western Lands and beyond.

## MERCHANTS, ARTISANS & TRADERS

### RIVER SUPPLY

Nearly all of Southwood's tax goods are stored in these three gargantuan, interconnected timber and vine halls, overseen by employees of the Green Council. These goods, including great quantities of timber, foodstuffs, herbs, viridia pod craft, and much more, are traded in bulk with foreign merchants that visit Vashay. The resulting coin is used to purchase the iron dart, bolt, and ballista heads, and red iron armor, that are used to equip Vardune's Rangers and Boatmen, and the crescent blades used by practically all Aeriad, as well as pay the nation's military force and botanomancers.

## INNS, TAVERNS & RESTAURANTS

### RIVER TAVERN

Also part of the Traders' Haven Complex, the River Tavern is operated by employees of the Green Council. It caters almost exclusively to visiting Aeriad from Northwood, and Southwood's surrounding villages. The inn consists of a single, large, cylindrical hut that forms a tube around the entire trunk of the viridia tree, the interior filled with a spiral walkway leading to numerous platforms of perches. Fresh seeds and vinesap are served here, and prices are average, though quality is good.

### RIVER INN - AERIAD

Clusters of individual huts literally cover the trunks of these two, close-standing viridia trees, each containing a perch, and scintilla lighting. These huts are provided for visiting Aeriad, as part of the Traders' Haven Complex, and prices are low.

### RIVER INN - GROUND-DWELLERS'

Located in proximity to the civilian docks, this structure resembles a huge log cabin, four-stories tall, its timbers beautifully carved and covered with flowering vines. This inn offers comfortable rooms for foreign visitors, and is part of the Traders' Haven Complex. Wooden cots topped with mattresses and pillows filled with fibrous down, along with fine linen sheets, and carved furniture, occupy each room. Prices are 50% higher than usual, but the accommodations are clean, dry, and comfortable. Food served in the first floor bar consists of garnished, fresh salads, vegetable and herb soups, fruit cordials and wines, all of good quality. Meat is not served, nor are any dishes cooked.

## TRANSPORTATION

### AXIS DOCKS

These basic docks are constructed of tough, ironwood timbers, and provide docking for up to 20 large vessels or barges.

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### BRIDGE OF VASHAY

This large suspension bridge is supported by four viridia trees, and is wide enough to permit two wagons to cross it simultaneously. It can be easily collapsed, should the need ever arise. The two suspension trees on Vashay's bank act as toll stations.

### MISCELLANEOUS

#### CROPS AND ORCHARDS

There picturesque orchards and crop fields form the immediate surrounds of Vashay, growing provender plant, goa nuts, and spice trees. Fruits such as pepper melon, red hairy blum fruit, leme, and yim-yam, are found in abundance, as are viridia tree crops, harvested before they reach three years of age. Many of Vashay's Green Aeriad make their livelihoods tending these crops and orchards.

#### BOWER OF FINAL FLIGHT

Located in the wild forests just beyond Vashay's farmland, this lone viridia tree is the final resting place of Vashay's dead. The deceased are covered in a shroud of vines, and laid to rest amid the branches of this tree, in a short, but moving ceremony of song, led by a Green Aeriad Creativist.

### NOTABLE CITIZENS

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, rivals (friendly or otherwise), or encounters:

#### *Khi-Chik - Green Aeriad Farmer*

Down-to-earth, forthright, and outspoken, Khi-Chik is a farmer, and proud owner of his family's yim-yam orchard. Although his plumage is just starting to show the yellow tinge of age, he is still hale and hearty, always willing to pull his weight, and take pride in his work.

#### *Skri-Kik - Crippled Blue Aeriad Creativist*

Born with a left arm that was twisted and gnarled like old wood, Skri-Kik would never know the joy of gliding, or pride of military service that typified his siblings. For many Blue Aeriad, that would have been a fate worse than death, but Skri-Kik was always calm, always willing to seek the good in any situation. To everyone's surprise, the local Green Aeriad Creativist, approached Skri-Kik, and took him as an apprentice. In the enfolding wings of the Creator, Skri-Kik has found his true calling.

#### *Cree-Kree - Blue Aeriad Boatman*

Cree-Kree is a proud pilot on one of Vashay's mighty barge forts, and takes her duties most seriously. Only recently assigned this duty, she feels herself drawn to the waters of the Axis, as much as the skies in which she can glide, and is ever alert for trouble on the waterway.

#### *Kee-Rik - Green Aeriad Botanomancer*

One of the elders of Viridian Hall, the ancient Kee-Rik is a highly skilled Botanomancer, and creates custom vegetation for sale to clients throughout the Seven Kingdoms and beyond. She willingly gives most of what she makes to the Green Council, for the benefit of Vashay, and also serves the community as one of its chief historians, recording notable events in bark runes on the First Tree.

#### *Ki-Skwawk - Blue Aeriad Ranger*

Ki-Skwawk is thoroughly disgusted with the current state of Green Aeriad devolution, and spends a great deal of his time taking out his irritation by acting in an aggressive, irritable, and insulting manner. A veteran who served for a time in Nankar, he shows open disdain for "dirt-dwellers", and abhors the thought that one day his once-proud race will be consigned to dwell as they do.

#### *Chik-Chik - Green Aeriad Weaver*

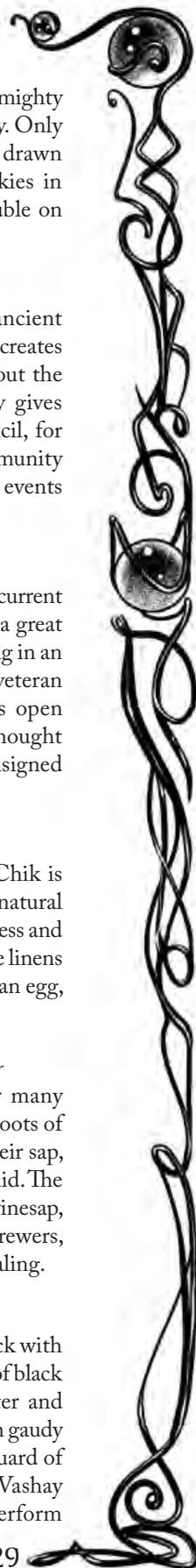
The viridia linen cloth produced by Chik-Chik is fine and supple, and he dyes it with a variety of natural ingredients. His wife, Kii-Twil, is a skilled mattress and pillow maker, and uses many of Chik-Chik's fine linens to create her works. They are currently nesting an egg, and expect the chick to hatch any day now.

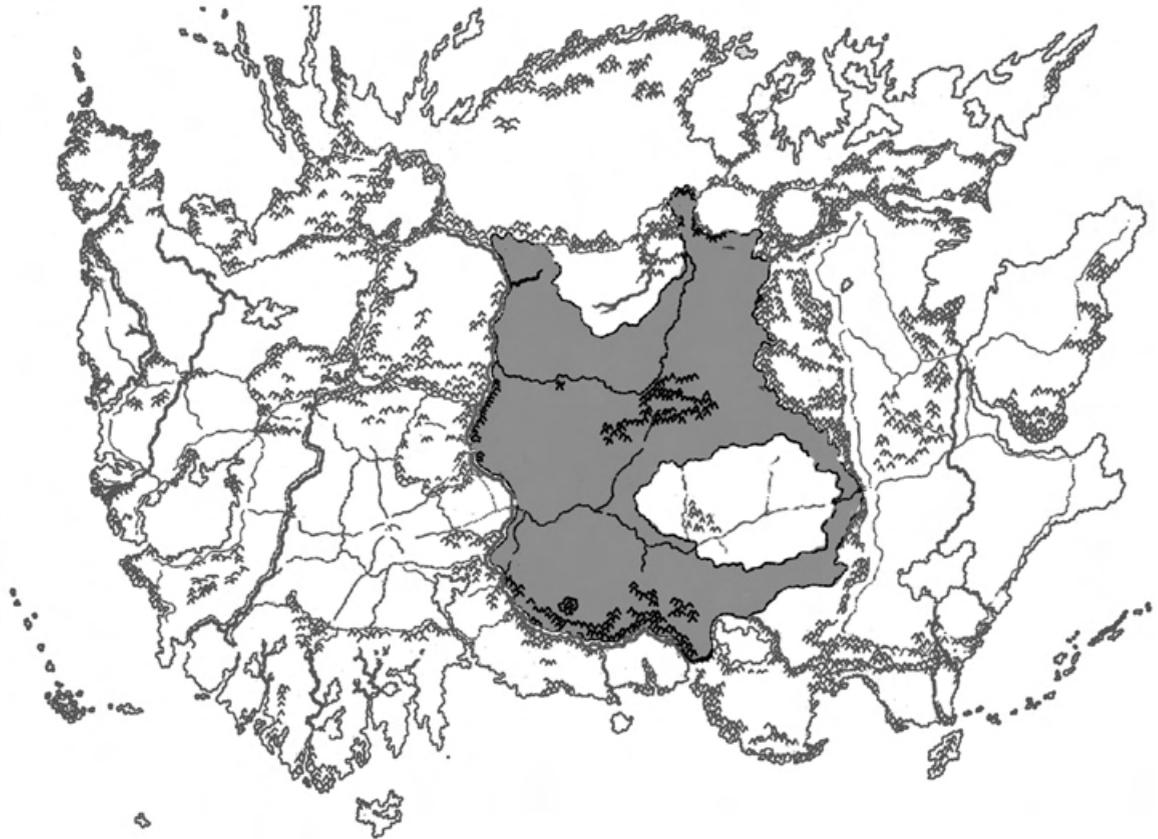
#### *Ree-Kwit - Green Aeriad Vinesap Brewer*

Ree-Kwit's family has brewed vinesap for many generations, trading kegs of the liquid for the roots of harvested viridia, which are then tapped for their sap, and used to brew more of the viscous green liquid. The family's secret mix of herbs used to flavor their vinesap, is a matter of much conjecture among rival brewers, and one fact that she has no intention of revealing.

#### *Yakkir - Arimite Iron Merchant*

Slightly corpulent, with long hair slicked back with grease, Yakkir is one of Vashay's main suppliers of black iron, and iron goods, and runs a large smelter and foundry in Shattra. His hands are bedecked with gaudy gold rings, and he always travels with a bodyguard of Thrall mercenaries. He conducts all trade in Vashay personally, not trusting any underlings to perform such work honestly.





## THE WILDERLANDS OF ZARAN

From the borders of the Seven Kingdoms to the Volcanic Hills, the vast territories of the Wilderlands of Zaran occupy much of the central portion of Talislanta. Here, amidst shadow-haunted wastelands, lie the ruins of the long-dead civilizations of the Forgotten Age: Elande, Zaran, Shana, Xambria, Ashann, and others too old to recall.

Much of the devastation caused by the Great Disaster took place within this region, and the Wilderlands have remained largely uncivilized ever since that time.

### THE WILDERLANDS ROAD

An ancient thoroughfare runs through the Wilderlands, called—appropriately enough—the Wilderlands Road. The road was originally paved with hexagonal stones, many of which have long since been worn away by the elements or scavenged. In some places, the route now consists of little more than a hard-packed dirt trail.

In the spring, heavy rains render sections of the road useless for weeks on end. During other times of the year, the highway is heavily traveled – by Aamanian pilgrims, merchant caravans from the Seven Kingdoms, Zandir traders and others – all enroute to Carantheum.

Regardless of the time of year, the presence of bandit gangs and predatory beasts makes passage through this region in anything less than a large, well-armed group a foolhardy, and possibly suicidal, endeavor.

### THE DEAD RIVER

Once the greatest waterway on the continent, the Dead River flowed from the North Sea (now known as the Lost Sea) south and east to the borders of Faradun. When the sea inexplicably dried up, so did all of its outlets.

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The Dead River is now a winding chasm, and forms the western frontier of the Wilderlands. It is difficult to cross due to its depth, which ranges from a mere 40 feet (in the vicinity of Grod) to as much as a 120 feet (especially along its southern extremities).

It is less difficult to traverse the Dead River lengthwise. The river bed forms a natural trail extending from north to south across much of the continent. Djaffir merchants, Orgovian traders, and Farad merchant caravans sometimes follow this route to Nankar or Kasmir. So, alas, do a variety of hostile creatures, including behemoths, malathrope, chasm vipers, satada, and Za bandits.

### THE TOPAZ MOUNTAINS

Bordering the Wilderlands on the southwest, the Topaz Mountains run for hundreds of miles in a wavering line of cliffs and precipitous peaks. Covered in thick jungle along the lower altitudes, the mountains are home to numerous strange creatures and beings, including batranc, manrak, chasm vipers, satada, and Nagra spirit trackers. Topaz crystals weighing up to 20 pounds have been found in these mountains.

### OTHER REGIONS

Although the Wilderlands is populated mainly by wild beasts and savages, a few bastions of civilization exist in isolation. Known collectively as the Independent City-states, these minor principalities wield little political or economic influence beyond their city walls, but serve a useful purpose as safe havens for travelers.

Hadj, the richest of the municipalities, claims both of the other city-states as debtors. Danuvia is a city of warrior women, and its stalwart soldiers have kept the city-states safe from invasion time and time again. Maruk is the weakest of the cities, but no one wishes to seize it from its possessors – the site is quite evidently cursed.

Other regions stand out for their terrain, the savages who dwell there, or the ruins which stud their surface. The Desertlands, for instance, is the largest expanse of sandy waste outside of the Red Desert itself. The Barrens are likewise...well, barren – little grows on the salt flats. And the Aberrant Forest is a lush woodland which defies logic by prospering in the midst of the wastes.

The Banditlands, in the distant east, is named after the Za bandits who lair there – the same folk whose ancestors (the Zaran) gave this entire land its name. Likewise, the Kharakhan Wastes are named both for the Kharakhan Giants who dwell there, and for the ruins of the ancient city of the same name.

Sharna and Ashann are wastelands distinguished only by the ruins of those lost kingdoms. Similarly, an entire territory is known as the Wastes of Torquar, after one of the most infamous of the ancient lands.

## THE ABERRANT FOREST

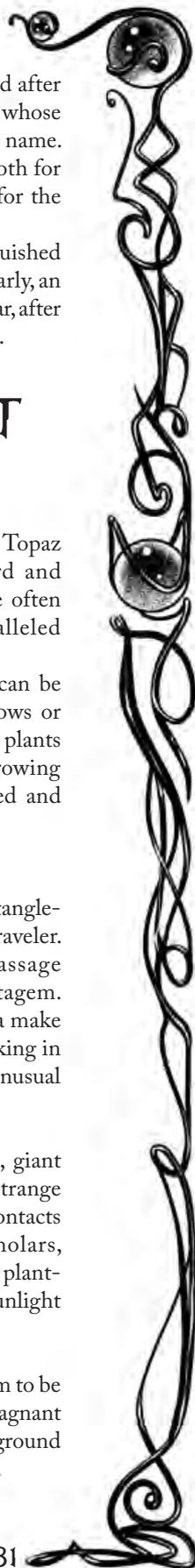
Pinched between the Desertlands and the Topaz Mountains is the Aberrant Forest, a weird and grotesque woodland the origins of which are often attributed to a magical mishap of unparalleled proportions.

All manner of rare and exotic vegetation can be found in this place, though nothing that grows or lives here is as nature intended it to be. The plants and trees appear heedless of natural law, growing to immense proportions or becoming gnarled and twisted in form.

From the underbrush, animate tendrils of tanglewood reach out to ensnare the incautious traveler. Hedgerows of thornwood make swift passage through the woodland an implausible stratagem. Less easily identifiable types of flora and fauna make their presence known by biting, tripping, speaking in mysterious tongues, or through even more unusual methods.

Among the reports of talking Mang trees, giant species of slugs and scavenger slimes, and strange insect-reptile hybrids, are interesting tales of contacts with intelligent plant-creatures. Most scholars, however, consider the descriptions of gangly plant-beings living in a lake village and devouring sunlight for food as merely entertaining stories.

At times, the very laws of the Omniverse seem to be contravened here. Murky streams flow uphill, stagnant ponds move slowly across the land, and the ground itself seems at times to pulse as if it were alive.





Because many varieties of rare and costly herbs grow throughout the Aberrant Forest, visitors to this macabre woodland are not unknown. Botanomancers, alchemists, and other individuals with an interest in naturalism sometimes come here, drawn by the region's seemingly endless variety of strange and exotic lifeforms.

### THE LEGEND OF THE MAD WIZARD

The profusion of oddities which populates this region might seem to lend credence to an ancient legend. The tale claims that the Aberrant Forest and its unusual residents are the creations of the Mad Wizard Rodinn, a rather obscure magician believed to have lived during the latter part of what is now known as the Forgotten Age.

A benign if somewhat erratic sort of fellow, Rodinn was forced to flee his native land of Pompados after committing a series of indiscretions, purportedly involving the wife and seven daughters of the Emperor of Pompados. Seeking refuge in the Wilderlands of Zaran, Rodinn constructed a manse deep within a secluded and scenic woodland area.

Here, the wizard continued the magical experiments for which he is known to history. During this time, legend claims that Rodinn chanced upon the discovery of quintessence, a substance capable of transmuting the very nature of matter. An accident led to the untimely release of a great quantity of this material, which wreaked havoc upon the surrounding environs.

Some apologists theorize that Rodinn's swift intervention prevented an even greater and more widespread catastrophe; others pinpoint Rodinn's mishap as the catalyst which spawned the Great Disaster, ending the most glorious age of Talislantan civilization.

In any case, Rodinn and his manse both reportedly survived the ordeal (if legends can be believed), though the Mad Wizard has never been heard from in the centuries since.

## THE BANDITLANDS

Bordered to the west by the Red Desert and to the east by the Volcanic Hills, this region is known as the Banditlands. The land of arid hills and scorched dust-flats is the bane of merchants and travelers alike, who must suffer the depredations of desert kra, manrak and opteryx – in addition to marauding bandits – in order to proceed east along the Wilderlands Road to Hadran, the gateway to the Quan Empire.

The rugged peaks of the Zaran Mountains are the final refuge of bandits who lay low in these parts to elude inquisitive patrols of Dracartan desert scouts. The region is rich in black-iron ore and certain types of semi-precious stones, but vaspas and manrak from the Volcanic Hills plague the heights. The marauders are said to have numerous hide-outs in the mountains, where they temporarily stash excess loot and inconvenient slaves.

### THE ZA

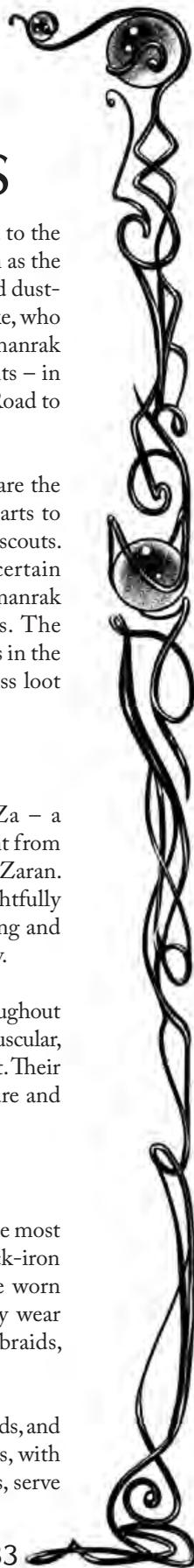
These badlands are the domain of the Za – a clannish and barbaric race which claims descent from the original inhabitants of the lost kingdom of Zaran. Contending that the Wilderlands region rightfully belongs to them, the bandits rationalize robbing and murdering any who trespass in “their” territory.

Nomadic bandits who range far and wide throughout much of the Wilderlands, the Za are lean and muscular, most standing at or just under six feet in height. Their skin is a pallid yellow in hue, leathery in texture and lined with creases and wrinkles.

### CUSTOMS

The Za shave their skulls, and forgo all but the most abbreviated attire. Necklaces of hammered black-iron disks are favored, as are bands of reptile-hide worn on the head and upper arms. Males generally wear long, braided mustaches; females, two long braids, one above either ear.

The tribesmen wield jagged-edged broadswords, and fire barbed arrows with their bows. Greymanes, with their long manes and tails done in tight braids, serve as steeds for the bandit clans.



Though the Za sometimes take prisoners for sale as slaves, they usually put their victims to death by the sword, this being thought of as fitting punishment for trespassers. Exceptionally valorous foes are accorded the dubious honor of being taken alive, so that they may later be slain in ritual fashion. The Za drink the blood of these vanquished enemies from skull-cups, believing that this gives them the strength of their foes.

There is little sense of unity among the bandits, who often engage in violent clashes over the rights to the best raiding territories. It is all the more surprising,

then, that the Za claim to have a single ruler, known as the Tirshata.

According to tradition, the identity of the Tirshata must remain unknown until the time comes for the Za to reclaim their lost homeland. At the designated hour, say the bandits, "the Tirshata shall be revealed, and the Za will rise up and smite all their enemies, until they alone rule the lands from east to west." Talislantan scholars, who by and large consider the Za to be on an intellectual par with the Wildmen of Yrmania, lend little credence to this folk tale.

## THE RUINS

### OF JALAAD

The crumbling ruins of the ancient city of Jalaad are located north of the Zaran Mountains. Though long since stripped of most of its hidden treasures by many generations of Yitek tomb-robbers and Za bandits, the ruins still shelter a relatively intact Library. The scriptorium was preserved due to the efforts of a cabal of Callidian Cryptomancers, which has endeavored to protect the facility's store of iron tablets since the time of the Great Disaster. Individuals who wish to explore the library may do so only under the watchful eye of the Callidians, who deal sternly with looters and vandals.



## THE BARRENS

Westernmost of the Wilderlands territories is the Barrens, a region of rocky hills, salt flats, and wide stretches of scrub plains. Herds of land lizards, valued throughout Talislanta as pack and burden beasts, roam the sparse plains in great numbers. Mangonel lizards, a combative species of reptile employed as war-steeds by the Thralls of Taz, can also be found here.

### THE ENIM

The hills of this region are inhabited by the Enim, a race of giant cannibalistic devils which hails from the lower plane of Oblivion. The devils have skin the color of brass, curved horns, and tusk-like fangs. Standing up to 14 feet in height, Enim are a fearsome sight to behold. They wield huge stone dubs carved with the visages of leering devils, and wear necklaces of skulls collected as mementos of their grisly conquests.

### CUSTOMS

The Enim are solitary creatures who dwell in caves located deep below the surface, emerging in order to hunt for food. Like all devils, they are the mortal foes of demonkind, and have a special dislike for Earth Demons. Enim are fond of Men, however, whom they regard as fine eating.

When not motivated by hunger, Enim sometimes entertain themselves by attempting to crush other creatures with large rocks, which they are able to hurl considerable distances. In the rare instances when two or more Enim meet above ground, they almost always engage in some game of chance, wagering on the outcome. Individuals who have a penchant for high-stakes gambling should be wary of gambling with the devils – most Enim know something of magic, and they are not averse to cheating if given the opportunity.

### THE DANELEK

The Danelek tribes roam the Barrens region of the Borderlands, hunting for land lizards and wild game. They also mine the salt flats for rock-hard salt crystals, which the tribes trade to other peoples. A Danelek tribe may consist of twenty-to-forty families, all living together in huts fashioned from blocks of salt. Danelek society is governed by a caste system, at the top of

which are the Warriors. Shamans are next, followed by Hunters and Traders.

The Danelek have glossy black skin, and stark white hair, which is worn in long dreadlocks. They dress in loincloths and sandals, their warriors wearing ornaments such as feathers, ear and neck rings, bones, stripes of paint, animal claws, and the fingers of slain victims.

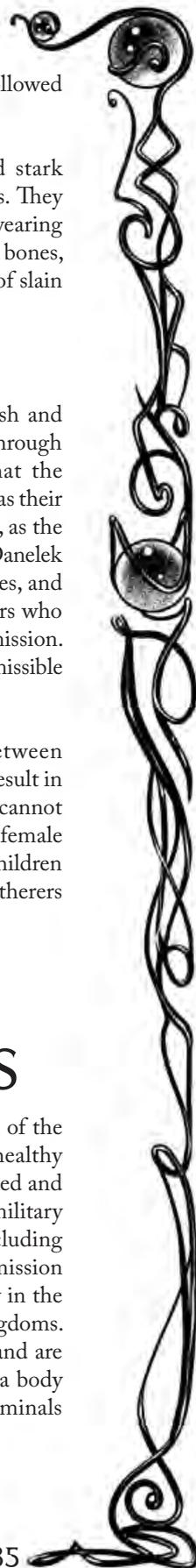
### CUSTOMS

The Danelek are a primitive people of harsh and occasionally cruel habits. Travelers passing through the Barrens may be amused by the fact that the Danelek perspire through their tongues as well as their pores. Showing such amusement is ill-advised, as the Danelek do not take lightly to being ridiculed. Danelek warriors are protective of their tribe's territories, and will attack small caravans or groups of travelers who stop to drink from their oases without permission. Stealth, ambush or a stab in the back are all permissible under their code of conduct

Danelek are monogamous. Marriage between members of different castes is taboo, and will result in expulsion from the tribe. Unblooded warriors cannot hope to marry, as no self-respecting Danelek female would wed one without caste status. Danelek children are expected to work in the salt mines or as gatherers as soon as they are old enough to walk.

## THE EASTERN BORDERLANDS

The Seven Kingdoms lies adjacent to much of the Wilderlands, and the Seven Kings have a healthy interest in what happens in this largely unsettled and dangerous region. Several Seven Kingdoms military outposts are located in the Wilderlands, including the fortresses of Akmir and Karfan. Their mission is to safeguard the caravan routes, particularly in the case of goods bound to or from the Seven Kingdoms. The outposts are run by Thrall commanders, and are manned by the Legion of the Borderlands – a body of hard-bitten mercenaries, outcasts and criminals from many lands.



The region adjacent to Karfan is known as the East em Borderlands, and is considered the Seven Kingdoms' first line of defense in the event of another invasion by the Beastmen of Golarin.

## AKMIR

Easternmost of the Seven Kingdoms' outposts, Akmir stands at a crossroads between the city-states of Maruk and Hadj. The fortress serves as a way-station for travelers in need of shelter, and is regularly frequented by Djaffir merchant tribes and Orgovian traders.

The archaic, walled fortress is regarded by professional men-at-arms as the most dismal of assignments. Situated far from civilization, Akmir is beset by harsh weather, wild beasts (such as omnivrax and malathrope), and marauding bandits. Consequently, the fortress is manned by the dregs of Talislantan society: Jhangaran exiles, Arimite knife-fighters, renegade Ur clansmen, devious half-men, and so forth.

## KARFAN

A small, walled fortress constructed by the Seven Kingdoms, Karfan has woefully limited facilities for travelers. Since the outpost is considerably off the beaten path, traders visit here most infrequently.



# THE CITY-STATE OF DANUVIA

A great stone citadel, the City-state of Danuvia was established on the site of a ruined city by refugees who fled the Phaedran Empire during the Cult Wars.

The municipality is a sovereign state, ruled by a royal Gynecocracy – a government run exclusively by females, under the ultimate authority of the Queen of Danuvia. The city-state is also notable for its mercenary army, which is composed solely of female archers, swordswomen and lancers (mounted on aht-ra bought from Djaffa).

## THE DANUVIANS

The Danuvians are a bronze-skinned race with strong features. The males are uniformly feeble, lazy, and addle-brained – therefore, the society is dominated by females, who serve in all positions of authority.

The warrior-women of Danuvia – known as Viragos – decorate their faces with colored pigments, and ride greymanes into battle. Equipped with black-iron corselets and parrying bracers, they are considered among the most skilled fighters on the continent.

## CUSTOMS

Rather than accept their own, pathetic mates as companions, Danuvian females also seek male partners from other lands.

Each year, the Queen of Danuvia holds a great pageant in the city, called the Conjugal Feast. The purpose of the festival is to find suitable mates for the Queen, and men of all nationalities are invited to compete for her affections. The top three contestants are rewarded by being appointed to the royal harem of male consorts. Lower-ranking Danuvians stake claims to other desirable males, according to their rank.

## THE BRIDGE AT DANUVIA

Two caravan routes lead away from Danuvia. The most heavily traveled is the trail leading north to the Wilderlands Road and thence to Kasmir. The lesser used path heads southward across the fertile

Danuvian plains toward Astar and the Dracartan installation on Lake Zephyr. Water caravans bound for Carantheum enter Danuvia by wagon, then depart for the Desertlands where land-barges await to load the precious transmuted cargo.

Crossing the great gorge, the Dead River Span consists of two black-iron suspension bridges stretching from each bank to a central rock spire. A ramp provides access to and from the river bed below.

## THE DESERTLANDS

This stretch of parched terrain, located to the southeast of the City-state of Danuvia, is one of the most desolate regions on the continent. Nothing grows here, for there is no water. The only creatures which can tolerate these environs are horned devil-men and sand demons, neither of which require moisture to survive. Both require sustenance, however, and so hunt each other relentlessly. Scattered across the landscape are the remnants of several ancient civilizations, along with the skeletal remains of unlucky travelers and their beasts.

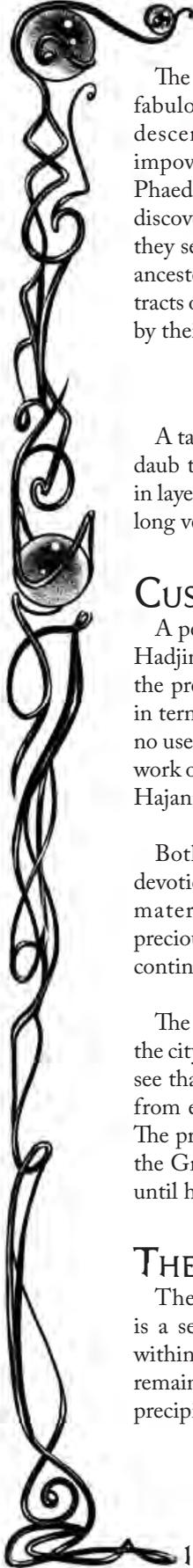
## THE RUINS OF KASRAAN

The Kasraan ruins lie deep within the Desertlands. Though the city itself has been reduced to a shambles by the ravages of wind and time, the catacombs located below ground remain largely intact. These subterranean haunts contain the petrified remains of the kings and queens of ancient Kasraan, sealed within crypts of solid stone. Gaining entrance to these vaults is said to be a formidable task: the Kasraanians, early ancestors of the Kasmir, took pains to safe keep the bodies of their monarchs from tomb-robbers and other entrepreneurial types. The Yitek, in fact, consider the effort required to gain access to the Kasraanian crypts to be barely worth the reward.

## THE CITY-STATE OF HADJ

A walled city, Hadj stands at the end of a narrow strip of arable ground, in the middle of an arid plain which stretches for miles in all directions. The modern settlement was erected near the ruins of a much older city —Phandril, capital of Hadjistan, the original homeland of the Phandre sub-race of Men.





The masters of this place are an aristocratic and fabulously wealthy people known as the Hadjin, descendants of the ancient Phandre. Virtually impoverished when they fled the collapse of the Phaedran Empire during the Cult Wars, the refugees discovered an incredibly vast store of wealth when they settled here among the ruins of the city of their ancestors. The Hadjin used this fortune to buy vast tracts of real estate across the continent, now managed by their servants and administrators.

## THE HADJIN

A tall and slender folk of noble bearing, the Hadjin daub their complexions with colored powders, dress in layered robes, and wear upward-sweeping caps and long velveteen gloves.

## CUSTOMS

A people of highly refined tastes and lofty airs, the Hadjin wave themselves with scented fans when in the presence of outsiders, who are deemed offensive in terms of appearance and odor. The Hadjin possess no useful skills to speak of, and delegate all of the real work of the city to a lower class of administrators (the Hajann) and hired servants.

Both the city and their lifestyle proclaim their devotion to idle pursuits. The Hadjin are the ultimate materialists, and spend great sums to import precious and exotic goods from the far corners of the continent.

The Consortium controls everything that goes on in the city-state, guided by a central principle—to always see that the Hadjin increase in wealth. One member from each of the Forty Families sits on the council. The presiding officer of the Consortium is known as the Grandeloquence, who holds the office for life or until he chooses to retire.

## THE HADJIN RUINS

The source of the great wealth of the Hadjin is a series of giant obelisk-like structures, located within sight of the city walls. Most of the megaliths remain standing, though some have fallen or lurch precipitously at odd angles.

Among the ruins are crypts which contain untold thousands of mummified corpses from ancient Phandril, each interred with the deceased's most prized possessions. The bodies were preserved al-chemically, then placed in sarcophagi carved from great blocks of colored crystal.

The ruins are closely watched by the Hadjin, who employ mercenaries and guard-beasts to ward the grounds. Visitors to Hadj can arrange for a guided tour of the tombs, which costs upward of 200 gold lumens, depending upon the choice of conveyance. Those who crave adventure first-hand can obtain a permit allowing exploration of the ruins, at a cost of 1,000 gold lumens per person, per day. Under the terms of the standard agreement, the Hadjin retain the rights to all treasure recovered, including any and all sarcophagi that may be discovered. The Consortium then sells the treasures, rewarding the discoverers with an amount equal to half the appraised value of the plundered items.

Unfortunately for explorers, the Phandre protected their crypts with traps and deadfalls, as well as magical and alchemical safeguards. Extra-dimensional entities are also known to wander the mausoleum.

## THE CITY-STATE OF MARUK

Maruk is also a walled city, though it is considerably less prosperous than Hadj. Built upon the ruins of an unknown civilization, the city was a place of notable splendor when first rebuilt.

Its citizens, magical craftsmen who were forced to flee the Phaedran Empire during the Cult Wars, renamed themselves the Maruk in honor of the valley in which they had taken up residence. Here, they made a good living as sellers of produce.

Soon after construction of the city was completed, a series of misfortunes – occurring at intervals of 13 months – beset the Maruk. Crops failed, animals died, the city was plagued by infestations of vermin, and the ruling class was slaughtered when the dead rose from their graves one night.

## Hotan's History of the World

Attempts were made to remedy the problem, which was diagnosed variously as being the result of an ancient curse, malicious spiritforms, ill-aspected stars, sunspots, and a host of less probable causes. Time and again, each of the proposed solutions met with failure.

Much to the chagrin of the Maruk, the Curse has persisted with regularity to the present day. The city has slowly fallen into ruin, all attempts at effecting much-needed repairs and renovations having long since been deemed unprofitable.

The ruling council of the city-state, itself the victim of numerous mishaps and misfortunes, continues to seek a solution to the city's woes. Though the government has technically been bankrupt for decades, a reward of 100,000 gold lumens is offered to anyone who can lift the Curse. The reward draws a few optimistic mystics, charismatic savants, and reputed miracle-workers, though not nearly so many as in years past.

### CUSTOMS

Reduced to selling ogront dung in order to make ends meet, the people of Maruk have become morose and gloomy. They dress in unflattering garments made of sack cloth, and walk about with their eyes downcast. Wan and unhealthy in appearance, the Maruk are considered harbingers of doom in many lands, and are shunned as if they carry the plague.

### THE MARUK MOUNTAINS

The wind-worn peaks of the Maruk Mountains, lying to the north of the City-state of Maruk, are believed to be rich in precious stones such as black opal. However, local folk are reluctant to approach the heights, saying that the peaks are the haunts of manrak, Kharakhan Giants and bandits.

Serpent Pass is a narrow gulch which weaves its way through the southernmost reaches of the mountain range. The pass offers shelter from sand and dust storms (common throughout the Wilderlands), and so is frequented by Orgovian traders, Aamanian Orthodoxists making the pilgrimage to the Well of Saints, and a few intrepid Maruk dung merchants. Consequently, this route also has its admirers among certain tribes of Djaffir bandits, Beastmen and Kharakhan Giants.

### THE ORACLE

A sheer pinnacle of blue and violet porphyry which overlooks Serpent Pass, the Oracle is said to be the abode of an ancient mystic who lives upon the summit – a peak constantly obscured by a bank of clouds. According to legend, the great sage knows the answers to all questions: past, present, and future.

Three trails lead to the top of the mount, each affording climbers with its own distinct set of hazards and disadvantages – an aerial approach, while most direct, is considered ill-advised due to the presence of wind demons.

## THE KHARAKHAN WASTES

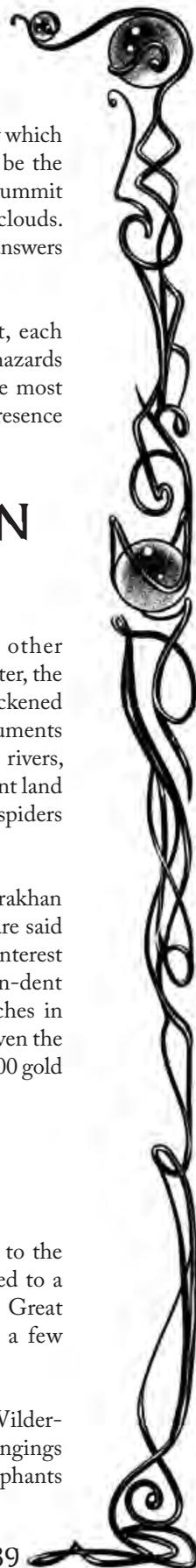
A region despoiled by firestorms and other unnatural phenomena during the Great Disaster, the Wastes of Kharakhan contain burnt and blackened ruins that stand like tombstones, dismal monuments of a bygone era. Where once flowed mighty rivers, winding chasms now cut across the plains. Giant land dragons graze on dry grasses, heedless of crag spiders and other noxious predators.

Many towering structures of the City of Kharakhan still stand, and oversized artifacts and curios are said to litter the subterranean levels. Of particular interest are the sliver coins once employed by the ancient inhabitants, which measure three to four inches in diameter and weigh up to one pound apiece. Even the most miserly collectors seldom offer less than 100 gold lumens for these unique items.

## THE KHARAKHAN GIANTS

A race of giants whose ancestors hail back to the Forgotten Age, the Kharakhan Giants reverted to a primitive and savage existence following the Great Disaster. The race is all but extinct – only a few hundred Giants remain on the continent.

The survivors are nomads, traversing the Wilderlands in warrior clans. They carry their belongings on huge war wagons drawn by teams of ogriphants or land lizards.



The Giants stand 15 feet in height, weigh over half a ton, and are incredibly strong. They speak an ancient and obscure dialect of Low Talislan, and are the only individuals able to decipher the ages-old inscriptions in the Kharakhan ruins. The Farad covet the Giants as slaves, and pay well for captured specimens.

## THE ARAQ

A hybrid of Men and Saurans, the origins of the Araq have been long since forgotten. The purpose of the experiment seems to have been to create a race of warriors adapted to harsh climates. The scaly brown hide of the Araq protects them from the glare of the twin suns, and their dorsal membranes masterfully regulate their body temperature. They require little food or water to sustain themselves, and can subsist on almost any type of organic material, including briars and even waste products. Unfortunately, the Araq are as prone to violence as the Saurans, and inherited numerous vices from Men as well: greed, lust, dishonesty and cruelty.

The Araq prowl the Kharakhan Wastes in large numbers, mounted on two-headed reptilian creatures known as duadir. They are skilled in the use of spears and bone war-axes, but will fight with fang and claw if necessary. Their primary source of food is the land dragon, from which they derive material to craft boots, loincloths, shields and weapons. Araq prey upon anything that lives, including crag spiders, vermin, and travelers who venture too near their domains. Their wars with the Saurans of the Volcanic Hills serve the useful purpose of keeping the population of both races in check.

## NOMAN'S LAND

This narrow strip of wasteland separates Tamaranth from the Shadow Realm. It is believed to be haunted by fantasms—pseudo-demons from the Nightmare Dimension, a place ruled by the entity known as Noman. Practitioners of black magic come to Noman's Land to search for Mordante's Gate, a magical portal said to provide entrance to the lower planes.



### MODOR'S TOMB

According to the Ariane, the Kharakhan Giant named Modor was buried in this inert volcano, along with his store of stolen riches (said to exceed 100,000 gold lumens). A 200-foot vertical shaft reportedly leads to seven doorways, only one of which leads to the actual tomb. Touching the treasure will supposedly bring the deceased Giant back to life.

### SHARNA

The southern Wilderlands contains several maze-like structures of certifiable antiquity. Some scholars attribute these ruins to the Sharna, a long-dead race of whom little is known. The purpose of the structures remains unclear – artifacts unearthed from the ruins range from costumes, utensils and odd furnishings to weapons, crystals, magical paraphernalia, and articles of no apparent utility whatsoever. Few of the labyrinths have been explored thoroughly, being considered unsafe due to their extreme age.

Artifacts from the labyrinths are highly valued as curios and collectibles, if for no discernible reason other than their avowed scarcity. In truth, the Sharna appear to have had an uncommon talent for creating items of the most tasteless and unaesthetic sort. Nevertheless, the demand for these unattractive objects continues to be high, a behavioral anomaly which has heartened many a generation of antique and curio dealers.

Contributing to the rarity of Sharna artifacts is the presence in this region of nightstalkers – weird creatures which hail from the astral plane, and are attracted to the material dimension by the dreams of sleeping beasts and men.

### THE FERRANS

The areas about the Sharna ruins are populated by Ferrans – rodent-faced, man-like beings of short stature, whose bodies are covered with a coat of dirty brown fur. They live in underground tunnel complexes, coming forth in groups to scrounge for food or to rob unwary travelers of their possessions. Ferrans steal anything that they can carry off and drag into their lairs. They are shrewd and cunning, and have been known to employ exotic weapons and gear pilfered from others in their raids.

### ASHANN

The territory known as Ashann is similar to Sharna, in that both regions are named for the ancient kingdoms said to have once existed there. Aside from crumbling ruins, there is little in either place to testify of past grandeur.

The shattered ruins of the Old City of Ashann consist of seven concentric rings, the outermost of which encompasses an area approximately two miles in diameter. At one time, these ancient stone structures may have measured nearly 100 feet in width, and over 40 feet in height.

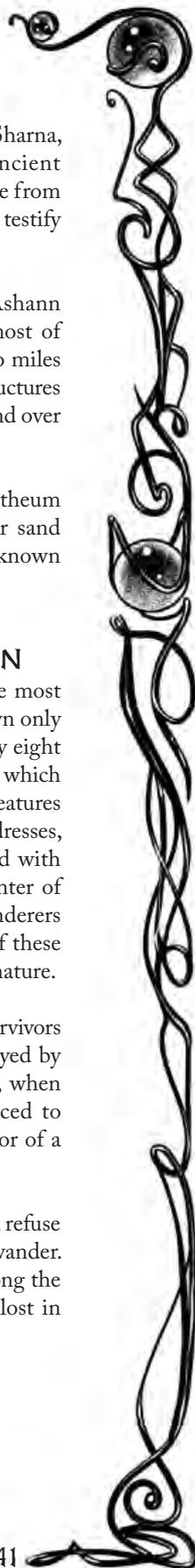
Desert scouts from the kingdom of Carantheum claim that the region is uninhabited save for sand demons, satada, and the mysterious beings known only as the Wanderers of Ashann.

### THE WANDERERS OF ASHANN

These mysterious individuals are among the most peculiar inhabitants of the Wilderlands. Known only as the Wanderers of Ashann, they stand nearly eight feet in height, and dress in long, billowing robes which hang loosely upon their angular frames. Their features are entirely concealed beneath elaborate headdresses, and each carries a staff of white oak inscribed with a curious symbol: a staring orb, set in the center of a silver pentacle. Some believe that the Wanderers are without eyes and can only see by means of these devices, which are supposed to be magical in nature.

The Wanderers may be the last of the Shan, survivors of the Kingdom of Ashann which was destroyed by the Great Disaster. According to this theory, when the Shan beheld their cities and lands reduced to desert, they forever rejected civilization in favor of a nomadic life.

To the present day, the Wanderers of Ashann refuse to settle in any one area, preferring instead to wander. They are sometimes encountered walking among the ruins of the Old City of Ashann, seemingly lost in thought.



# TORQUARAN WASTES

Peering down the corridor of time like a spectre that refuses to be buried, the City-state of Torquar continues to stir the minds of men despite the fact that its cabal of sorcerers fell from power eons ago. This entire region of the Wilderlands resounds with the curse of having been associated with such a reprehensible memory.

## THE RUINS OF TORQUAR

Despite the combined effects of time, the elements, and the cataclysmic upheavals resulting from the Great Disaster, the ruins of the Citystate of Torquar still stand as grim reminders of that dark and nearly forgotten age. Here, amidst stark stone towers and nightmarish effigies, once flourished the capital of the most sinister empire in the annals of Talislantan history.

Generations of occultists, black magicians and tomb-robbers have come to the ruins to sift through the debris in search of clues to the Torquarians' dark and macabre secrets. Many articles have been retrieved from the ruins, often to the great regret of those who have found them: cursed tomes, diabolical artifacts, instruments of torture and death, and things too terrible to describe. Countless other items remain buried in tombs, vaults and underground pits, awaiting discovery by those who covet infernal knowledge above all other considerations.

## THE PLAGUELANDS

North of the ruined city-state, this cracked and barren plain was laid waste centuries ago by some unknown catastrophe, possibly in conjunction with the Great Disaster. It is a widely-held belief that any living thing which passes through the Plaguelands will be changed or transformed in some unpredictable manner. Consequently, few intelligent creatures willingly venture into this region.

## THE SURSIAN PLAINS

West of Old Torquar is the Sursian Plains, an arid grassland pockmarked with holes and craters. Here can

be found the remnants of the once-mighty Kingdom of Sursia: the twisted and charred hulks of terrible siege engines, the ruins of blasted stone towers, and shards of fused metal and glass.

Packs of Ferran bandits live in tunnels beneath the plains, inhabiting a network which links the region's largest craters and crevasses. Gigantic ogronts mindlessly graze on the dry grasses, while azoryl glide across the sky. If not for the presence of such creatures as these, the area would resemble a ghostland.

## THE SAD PLAINS

These barren plains, south of the dead city-state, are lined with rows of aged and pitted stone statues, each portraying one of the Necromancer-Kings of ancient Torquar.

On this site the nation of Xambria once stood, its cities shining brightly in the light of the twin Talislantan suns. Now nothing remains, all trace of this once-prosperous civilization having been obliterated from the face of the continent by the merciless armies of Torquar.

Since that time, the plains have been inhabited only by ogront, land dragons and malathrope. Marauding bands of Araq and Kharakhan Giants sometimes sweep through the Sad Plains, but they seldom linger in this strange and mournful place.

## OMEN

This cursed place is avoided by most Talislantans. In ancient times, the Necromancer-Kings of Torquar erected at Omen a mountain of skulls nearly 1,000 feet in height, representing untold millions of victims. The mountain stands to the present day, and is sometimes visited by descendants of the victims, who seek to commune with their ancestors.



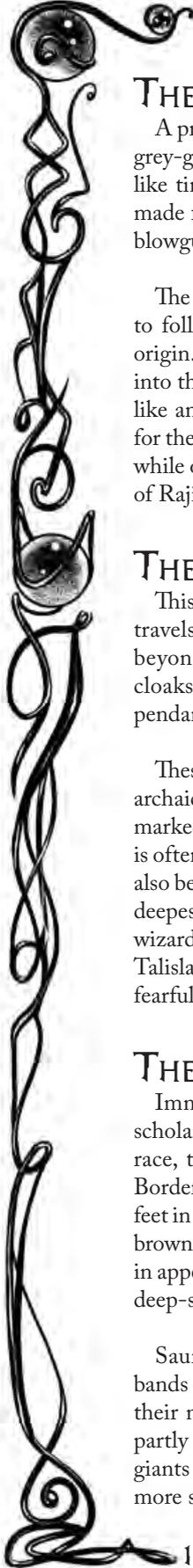
## THE DISPLACED PEOPLES

A number of different races traverse the territories of the Wilderlands without inhabiting any specific lands. Most are descended from refugees whose homelands were destroyed in the Great Disaster, their lands now long abandoned and fallen into ruin. Some are driven by modern oppressors, such as the Quan Empire; others are members of dying races.

## THE BODOR

An amber-skinned people of uncertain origin, the Bodor are round faced, portly of build, and eccentric in their choice of costume. Modest and unassuming by nature, Bodor are content so long as they have work. They are consummate musicians, proficient with such instruments as gossamer harps, glass flutes, crystal bells, a device known as the intricate spiral-horn, and four-man bellows-pipes. Traveling troupes of Bodor musicians are common throughout the city-states of the Wilderlands, and may be found in such lands as Zandu, Faradun, the Seven Kingdoms, Carantheum, and the Quan Empire.





## THE NAGRA

A primitive, man-like race, the Nagra have mottled grey-green skin, black fangs, peaked skulls, and eyes like tiny ebony specks. They dress in rude garments made from the furry hides of winged apes, and carry blowguns and long knives made of bone.

The Nagra are spirit trackers, possessing the ability to follow any track or trail, regardless of its age or origin. They once lived in the East, but were driven into the Wilderlands by the Kang, who hunted them like animals. Some who survived made a new home for themselves in the jungles of the Topaz Mountains, while others settled in the Jade Mountains to the east of Rajinnar.

## THE RAHASTRANS

This race of itinerant wizards and mountebanks travels throughout the Wilderlands of Zaran and beyond. Tall and dark-skinned, Rahastrans wear cloaks, gloves and long coats of blue fustian, and pendants of carved amethyst.

These wizards are skilled in the art of the Zodar, an archaic game which utilizes cards, each of which is marked with a different arcane symbol. While Zodar is often thought of as a game of chance, the cards may also be used to divine the future, or to reveal a person's deepest thoughts and desires. As a result, Rahastran wizards are regarded with mixed emotions by other Talislantans, who are fascinated with the Zodar, yet fearful of the secrets which the cards may reveal.

## THE SAURUDS

Immense, man-like reptilians believed by some scholars to have been the progenitors of the Sauran race, the Sauruds wander throughout the Eastern Borderlands and the Volcanic Hills. They stand eight feet in height and are massively built, with rough, scaly brown hide. Their features are not unlike a land lizard's in appearance, though their eyes are smaller and more deep-set, and their fangs somewhat less obtrusive.

Sauruds favor abbreviated attire, loincloths and bands of strider or dragon hide usually sufficing to suit their needs. In battle, they wield huge spiked clubs; partly as a matter of preference, but also because the giants lack the manual dexterity required to utilize more sophisticated weaponry.

Their tiny reptilian brain is incapable of grasping any but the least intricate of ideas. Sauruds are sometimes employed as bodyguards and sentinels, positions for which the ferocious brutes are well-suited. The race seems on the verge of extinction, and there are perhaps only a few hundred Sauruds left on the entire continent.

## THE XAMBRIANS

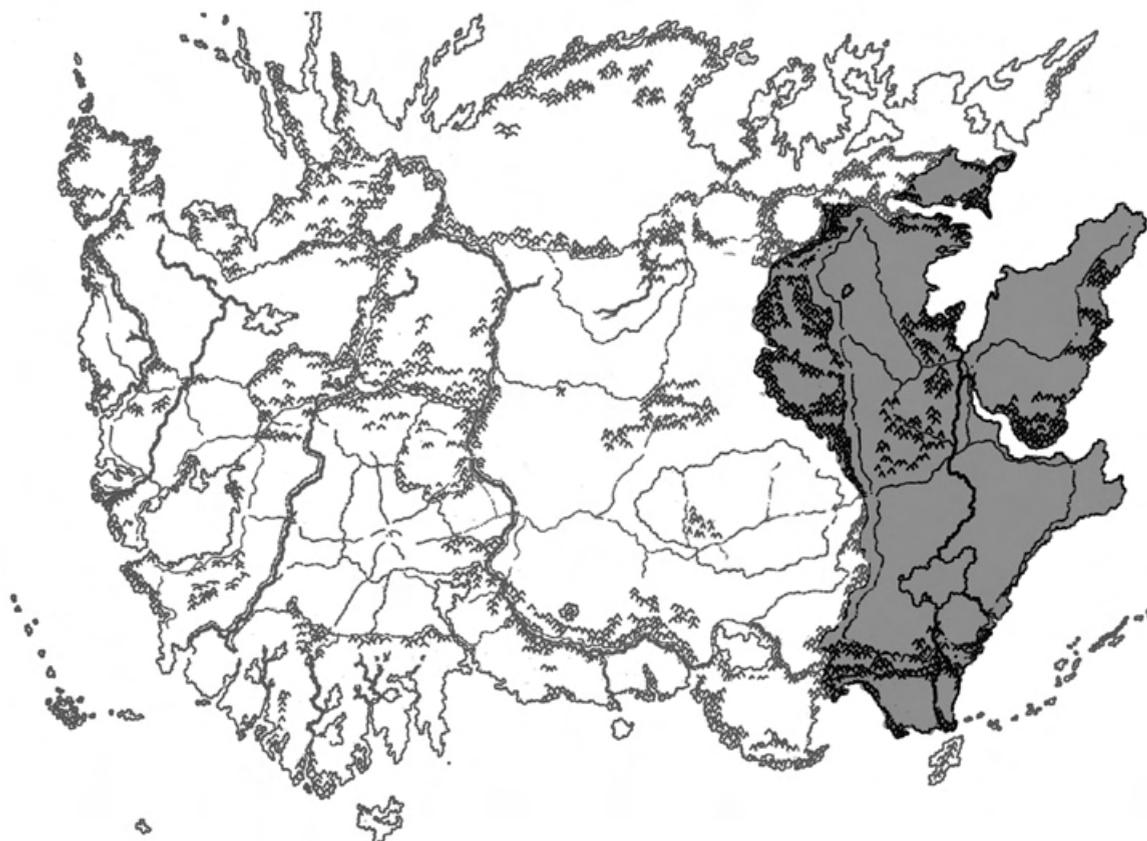
These folk are descended from the citizens of ancient Xambria, a kingdom destroyed before the Great Disaster. Few in numbers, they are a grim and moody lot, regarded with suspicion by most Talislantans. The Xambrians blame the demise of their kingdom on the sorcerers of ancient Torquar, and distrust all spell-casters. Many Xambrians are mercenary wizard-hunters by trade.

Xambrians resemble the Ariane in stature, but have bone-white skin and long, raven-black hair. Their customary mode of dress includes a cape, high boots, a vest, and tight breeches of black strider hide, with gauntlets of fine silver mesh.

## THE YITEK

A nomadic people, the Yitek are brown-skinned, built along lean and narrow proportions. They dress in veiled headdresses, capes, and loose-fitting garments made of woven gauze, usually grey with the dust of crypts and barrows.

The Yitek are tomb-robbers by profession. They scour the Wilderlands, ranging from the Labyrinths of Sharna to the Kharakhan Wastes, searching for valuable treasures and artifacts. They are frequent visitors to the City-state of Hadj, and are friendly with the Djaffir. Known for their morbid sense of humor, the Yitek are avoided by many folk, who find their line of work distasteful.



## THE EASTERN LANDS

### CHANA

The Jungles of Chana occupy part of the southeastern coast of Tallslanta, from Faradun in the west to the Mandalan region of the Quan Empire. The solid jungles of the coasts meld into rain-forests as the land rises upward into the Jade Mountains.

Chana's jungles are known to harbor an abundance of riches, including costly herbs, precious stones and exotic animals. Magical herbs and necromantic paraphernalia are additional lures to raiders—such as the Imlans, who sometimes venture ashore here. Not surprisingly, more than a few of the local savages bear the shrunken and scaly-skinned heads of such souvenir hunters on their belts.

The climate in this region is hot, wet and unbearably humid—ideal conditions for Chana's many varieties of tropical plants and trees, which can literally spring

up overnight after a drenching rain. Virulent species of animals and insects likewise find the jungles to their liking, making travel in this region a dismal proposition.

Worse still are the fierce tribes of savages which dwell here: the Witchmen, dwelling along the southern coast of Chana and in the eastern jungles; the Manra, in the remotest parts of the central highlands; and the Nagra, in the western jungles.

### THE WITCHMEN

A people of dark and sinister repute, the Witchmen are known to have tastes for such pastimes as headhunting and cannibalism, which have endeared them to few other races. A reliance upon various narcotic herbs (primarily kesh, which is derived from the jabutu plant) contributes heavily to the unhealthy appearance of these folk, who are tall and cadaverous in stature, with bilious green skin.



## CUSTOMS

The Witchmen do their utmost to appear fearsome: filing their teeth to sharpened points, decorating their glowering visages with occult glyphs and symbols (as yet indecipherable, even to the savants of Cymril's Lyceum Arcanum), and wearing the shrunken heads of their adversaries on cords slung about the neck. It is customary for these folk to wear their hair in a single topknot, lacquered and braided with leather thongs or sinew.

Witchmen tribes are warlike. In the extreme, and fight among each other constantly, each vying for control of the other's jabutu-growing territories. The savages employ throwing sticks, blow-guns and spears in combat, and generally disdain frontal assaults in favor of ambushes and traps. In addition to their usual depredations, bands of Witchmen occasionally cross the border into the Quan Empire, wreaking havoc on the plantations there.

The tribes lack all of the civilized virtues, but possess certain undeniable (though gruesome) talents. Witchmen shamans are skilled in the concocting of strange and unique substances, such as devilroot and kesh. The former is an herbal poison which can be made to varying degrees of toxicity, and may be prepared in powdered or resinous form. Kesh is a pungent liquid derived from the root of the jabutu, a plant found only in the Jade Mountains. This drug

is notable for its profound narcotic and magical properties, and is used extensively in the black magic rituals of the Witchmen.

The Witchmen have also learned how to charm the poisonous serpents known as Death's Head Vipers. The natives call these foot-long snakes, "*wrist vipers*," and wear them like deadly, living bracelets. The serpents are trained to attack on command, and have other practical uses as well.

Perhaps the most infamous of the Witchmen's talents is their reputed ability to steal souls, which the shamans are said to imprison in enchanted stones. These "soulstones" are supposedly used to create jujus – mindless zombies, controlled through the use of a graven image. Shrunken head fetishes, purportedly used by the shamans to communicate with the lower spirit realms, are also said to be popular. The process by which jujus and shrunken head fetishes are made is sufficiently revolting to warrant omission from this text, however.

## THE MANRA

These savages resemble the Witchmen in physical stature, but exhibit none of the frightful or unhealthy characteristics associated with those hostile people. Manra possess the unique ability to assume the forms of other living things, such as wild beasts and even plants. A derivative of the jabutu plant, prepared in



some secret manner, is believed to be the source of the Manra's shape-changing abilities.

## CUSTOMS

The Manra are nature worshipers, whose primary concern is the protection of the rain-forests which they call home. They live in small villages composed of thatched huts, and tend to keep to themselves.

The tribes are generally peaceful in nature, though deviant Manra clans are believed to exist. All of the shape-changers bear considerable resentment for the Witchmen, their rivals for the region's limited supply of the jabutu plant.

## THE JADE MOUNTAINS

Sweeping northwestward in an arc, the Jade Mountains run from Chana to the Volcanic Hills. The deep-green peaks of these ancient mountains are swathed in thick vegetation, and inhabited by such predators as batranc and revengers, and numerous species of tropical avir, poisonous serpents and giant insects. The Jade Mountains are also rich in such natural resources as black diamonds, moonstones, k'tallah, lotus, devilroot, and a tropical variety of cleric's cowl.

Hidden amid the ravines and rain-forests of these mountains are the majority of the surviving Nagra, a people once persecuted by the Kang of the Quan Empire. Fierce, aggressive and violent, these tribesmen are renowned for their ability to spirit track—to perceive and trace the faint trails left by a creature's spirit essence.

## THE RIVER CHANA

A fork of the South River Shan, the River Chana's murky waters are infested with aramatus, skalanx and grey ikshada...which explains, perhaps, the Chana Witchmen's extreme reluctance to cross almost any body of water.

Many varieties of rare plants and herbs grow along the banks of the Chana River. Imrian slavers occasionally venture upriver in order to obtain stores of fresh provisions – primarily, slugs and giant water-bugs, which the amphibians regard as delicacies.

## THE BAY OF CICZ

Adjacent to the eastern coast of Faradun and the western coast of Chana, the Bay of Cicz is populated by sea demons, giant sea scorpions, and the marauding vessels of Mangar Corsairs—to the dismay of Farad merchant vessels and Imrian slave coracles, which also traverse these waters. The Imrians raid the coastal regions of Chana on a regular basis, taking Witchmen slaves. There is a market for the primitive shamans in Faradun, where the savages are sold for use in the narcotics and contraband trades.





## HARAK

Harak is a bleak and desolate land, hemmed in on all sides by mountains and swept by frigid winds from the north. The landscape of this northern land is nightmarish: jagged spires of rock jut upward from the cracked and barren earth, and scattered shards of black iron litter the ground. Here, in this most inhospitable of regions, dwell the fierce warriors known as the Harakin.

### THE HARAKIN

A gray-skinned sub-race of Men, the Harakin are lean and rugged of build, averaging over six feet in height. They dress in loincloths, cowls, high boots and heavy gloves, all of which are usually made of reptile hide. Both the males and females paint the areas around their eyes with black pigments, giving them a fearsome aspect.

### CUSTOMS

A hard-hearted people, the Harakin are utterly devoid of mercy or compassion. Ultimate survivalists, they view all other living creatures as prey. Forced by the circumstances of their existence to endure great hardships, the folk of Harak have no concept of morality or religion, and are by nature fatalistic and grim. They take what they want, raiding both rival clans and neighboring lands.

The clans of Harak are nomadic, traveling from place to place in search of food and water—both precious commodities in this region. When their hunts and raids prove fruitless, the Harakin subsist on scorpions, spiders, and bits of lichen and mosses.

All Harakin consider themselves to be warriors. Skills and trades not related to warfare are regarded as useless. Each clan member learns to make his or her own weapons, which are hammered and honed from the fragments of black iron found almost everywhere throughout this region.

The tribesmen employ several unique types of weapons, including the tarak (a four-bladed iron axe), the khu (a double-bladed dagger), the krin (a heavy crossbow that fires iron spikes) and the jang (a thrown weapon resembling an edged scythe). All other survival skills—such as hunting, dressing game, finding water, and so forth – are considered warriors' skills. In fact, the Harakin word for “survival” and “fight” are one and the same.

### THE DRACYL RIDERS

Although the Harakin show few other traces of civilized behavior, they have domesticated the dracyl, a species of winged reptile native to the sheer cliffs of

## Hotan's History of the World

Harak's coastal regions. Large and ungainly, dractyl have gray-green scaly hides and great membranous wings.

Their beaks are lined with rows of pointed teeth, and their hands and feet are clawed. The rheumy, yellow-eyed stare of these creatures is somewhat unnerving, a fact from which dractyl seem to derive a certain strange pleasure. In the wild, dractyl live on the ledges of cliffs and chasms, usually in small groups. They have a language of sorts, but are among the most dour and rancorous of creatures in Talislanta.

The dractyl's diet normally consists of vermin, scorpions and spiders, though they will eat almost anything that can be obtained without great exertion. Mean and untrustworthy, dractyl will abandon a weak or indecisive master if not closely monitored. The creatures are also known to bicker among themselves, particularly during the dractyl's monthlong mating season.

The Harakin use trained dractyl for transport and in battle. However, the avians have little love of combat, and obey their masters primarily to avoid being eaten at the next meal. Even so, these reptilians are capable of delivering a nasty bite, and can use their front and rear claws to some effect if and when the need arises.

Dractyl require little food and are themselves somewhat edible, factors which hold a certain appeal for their masters. The avians are only fair as fliers, however, and cannot or will not fly at altitudes in excess of 100 feet. As a result, the Harakin must ride them on foot when attempting passage through mountainous regions.

In spite of the shortcomings of their beasts, the warrior clans of Harak are known to range as far as the Quan Empire and the Volcanic Hills in their depredations. Able to survive the rigors of their own land, the Harakin have little difficulty tolerating the colder climates of Xanadas or L'Haan, or the volcanic terrain of the Volcanic Hills – these lands all seem pleasant by comparison with Harak.

However, the Harakin attack L'Haan less frequently than they do the other neighboring countries, generally considering the grueling passage through the towering peaks of the Mystic Mountains to be a profitless endeavor. The powerful and efficient Mirin military is also a deterrent against Harakin raids.

## DEALINGS WITH OUTSIDERS

An unusual tale regarding the Harakin is told within the Quan Empire. There, it is said, a group of Mandalan scholars once ventured forth on a mission to Harak. It was their contention that the Harakin were not evil beings, but were simply the products of the harsh and cruel environment of their homeland. As such, the savants intended to convince a few of the Harakin to accompany them on the return trip to Quan, where their scholarly theories might be put to the test.

Upon sighting a small band of the nomads, the wise men threw up their hands and raised their voices in greeting. When the Harakin approached, the scholars gave them gifts of gold, fragrant oils and precious stones.

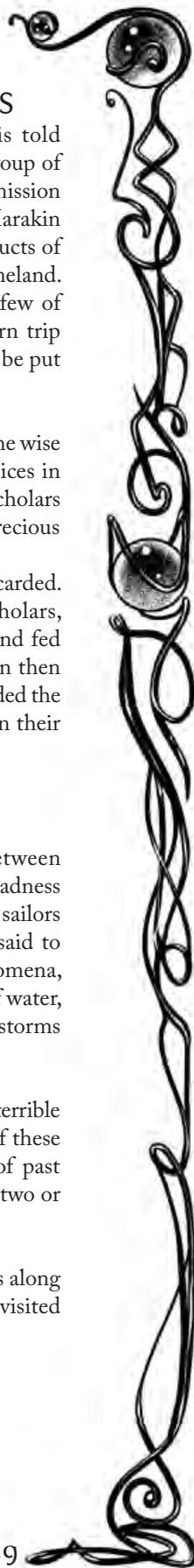
These the savages examined, and then discarded. Without apparent enmity they slew the scholars, divested them of their fur cloaks and boots, and fed their remains to the clan's dractyl. The Harakin then slew and quartered the Mandalans' mounts, loaded the meat on their winged steeds, and continued on their way across the bleak terrain of Harak.

## THE SEA OF MADNESS

A turbulent body of water which lies between Harak and the Quan peninsula, the Sea of Madness is regarded as the limit beyond which most sailors of the East will not trespass. The waters are said to be subject to strange and inexplicable phenomena, such as fierce maelstroms, spiraling columns of water, sudden outbursts of noxious gases, and raging storms of black lightning.

Since ancient times it has been rumored that terrible sea monsters haunt these waters. The largest of these is the legendary Gargantua, which scholars of past ages believed could attain lengths in excess of two or three miles.

All of this, plus the unwelcoming sheer cliffs along the coasts of Harak, keeps this desolate land unvisited by maritime voyagers.





## THE QUAN EMPIRE

The territories of the Quan Empire extend from the southern Jungles bordering Chana to the northern reaches of the Opal Mountains. Once home to numerous rival warrior clans, the East came under the dominance of a single tribe of barbarians around the beginning of the New Age. By various means, these warriors eliminated their rivals, retaining only those peoples who could be coerced or bribed into serving them. These diverse elements have since been incorporated into an empire, governed by the sub-race of Men known as the Quan.

### THE QUAN

A pale-skinned folk of average height and build, the Quan were once a barbaric people, but now exhibit the lofty airs and delicate sensibilities normally

associated with royalty. They are an unexceptional race, and possess little in the way of creativity, being just sufficiently aggressive and cunning to rule an empire. The Quan have no religious affiliations, the concept of worship being without interest to these folk, who consider themselves akin to gods.

### CUSTOMS

The Quan do no work, but simply oversee the various peoples that their ancestors conquered, who together supply them with all their needs. From birth, the imperials are attended hand and foot by slaves, who feed them, bathe them, and carry them about on cushioned palanquins. Jewelry of the most ostentatious sort is considered a mark of distinction and elegance by the Quan, and obesity a sign of wealth and success.

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Even the lowest members of the ruling caste dress in costly silk garments, and the elite of their kind are notable for the most extravagant and garish costumes: elaborate headdresses festooned with baubles, capes of such length that they must be carried by attendants, and so forth.

Imperial society is governed by a rigidly enforced caste system which divides the populace into distinct classes. By careful manipulation of this system, the ruling Quan maintain control of the population, rewarding those of their servants who are most loyal to the regime.

In descending order, the castes within the Quan Empire are:

<b>Grand Elite</b>	the Emperor and his family
<b>High Elite</b>	Quan of favored status
<b>Elite</b>	all other Quan
<b>Honorary Elite</b>	non-Quan granted special status
<b>Luminaries</b>	the seven lower classes

## THE EMPIRE

Despite an outward appearance of civility, the Quan rule their empire without mercy. Most criminal offenses are punishable by death, a variety of cruel methods being employed to achieve the desired result. Individuals accused of breaking the law are typically hauled before a magistrate and sentenced without trial.

As it is impossible for individuals to bring charges of any sort against a person of higher rank or social status, injustice is rife among the less privileged classes. Those seeking to elude imperial justice are hunted down by Kang trackers and their beasts, which are both efficient and cruel.

Although they tend to be distrustful of strangers from the West, the Quan are not entirely averse to doing business with foreigners. No outsider may travel across the Empire without first obtaining an official permit, however. Issued in the form of a lead tablet stamped with the Emperor's seal, these devices are available at Hadran and Jacinth, and cost upwards of 1,000 gold lumens apiece.

## THE GOLDEN CITY

Tian is the capital of the Quan Empire. Situated on an island within a man-made lake, the metropolis can only be reached by boat or windship. The city was designed by Mandalan architects at the command of the Emperor of Quan, who demanded that the new capital surpass in beauty all of the cities of the Empire – even that of the Mandalan city of Jacinth.

Tian is considered by many to be the most splendid city on the continent. The gilded spires and domes of the Palace of a Thousand Fountains, wherein the Emperor resides, are especially noteworthy.

## THE IMPERIAL CANAL

This man-made waterway links the River Shan to the Gulf of Tian, and was built to allow access to the lake that surrounds Tian. It was constructed in twelve years by vast crews of Vajra slave laborers, at a terrible cost in lives.

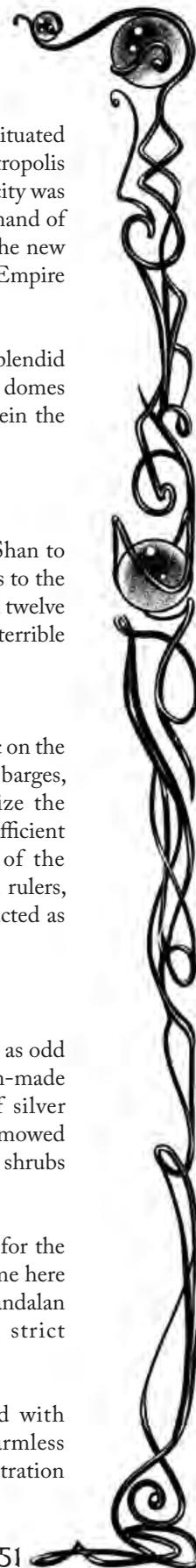
A system of locks and channels allows traffic on the canal to be strictly monitored. Quan pleasure barges, Sunra fishing vessels, and other boats utilize the Imperial Canal, but the waterway is of an insufficient size to accommodate the dragon barques of the Sunra – an oversight attributed to the Quan rulers, who rigidly insisted that the canal be constructed as quickly as possible.

## TIAN FOREST

Just east of the capital, the Forest of Tian is as odd a place as one may find in Talislanta—a man-made woodland, comprised of orderly groves of silver deodars and shade trees, separated by neatly mowed grass trails lined with arrangements of colorful shrubs and flowers.

The Quan aristocracy had the forest *built* for the pleasure of the Emperor, so that he might come here to hunt “wild” game as did his ancestors. Mandalan savants fabricated the forest, under the strict supervision of the Kang.

The woodland is continually re-stocked with selected types of creatures, all rendered harmless by de-clawing, de-fanging, and the administration



of sedative elixirs. The Emperor – borne aloft in a sumptuous palanquin, and escorted by a vast retinue of guards, trackers, servitors, and aides—rarely does more than watch others hunt.

## THE EMPEROR'S ROAD

This highway spans the length and breadth of the Quan Empire, from Hadran to Ispasia, and from Karang to Vishana. Without a doubt, it is the best-maintained roadway on the continent, showing signs of neglect only in the most dangerous jungle regions of the south.

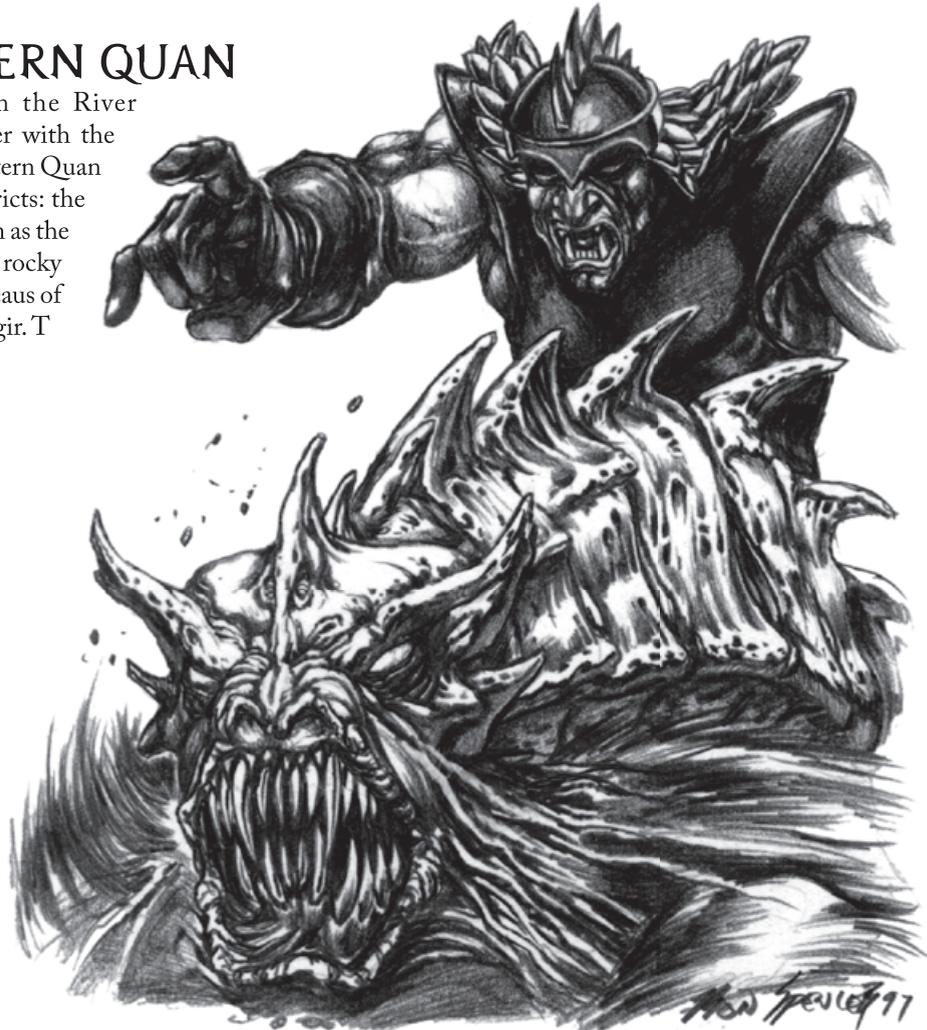
A minimum toll of five gold lumens is charged at all bridges and city gates, the alleged purpose of these somewhat exorbitant fees being to keep the roads clear of riffraff. Heavily-armed Kang sentinels patrol the Emperor's Road at regular intervals.

## WESTERN QUAN

Stretching from the River Shan to the frontier with the Volcanic Hills, Western Quan consists of two districts: the barren wastes known as the Greylands, and the rocky hills and grassy plateaus of the Steppes of Kangir. T

he Greylands were once the domain of wild submen tribes, the scattered descendants of which are rumored to survive in secluded areas. The Kang deny these claims, insisting that the only creatures inhabiting these lands are wild tarkus, striders, durge, winged azoryls, and perhaps a handful of crested dragons. Kang scouts patrol the western borders, alert for signs of Sauran invaders.

The Steppes are the traditional hunting grounds of the Kang, who ranged throughout this area prior to being absorbed by the Quan Empire. Kang still come here to visit the land of their ancestors, and to hunt wild tarkus, striders, azoryls and megalodons.



### THE KANG

A tall and fierce people, the Kang have fiery red skins, white pupil-less eyes, and almost reptilian features. They wear their long black hair pulled straight back in a single queue. Iron collars and armbands are the fashion among their warriors. The Kang have a long tradition of hostility and aggression – they seethe with wild passions. Counteracting this is the intense military training which all Kang undergo from birth, instilling in them a deep-seated respect for authority.

Tribal leaders govern by force of arms. The chief ruler of the Kang is the Overlord, a figure subservient only to the Emperor himself. This warlord commands the Empire's vast military resources, and is responsible for keeping the populace under control. For serving the Quan Empire, the Kang are paid in gold, and are accorded a position of status second only to the Quan themselves.

### THE CITADEL OF HADRAN

The largest military installation in the Quan Empire, Hadran houses thousands of Kang troops, along with their striders and support personnel. The fortress is also the headquarters of the Overlord of the Kang. Built of marbled green-and-black stone from the Jade Mountains, Hadran overlooks a yawning 600-foot-deep chasm which runs for a hundred miles along the western frontier. A massive bridge allows access to the West, and a toll of 100 gold lumens is charged to all visitors of foreign extraction.

### THE FORTRESS CITY OF SHONAN

An impregnable fortress which has withstood countless attacks by the Sauran tribes which dwell to the west, Shonan is built of dull grey stone from the Volcanic Hills. The citadel is surrounded by a 40-foot-high wall lined with rows of black-iron spikes. Hundreds of Kang are stationed here, along with Vajra artillerymen and engineers, all charged with guarding the Empire against Sauran raids from the Volcanic Hills.

Primarily a military installation, Shonan serves as a center of trade only because it is located at a nexus of the River Shan and the Emperor's Road. Goods of many sorts pass through here: precious metals,

gemstones and cerulean dye from Karang; foodstuffs and moonfish transported upriver from Isalis; rare herbs and hardwoods from Vishana; and Mandalan silkcloth from Jacinth. A bridge spans the river, and a toll of five gold lumens is charged to all who cross.

### KANGIR

A fortified outpost at the edge of the Greylands, Kangir is a supply facility where siege-engines are built, maintained and refurbished. A large garrison of Kang strider cavalry is stationed here, along with a contingent of Vajra engineers and artillerymen. Merchants and traders from across the Empire often stop here, enroute to or from Karang, Hadran or Tian.

### SOUTHERN QUAN

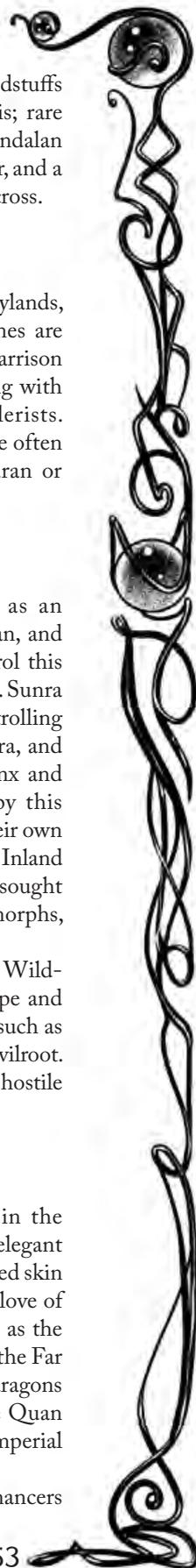
The placid waters of Sunra Bay serve as an entrance to the waters of the East River Shan, and beyond, the Inland Sea. Dragon barques patrol this waterway, which is off-limits to foreign vessels. Sunra fishing vessels can be seen along the coast, trolling for rare moonfish, the egg-sacs of rainbow kra, and pearl-bearing mollusks. Water raknids, skalanax and adolescent sea dragons are also attracted by this delectable prey, and are ignored by sailors at their own peril. Upriver lies the formidable expanse of the Inland Sea, whose jade-green waters sustain nar-eels (sought for their ivory horns), spiny-shelled echinomorphs, moonfish, and giant lake-kra.

Further south are the hostile jungles of the Wildlands, home to kaliya, winged apes, maiathrope and alatus. Many rare herbs and plants grow here, such as tandalus, red and black lotus, narcolesian, and devilroot. These resources go largely untapped, due to the hostile nature of the environs.

### THE SUNRA

Semi-aquatic man-like beings who live in the fabulous Coral City of Isalis, the Sunra are elegant creatures – graceful in stature, with silvery-scaled skin and deep-blue eyes. They are known for their love of the inland Sea, which they reverently refer to as the "Mother of Life." Their ancestors once ranged the Far Seas in glittering dragon barques, hunting sea dragons and trading with far-distant lands, before the Quan conquest. The sea people greatly resent their imperial masters, and long for freedom.

The Sunra are the finest sailors and astromancers



in the known world, and use intricate astrolabes to navigate according to the position of Talislanta's twin suns and seven moons, and "read" the currents and tides for aid. They have been compelled to put their fleet of powerful dragon barques at the service of the Quan Empire.

## THE CORAL CITY OF ISALIS

Beside being home to the Sunra, the Coral City of Isans hosts the Empire's vast flotilla of dragon barques, merchant skiffs and fishing boats. A reef serves as the foundation for the city, which is fashioned of pink, blue, red and green varieties of coral. Its "streets" are narrow waterways which course among the elegant coral structures. A garrison of Kang troops maintains order and discipline.

Sunra sea-farmers ply the shallows around the city, harvesting kelp, algae, edible mollusks, and other

aquatic foodstuffs. Moonfish – rare creatures reserved by law for eating by the Quan only – are caught and shipped to Tian in water-filled spheres.

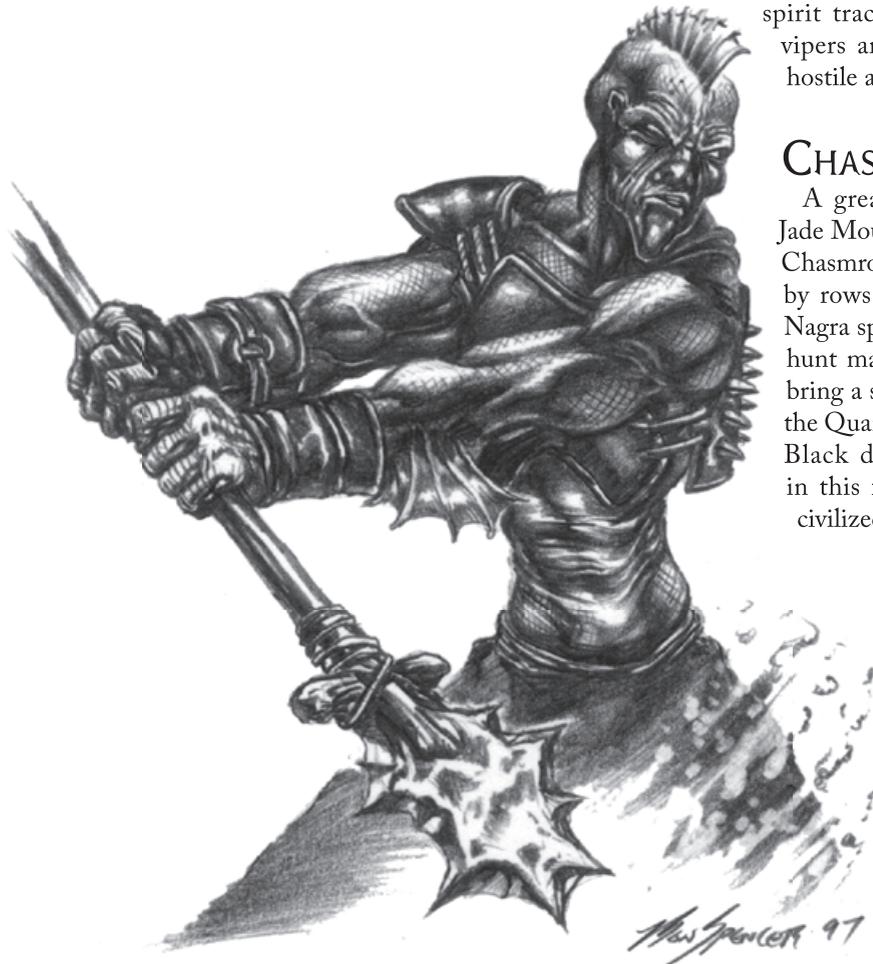
## THE JUNGLE OUTPOSTS

Located in the hot and humid jungles of the far south, Vishana is a military outpost situated on the River Shan. Soldiers from here are sent to patrol the Emperor's Road, though the task is made difficult by wild beasts and marauding Witchmen. The Kang trackers and cavalry which patrol the Empire's southern borders have a particular loathing for duty here. To instill enthusiasm among the troops, the fort commanders offer a bounty of 100 gold lumens for each Witchmen head taken on jungle patrols.

A second, more isolated fortress, set in the Jade Mountains, Vu/ge is manned by a contingent of Kang trackers and their beasts. The occupants live in constant fear of Manra raiders. Nagra spirit trackers, kaliya, and winged vipers are likewise native to this hostile area.

## CHASMROCK

A great canyon located in the Jade Mountains of southern Quan, Chasmrock is flanked on both sides by rows of twisting stone spires. Nagra spirit-trackers come here to hunt manrak, the heads of which bring a sizable bounty in Faradun, the Quan Empire, and other lands. Black diamonds are also found in this forbidding region, where civilized men rarely go.



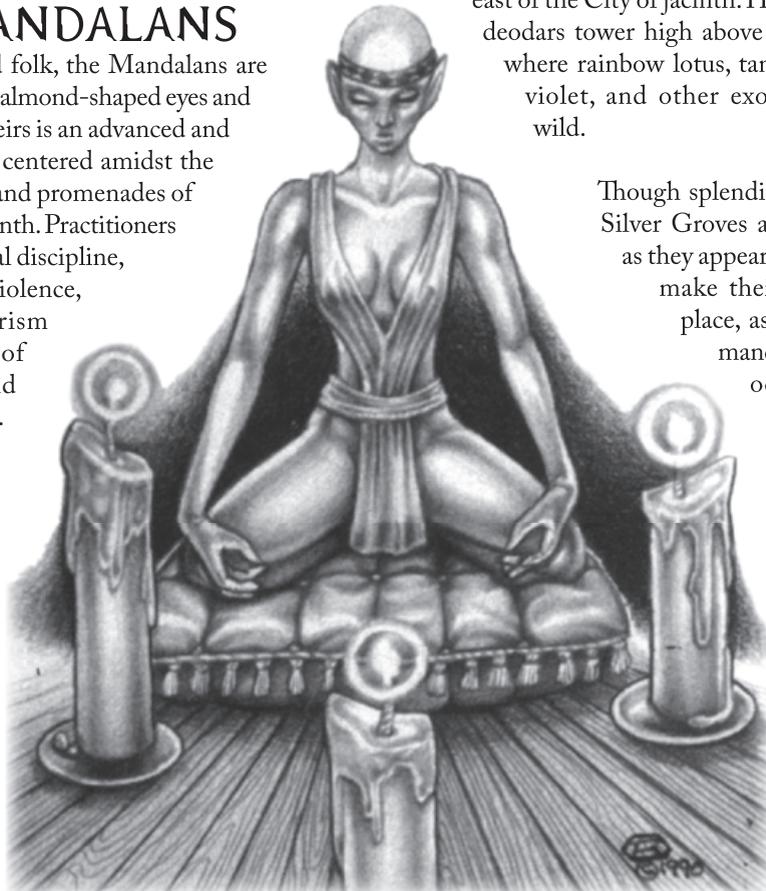
## CENTRAL QUAN

The wooded coasts of Mandala stretch on for several hundred miles, from Sunra Bay in the south to the Silver Groves. Valuable hardwoods, incense trees, and various sorts of magical herbs grow here in plentiful supply, as do many cultivated crops, planted in areas cleared by order of the Kang. Mandalan slaves tend these plantations, which provide grains, fruits, and vegetables for a large portion of the Empire. The farms are very productive, though malathrope, winged vipers and kallya pose a constant threat to workers in the fields and their taskmasters.

In the west, the great River Shan runs north from the inland Sea to the Gulf of Quan. Fishing vessels, merchant skiffs and Quan pleasure barges ply the waters of the Shan, which teem with edible fish, crustaceans and mollusks. Echinomorphs, chang and other hostile creatures likewise inhabit the river. The Shan is wide and slow in the south, becoming narrow, swift and treacherous farther north.

## THE MANDALANS

A golden-skinned folk, the Mandalans are slender of build, with almond-shaped eyes and pleasant features. Theirs is an advanced and enlightened culture, centered amidst the pastel spires, arches and promenades of the coastal city of Jacinth. Practitioners of an ancient mystical discipline, Mandalans abhor violence, considering militarism to be the domain of unsophisticated and primitive peoples. Their interests include the study of mysticism, meditation, and various scholarly pursuits.



Skilled Mandalans serve the Quan as artisans, scholars, historians, personal servants, gardeners, and menial laborers. Some believe that the passive Mandalans are not as submissive as they seem, but that they oppose the Quan through means too subtle for their masters to detect.

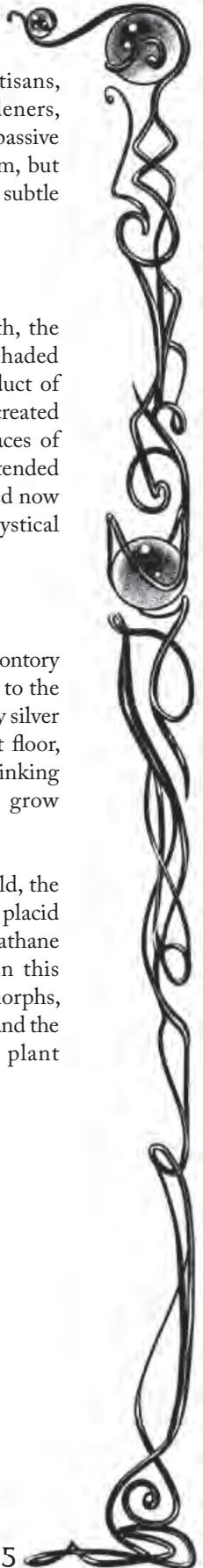
## THE GROVES OF SERENITY

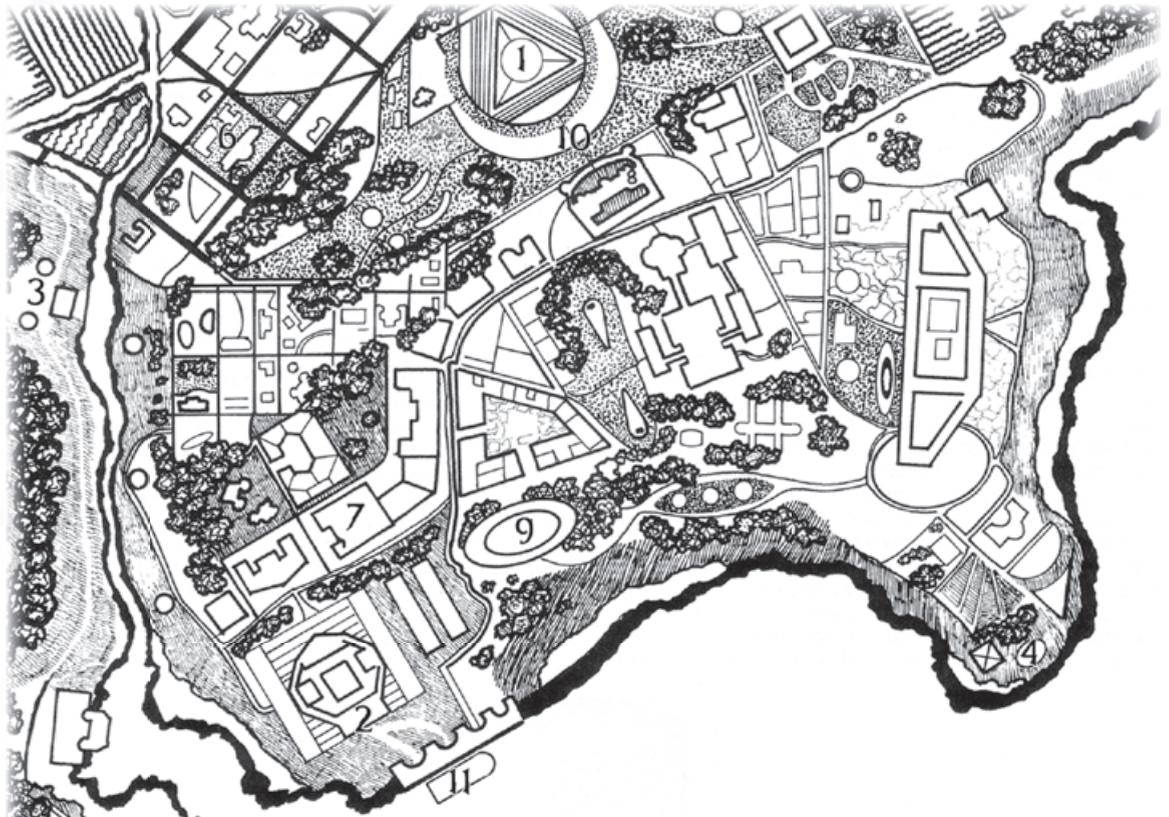
Just beyond the walls of the city of Jacinth, the beautiful moss gardens, topiary mazes and shaded arbors of the Groves of Serenity are the product of untold generations of Mandalan savants, who created these patiently-crafted settings for use as places of relaxation and meditation. The areas are still tended by the Mandalans, though they are seldom used now due to the Quan, who have outlawed the mystical meditative practices.

## THE SILVER GROVES

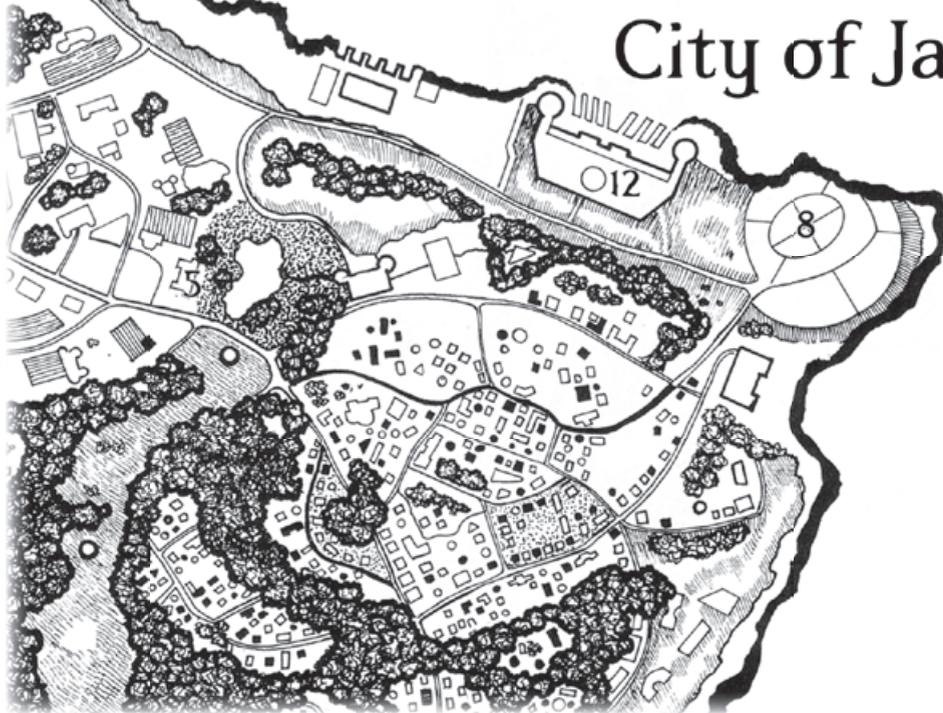
This scenic forest rings the northernmost promontory of the Mandalan Coast, terminating just to the east of the City of Jacinth. Here, stately silver deodars tower high above the forest floor, where rainbow lotus, tantalus, shrinking violet, and other exotic herbs grow wild.

Though splendid to behold, the Silver Groves are not as placid as they appear. Giant shathane make their home in this place, as do exomorphs, mandragores, and the occasional plant grue.





## City of Jacinth



### THE QUAN FOREST

This expansive woodland region is inhabited by ogriphants, malathrope, shathane, and the voracious insectoids known as chigs. The insects are so destructive that Kang trackers and trained ibik are regularly sent to hunt and destroy the chig colonies.

### THE CITY OF JACINTH

Once the center of Mandalan culture, the coastal city of Jacinth is now a resort area enjoyed by the wealthiest of the Quart ruling class. A large number of Mandalans still live here, serving as slaves of the Empire. In Jacinth are found ancient collections of scrolls and books, and gardens of crystal dendrons, mosses and prismatic blossoms. Elite units of Kang guard the city from attack by land, and Sunra dragon barques patrol the harbor where Quan pleasure barges drift.

### A VISITOR'S GUIDE OT JACINTH

*"For the first time since leaving my beautiful Vardune, I've found a place I can call home."*

*- Chek'Che - Green Aeriad Diplomat*

### THE POPULACE

Among the most scenic locations in Talislanta, the beautiful coastal habitation of Jacinth has been the heart of Mandalan culture since time immemorial. Approximately 125,000 of the golden-skinned pacifists continue to live a calm, sedate life in the city, albeit one under the watchful eye of their Kang and Ispasian masters (factors of the ruling Quan). A seat of learning, and center of the arts, Jacinth has become something of a resort, as Quan nobles relax on the pleasure barges anchored in Jacinth's harbor, and enjoy relaxing tours of the city itself.

### HISTORY

Mandalan culture has existed essentially unchanged for millenia, having weathered and outlived all of the empires that have risen and crumbled in the east. Timeless Jacinth has also prevailed, and will continue long after the Quan Empire has also fallen. Time means little to the infinitely patient Mandalan

### MEDITATION AND THE YOUNG

Only young Mandalans, those not yet accomplished at the art of meditation, sleep in the prone posture common among other humanoids, rolling out long mats to serve as bedding. Older and more accomplished Mandalans sleep in meditative position, sat atop a small padded silk mat.

### NUDITY

Unlike many Talislantan cultures, Mandalans have no taboos about nudity, and communal bathing is commonplace and unremarkable.

mindset, and their passive approach to life means they have been spared much of the anguish and destruction that other people's suffered when conquered. When Sunra vessels arrived in Jacinth harbor in 107 N.A., and Kang troops disembarked to take over the city under the command of their Quan masters, the Mandalans offered no resistance, and therefore suffered little bloodshed.

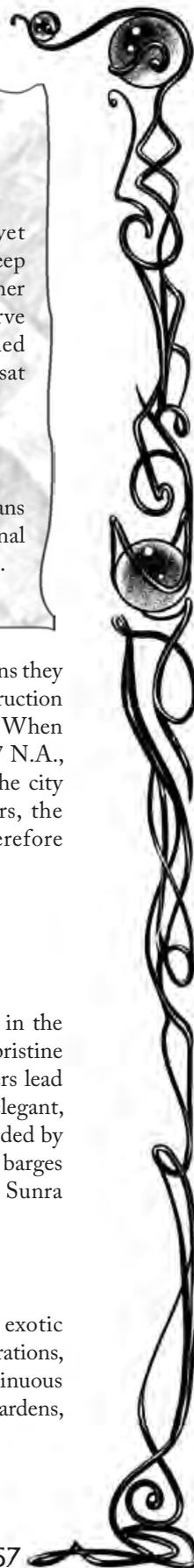
### VISIONS OF JACINTH

#### A VIEW FROM AFAR

The azure waters of Jacinth harbor sparkle in the sunlight, gently lapping against a beach of pristine ivory sands. Simple docks of timeworn timbers lead to the settlement that overlooks the sands, elegant, multi-tiered pagodas in pastel shades, surrounded by sculpted gardens. Huge, ostentatious pleasure barges float in the harbor, the waters patrolled by Sunra dragon barques, scales glistening.

#### ON APPROACH

Smooth paper, stretched over frames of exotic woods, and painted with deft and abstract illustrations, make up the tiered pagodas that line the wide sinuous streets. All are set about with trees and tended gardens, lending the city a feel of tranquility.



## THE CITY STREETS

Delicately carved arches vault over promenades of grass and smooth river pebbles, Mandalans passing gracefully along them, while others practice meditation or arts in shaded arbors. Streams of crystal-clear water and colored pebbles line the earthen streets, crossed by slender bridges of carved wood. A few Kang patrols swagger along the restive streets, harsh colors of crimson and black, while Ispasians escort visitors from foreign locales around the tranquil setting.

## JACINTH AT NIGHT

The paper pagodas of shadowed Jacinth glow softly with the warm orange and pink of illumination from within. Paper lanterns are hung from the arches that stretch delicately over the city's walkways, crystal moths fluttering about them, wings catching the light. Soft music fills the night air, as do the mournful cries of nocturnal avir.

## THE TYPICAL DWELLING

### AN EXTERIOR VIEW

Encircled with tended shade trees, limbs coaxed over time to form intricate and subtle patterns, a two-story pagoda stands, topped with slender spires of carved wood. A lucid pool displays a rainbow of exotic fish swimming lazily beneath the simple wooden bridge that spans the waters, a cornucopia of flowers and rocks intermixing around the perimeter of the pool.

The delicately etched timbers of the pagoda display a variety of soft hues, supporting sliding walls of paper and timber painted with scenes of great beauty. A low, curving stair of river-worn pebbles leads up to a wooden patio, and the main entrance of the pagoda.

### THE INTERIOR

Given the simple functionality of Mandalan housing, nearly all of their rooms are essentially identical, being used for rest, work, and artistic endeavors. Only a few rooms are notably different as a result of function. Thus, the "generic" Mandalan room is described, along with the notably different rooms.

#### Generic Room

Elegantly spartan, this moderately-sized room feels open and airy, the floor a mosaic of geometric

wooden tiles, lacquered and colored. Sliding paper screens form the interior walls and doors, themselves breathtakingly painted with natural dyes. Little occupies the room, save for a few paper lanterns suspended from the beams of the ceiling, providing soft illumination, and the only furnishings are a low circular table, surrounded by woven mats, scrolls and artistic implements laid atop it. A sculpture of abstract yet flowing form stands in one corner. A utilitarian staircase leads to the next level of the pagoda.

#### The Bathroom

Containing several large, barrel-like tubs, each capable of comfortably seating one or two people inside, this room serves as the bathroom of the pagoda. Each tub has a hollow base into which are placed stones that have been heated up with a fire, warming the water placed within. Cotton and silk-weave towels permit those just bathed to dry themselves, and a small table on the side of each tub holds several small vials of scented oils. In a small segregated room in the corner, a small lacquered box-like toilet stands, along with a box of paper wipes.

#### The Kitchen

With wooden walls, and a sliding panel that opens onto the back patio, this simple room features little decoration, save for simple carving. Wooden cabinets contain fresh and dried herbs, grains and vegetables, while a small stone stove is topped with a large clay pot of boiling water. The food is served on lacquered wooden plates, and eaten with slender wooden tongs.

## PLACES OF AUTHORITY

### THE PEOPLE'S COUNCIL (MAP KEY #1)

An unassuming, almost humble, structure located at the center of Jacinth's Public Square, this single-story pagoda has unadorned walls, and plain, but polished timbers. Seven-sided, and consisting of a single room, a septagonal table of lacquered wood occupies its center, each side surrounded by a seating roll of undyed silk, seven paper lanterns hanging from the ceiling.

Given a relative degree of autonomy by the ruling Quan, the Mandalans rule themselves largely as they have always done, by popular democratic vote, seven elected council-members serving to represent the interests of the populace, decrees being called out

## Hotan's History of the World

to the assembled citizenry when they gather in the surrounding Public Square.

However, any council ruling can be overturned by the Governor of Jacinth, a position currently held by His Lotus Excellence Quelni of Jacinth. In practice, the ruling council hold little real power as any decree not to the liking of the Quan ruling class is routinely stricken down and those Mandalans responsible for its resolution executed.

## MILITARY BASES

### THE RUBY GARRISON (MAP KEY #2)

Among Jacinth's only stone structures, this squat, ugly barracks and military base is made from rough-hewn granite covered with a cobweb of ivy. Hastily constructed by the Vajra following the original Quan conquest of Jacinth, the ostentatiously named Ruby Garrison was never updated or embellished, due to lack of interest. In stark contrast to the beauty of the surrounding city, this utilitarian, almost fortress-like building is adjacent to Jacinth's dock, and houses over 900 Kang soldiers.

### ACCURSED POSTING

Being posted to the Ruby Garrison is considered something of a curse among the Kang, due to the lack of potential conflict, the lack of opportunity to earn khir, and the inexplicable rash of mishaps that occur there on a regular basis, including the scoffed at tales of shadows that come to life and are immune to weapons. Kang stationed at the Ruby Garrison quickly turn to infighting out of frustration and boredom.

## EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

### SCHOOL OF EMPTINESS (MAP KEY #3)

The most spartan and simple of the schools, with large grounds containing little but a single tree overlooking a small pond and boulder, the School of Emptiness excels at the tuition of mysticism and meditation.

### MANDALAN TUITION

Mandalan schools teach their pupils a range of subjects, including the arts, mysticism, meditation, natural magic, and mandaquan, although each has a speciality for which it is renowned. Little rivalry exists between the various schools, each of which is usually attended by the same families and their descendants for centuries. Such education is free, supported by such donations as those attending can afford, and starts at the age of 3. Each school is a large, long, comparatively narrow, wooden hall surrounded by its own grounds.

### SCHOOL OF FRAGRANT BLOSSOMS

#### (MAP KEY #4)

Featuring the most beautiful gardens in all of Jacinth, with subtle fragrances filling the air, and colorful flowers and vines everywhere, around free-standing sculptures, this school provides superb tuition in the arts.

### SCHOOL OF HARMONY (MAP KEY #5)

Its large grounds merging seamlessly with the surrounding landscape, and left to grow naturally, this school stands foremost for tuition in the realm of natural magic.

### SCHOOL OF THE WILLOW

#### (MAP KEY #6)

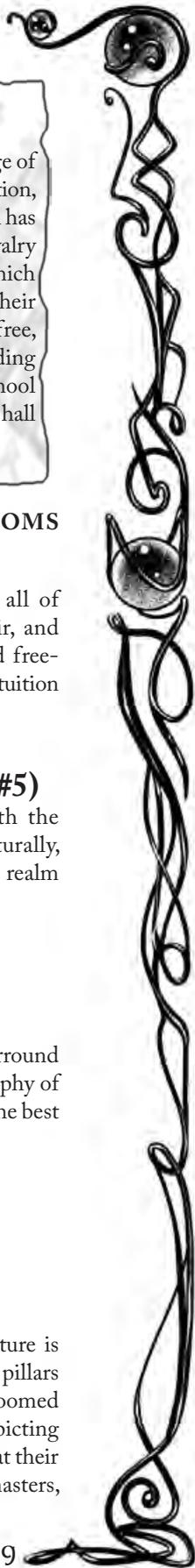
Named for the beautiful willow trees that surround its almost moat-like pool, as well as its philosophy of flexibility, this school is regarded as providing the best tuition in mandaquan.

## MUSEUMS & LIBRAIRIES

### ALTAR OF GLORIOUS SALVATION

#### (MAP KEY #7)

Gaudy and tasteless, this pagoda-like structure is decorated with overly-elaborate carvings and pillars plated with a thin layer of gold leaf, its well-groomed grounds dominated by a swathe of statuary depicting heroic Quan, thankful Mandalans worshipping at their feet. Built at the direction of the Empire's masters,



to display their *glorious* history, its two large halls are filled with tapestries, friezes, scrolls of commissioned poetry, and statues celebrating the Quan.

### HALLS OF JADE (MAP KEY #8)

A complex consisting of a single triple-tiered pagoda, surrounded by seven single-story pagodas, the Halls of Jade serve as Jacinth's museum. Decorated in typical Mandalan style, its decorative carving and painting depicting historical events, it displays innumerable antique sculptures, paintings, musical instruments, scrolls of poetry, silkcloth weavings, etc. on simple plinths of carved wood, covered with fragile domes of jade so thinly carved as to be translucent.

Although no Mandalan would ever dream of stealing from the museum, it is guarded by a detail of Kang, as the treasures it contains are considered to be Imperial Property. Mandalans, and other Imperial citizens may enter the museum for free, but outsiders must pay a entry fee of 10 g.l., and are always accompanied by at least one Kang guard.

### HALLS OF STONE

#### (MAP KEY #9)

Built of polished river stone veined with sparkling quartz, and grown over with flowering vines, the Halls of Stone are a ring-shaped complex of connected pagodas around a beautiful garden filled with benches that runs inside and out. Shelf upon shelf of box-like apertures contain scrolls both new, old, and ancient, on many diverse subjects, fill the complex, organized according to date, subject and author, by the diligent Mandalans that work here. Jacinth's primary library, the Halls of Stone stand among the greatest libraries on the continent, and while access is free to any Imperial citizen, outsiders must pay an entry fee of 10 g.l. and will always be accompanied by a Kang guard. The scrolls may not be removed from the library complex.

### MARKETS & BAZAARS

#### PUBLIC SQUARE (MAP KEY #10)

Entirely paved with interlocking geometric stones, and surrounded by shade trees that form a ring of archways, the Public Square serves as Jacinth's market and meeting place, where locals come to barter their

wares, perform their latest compositions, and display or sell their creations. Busy for the morning hours of most days, the Public Square houses the People's Council at its heart.

### TRADERS, MERCHANTS & ARTISANS

Jacinth contains no stores, for its citizens barter among themselves at the Public Square. As a result, examples of those Mandalans that might barter goods and services are provided in the NPC section.

### PARKS

#### GROVES OF SERENITY

Just beyond the city, the beautiful moss gardens, topiary mazes, and shaded arbors of the Groves of Serenity are the product of untold generations of Mandalan savants, who created these patiently-crafted settings for use as places of meditation. Until recently little-used due to the Quan prohibition against mystical meditative practices, the Groves now once again serve their intended purpose, following the Kang's more permissive rule.

### PARKS

Scattered throughout the Jacinth, the parks are carefully tended and arranged by volunteers, making them conducive to natural magics. Replete with crystal dendrons, fragrant mosses, crystal clear ponds of exotic fish, a cornucopia of rainbow-hued blossoms, delicate trees, rock gardens, and flat-topped boulders that serve as benches, these parks are favorite places for Mandalans to meet friends, and discuss philosophy.

### INNS, TAVERNS & RESTAURANTS

#### THE MAJESTIC (MAP KEY #11)

A lavishly appointed Quan pleasure barge, the Majestic is now an expensive Ispasian-owned hotel and restaurant, serving wealthy visitors to the city who do not necessarily have business dealings with the lemon-skinned mercantilists. Crewed by Sunra mariners, Mandalan servants, and Vajra porters, it is usually moored at the docks, but also takes short cruises around the bay. Costs are phenomenal, but the menu, service, and accommodations are superlative.

## TRANSPORTATION

### JACINTH DOCKS (MAP KEY #12)

Little more than several simple wooden gangways of weathered timber, Jacinth's docks can only permit up to 4 dragon barques or pleasure barges to dock at any one time, and see little use by the Mandalans themselves, being erected after their conquest by the Quan.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### BRIDGES

Simple, but intricately carved, and slender wooden bridges that lead over Jacinth's many streams and pools.



## NOTABLE CITIZENS

The following NPCs are useful as player contacts, encounters, and rivals (friendly or otherwise):

### *Sheen Na - Silkcloth Weaver / Mystic Warrior*

Sheen Na is one of Jacinth's better known weavers. His silcloth is much in demand and his dyeing technique is a secret handed down by his forefathers. Another secret handed down to him is his secret identity as a Mystic Warrior. While Sheen Na is a faithful servant of the Quan Empire by day, by night he works tirelessly to disrupt the Quan and their servants the Kang and Ispasians.

### *Xhan Shan - Antiquarian*

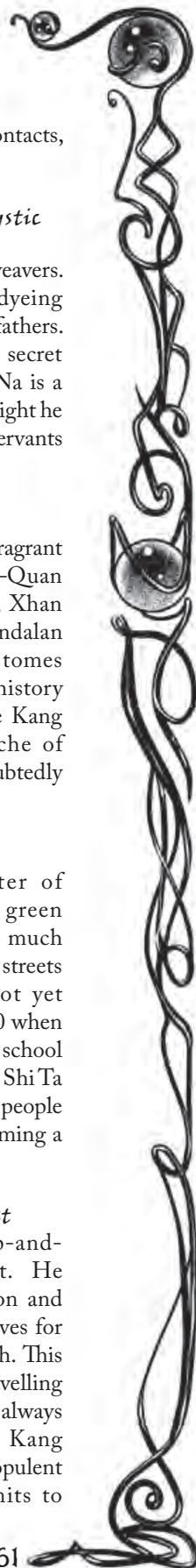
Xhan Shan is an instructor at the School of Fragrant Blossoms. He is an instructor in history—Quan history officially. However, Xhan is also amaster in lost Mandalan lore and secretly collects tomes and scrolls on Mandalan history and philosophy. Should the Kang or Quan discover his cache of manuscripts, he would undoubtedly be executed.

### *Shi Ta - Child*

Shi Ta is the daughter of a moderately successful green wine brewer. She spends much of her days wandering the streets and groves of Jacinth, not yet having reached the age of 10 when Mandalan children enter a school or apprentice to a craftsman. Shi Ta knows the Quan oppress her people and dreams of one day becoming a Mystic Warrior.

### *Ispal - Ispasian Mercantilist*

Ispal is a young but up-and-coming Ispasian merchant. He specializes in the acquisition and operation of foreign operatives for the Quan Governor of Jacinth. This role sees Ispal frequently travelling outside of the Empire but always with a bodyguard of two Kang soldiers. Ispal lives in an opulent section of Jacinth off limits to



Mandalans but he is frequently seen in and around both the Public Square and the Ruby Garrison.

*Kama - Kang Tracker*

Kama has recently been stationed in Jacinth and spends much of her day tracking down escaped slaves or reports of Mystic Warrior activity. She is never far from her beloved Tarkus.

*Shian Ti - Sculptor*

Shian Ti is a Mandalan sculptor of unsurpassed skill. He spends much of his day sculpting pieces of fine art and monuments at the behest of Governor of Jacinth. Unbeknownst to the Quan or Kang however, Shian Ti is also responsible for a series of sculptures that have been mysteriously appearing in several Jacinth parks of late. These peices, which appear out of nowhere

feature Mandalan Mystic Warriors and other heroes who fight oppression in all its forms. The Quan Governor quickly orders these pieces destroyed and has placed a 500 gold emperor bounty on the capture of the "Phantom Sculptor".

*Kargal - Kang Garrison Captain*

Captain of the Night Watch, Kargal hates his posting and hates these grovelling Mandalans even more. He spends his days drinking in on of the Kang taverns on the water front lamenting his fate at being posted to this Zorion-forbidden city, his nights are spent endlessly tracking 'Ghosts' as Kargal refers to the recent rash of Mystic Warrior activity within the city.



## NORTHEASTERN QUAN

The Quan Peninsula is easily divided into three regions: In the north is Ispasia, a cool but pleasant land. The Ku-Chang Plateau dominates the central peninsula, and in the south are the wooded slopes of the Khan Mountains.

## ISPASIA

Tucked away in the far-northern corner of the peninsula, the City-state of Ispasia is a mercantile center through which foreign trade is transacted. The city was annexed by the Quan in the early days of the Empire. Although a Kang garrison is stationed in the city, the local citizens are permitted to govern themselves, albeit within the limits of Quan law.

The Ispasians are a folk of slender physique, lemon-yellow skin and expressionless features, who always dress in robes of fine silkcloth. They bear a well-deserved reputation as ruthless and calculating businessmen, attracted to high-stakes ventures. The Ispasians serve the Empire by administering trade and transport across the length and breadth of Quan. In return, the imperials allow Ispasia a degree of autonomy equaled only by the Kang.

## THE VARIEGATED FOREST

Named for its wildly colorful flora and fauna, Ispasia's Variegated Forest is home to plants and animals which sport the most exotic and vibrant hues – avir with six-colored plumage, lime-green malathrope, groves of purple tanglewood, yellow shathane, even pink monitor Imps. There is a considerable market in Tian and elsewhere for these plants and creatures, which are wondrous curiosities.

## KU-CHANG

This rugged, rocky region is valuable due to its deposits of gold, silver and copper. Crag spiders, cave bats and other dangerous creatures occupy the caves and gullies of the plateau. Kang patrols comb the heights by day, searching for signs of intruders, but do not dare to venture forth at night.

The Outpost of Ku-Chang Is a mining installation where crews of Vajra slave laborers exhume gold and silver, crystals, cinnabar, antimony, and a half-dozen varieties of precious stones. A garrison of Kang warriors and trackers keeps the Vajra in line, and protects the vital installation from murderous raiding parties.

## THE KHAN MOUNTAINS

The sheer peaks of the Khan Mountains extend across the southern end of the peninsula. The mountains remain a largely untapped source of minerals and precious stones, due to omnivrax, shriekers, lopers, yaksha, muskronts, tarkus, giant shathane...and the fierce tribes of half-men known as the Mondre Khan.

## MONDRE KHAN

The wooded hills and mountains are the domain of the Khan, who are the last indigenous people to resist subjugation by the forces of the Empire. A nomadic folk, the Mondre Khan have proved to be a resourceful and dangerous enemy.



Holed up in their mountain retreats, the tribes have waged a successful campaign against numerically superior Kang forces for over four centuries—launching surprise attacks against merchant caravans, stealing military supply wagons, and repeatedly raiding the mining settlement of Ku-Chang. The Kang consider the Mondre Khan to be akin to animals, and hunt them down like beasts.

The Mondre Khan resemble a cross between Men and beasts, and exhibit the ferocity and cunning of wild animals. Some scholars theorize that their race is devolving back to an animalistic origin with each passing generation. The Khan are intelligent enough to make metal weapons and armor, however, and are experts in the art of covert warfare.

## NORTHWESTERN QUAN

The traditional territories of the Vajra, the Vajran Hills are rich in minerals, timber and other natural resources. After the Quan annexed this part of their Empire, the Vajra were deported from their subterranean homes and taken to slave camps near the Opal Mountains. The underground settlements were sealed, and have never been reopened.

## THE VAJRA

A subterranean race native to the regions beneath the hills of northern Quan, the Vajra are short and squat, with barrel-like torsos and heavy limbs. Their bodies are covered with overlapping orange-brown plates, which form an effective natural armor.

The Vajra are an industrious and peaceful folk, known for their ability to withstand great hardship without complaint. Like the Gnomekin of Durne, they worship a manifestation of the earth goddess, Terra, though such practices are officially outlawed by the Quan.

Forced to serve the Empire as miners, engineers, stone workers, and infantry, the Vajra live in underground labor camps, where they excavate for precious stones and metals. The gold and gems from the mines have made the Quan fabulously wealthy.

## THE CITADEL OF KARANG

Located to the north, Karang is a walled citadel built by Vajra slaves under the orders of the Emperor, to safeguard against incursions of barbaric Harakin from beyond the Opal Mountains. Most of the Vajra live in the sub-levels of this ponderous structure, which is crisscrossed with catacombs and tunnels after the Vajran style. Precious stones and metals from



## Hotan's History of the World

several mines are stored here until they can be shipped by caravan to Shonan. Kang trackers patrol the outskirts with deadly hunting beasts.

### THE CERULEAN FOREST

This forest is named for its vegetation, all of which is resplendent in various shades of blue. Costly cerulean dyes, rare herbs, and beasts (such as muskronts, yaksha and omnivrax) are found in the Cerulean Forest. Individuals who traverse these parts regularly know to string nets above their campsites to ward against attacks by metal-plumed shriekers.

The placid waters of Moon Lake, located in the western forest, are home to a freshwater species of moonfish much favored as pets by the Quan. The woods surrounding the lake are populated by grues (plant demons), giant shathane and the diminutive race of Chromids.

### THE FORTRESS OF KANG-TU

Adjacent to the Cerulean Forest, at the furthest northern reaches of the Greylands, Kang-Tu is a base for Kang trackers, who regularly patrol the

borderlands. There is some trade here with merchants from Kangir and Karang, but not much—Kang-Tu has long been a favorite target of the Saurans, who periodically storm the installation from their bases in the Volcanic Hills.

### THE OPAL MOUNTAINS

The Opal Mountains extend from the western border of Harak to the Sinking Land, circling the Quan Empire from the north. The peaks are among the tallest on the continent, averaging 20,000 feet in height. Black-iron ore, silver, gold, and precious stones are found here, particularly in the south. The inhabitants of the region include winged dractyl, omnivrax and frost demons.

### THE MAZDAK MOUNTAINS

Named for the former ruling tribe of the Empire, the Mazdak Mountains lie to the southeast, along the Gulf of Quan. The Kang insist the region is inhabited only by tarkus, wild striders, and a few crested dragons, but rumors persist that a handful of rebels have established a base in the region.

## THE VOLCANIC HILLS

The region known as the Volcanic Hills is one of the most desolate portions of Talislanta. The terrain is tortuous, rising and falling in twisted mounds of pitted pumice-stone, punctuated by angular peaks and deep ravines. Clouds of smoke and ash, by-products of the area's considerable volcanic activity, blot out the sun's light for miles around. Streams of molten lava pose hazards to all but the most adroit and wary travelers, and the air reeks of sulphurous fumes. Few living creatures dwell here, and those that do are of a nature akin to the hostile environment which encompasses them.

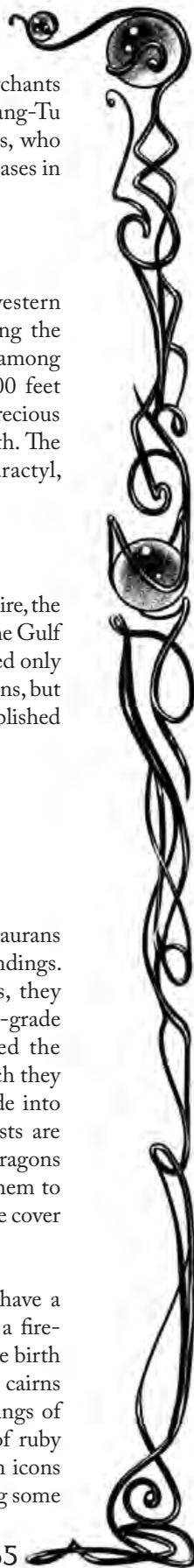
### THE SAURANS

The dominant species in this region is a race of manlike reptilians known as the Saurans. Standing up to seven feet in height, they have clawed hands and feet, scaly hide, and powerful jaws lined with rows of sharp teeth.

### CUSTOMS

A primitive folk of limited intelligence, the Saurans nonetheless have adapted well to their surroundings. Utilizing volcanic mounds as natural forges, they make crude armor and weapons, mostly of low-grade red-iron alloys. The clans have domesticated the massive creatures known as land dragons, which they outfit with plates of hammered metal and ride into battle—though ponderous and slow, the beasts are awesomely strong. The Saurans employ their dragons much in the manner of siege engines, using them to batter down enemy fortifications and to provide cover against opposing missile fire.

The Saurans know little of magic, but do have a religion of sorts. Their patron deity is Satha, a fire-breathing dragon goddess who supposedly gave birth to the Sauran race. The reptilians erect huge cairns of stone in her name, filling them with offerings of firegems – a particularly spectacular variety of ruby common to the Volcanic Hills region. Dragon icons fashioned of beaten metal are also in use among some tribes.





Late at night in certain parts of the Volcanic Hills, the low rumblings of what would seem to be thunder can be heard. According to the Saurans, these sounds issue forth from deep underground, where their dragon goddess lies. The rumbling noises, the reptilians claim, are the sounds of Satha In labor.

A clannish folk, Saurans sometimes war amongst themselves, but most prefer instead to kill Raknids (insectoid beings who also inhabit the Volcanic Hills). Some of the reptilians have an appetite for man-flesh, and occasionally engage in raids against the Quan Empire. The Kang soldiers rely on fortifications and heavy catapults when defending against Sauran war-parties, believing frontal assaults against these foes to be tantamount to mass suicide.

Though noted for their aggressiveness, certain of the Sauran tribes are friendly toward certain of the races of Men. Some trade firegems to Djaffir and Orgovian traders, receiving high-quality metal tools and weapons in return. On occasion, adventuresome Saurans journey throughout Talislanta, often fighting as mercenaries.

## FORTRESSES OF THE SAURANS

The Sauran tribes live in walled stone enclosures of crude design. Two of these are large enough to make note of:

Sathra is a sprawling fortress constructed of a motley assortment of materials: rough-hewn boulders and chunks of volcanic rock, along with blocks and columns of stone pillaged from Wilderlands ruins (Torquar, Jalaad and other sites). Several regiments of troops are stationed here, including dragon-riders, land-lizard cavalry, artilleryists, and Saurud heavy infantry.

Sathra boasts at least four dozen land dragons, each equipped with an iron battletower and stone-thrower. These reptilians have an exclusive trade relationship with one of the Orgovian clans, and slay other merchants who approach them.

Sathir is smaller, housing only half as many land dragons and troops. Both Djaffir and Orgovian traders are welcome here, but other foreigners should be wary.

### THE RAKNIDS

Hideous insectoids resembling a cross between demonoids and scorpions, Raknids have segmented bodies encased in exoskeletons of tough, iridescent chitin. There are four different types of Raknids: Workers (huge, with eight legs), Warriors (man-like creatures, armed with poisonous stingers), Drones (malignly intelligent breeders), and the giant larval creatures called Queens.

### CUSTOMS

Raknid society is regimented and inflexible. Workers build and maintain the massive hive complexes which house the colonies. Warriors protect the hives, hunt for food, and exterminate other creatures, thus ensuring the survival of their own species. Drones are driven solely by the urge to mate. Each colony has but a single active Queen, who spawns Raknids of all four types.

It is believed that the evil hive-mentality associated with the Raknids stems from their horrid mistress-rulers, who are said to exert a powerful mental influence over their subjects.

### THE RIVER OF FIRE

An ever-flowing torrent of molten lava, the River of Fire receives its life from the giant volcano, Dragon-rock. Pyro-demons and earth demons are said to inhabit the depths of the northern volcano, and Saurans believe that the mountain's exhalations are actually the fiery breath of Satha, the patron mother-deity of their race.

Pyro-demons are said to swim in the River of Fire, while Crested Dragons are rumored to drink the liquid fire in order to enhance their fire-breathing capabilities. The northward-flowing river terminates in most dramatic fashion, in an incredible deluge of flame known as the Firefalls.

Spectacular when viewed at night, the falls empty into what many claim to be a bottomless chasm. As always, sight-seers should always keep one eye peeled for pyro-demons.

### THE VALLEY OF MIST

Not far from the Firefalls is the Valley of Mist, which has a foggy atmosphere derived from the Firefalls' close proximity to the snows of nearby Xanadas. In this valley can be found the Well of Saints, the sparkling waters of which are reputed by the Orthodoxists of Aaman to possess miraculous healing properties. Those seeking divine aid should take pains to avoid vorls—insidious creatures of mist, which offer a definite and final cure for all ills.

### THE LEGEND OF ERENDOR

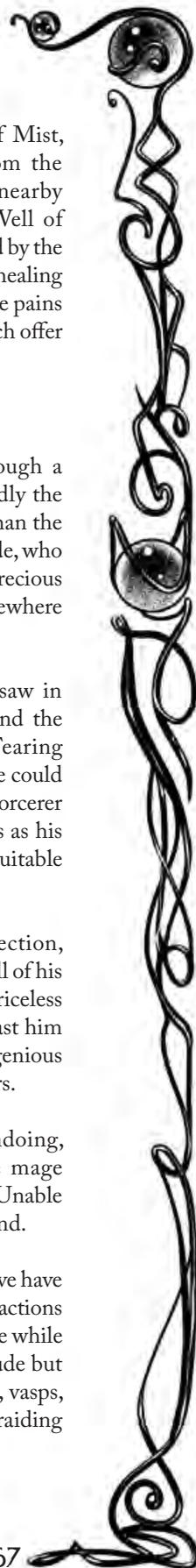
A rugged trail, which winds its way through a good portion of the Volcanic Hills, is reportedly the same one which was followed by none other than the legendary Erendor—a wizard of ancient Elande, who is purported to have hidden all of his most precious possessions in a maze of caverns located somewhere in the vicinity.

According to Quan legend, Erendor foresaw in a vision the coming of the Great Disaster and the subsequent destruction of his homeland. Fearing death, he established a hidden retreat where he could reside in safety until the threat subsided. The sorcerer chose a network of caves in the Volcanic Hills as his hideaway, and hastily began to construct a suitable shelter for himself.

Working at night in order to avoid detection, Erendor stocked his underground home with all of his most cherished possessions: ancient librams, priceless scrolls, rare curios, and provisions enough to last him for many years. Finally, he set a number of ingenious traps, designed to keep out unwanted intruders.

This last seep proved to be Erendor's undoing, however. In a moment of carelessness, the mage became entangled in one of his own devices. Unable to escape, Erendor met a slow and untimely end.

Neither the wizard, his possessions, nor his cave have ever been found. This is possibly due to the distractions which aspiring treasure-hunters must overcome while attempting such a reconnaissance, which include but are not limited to: land dragons, wild striders, vamps, war parties of Saurans and Raknids, and even raiding Araq from Kharakhan.



## DRAGONS IN THE HILLS

In Sauran legend, the Volcanic Hills are proclaimed to be the birthplace of all Talislantan dragons. While most scholars of the enlightened New Age scoff at this belief, a few naturalists call on them to explain the occasional sightings of young dragons emerging from the mouths of volcanos in this region.

A dead volcano known as Dragon's Grave, located somewhere in the heart of the Volcanic Hills, is purportedly the fabled "*dragon's graveyard*" of many a Rajan and Dracartan folk tale. According to the lore of the desert folk, it is traditional for Crested Dragons to make the long voyage to this mountain when it is their time to die.

The interior of the dead volcano is said to be littered with the remains of untold hundreds or thousands of these great monsters, which popular tales depict as having carried their most treasured possessions with them to their graves.

Treasure hunters and ivory traders have searched for Dragon's Grave for centuries, and a few claim to have found the place and become rich on what they carried away. Others no doubt met an untimely end at the hands of the Saurans and Raknids, vaspas, and other threats.

## XANADAS

An isolated region located high amidst the towering peaks of the Opal Mountains, Xanadas is covered year-round with deep layers of snow and ice. Here is the tallest mountain in the known world—Mount Mandu, rising over 30,000 feet in height. At its summit stands the Temple of the Seven Moons, where the Savants of Xanadas gaze into enchanted seeing stones, observing and recording all manner of events and phenomena.

delicate fluxes of time and space, the emergence and disappearance of plant and animal species, and so forth. Seated on pedestals of lavender stone, they gaze into crystals of polished blue diamond, monitoring and noting the activities of the continent's peoples. Every event of note is recorded in massive leather-bound tomes. When filled with information, these books are stored in great underground vaults.

Scattered along the difficult trail which leads to the mountain's summit are the frozen remains of explorers and adventurers who sought in vain to find the Temple. Aside from frost demons and ice dragons, few living things can survive for long in the frigid upper altitudes of Mount Mandu. Here, where even the dreaded Ice Giants will not go, dwell the fabled Savants.

Members of a secret mystic order, the Savants and their predecessors have chronicled the history of Talislanta for many centuries. The origin of the current occupants of the Temple of the Seven Moons remains a mystery. Some believe that the sages are Mandalans who long ago fled from the Quan Empire; others claim that they are survivors of a past age.

## THE SAVANTS OF XANADAS

Believed to be old beyond reckoning, the Savants are said to extend their lifespans by adherence to certain secret regimens and practices. They dress in long robes of silver and black, and wear elaborate headdresses inscribed with arcane runes, symbols and sigils.

The Savants of Xanadas are said to welcome visitors, whom they question at length in order to supplement or verify their observations. They are a curious lot, and seem to want to know everything. It is their practice to allow any who come here to study, and on occasion, some do. Passage to the mountain retreat of the Savants is difficult, however, and fraught with peril.

## CUSTOMS

The Xanadasian Savants are mystics and scholars of unrivaled ability. Self-appointed chroniclers of Talislantan history, they observe and record phenomena of all sorts: the positions of the stars and planets, the

## THE LEGEND OF XANADAS

Some scholars connect the activities of the Savants of the Temple of the Seven Moons to the obscure Legend of Xanadas. According to the ancient tale, many years ago a great mystic named Xanadas was



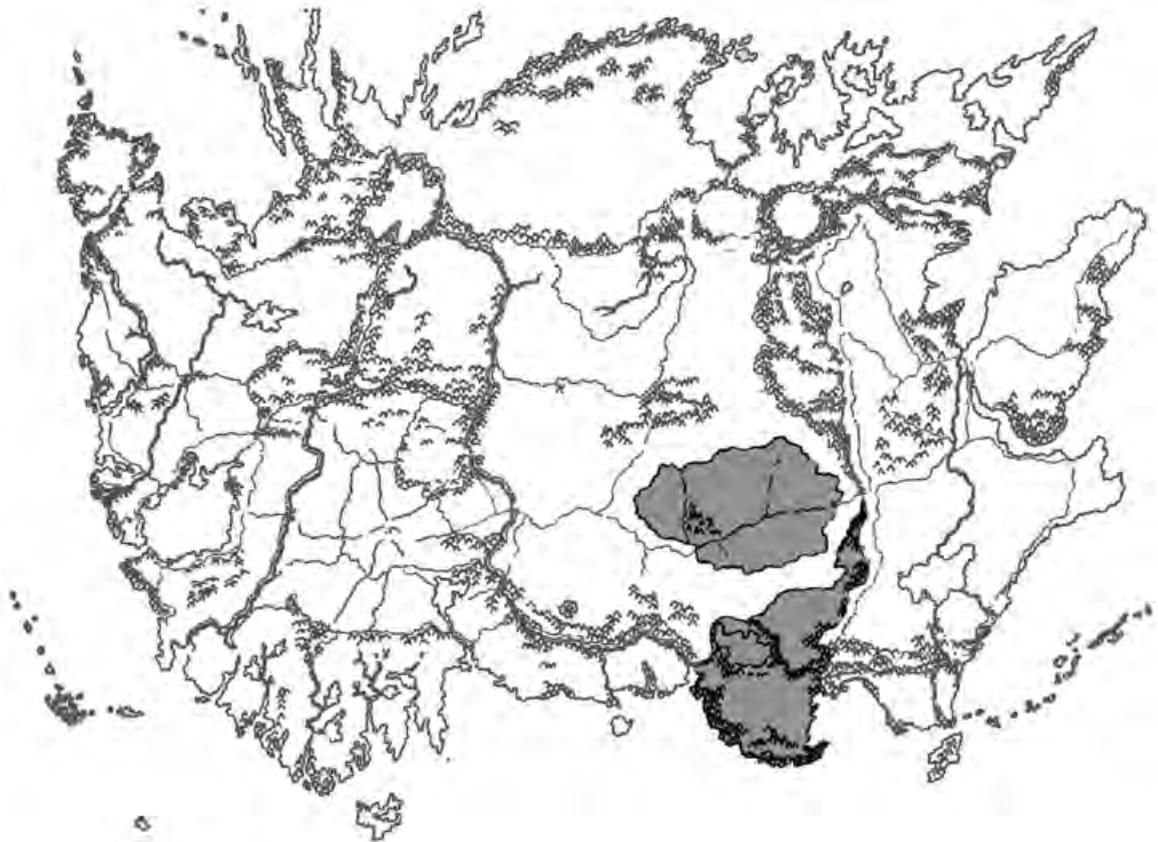
summoned by Death to meet his inevitable end. As his pupils and associates grieved upon hearing of their master's imminent doom, the sage bade them not to worry; he would visit with the gods for a time, after which he pledged to return to the material plane and relate the secrets of the afterlife to all who waited for him.

Those who accept this legend as fact believe that the Xanadasian Savants are the last of the great mystic's followers. They say that the Savants record important events, believing that their master will wish to know all that has transpired in his absence.

Though many scholars think the legend to be somewhat far fetched, others point out that the tale is supported by certain odd traditions observed among the Savants. These include the leaving of a light in each of the Temple's windows by night, the custom of setting one extra place at all meals, and a few other minor eccentricities. When asked the significance of such observances, the Savants merely shrug and cast their eyes heavenward.



# THE DESERT KINGDOMS



## CARANTHEUM

The Kingdom of Carantheum is located in the Red Desert, a great expanse of scarlet sand surrounded on all sides by the Wilderlands of Zaran. It is a harsh land, swept by sandstorms and scorched by the burning rays of Talislanta's twin suns. Practically devoid of life, the Red Desert is nonetheless home to one of the foremost centers of trade on the continent: the Crimson Citadel of Dracarta.

Travel to Carantheum, despite efforts to improve conditions, remains a rather perilous proposition. From the East, the only practical routes lead through territories claimed either by the Saurans, the Za, or the fanatical Rajans. The ancient Wilderlands Road, sole causeway between Carantheum and the West, is beset by bandits, wild beasts and other dangers. The safest means of traveling to this land is in the company of a large, well-armed caravan.

## THE DRACARTANS

The folk of Carantheum, known as the Dracartans, are tall and jade-skinned, with chiseled features. Formerly a tribe of nomadic wanderers, these hardy folk settled in the Red Desert some centuries ago. With the discovery of the secret of how to create red iron (a metal superior in all aspects to common black iron), the Dracartans became rich, and Carantheum soon became an important center of trade and commerce. Once able to afford only the meanest of garments, the Dracartans now dress in flowing robes of fine white linen, and adorn themselves with necklaces, bracers and torcs of red iron.

### CUSTOMS

The Dracartans are friendly, if somewhat reserved; frivolity is not a quality associated with these folk. They exhibit an admirable degree of tolerance for the ways and beliefs of most other peoples.

Carantheum is ruled by a king, who is chosen through a process known as the *Test of the Ancients*. This ordeal consists of three separate parts: a journey through the desert, the scaling of a mountain of glass, and the retrieval of a magic scepter from a vault deep inside a crystal mountain. The test is held once every twelve years, unless the premature death of a reigning king requires otherwise.

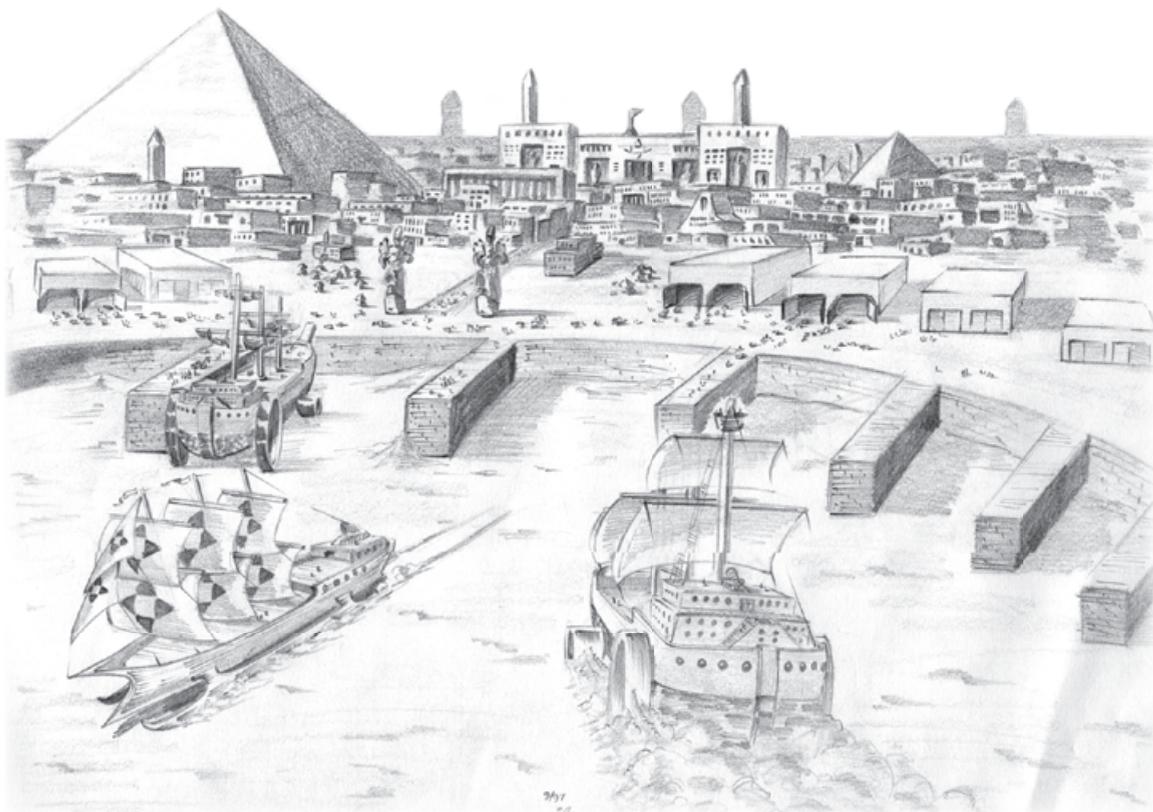
A committee of nine elder statesmen meets in secret to select three suitable candidates. The first to successfully complete the test is ordained as king, and enthroned in the royal palace at Dracarta. The remaining two applicants, assuming they survive, are crowned as princes of the realm and granted positions of authority in the cities of Nadan and Anasa.

The laws of the Kingdom of Carantheum are strict, but fair. Individuals convicted of minor offenses are sentenced to a period of hard labor, typically entailing some sort of civic duty (such as cleaning municipal sewage receptacles). Banishing criminals to the Wilderlands is also a popular punishment.

Merchant caravans from many lands come to Dracarta, bearing goods of all varieties: amberglass from Cymril, woven goods and hardwoods from Vardune, scintilla and amber from Jhangara, metal and precious stones from Arim, beasts from Djaffa, and many other items.

The desert people are especially in need of those materials scarce in their own land: herbs and spices, burden beasts, timber, fabric, and foodstuffs. From Astar, the Dracartans obtain much-needed stores of water—thaumaturgically solidified, cut into massive blocks, then transported in wagons and sand-sailing land barges.

The Dracartans count as their friends the Djaffir, going all the way back to the time of both peoples' nomadic ancestors; the various states of the Seven



Kingdoms are also their allies. Carantheum's enemies are somewhat more numerous: The Necromancers of Rajinnar covet the Red Desert's riches, and have launched several attacks against the Dracartans in the past. The Quan Emperors are also believed to have an overly acute Interest in this desert region, and the mercantile nation of Faradun is obviously jealous of wealthy Carantheum.

## THE CULT OF JAMBA

The folk of Carantheum revere Jamba, the mysterious god of their nomadic ancestors. Dracartans build pyramid-shaped shrines in honor of their patron, whose ways are said to be beyond the understanding of mere mortals. The priests and priestesses of Jamba do not profess to comprehend the ways of their arcane deity—most walk about with puzzled looks on their faces a good deal of the time.

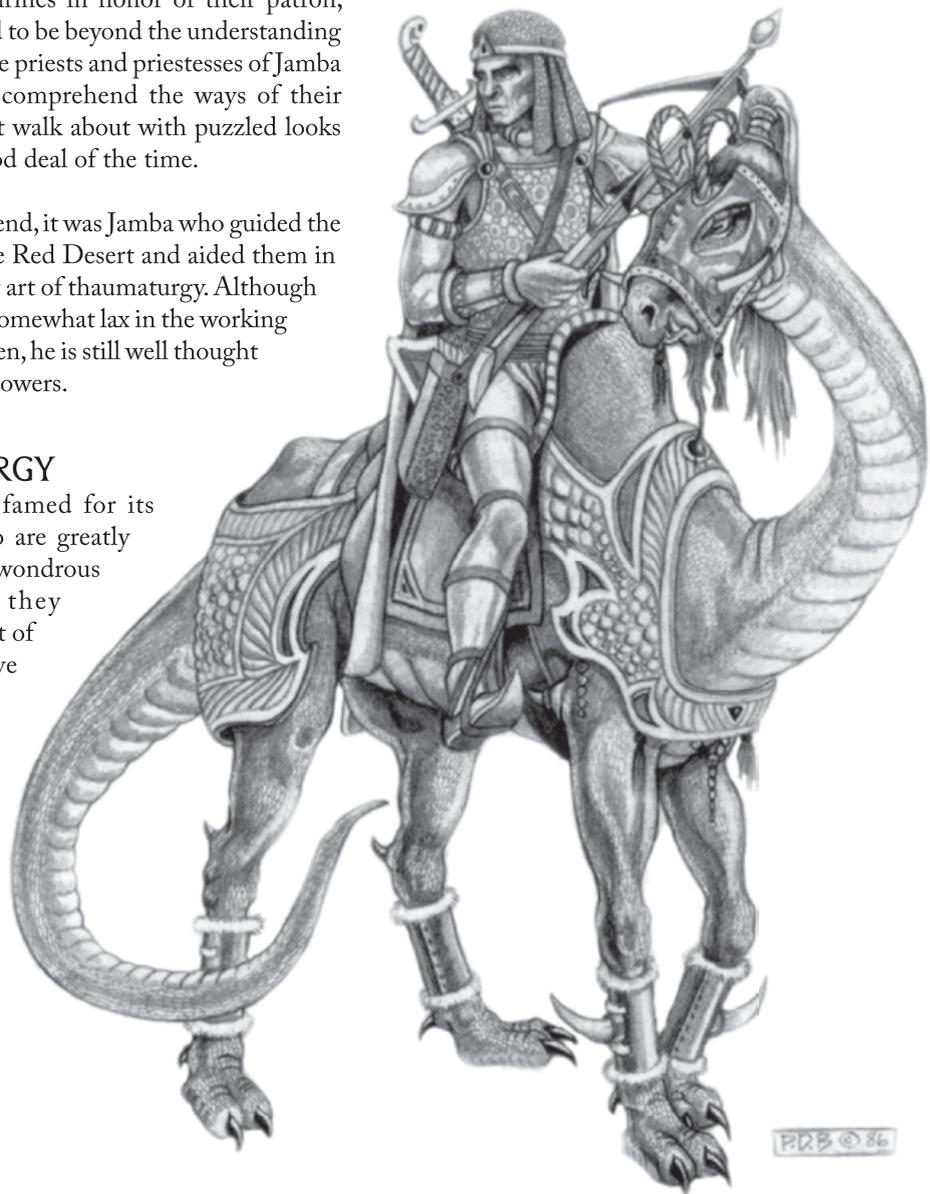
According to legend, it was Jamba who guided the Dracartans into the Red Desert and aided them in discovering the lost art of thaumaturgy. Although the deity has been somewhat lax in the working of miracles since then, he is still well thought of by his desert followers.

## THAUMATURGY

Carantheum is famed for its thaumaturges, who are greatly esteemed for the wondrous products which they create. Not the least of these is the elusive substance known as quintessence, a crystalline powder derived by a secret alchemical process.

By skillful utilization of the magical properties of quintessence, Dracartan thaumaturges are able to transmute the very nature of substance. Thus, they are able to solidify water, liquify stone or metal, turn sand into glassine stone, or place elemental forces in suspension. The symbols of Dracartan thaumaturgy are the star of four triangles (representing the relationship of the four elements to the three states of matter) and the caduceus, or thaumaturgic wand.

The power of the thaumaturges makes possible one of the more unusual sights in this region: the



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Dracartan duneships and land barges. These vessels skim across the desert on red-iron runners, braving the hazards posed by sandstorms, hostile bandits, and the scorching suns.

Sails provide some impetus, but the real motion is provided by thaumaturgically-energized wind machines. Resembling coils of metal tubing, these arcane devices are powered by crystals of Elemental Wind, captured and solidified by the Dracartan Thaumaturges.

### THE SANCTUARY MOUNTAINS

These imposing peaks served as a safe haven for the early ancestors of many of the desert peoples, when they were driven from their homelands following the Great Disaster. The old stone forts are now occupied by Dracartan desert scouts, who use the crumbling facilities as watchposts. Predatory satada, land dragons and winged azoryl are also found in this region, as are abandoned gold and silver mines.

### THE FORGOTTEN CITY

The name of this ruined metropolis has long since faded from the memory of Talislantan scholars. Even so, the majestic spires and domes conjure up visions of the grandeur of a bygone age, and continue to attract explorers intent upon unearthing their ancient treasures. The proximity of war bands from Rajinnar poses some danger to would-be archaeologists, as does the presence of sand demons and predatory satada.

### CITADELS OF THE DESERT

Anasa is a Dracartan citadel which stands at the southern edge of the Red Desert. Primarily a military outpost, it has its own fleet of duneships and a garrison of desert scouts. Some trading is done here, mainly with the Djaffir.

Nadan is a fortified settlement located at the northern edge of the Red Desert. It is notable for its dune-ship construction yards, and for its large population of Yassan. This dispossessed people are skilled at the art of technomancy, and are able to repair, assemble or modify just about anything that has working parts.

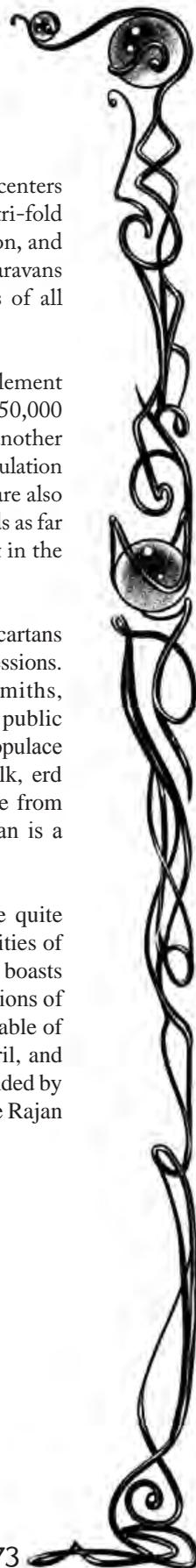
## THE CRIMSON CITADEL OF DRACARTA

Dracarta is one of the most important trade centers on the continent. It is a striking to behold, its tri-fold walls and towers plated with gleaming red iron, and its streets paved with white stone. Merchant caravans from many lands come here, bearing goods of all description to trade for the Dracartans' wares.

Dracarta is, by far, the largest permanent settlement in the Desert Kingdoms. It is home to almost 50,000 jade-skinned Dracartans and approximately another 15,000 of other races. There is a large Yassan population in Dracarta and Yitek, Djaffir and Marukans are also not uncommon. Merchants caravans from lands as far away as Zandu and L'Haan are a regular sight in the Crimson Citadel.

Safe within their walled cities, the Dracartans practice many a diverse array of crafts and professions. There are food-growers, artisans, metalsmiths, thaumaturges, merchants, priests, teachers, public officials, desert scouts, and many others. The populace subsist on a plentiful diet of dates, erd's milk, erd cheese, and a type of unleavened bread made from provender plant called t'chall. Djaffir mochan is a popular beverage.

The Dracartan military is known to be quite formidable, though the exact size and capabilities of its forces are government secrets. Dracarta also boasts a large fleet of armored duneships, many divisions of aht-ra cavalry, and several dozen hurlants capable of propelling spheres of red menace, yellow peril, and other dangerous substances. The city is surrounded by tri-fold walls, and despite the best efforts of the Rajan army has never been successfully penetrated.



# DJAFFA

Nearly surrounded by the Wilderlands of Zaran, Djaffa consists primarily of scrub plains and desert. With the exception of the vegetation at a few scattered oases, practically nothing grows in this arid region. This desert is home to the nomadic people known as the Djaffar, who are divided into two types of tribes: merchants and bandits.

## THE DJAFFAR

Uniformly slender and wiry of build, the Djaffar are dark skinned and of average height. Flowing headdresses, robes and cloaks of beige or white linen are worn, along with boots of soft animal hide.

## CUSTOMS

It is the peculiar custom of all Djaffir to wear leather masks, which are made to cover the entire face. They will not remove these masks except in the

privacy of their tents, believing that “*the face mirrors the soul*,” and that their masks protect them from hostile magics. Fashioned by Djaffir wizards, these devices do indeed seem to confer some protection from magical Influences, and certainly are of practical use during sandstorms (common in Djaffa). Individuals of a more skeptical nature claim that the Djaffar wear masks simply to conceal their identities from those who, by one means or another, they eventually intend to relieve of their money.

## BEASTS OF THE DJAFFAR

The desert folk produce few marketable wares, though they make lances, daggers and short bows of good quality for their own use. The Djaffar have some talent for herding and animal husbandry, however, and have managed over time to foster the development of a unique burden beast.



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The aht-ra is a variety of beast similar in some respects to the equus, but having a heavier torso, longer legs, spiraling horns, and a serpentine tail. The Beasthandlers of Djaffa claim to have created the species centuries ago, by the accidental crossbreeding of various riding and burden beasts; no one knows for certain the exact composition which contributed to the existence of these eminently useful hybrids.

Though the normally placid nature of these beasts can sometimes make motivation a difficult task, they are among the most useful of Talislantan creatures. They usually sell for 200 to 800 gold lumens apiece, regardless of type—age and overall condition being the most important factors affecting cost. Young aht-ra are seldom available except through the auspices of Djaffir merchants, who sell only gelded males in order to maintain their countrymen's monopoly on this valuable commodity.

Despite their ungainly appearance, aht-ra are surprisingly swift and agile afoot. More impressive is the endurance of these creatures, which is unmatched in the animal kingdom. With their characteristic long and loping stride, aht-ra can travel for days without stopping for rest. By retaining fluids in their hump-like sacs, aht-ra can go without water for long periods of time (one month per hump is thought to be an accurate estimate). The creature's scaly hide renders the beast immune to the effects of the rays of Talislanta's twin suns, and translucent membranes shield its eyes from sun and sand.

There are three varieties of aht-ra, each possessed of its own individual virtues: Swiftest is the one-humped ontra, bred mainly for speed. The two-humped batra is somewhat slower and can carry 800 pounds of weight (compared to only 400 pounds for the ontra). The three-humped tatra can carry 1,200 pounds of cargo, but is the slowest of the three, and will not run at full speed unless constantly goaded with a prod or riding crop.

Plans for a four-humped variety of aht-ra were proposed by Djaffir Beasthandlers at one point, but were subsequently discarded as being impractical, and possibly absurd.

Other animals herded by the Djaffar include land lizards, greymanes, and the fierce war-beasts known as mangonel lizards.

## OF MERCHANTS AND BANDITS

By far the most numerous of the two types of tribes, Djaffir merchants tribes carry goods to and from the civilized countries of Talislanta, from as far west as Zandu to the eastern lands of the Quan Empire and even the Volcanic Hills. Their chieftains are generally regarded as the shrewdest and most skillful traders on the continent.

It is said that Djaffir merchants will travel anywhere, regardless of the dangers, as long as there is a profit to be made. In truth, the only trails found in certain remote regions are those established over the years by the trade caravans of these nomadic merchants.

The bandit tribes, though fewer in number, are nearly as persistent as their mercantile counterparts. Primarily known as caravan robbers, Djaffir bandits are relentless in their pursuit of prey. The larger tribes have been known to raid small villages, taking women, slaves, and anything else of value that can be carried off.

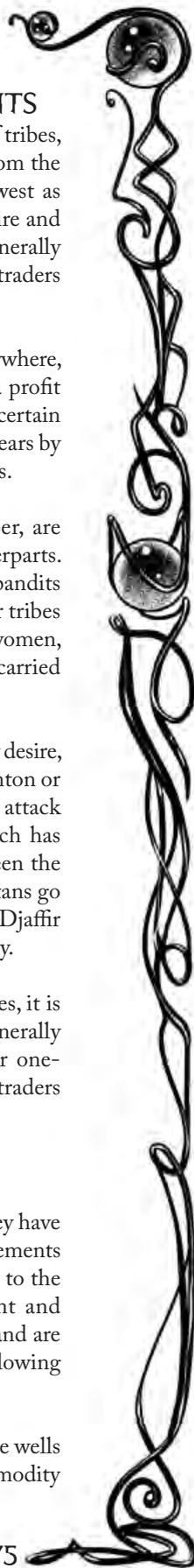
Though they will kill in order to get what they desire, Djaffir bandits are not known to engage in wanton or senseless violence. Neither are they known to attack the caravans of Djaffir merchants, a fact which has led many observers to suspect collusion between the sheiks of the two tribal groups. Some Talislantans go so far as to claim that the distinction between Djaffir merchants and bandits is one of semantics only.

Whatever the relation between the two tribes, it is certain that both have much in common. Generally speaking, the Djaffir bandits prefer the faster one- and two-humped aht-ra, while the merchant traders mainly employ the three-humped tatra.

## SETTLEMENTS

As the folk of Djaffa are nomads at heart, they have no true cities. However, two extensive tent settlements exist, growing or contracting in size according to the comings and goings of the various merchant and bandit tribes. Both cities are located at oases, and are comprised entirely of tents and pavilions, allowing them to be moved at need.

Al Ashad is the southern tent settlement. The wells are heavily guarded, for water is a precious commodity



In this region. It is said that the Djaffir merchant tribes prefer this settlement due to its close proximity to the Wilderlands Road.

The northern oasis-settlement, El Aran, is identical in most respects to Al Ashad. Djaffir bandit tribes reportedly prefer this place, due to its isolated location in the desertlands. Sand demons proliferate in this region.

## RAJINNAR

Far to the east, between the scorching sands of the Red Desert and the green swirl of the Sea of Glass, lies the warlike nation of Rajinnar. Known as “*the Scourge of the Desert*,” It is the most populous of the desert kingdoms.

This is a harsh and arid land, made hospitable only by numerous small springs found scattered across its far-ranging territories. The Jade Mountains ring it on nearly all sides; elsewhere the terrain is monotonous in form, a sprawling expanse of yellow sand interrupted only by sparse patches of date palm, nettle and briarbrush.

The mountains and deserts are rife with dangerous beasts, including yaksha and sand demons, and rare crested dragons are not unknown in these parts. During the spring, water from thawing ice caps cascades down the southern mountains, carrying with it many small bits and chunks of gold. Adventurers with a flair for the melodramatic sometimes attempt to steal into the mountains, hoping to escape the desert natives, harvest the gold and become rich.

In the Rajanin language, the word Raj means death while the suffix -innar means land of, hence Rajinnar is known to many as the Land of Death.

### THE RAJANS

A fierce, dark-skinned folk, the masters of Rajinnar are tall and wiry of build, with blood-red eyes, and horn-like protrusions jutting forth from their chins and foreheads. They dress in dark grey capes, veiled headdresses, and loose-fitting garments bound with cords at the wrists, ankles and waist. These same cords are used for many practical purposes by the Rajans, including the strangling of enemies. It is the unfriendly

It is said that the Caliph of Djaffa, whom both merchants and bandits regard as their spiritual leader, is always to be found at one of these two settlements. Aside from his duties as arbiter of all tribal disputes, the ruler performs no other known function. Even so, it is said that at a single word from the Caliph, all the tribes of Djaffa would unite to do his bidding.

custom of both the males and females of this people to carry concealed weapons on their persons, curved daggers being considered especially elegant.

### CUSTOMS

The Rajans are a race of fanatics, utterly devoted to the dread entity known as Death—and his minion the Khadun, absolute ruler of Rajinnar and Necromancer-Priest of the Black Mystic Cult. The cultists believe that the Khadun is the earthly manifestation of Death, and revere him as a demi-god.

Only by dying can they become one in spirit with their mystic deity, or so the Rajans have been taught from birth by the Necromancer-Priests; therefore, they are eager to sacrifice their lives for any cause that the prophet of Death endorses.

Under the iron rule of the Khadun, Rajinnar is among the most repressive states of Talislanta. The punishment for most crimes is the removal of an appropriate body part: liars have their tongues cut off, thieves lose a hand, and voyeurs (those who attempt to peek beneath a woman’s veil) lose an eye. The penalty for adultery is especially grim. Individuals accused of treason or heresy are imprisoned in the Tower of Irdan, where torturers practice their arts.

Rajinnar marks Carantheurn and Djaffa as hated foes, and bears no love for the Seven Kingdoms. The fortress of Hadran intervenes between the desert nation and the Quan Empire—given the Quan’s history of expansion and conquest, Rajinnar may also have some reason for concern in this direction.

The Rajans covet the ore-rich sands of the Red Desert, but attempts to conquer the Dracartans have

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failed. Defeat has not swayed the tribes from this cause, and the Khadun has sworn to crush Carantheum, if every man, woman and child in Rajinnar must die in the attempt. As his generals are unfortunately known more for fanatical obedience than their tactical abilities, observers speculate that such a result is within the realm of possibilities.

Rajinnar has political ties with no other nation except Faradun, a vital trade partner. The Rajans are an impediment to east-west trade as long as they continue to plunder caravans on the Wilderlands Road—a situation favorable to the Farad, whose trade routes do not pass through the Red Desert.

### THE BLACK MYSTIC CULT

The Rajan tribe is ruled by the Black Mystic Cult, just as the Rajans are the masters of the other inhabitants of Rajinnar. The necromancers of the cult wear dark vestments and skull-like iron masks. Mages of greatest power are reportedly capable of manifesting a third eye in the center of their foreheads, of use in detecting invisible or spirit presences.

The Rajans believe that by killing non-believers, they make converts for their morbid deity. They have been taught this by the Necromancer-Priests, the Death-mages who also train the elite corps of religious assassins known as the Torquar. Under the command of the Khadun, the Cult exports terrorism to many lands. The Torquar are known for magic, and for their skill with the da-khar (a leather gauntlet equipped with retractable metal claws).

The Temple of Death in Irdan is the sanctum of the Black Mystic Cult. Here, the Necromancer-Priests of are said to consort with the spirits of the deceased, hoping to exhume lost magical secrets of the Forgotten Age.

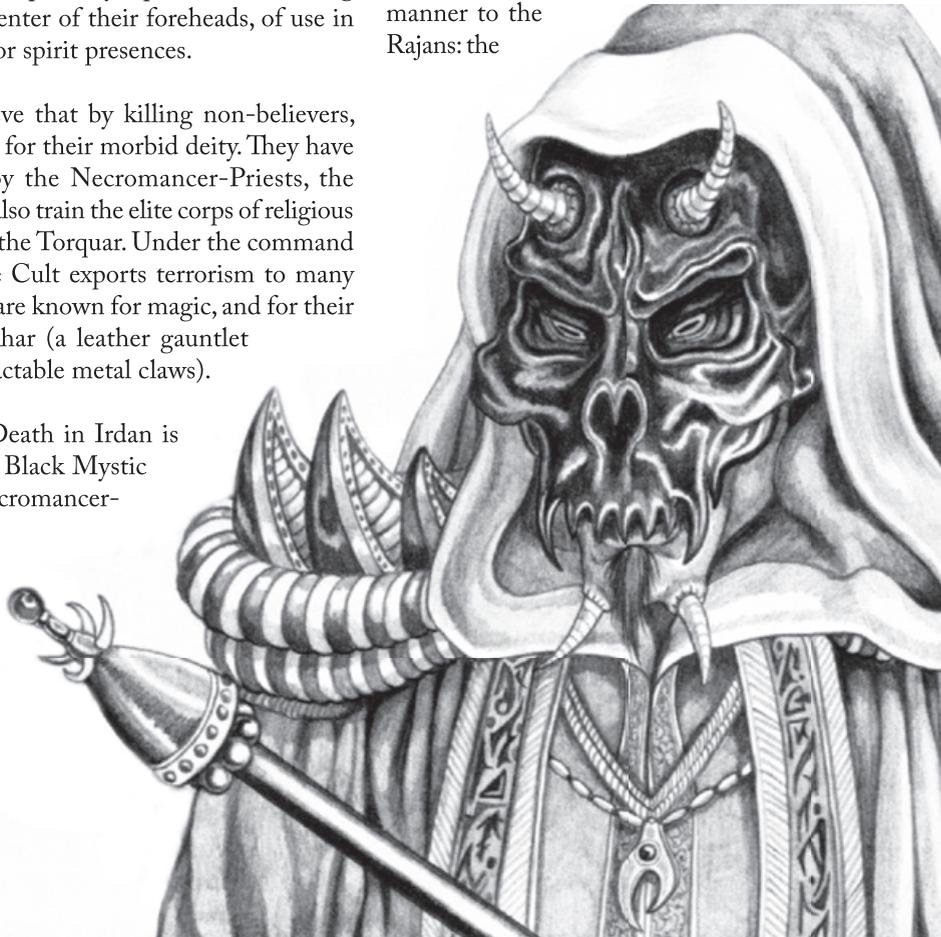
### THE HOLY CITY OF IRDAN

A warlike and violent people, the Rajans long ago conquered and subjugated the other tribes of this region, then employed them as slaves to build Irdan, a dark fortress located on the lower slopes of the Jade Mountains. The massive citadel is the only major settlement in Rajinnar, and serves as the country's capital.

Aside from an occasional visit by Farad merchants, the city is dosed to foreigners. Gold, mined in great quantities from the Jade Mountains, is smelted into ingots in Irdan, then used to purchase weapons and k'tallah. The Khadun resides within the Temple of Death, protected by necromancers, elite Torquar and giant Shadinn warriors.

### THE OTHER TRIBES

Though the masters of this country are the Rajans, four other nomadic tribes make their homes here. All are related in some manner to the Rajans: the



warrior Aramut, the mountain-dwelling Zagir, the giant Shadinn, and the despised “mongrel” Virds.

The Aramut and Zagir tribesmen closely resemble the Rajans, but are shorter in stature and favor less elaborate attire. Their homeland, the arid mountains of Zagiran, was conquered by the Rajans toward the end of the third century. Satada, earth demons, azoryl, and land dragons are all found in this rugged, mountainous area.

The Virds, a people of mixed ancestry, are devoid of any single set of definable characteristics. The Rajans consider them expendable, and send them to carry out suicidal attacks against enemies.

Virdistan was conquered by the Rajans in the early part of the fourth century. The nomadic Virds tend herds of land lizards, durge, and other creatures. Sand demons, wild duadir, and the much-feared opteryx are common to this arid land, and Araq raid from the north.

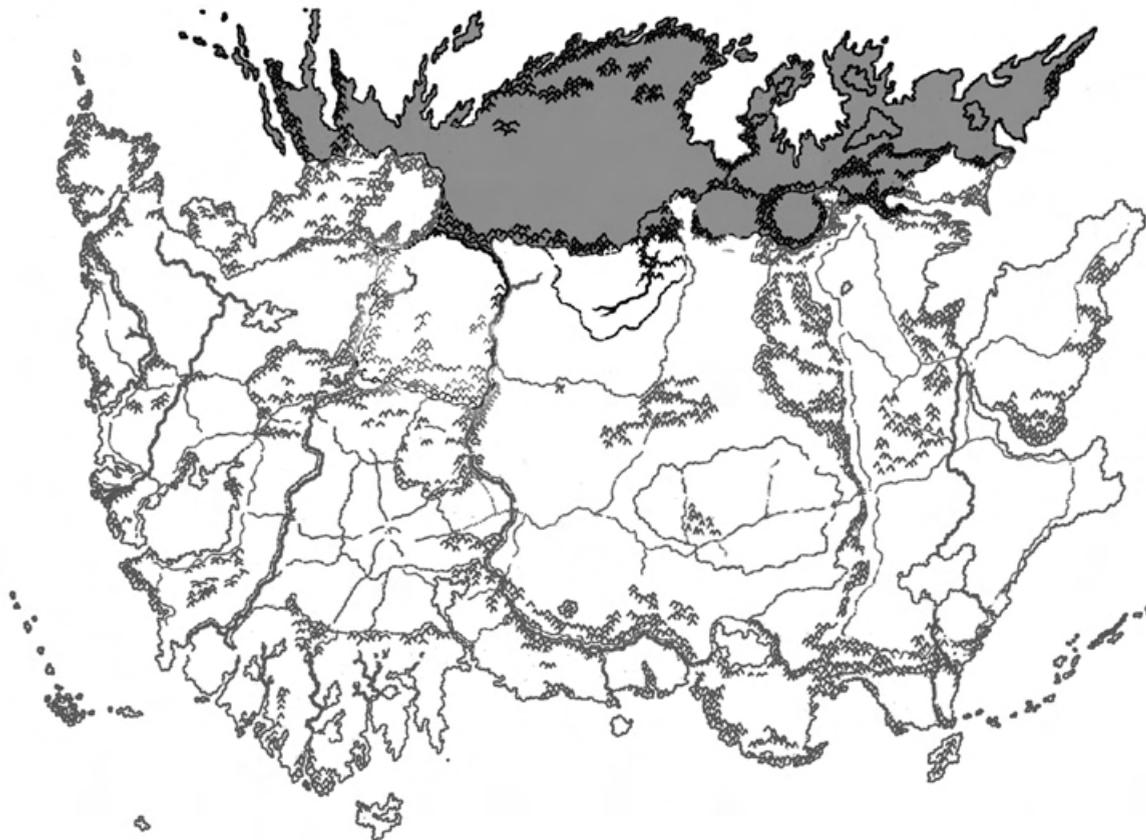
The Shadinn resemble the Rajans, but are giants, averaging seven feet in height. They live in tent settlements scattered across the southern desert, which is also inhabited by sand demons, satada and desert kra. Shadinnar was conquered by the Rajans at the beginning of the fourth century.

## THE HAND OF URMAAN

This 150-foot-tall stone spire, located in the Jade Mountains, resembles a massive grasping hand. According to the Rajans, this oddity was created by Urmaan, the first Necromancer of Rajinnar. Some say that the hand wards Urmaan’s lost sanctum, the secret entrance to which may be hidden somewhere in the vicinity.



## THE NORTHERN REACHES



### L'HAAN

L'Haan is a land of vast snow fields, glittering ice peaks, and frozen lakes. Located in the nethermost reaches of eastern Talislanta, the region is predominantly wilderness, populated by tundra beasts and great herds of snowmanes and woolly ogriphants. Along the shores of the Sea of ice live the only civilized folk native to L'Haan: the blue-skinned race known as the Mirin.

### THE MIRIN

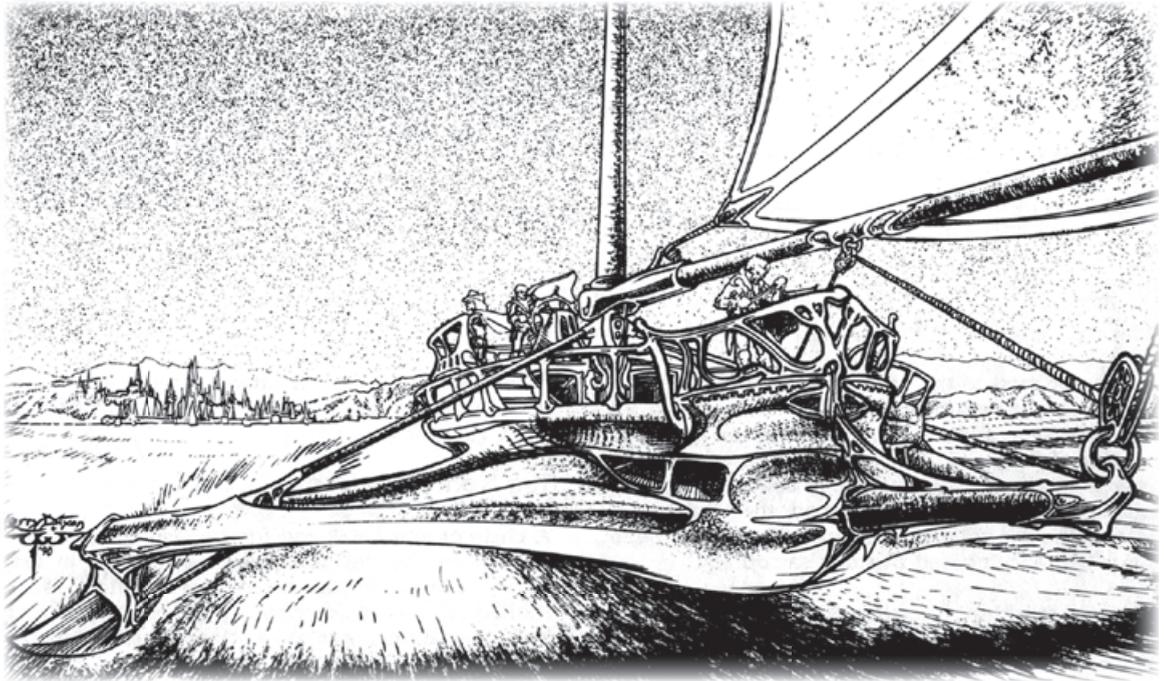
A people of noble appearance, tall and statuesque, the Mirin live in crystalline ice castles, and are skilled in the arts of enchantment, alchemy and elemental magic. Renowned throughout Talislanta as artificers of the highest order, the Mirin fashion superior weapons and implements from adamant, an alloy of blue diamond—the fabled “permanent ice” of legend.

### CUSTOMS

The Mirin are an enlightened and peace-loving people, who shun the use of violence except in defense of their land and its cities. A deeply religious people, the Mirin revere Borean, the God of the cold North Wind. The priests and priestesses of Borean do not build temples in his name, but do erect altars on the snowy steppes around frozen lakes such as L'Lal and Rhin. It is only in such open and natural surroundings, the Mirin say, that one can truly feel the presence of the God of the North Wind.

It is the custom among these folk to undertake a *bonding of spirit* with a chosen mate or friend. The procedure, known as melding, creates a psychic link between the two individuals. While melded individuals cannot actually communicate via this





ability, each instinctively knows if the other is in danger or great distress.

The Mirin seldom venture beyond their own borders, as they dislike any but the coldest climates. Druas from the Maze-City of Altan sometimes come here, as does at least one tribe of hardy and extremely determined Djaffar merchants. Despite generous offers from other lands, the Mirin refuse to trade any but the smallest quantities of blue diamonds or adamant, substances which they consider vital to the defense of their land.

## THE SEA OF ICE

An expanse of shimmering, perpetually-frozen water, the Sea of Ice is traversed by Mirin ice schooners. These majestic sail-driven vessels glide across the ice on runners made of gleaming adamant as they journey from Myr to Rhin, bearing cargos of adamant, blue diamonds and alchemical mixtures. Ice dragons, spawned in the frigid depths of the Midnight Sea, pose a hazard to ships, as do the razor-sharp edges of partially-submerged glaciers.

Two major Mirin settlements ring the Sea of Ice: Rhin, and Myr. On the eastern shore is the walled city of Rhin, the capital of this far-northern land. The Snow Queen—a figure of some mystery, said to

be a white witch of surpassing ability—is the ruler of L'Haan, and lives in a fabulous ice palace in this city. Rhin is renowned for its alchemists, who are skilled in the art of magically forging adamant.

Myr, likewise a city of shining ice castles, stands on the western shore of the Sea of Ice. Closest of the Mirin cities to the territories of the evil ice Giants, Myr is surrounded by walls over 40 feet in height. The greater part of L'Haan's formidable military force is stationed at this ice fortress, warding against possible invasion by the Ice Giants of Narandu. Equipped with light chain mail, swords, shields and spears all of adamant, the Mirin present a formidable challenge to intruders venturing into their realm. Mirin war sleds, drawn by teams of snow-manes, allow swift response to threats from all aoss the territory.

The city of L'Lal stands on the western shore of Lake L'Lal in the east of L'Haan. This city is famed for its shipyards, where graceful ice schooners and smaller ice skiffs are constructed. The walled city is also the foremost supplier of blue diamonds on the continent.

## THE ICE LAKES

The five fresh-water lakes of L'Haan lie in the snowy reaches of L'Haan's interior. The Mirin sail the frozen waters in double-bladed ice skiffs, hunting for

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frostweres, tundra beasts and ice dragons. Ice-fishing is also a popular pastime in this region, though one enjoyed almost exclusively by Mirin ice-divers, whose uncanny metabolism enables them to survive in the freezing-cold waters below the surface of the frozen lakes. The crystal eggs of ice dragons, shimmering blue pearls of the northern Quaga, and various species of edible aquatic creatures are harvested by Mirin divers.

Lake Rhin is the largest of the lakes, and is something of a fashionable resort among the Mirin. The northern folk like to vacation here in ice lodges built along the shores.

Travelers should be cautious near Lake Lir, which is known to be the domain of frost demons.

### THE MYSTIC MOUNTAINS

These mountains separate the land of L'Haan from its southern neighbors, Xanadas and Harak. The peaks are so named for their unusual configuration—some say the range resembles a line of towering stone figures, dressed in the voluminous robes of sages or mystics.

The Mystic Mountains serve as an impediment to the hostile Harakin clans, who therefore rarely raid the icy wastes. The heights are also believed to be a source of blue diamonds, but the Mirin refuse to confirm this belief. Bitter cold, the precipitous terrain, and the local concentration of frostweres have together discouraged concerted efforts to take advantage of the region's natural resources.

### NORTHERN WATERS

Several areas of interest lie along the frigid north coast of L'Haan. The icy stretch of water known as Traitor's Bay is named for the infamous Rasmirin, a cult of anarchists and black witches which continue to scheme to usurp the rule of the Snow Queen. The traitorous Rasmirin launched an assault on L'Haan's fleet of ice schooners in the year 403 N.A. and were defeated, then banished to dwell forever on the Outcast Isles at the mouth of the bay. Sunken ships from the battle, laden with treasures plundered from the City of Myr, still lie somewhere at the bottom of the bay.

The frigid and rock-strewn Outcast Islands serve as home to the exiled cult to the present day. The Rasmirin dwell in rude ice fortresses, ever plotting new schemes to overthrow the ruler of L'Haan.

Further east lie two neighboring islands of very different history. The ice island of Warlock's Keep protrudes upward from the Midnight Sea, and resembles a jagged crystal tower. According to Mirin legend, this place is home to an ancient warlock named Nobius—a master of Grey Witchcraft, and a figure of unpredictable temperament. Lending credence to the legend are reports from Mirin tundra scouts, who claim to have spotted matrices of colored light hovering above the island.

Paramour Island also has its place in folklore. The Snow Queen of L'Haan had a fabulous ice castle built upon this island for the many suitors who desired her hand in marriage. The situation became untenable when the rivals began to plot against each other, causing great mischief. The facility was abandoned, and remains deserted to the present day. Now, only frost demons inhabit the island.

### A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO RHIN

*"The sight of Rhin's glittering spires will take your breath away, assuming the frigid air doesn't do so first."*

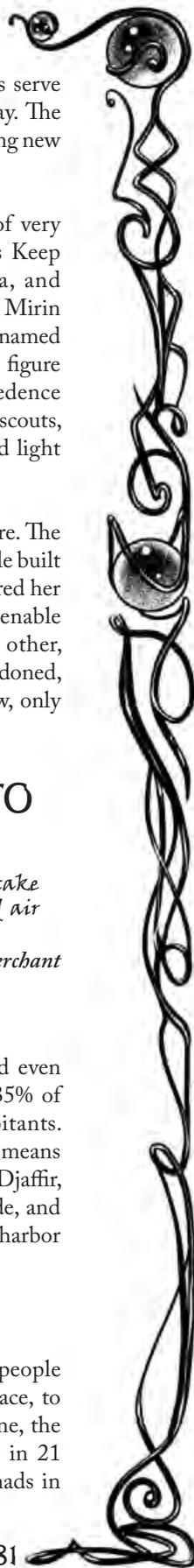
*- Djama al Shen, Djaffir Merchant*

### THE POPULACE

The Mirin are not a numerous people, and even Rhin, capital of L'haan and home to a full 35% of their population, only houses 12,000 inhabitants. The inhospitable nature of their frigid climate means they receive few visitors, save for the al Shen Djaffir, and Oj Orgovian tribes with whom they trade, and the occasional Ariane Druas for whom they harbor great respect.

### HISTORY

According to Mirin legend, they were a people that had fallen to earth from Borean's embrace, to experience life. Led by the white witch Cerene, the Mirin began construction of Rhin and Myr in 21 N.A., following centuries of hardship as nomads in



the frozen wastes. With Cerene's guidance, both cities were constructed in a matter of years, providing the Mirin with much needed protection, and a place to call home. In 163 N.A. a Mirin expeditionary force into Narandu, stumbled across what seemed to be a great tower-like construct, leaning precariously, and half covered with ice and snow. Chipping their way inside, they came across many strange alchemical devices, and tomes of lore containing the secrets of adamant. Many dangers beset their return, but those few that survived bore extra knowledge of alchemy beyond that the Mirin already possessed, and the ability to forge blue adamant gave the Mirin a greater edge, although they never did find the ice-encased tower again.

In 176 N.A. a colossal force of Ice Giants attacked L'Haan, but armed with adamant and powerful alchemy, the Mirin were able to drive the invaders back. In 350 N.A. the Mirin came under attack once again, as they repelled an army of Harakin in a fierce battle that lasted three days and nights.

## VISIONS OF RHIN

### A VIEW FROM AFAR

A mighty 25-foot wall of ice encircles the city in the shape of an eight-pointed snowflake. The wall merges with the landscape like a natural growth. Light sparkles from the icy surface of many tapering, elegant towers of ice. Like a field of impossibly large stalagmites shaded in blues and whites, surrounded by a wall of ice, the city stands on the bank of a vast mirror-like expanse of frozen water, elegant ships skimming the surface on glittering blades.

### AT THE GATES

A huge disk of lustrous blue metal rolls back into a slot within the wall, leaving a large circular gateway. Stalagmites, each 35-foot tall and carved with narrow windows stand at either side of the gate, and at regular intervals around the wall. A fortress-like dock of ice lies on the banks of the vast frozen lake nearby.

### THE CITY STREETS

Crisp paths of snow lie between buildings of crystal-like ice; each sculpted like a stalagmite of various heights and widths, some standing alone, others in elaborate clusters connected by enclosed walkways of ice. Each is delicately carved to reflect

## FIRE AND HEAT

Fire and heat, including the use of pyromancy, is expressly forbidden in any Mirin settlement as it could damage the architecture. Visitors are provided with ample furs, but are not permitted to create fires to warm themselves.

## HOSPITALITY

Mirin hospitality is warm-hearted and welcoming. A Mirin family temporarily adopts each visitor. However, the Mirin will expect the visitor to be polite and courteous, as well as regaling them with tales of far-off places.

light, shimmering like a diamond. A great palatial cluster of slender spires stands in the center of the city, towering a full half again the height of its tallest neighbor. Sculptures of heroic figures, magnificent beasts, and abstract design stand here and there as if by whim. The inhabitants walk with stately grace, bedecked in blue silks and white furs.

## RHIN AT NIGHT

Darkness never truly engulfs Rhin, for the northern night sky is cloudless, and afire with stars. The polished ice of the city itself glitters and sparkles, and the haunting sound of the Soul of Borean (see below) fills the air.

## THE TYPICAL DWELLING

### An Exterior View

An 80-foot high stalagmite, tapering gradually from a 35-foot base is carved with delicate trceries, and many windows of abstract shape. Willowy needles of ice extend and twist from the tower, seemingly for no other purpose than decoration. A carved oval doorway stands open at the base.

## THE TOWER INTERIOR

A staircase of polished ice ascends, while another descends, each featuring an elegant banister of ice.

### ILLUMINATION

Each Mirin building is designed to reflect and channel light through precisely cut ice, providing interior lighting beyond that the windows provide. This system is so efficient that even starlight and moonlight provide more than adequate illumination. Orbs filled with amberglow - a luminescent fiery-orange alchemical - are trapped in the tips of ceiling stalactites, glowing softly during the hours of darkness, and are also used as nightlights and torches on those few nights when the stars and moons are obscured.

### DOORWAYS

Rather than the doors common to other cities, the Mirin have but a single thick hide on their front entrance that is fastened down from the inside.

### THE APARTMENT

A cluster of grotto-like rooms forms the apartment, each room connected to the other by a doorway covered with an elaborately stitched hanging of leather and fur.

#### The Communal Room

This small room features a low table at its center, carved from the ice of the floor. Several thick fur rugs are scattered around it, providing comfortable seating low to the floor. A shelf is carved into the wall, following its curve, decorated with books, ivory statuettes and ice decanters. A cluster of stalactites hangs from the ceiling, orbs of amberglow frozen into their tips.

#### The Bedroom

An abstract-shaped window of clear ice sheds light into this room. A circular plinth of ice some 7-foot in diameter and 1-foot in height serves as a bed, its center hollowed out and filled with a mattress of soft snow covered with stitched furs and several tooled fur and leather blankets. Pegs and shelves of delicately carved ice serve to hang and bear clothing, and personal possessions.

#### The Bathing Room

A large oval bath is sunken into the floor, filled with frigid water. An entire wall is highly polished acting as a mirror in front of which are several elaborate ice-shelves bearing cleansing alchemicals, musk perfume, and toiletries. A beautifully carved box-like toilet stands in the corner, the wastes sliding down a frozen chute into the sewer.

#### Larder and Kitchen

This small room features a large wardrobe-like feature of ice containing frozen joints of meat, freeze-dried lichen, and wafers of snow lily bread. Plates and cutlery are contained on a wall-rack, along with vials of imported spices, and local alchemicals that flash-cook and cool the food ready to serve.

### THE SNOW QUEEN

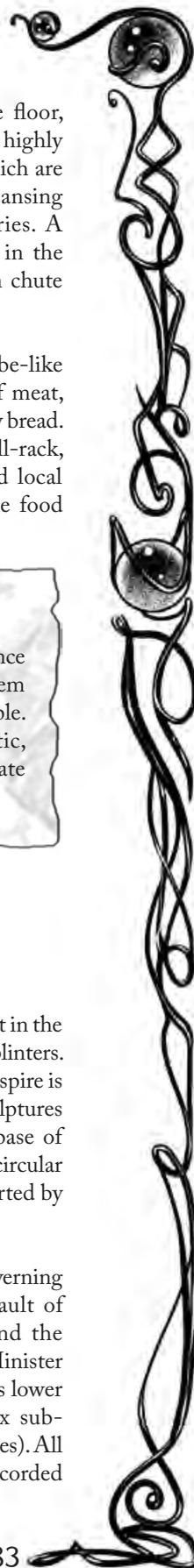
Cerene, the leader of the Mirin people since their earliest history, continues to rule them even now, and is much beloved by her people. Even-handed, charismatic, and enigmatic, Cerene is a radiant beauty of indeterminate age, and surpassing magical prowess.

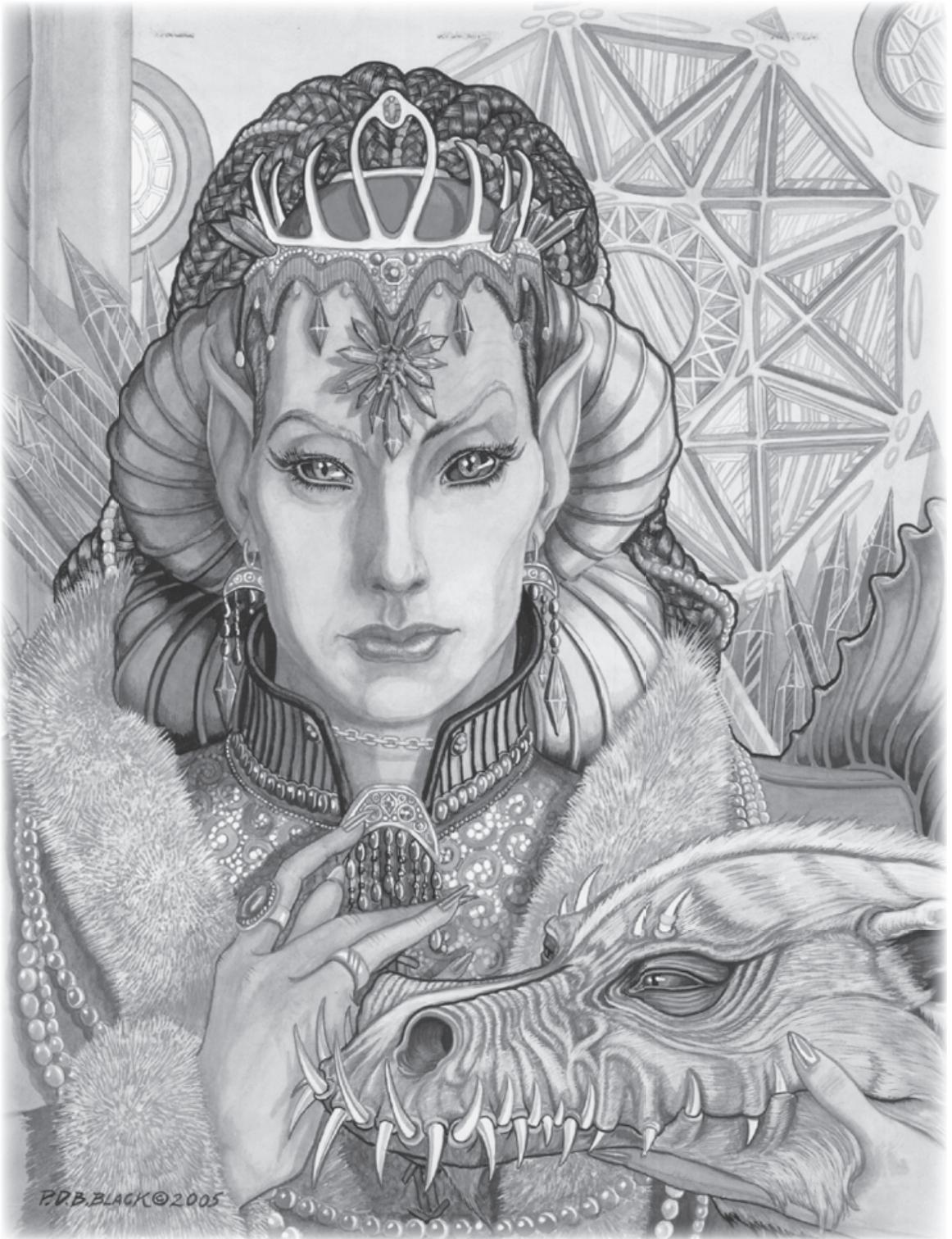
### PLACES OF AUTHORITY

#### THE SNOW QUEEN'S PALACE

Elegant clusters of spires tower up to 120-foot in the air, composed of thousands of needle-thin ice splinters. Delicate tracteries cover every surface, and each spire is fluted, carved and faceted like a diamond. Sculptures stand in recessed alcoves around the entire base of the palace. A broad stair sweeps up to a great circular portal of blue adamant under a balcony supported by carved tapering pillars.

The Snow Queen's Palace houses L'haan's governing body of Royal Ministers, along with the Vault of Records, the Crystalline Courts of Law, and the mysterious Snow Queen herself. Each Royal Minister lives in a well-appointed quarter of the palace's lower levels. The Royal Ministers act through six sub-ministers each (two in each of L'haan's three cities). All the records of births, marriages and deaths recorded





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by community clergy, as well as trade, tax and military records are collected monthly and stored in the Vault of Records beneath the palace.

### THE KEEPS OF SOLACE

Housed under the base of each Vigil Tower are The Keeps of Solace: the city's prison cells. Each Keep is a single cell, large enough for one man, secured by bars of blue adamant. Each Vigil Tower has but one of these cells located beneath their stables. As a result, each city can only hold up to 25 criminals at any one time.

### MILITARY BASES

#### THE VIGIL TOWERS

Each Vigil Tower houses two units of 10 tundra scouts who alternate shifts. It is typical for four scouts from each unit to patrol outside the city walls in pairs, while the other six remain on constant alert. As a result, the city has 32 pairs of tundra scouts out on patrol, 96 scouts on active alert, and 160 scouts off-duty at any one time. The first floor of each Vigil Tower is a well-equipped snow-mane stable, and also contains four war-sleds. In the ground beneath each Vigil Tower is a Keep of Solace.

### EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

#### THE COLD FORGE

Eight large halls of opaque ice radiate from a central hub that contains a lecture hall in which Rhin's alchemists are trained. Each of the eight halls consists of two levels: one above ground, and one subterranean. The upper level of each hall contains eight alchemical laboratories, while the lower level of each contains four blue adamant forges.

#### THE CHOSEN FEW

Alchemists are a decided minority in L'Haan, with L'Lal only housing 50, Myr, 150, and Rhin, 300. Only 30 new alchemy students are accepted for training in each Rhin every year. Training is free, but only the best applicants are selected after numerous tests of intellect and character: such is the responsibility of keeping blue adamant's forging process a secret.

### MUSEUMS & LIBRAIRIES

#### VAULT OF THE WIND-BORNE

This vaulted subterranean hall of ice contains life-size ice sculptures of L'haan's greatest heroes, and is entered via a sweeping staircase that lies at the base of the Soul of Borean above. The finest warriors, artisans, alchemists are artists are represented here in a long hall, back-lit with glowing alchemicals. They serve as an inspiration to those that visit them, as well as a record of L'haan's history and development.

### PLACES OF WORSHIP

#### THE SOUL OF BOREAN

This monument is a huge cluster of ice needles, ranging in size from a mere 3-foot to 50-foot in height, each delicately carved and pierced with holes. When the north wind blows through the monument the pipes whistle with a sound so haunting and beautiful it has moved many to tears. This reminds the Mirin that Borean is always near.

### MARKETS & BAZAARS

#### THE FRIGID HEART

Occupying an expanse in front of the Snow Queen's Palace is the Frigid Heart: an open area of snow at the center of which is the Soul of Borean. Mirin gather at the Frigid Heart every day to trade for whatever goods and services they need. Located deep within the ice beneath the Frigid Heart is the Vault of the Wind-Borne, the entrance to which is at the base of the Soul of Borean.

Any item made of carved ice, including furnishings, musical instruments, etc. can be purchased for a mere 25% of the cost of a similar good elsewhere. Needless to say, such goods melt outside L'haan or Narandu. Minor and beneficial alchemicals are also cheap: 30%-50% of their standard value. Hazardous alchemicals are strictly prohibited without a Royal Ministry permit. Blue diamonds only cost 50% of their normal value. Blue adamant is heavily restricted, only used for mining, ship-building, and the crafting of tools and weapons. Merchants who wish to trade for it must approach the Royal Ministry, and should expect to pay high costs for the few dozen ingots they "might" be offered.



## MERCHANTS, ARTISANS & TRADERS

### THE MERCHANT'S GUILD

Situated on the perimeter of the Frozen Heart, this structure resembles three residences melded together in a ring. Members of Rhin's small Merchant's Guild work here, and are responsible for all trade with outsiders, especially the restricted availability of adamant.

## PARKS

### THE BOUNDARY PROMENADE

This park of crisp white snow encircles the Snow Queen's Palace like an ivory band, covered by soaring archways of ice. Twinkling sculptures line the pathways, and delicate snow lilies grow on banks of snow. Tended ponds feature layers of glass-like ice under which fish swim lazily.

### SNOWFALL PARK

A huge dome of ice some 50-foot high covers this park, cut to resemble the facets of a diamond. Polished mirror-like ponds reflect the sky, and tables and benches are carved from the ground itself. Intricate frames, chutes and tunnels of ice provide hours of enjoyment for the city's young.

## RECREATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

### THE MELDING HALLS

These large circular halls of ornately carved ice feature many friezes carved in bas-relief both inside and out. A single circular portal is covered with a thick layer of furs and leather, but is never secured, leaving the hall open at all times. Inside are countless low tables and fur rugs for seating. The Melding Hall is the heart of the surrounding community: the children spend 4 hours here each day attending classes run by local clergy and sages. Marriage and funerary services are also conducted in the local Melding Hall, as are the rare criminal trials and hearings.

## COMMUNITY SPIRIT

The Mirin do not have bars, inns, taverns or restaurants. Instead, they often gather during the evening at their local Melding Hall, along with family, friends and other community members. Everyone brings along as much food and drink as they can afford. This is then combined and made available to all in attendance. Entertainment takes the form of conversation, storytelling, performances of music or song, and games of LMhir, a game of strategy using carved miniatures of ice on a circular, multi-tiered board.

## TRANSPORTATION

### THE ICE DOCKS

A small 50-foot fortress of ice stands on the bank of the Sea of ice, just to the SW of Rhin. As well as serving as the docks for all of Rhin's ice vessel traffic, this fortress hosts a contingent of four scout units, and also features two large shipbuilding halls. Docking facilities are provided for 10 ice-schooners and 20 ice-skiffs.

## TRAVEL COSTS

Two ice-schooners arrive and depart from Rhin's Ice Docks every day at noon; one bound for L'lal and one bound for Myr. Each one-way journey takes nearly two days (wind permitting), or at least five days for a return journey (unless you leave a city on a departing schooner as soon as you arrive). The cost is 2 g.l. each way, per person. Berth is not provided for mounts.

## SKIFF-RACING

Ice-skiff racing is a popular sport among the Mirin, with races held on the second High day of each month. Teams eagerly strip down their skiffs for greater speed, competing to win trophies of sculpted ice and blue diamond.

### NOTABLE CITIZENS

The following NPC descriptions can be used as player contacts, encounters, rivals (friendly or otherwise), or possibly even the inspiration for a PC:

#### *Mirak - Veteran Tundra Scout Unit Leader*

The upper right-hand side of Mirak's face is a mass of scar tissue, thanks to an Ice Giant's club, and his missing right eye has been replaced with a blue diamond. He has a drooping white mustache, casual gait and easy smile.

#### *L'Tir - Ice Sailor and Skiff-Racing Champion*

Roguish and flirtatious, L'Tir is deadly serious when it comes to racing. Lithe and sensuous, she wears form-fitting white leathers and has severely cropped hair. Numerous trophies adorn her dwelling.



#### *Mirelsar - Well-known Ice Sculptor*

This slightly portly, wild-haired Mirin is surly and gruff while working, but raucous when relaxing. He has done work for nearly everyone in the local community, and has the peculiar habit of always creating his sculptures in the nude, stating that he draws his inspiration from Borean's touch.

#### *L'Kes - Troubadour (and undercover Rasmirin)*

L'Kes is pleasant beyond belief, with deep eyes, a warm smile... and utter disdain for the "deluded Mirin fools". She is a master of the ice flute.

#### *Mirol - Huntsman*

Aged, quiet and serene, Mirol knows the tundra like the back of his hand. He deeply respects the animals he hunts, and enjoys playing with the community's children in SnowFall Park.

#### *L'Mah - Priestess of Borean*

Passionate and outspoken, L'Mah tries to instill a love of Borean into everyone she meets. She is often found perched precariously on top of tall buildings; arms open to embrace the North Wind.

#### *L'Haal - Young Alchemist*

Slightly arrogant, but utterly devoted to L'haan, L'Haal is especially talented at creating healing elixirs. She is completely hairless due to an alchemical accident, but is beautiful nonetheless.

#### *Mirata - Merchant Guildsman*

Mirata has served the Merchant's Guild faithfully for many years, and upholds his position with honor, dealing strictly but fairly with outsiders. His contact with foreigners has given him a somewhat larger perspective on life than many of his fellow Mirin, and he speaks several languages, including Talislan, fluently.

# NARANDU

An immense and frozen wasteland, Narandu stretches across much of the far-northern regions of Talislanta. Here, jagged mountains of ice pierce the bleak tundra, and frigid winds howl through chasms ringed with hoarfrost. Only the hardiest creatures can survive in this tortuous region, which is home to the monstrous beings known as the Ice Giants.

Aside from its Giant population, Narandu is home to man-eating frostweres and the fearsome creatures known as Frost Demons. Both subsist on warm-blooded prey, and in fact are not unlike in appearance. The harsh climate of Narandu allows few plants to prosper in its territories. The exception is the silver-white snow lily; a plant which, when prepared in an elixir or potion, has the virtue of conferring resistance to cold.



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North of Narandu lies a dark and ominous body of water known as the Midnight Sea. Icebergs and frozen straits pose hazards to vessels attempting to ply these waters, which are believed to be haunted by night demons, ancient sea dragons, and phantom ships from the long-dead kingdom of Khazad.

### THE ICE GIANTS

These creatures are aptly named, for their bodies are composed entirely of solid ice. The Ice Giants are frightening to behold, standing well over ten feet in height, and weighing as much as a ton. Spiky protrusions of ice cover their bodies, and their hands and feet are clawed. Although they are bestial and lack great intelligence, the Giants are formidable foes. Their very bodies emanate a piercing cold, so much so that the presence of large groups of Ice Giants can lower temperatures in a wide area.

### CUSTOMS

By advancing further south each year, the Ice Giants are slowly extending their territories, converting temperate lands to bleak tundras. The Gryphs of Tamaranth have long warned of these intrusions, though generally to little avail. Even scholars who acknowledge the Gryph claims contend that the Giants' southern progress is so gradual as to warrant little concern; most estimate the overall rate of advance at less than one-half foot per year. Despite the fact that the ice Giants advance along more than a 1,000-mile front, scholars claim that the annual loss of land is so minimal as to be insignificant.

The Ice Giants are ruled by a mysterious being known only as the Ice King. Unlike his brutish subjects, who know nothing of magic, the Ice King is believed to be a powerful warlock. His sworn enemy is the Snow Queen of L'Haan, who has long opposed the Ice King's plans of conquest. Fierce battles, pitting the ice King's legions against the Snow Queen's Mirin armies, have raged across the borders of L'Haan for many centuries.

The Giants erect no structures more permanent than tunnels and caverns carved in glaciers or mountains of ice. In such places, they store plunder obtained in battle with the Mirin, the frozen carcasses of creatures such as tundra beasts and woolly ogriphants (the Ice Giants cannot obtain nourishment from anything

that is not frozen solid), and precious blue diamonds. The Ice King is said to dwell in a massive complex of similar design carved within an ice mountain, but its location remains unknown.

The land of Narandu is rich in deposits of blue diamond, the magical substance which is also known as "*permanent ice*." The Giants lack the knowledge to utilize the magical properties of these gemstones, but hoard them nonetheless for use in making crude weapons. They use war clubs embedded with uncut blue diamonds, to some effect.

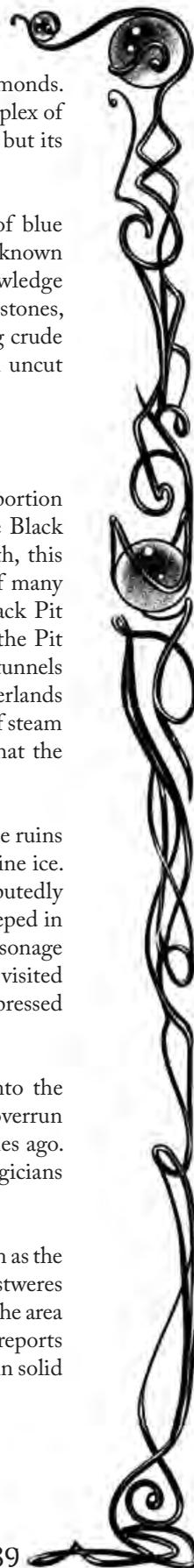
### EASTERN NARANDU

One of the more unusual features of this portion of Narandu is the great chasm known as the Black Pit of Narandu. Located north of Tamaranth, this supposedly bottomless fissure is the source of many colorful legends. Some scholars claim the Black Pit leads to the Demon Realms. Others believe the Pit to be the entrance to an extensive system of tunnels which winds its way as far south as the Wilderlands of Zaran. Certain scholars, noting the clouds of steam which issue from the Pit's mouth, theorize that the Black Pit exits into a vast underground sea.

Deep in the frigid interior of Narandu lie the ruins of Farnir, a city frozen under layers of crystalline ice. Before the coming of the Ice Giants, Farnir reputedly was the site of an enlightened civilization, steeped in the arts of magic and alchemy. No less a personage than the great sorcerer Koraq claimed to have visited here, and the ancient mage was reportedly impressed by the talents of the Farnir mages.

Apparently, their talents did not extend into the realm of military defense, since Farnir was overrun by advancing Ice Giant hordes several centuries ago. The Mirin claim that some of the Farnir magicians still live, frozen in stasis by the extreme cold.

In the far north are the mountain lands known as the Far Reaches, a region inhabited mainly by frostweres and ice dragons. Scholars theorize that parts of the area were once underwater, in order to explain the reports of shipwrecked vessels found frozen here within solid blocks of ice.



## CENTRAL NARANDU

The northern coast of central Narandu is dominated by the Ice Peaks, jagged shards of ice said to be haunted by frost demons. As far as anyone knows, the demons are the only creatures who possess any desire to venture into this region. Even the Mirin consider the Ice Peaks to be impassable.

Stretching south is a vast expanse of frozen tundra known as the Plain of Blue Frost. It derives its unique coloration from the pollen of snow lilies which, carried upon the winds, settles across the terrain for hundreds of miles.

Muskronts, lopers and other beasts come here to graze on the lilies, and to lap up the plants' nutritious blue pollen. This in turn draws a variety of predatory species, including frostweres and packs of two-headed tundra beast.

The icy peaks of the Crystal Mountains form the southern border of central Narandu, extending from the Lost Sea to the borders of Tamaranth. Impassable except by means of a handful of little-known trails, the mountains are reputed to contain deposits of blue diamonds. Avalanches — as well as ice dragons, frostweres and other hostile entities — pose significant dangers to would-be prospectors.

## WESTERN NARANDU

The Trackless Wastes stretch north of the Lost Sea and are rumored to be uninhabited, save for a possibly mythical being known as the Crystal Kallya. Naturalists have offered rewards (up to 50,000 gold lumens, in at least one instance) for anyone able to capture this elusive creature.

Further west, a stretch of bleak, icy terrain is inhabited mainly by herds of lopers, tundra beasts, frostweres, and Ice Giants. These are the Western Glaciers, where blue diamonds and snow lilies can be found by entrepreneurs willing to risk exploring this bleak domain.

## THE NORTHERN ISLES

In addition to the sites already described, three chains of islands spread out northward from the mainland coast of western Narandu, proceeding into the Midnight Sea like victims irresistibly drawn toward their doom.

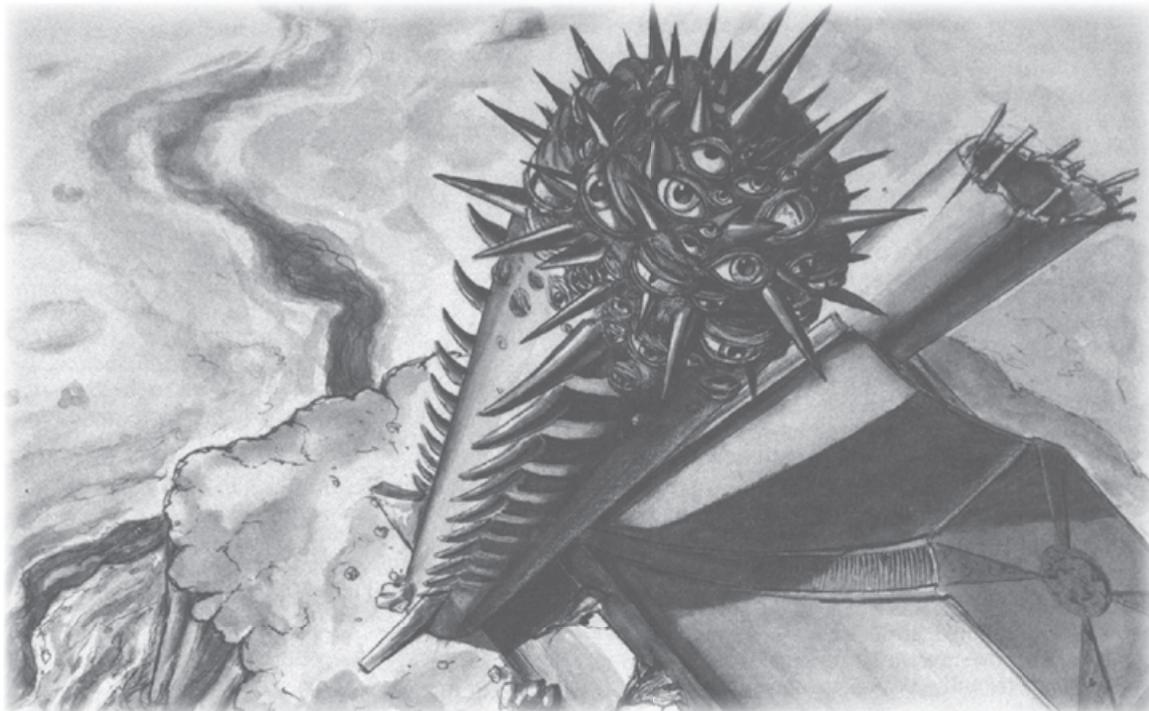
The Unknown Isles form the easternmost chain, and are the most mysterious to Talislantan cartographers. Though these frozen islands appear on ancient sea charts (dating back to the Forgotten Age), no one is known to have mapped or explored the isles in the modern age.

Next to the west are the Midnight Isles which, according to legend, are the abode of night demons and other terrors of the darkness. More than a few Talislantan seamen believe that the end of the world lies but a few miles north of these isles; thus, there is little enthusiasm for the area in general.

The westernmost chain, reportedly obscured constantly by clouds of ghostly grey mist, are the justly-named Spectral Isles. As far as anyone knows, none of these islands has ever been explored, possibly due to the belief that monstrous ice dragons dwell in this isolated area.



## THE SHADOW REALM



At the northernmost edge of the Wilderlands lies an eerie and deserted wasteland, a region said to be haunted by the ghosts of a dozen vanished civilizations. The landscape is correspondingly unpleasant, and consists largely of broken hills, outcroppings of wind-blasted rock, and thickets of stunted tangle-wood and thornwood. Shattered ruins, worn beyond recognition by the centuries, are found throughout the district. The Ariane of Tamaranth call this place Oranthus: literally, "The Shadow Realm."

Decimated by the forces unleashed during the Great Disaster, the Shadow Realm is incapable of supporting any natural species of plant life. Normal animal and insect species are likewise practically unknown here, though various horrid forms of abominations can occasionally be seen wandering across the bleak terrain.

The few brave souls who dare to venture into this region generally come here to obtain Sardonicus (also known as "bottle imps"), which can sometimes be found lurking about the ruins. Much favored by spell casters, who find them to be useful familiars and companions, Sardonicus can command prices of more

than 1,000 gold lumens apiece. Demons of all sorts consider them especially tasty, a fact which prospective bottle-imp trappers would do well to keep in mind.

Various other strange and unnatural creatures roam the Shadow Realm, including the gaunt, horned pseudo-demons known as fiends, and the diminutive variety of devils called monitor imps.

### THE SHADOW WIZARDS

Among the intelligent and malign beings known to inhabit this forlorn land are the Malum, a cabal of Arch-Spectres from the Lower Dimensions. Comprised of animate darkness, these spiritforms of deceased magicians resemble man-like shadows, distorted in form. They cloak themselves in hooded vestments, and bear ebony runestaves studded with black diamonds. The Shadow Wizards' eyes burn with a fiery incandescence, and their bodies may change from substantial to insubstantial form at will.

The Malum are skilled in the Black Arts, and are sometimes forced to act as thaumaturges,

## KABROS' MONOGRAPH

Because the Shadow Wizards of this region are reclusive by nature, very little is known of their motives. However, the intrepid sorcerer Kabros claimed to have visited the Shadow Realm on at least one occasion. In volume six of his famous *Guide to the Lower Planes*, there appears a brief monograph on the subject, recounted here in part:

"I approached the Iron Citadel, heedless of the obsidian eyes which stared at me from the castle's black metal towers. Twin portals of solid iron – each engraved with weird runes and sigils, and standing over 20 feet in height – opened slowly as I drew near. A foul wind issued forth, cold and unnatural, as if originating from another world. Summoning the remainder of my resolve, I entered into darkness.

"For a time, I groped about blindly, fearing lest I should stumble into some unseen pit or other obstacle. At last my eyes adjusted to the gloom, and I could discern the vague outlines of a long, winding stairway. I ascended and, after a seemingly interminable period of time, emerged into a vast and eerie chamber.

"Within, a group of shadowy figures stood occupied at various tasks, apparently oblivious to my presence. Some worked at tables piled high with tangles of alchemical equipment and tubing, distilling some sort of dark, viscous liquid; others fed malformed imps to caged bat manta, attended steaming vats, or conversed in hushed whispers with winged fantasms. With a pair of tongs, one of the Shadow Wizards brought forth a small creature from the largest of the vats: a hideous man-thing with a bloated head, covered with barbs, horns and sharp protrusions.

"An Icy terror gripped my soul at the sight of this being, freshly fashioned from the stuff of which nightmares are made. My mind reeled: this was Fear itself, given tangible form and substance by the black arts of the Shadow Wizards. I fled, unable to bear the scrutiny of those dark eyes, and anxious only to return to the world of light and reason..."

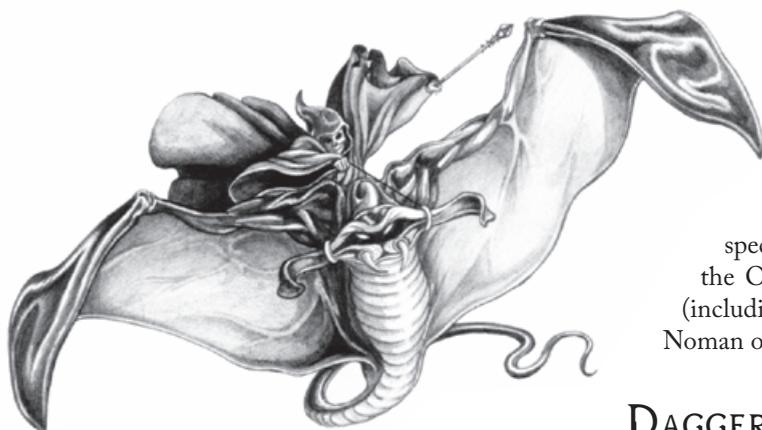
advisors and subordinates by more powerful beings. Conversely, Shadow Wizards occasionally employ lesser entitles—such as shadow wights, harbinger imps and fantasms—as their servants.

The Shadow Wizards prefer to dwell in solitude, during which they engage in such pursuits as interest spectral mages—arcane studies, magical experimentation, consultations with other entitles from the lower planes, and so forth.

Though it is considered a dangerous practice to contact one of the Malum, there have always been those willing to accept the risks entailed in such operations in order to gain a measure of occult knowledge. Among the secrets said to be known by the arch-spectres are many ancient spells, rituals and arcane formulae, including the lost process of creating obsidian mirrors, and the principles which control the fashioning of certain artificial lifeforms.



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## THE IRON CITADEL

After escaping or being exiled from the Lower Dimensions, the Malum of the Shadow Realm took residence in the deserted ruins now known as the Iron Citadel, a ruined structure of ancient and obscure origin. In the towers are eyes of carved obsidian, which constantly scan the surrounding environs, alert for signs of any intruders who would dare to venture into the realm of the arch-spectres.

## THE SINKING LAND

Situated in the northeastern reaches of the Wilderlands of Zaran, the Sinking Land lies just north of the Volcanic Hills, and south of the Opal Mountains. The skies above this region are ever dark and grey, while the earth below is a vast quagmire of inert brown sludge. Passage through the Sinking Land is deemed next to impossible, the muddy terrain tending to slowly swallow up creatures or beings who remain stationary for more than a few minutes' time.

A few species of plants and animals have somehow managed to adapt to this bleak environment, including several varieties of giant fungi, the mud-dwelling Snipes, and the flat-rooted barge tree.

An intelligent species of mollusk, the Snipe possesses the ability to move swiftly through the muddy ground of the Sinking Land as easily as fish swim through water. They are insatiably curious creatures, always eager to exchange bits of news and to gossip with other sentient lifeforms.

From within the dark confines of their sanctum, the Shadow Wizards reputedly consort with creatures from the lower planes, including fantasms, bat mantas and void monsters. It is not known what contacts, if any, the arch-spectres have with Malum elsewhere in the Omniverse and their various masters (including the entity known as Death, and Noman of the Nightmare Dimension).

## DAGGER RIDGE

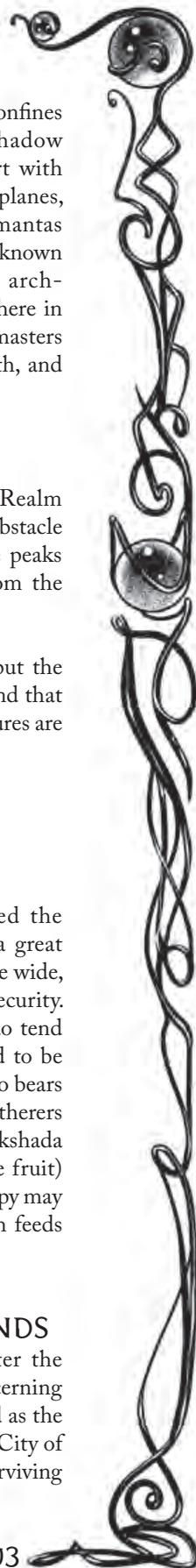
Explorers wishing to enter the Shadow Realm from points to the south must surmount the obstacle known as Dagger Ridge, a line of knife-like peaks which separates the land of the Malum from the Kharakhan Wastes.

The ridge is considered impassable to all but the most expert climbers. It is wise to keep in mind that satada are expert climbers, and that such creatures are not unknown in these parts.

Adventurers who claim to have explored the Sinking Land cite the barge tree as being a great boon to travelers, who can take their rest in the wide, low-lying branches of this tree in relative security. As these trees are not securely rooted, they do tend to drift about to some extent, but this is said to be only a minor inconvenience. The barge tree also bears a most edible and nutritious fruit, though gatherers should be warned that precautions against ikshada (horrific parasites which sometimes infest the fruit) are necessary. Also found among the leafy canopy may be the ironshrike, a metal-plumed bird which feeds on ikshada.

## THE CITY OF THE FOUR WINDS

No reasonable person would care to enter the Sinking Land were it not for the tales concerning the City of the Four Winds. Known in legend as the capital of the ancient kingdom of Elande, the City of the Four Winds is believed to be the last surviving

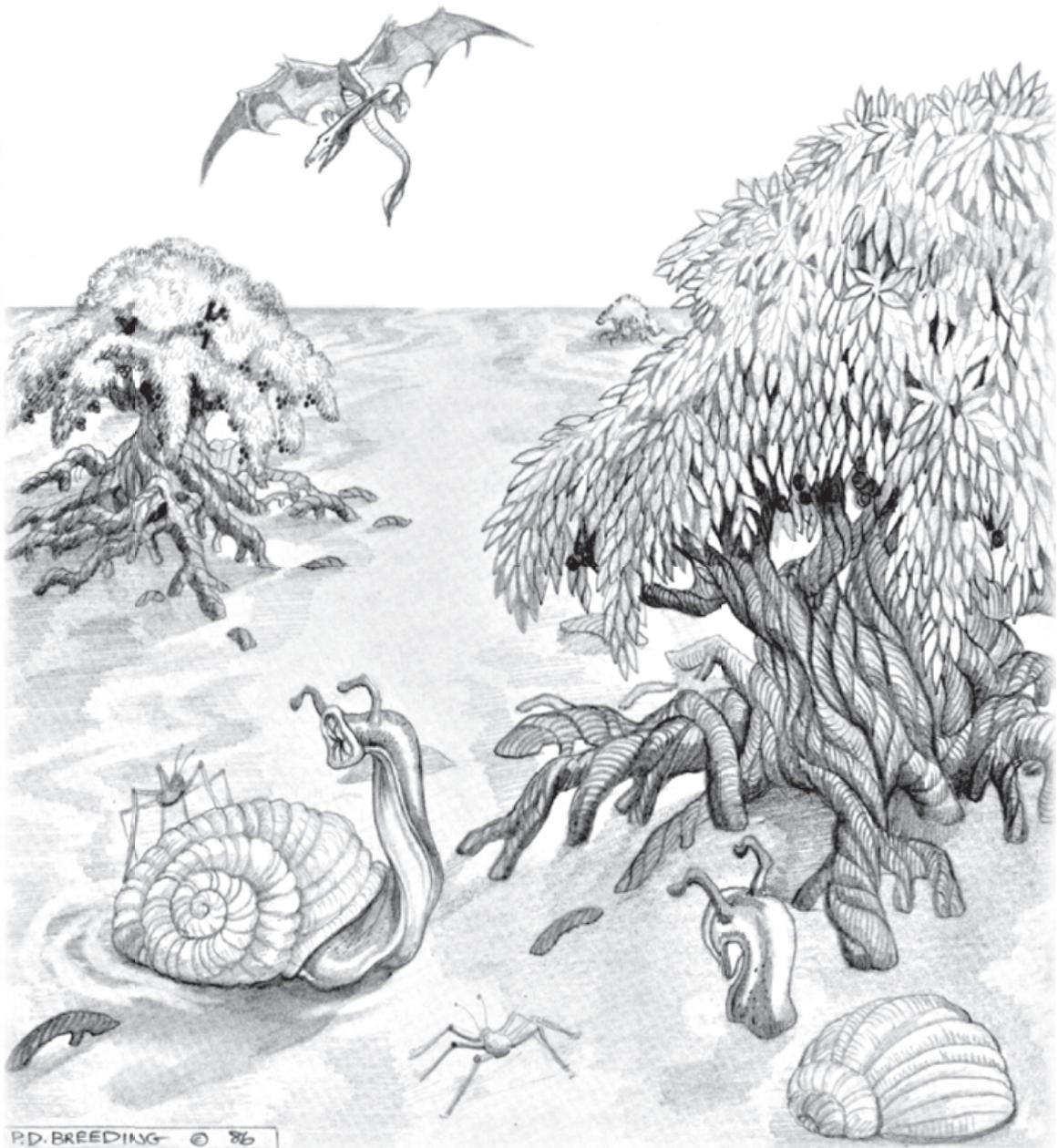


vestige of an advanced and enlightened civilization. It was built by the greatest magicians of the Forgotten Age, who invested the city with magical properties which allowed it to hover suspended above the ground.

According to several unconfirmed accounts, the City of the Four Winds survived the Great Disaster and still floats generally above the Sinking Land, moving slowly on the winds. The travelers who claim

to have caught a glimpse of the fabled city describe it as being most enchanting, its wind-worn towers and archways still capable of conjuring up visions of the halcyon age of Elande.

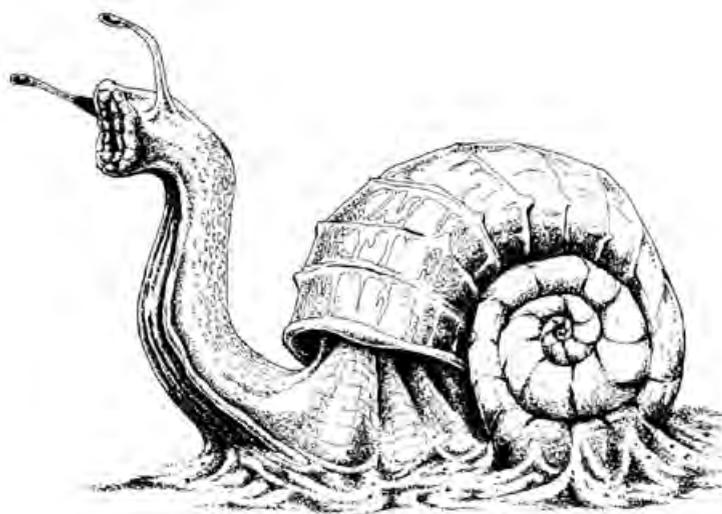
The sorcerer Kabros sought and claimed to have found the Lost City. Of his discovery, he would only say: "The City of the Four Winds must be believed in order to be seen, and seen in order to be believed."



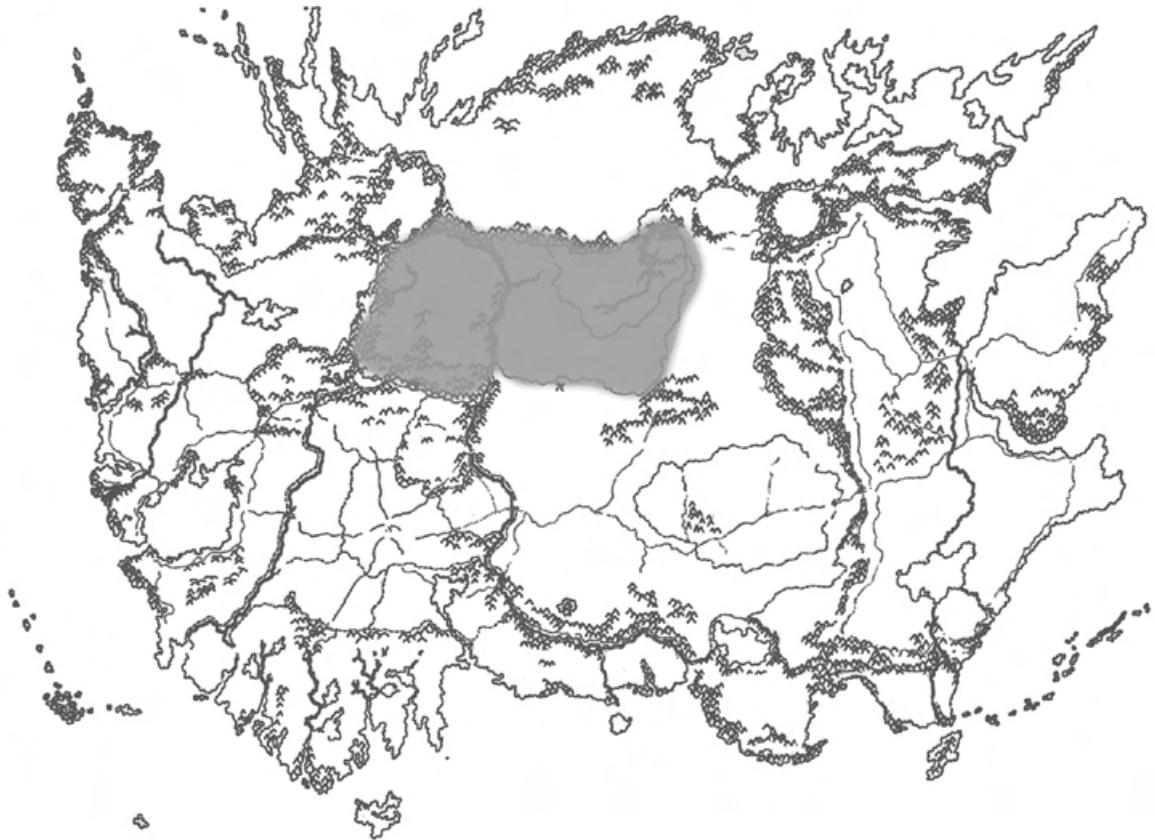
## Hotan's History of the World

What riches lie within the airborne city can only be surmised. Legends hint at the existence of hidden treasure caches containing arcane scrolls, jeweled amulets and magical talismans. One account claims that the city's artisans created six rare and scintillant colors which never before existed. Another states that Elande's magicians, upon learning that their civilization was doomed to perish in the Great Disaster, imbued a number of soulstones with their life essences and memories. It is believed by certain optimistic individuals that anyone who gains possession of one of these soulstones will acquire all the knowledge of the great magician who created it.

Since it is thought to have been abandoned for untold centuries, scholars speculate that the City of the Four Winds, if it does still exist, may not be entirely devoid of inhabitants. Though it is doubtful that the Elande or their descendants still live within the floating city, other creatures or beings might conceivably be found there. Wind demons, shadow wights and necrophages have all been reported to reside in the lost city, but none of these accounts are considered authoritative or thoroughly reliable.



## THE CENTRAL REGIONS



## THE PLAINS OF GOLARIN

Northward beyond the Wilderlands of Zaran lie the grassy steppes of the Plains of Golarin. This is a place of some mystery—the crumbling ruins of an unknown number of ancient civilizations litter parts of the interior, long abandoned by their makers and overgrown with weeds and creepers.

Where once mighty armies clashed on ancient fields of battle, now roam ogriphants, great herds of greymane, and giant, six-legged megalodonts. What lost secrets lie hidden here remain largely a matter of speculation, this due in great part to the aggressive nature of Golarin's current occupants: the predatory Beastmen.

### THE BEASTMEN

Savage beings, the Beastmen of Golarin are ignorant and primitive, yet possessed of a certain animalistic cunning. A coat of bristling fur, usually dirty brown or grey in color, covers their muscular frames. Though man-like in form, Beastmen have many features which are more reminiscent of wild beasts—slavering fangs, deep-set eyes, pointed ears, and protruding jaws typify the vast majority of this folk.

### CUSTOMS

The Beastmen exhibit few civilized traits. They are able to employ the fierce steeds known as dark-manes, and the more intelligent members of their species sometimes set crude traps to disable their prey. Having no noticeable talent as craftsmen, the barbarians are

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limited in their weapons and other equipment to such gear as they can scavenge or pillage. They have only the crudest of languages, which consists mainly of growls, howls and barking.

The savage Beastmen range the length and breadth of Golarin in bands of up to 40 individuals, often stopping to rest or make camp in the ruined cities which lie scattered across the plains. They are quite unparticular with regard to their eating habits, having an equal fondness for herd beasts, carrion or luckless travelers. Beastmen sometimes hunt intelligent prey purely for sport, but they indulge themselves in this way only when food is plentiful.

On the hunt, a band of Beastmen behaves much like a pack of wild hunting beasts. They pursue their prey relentlessly, driving their darkmane steeds on, harrying their prey until the victims become too weak from exhaustion to continue. The savages are superior trackers, who will never quit a blood trail.

Though fierce when encountered in numbers, the Beastmen have seldom been known for

individual displays of courage—just as most pack animals lose their bravery when separated from their group.

### THE VANISHED KINGDOM

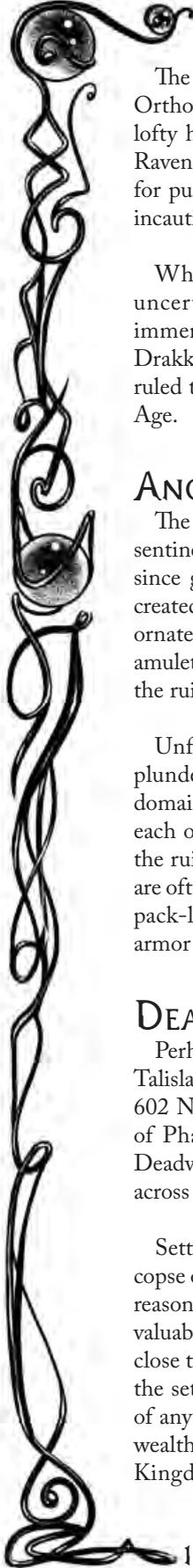
In ancient times, on a site believed to lie in the northern Golarin plains, stood the fabled Kingdom of Shalihan—a land renowned for its formidable magicians, who were masters of Illusion. (The legendary illusionist, Cascal, may have hailed from Shallhan, or so some scholars believe.)

Where Shalihan is now, no one knows; apparently, the entire kingdom simply vanished into thin air sometime after the onset of The Great Disaster. Individuals who aspire to search for the Vanished Kingdom must contend with the region's present residents, which include Beastmen, malathropes, and herds of vidous darkmane.

### THE WATCHSTONE

On the north-central plains stands the Watchstone, an immense pillar of grey basalt several miles in height. An age-worn stairway, carved into the face of the Watchstone, winds upward in a slow, twisting spiral. Climbing to the summit, an endeavor requiring the better part of a day to complete, allows one to see clear across Golarin.





The Watchstone is considered a holy place by the Orthodoxists of Aaman, who claim that from this lofty height one may glimpse the gates of paradise. Ravens favor the high elevations as well, primarily for purposes of preying on groups of rapturous and incautious Aamanian pilgrims.

While the origins of the Watchstone remain uncertain, recent discoveries indicate that this immense structure may have been created by the Drakken—a race of giant, intelligent reptilians who ruled the continent of Talislanta before the Archaen Age.

## ANCIENT OSMAR

The wind-worn towers of Osmar stand like silent sentinels on the western plains, their occupants long since gone and forgotten. The artifacts which they created—blades of blue-black iron, fine ceramic vases, ornate helms and suits of archaic armor, enchanted amulets and bracers—can still be found buried among the ruins.

Unfortunately for those who would explore or plunder the site, the ruined city is the occasional domain of no less than six different Beastmen clans, each of which stakes a claim to a different sector of the ruins. Beastmen who hail from the Osmar ruins are often well-armed with relics of a lost age, and their pack-leaders are occasionally dressed in full battle armor and bear enchanted weaponry.

## DEADWOOD

Perhaps the newest settlement on the continent of Talislanta, Deadwood has only been in existence since 602 N.A. Originally founded by a wandering band of Phaesian peddlers from the Seven Kingdoms, Deadwood is a melting pot—attracting settlers from across Talislanta.

Settlers are drawn to Deadwood (so named for the copse of Deadwood trees near the settlement) for one reason: blue iron. For reasons unknown, this highly valuable metal can be found in large quantities and close to the surface in and around Deadwood. While the settlement is technically outside the jurisdiction of any Talislantan nation, many are interested in the wealth being created out on the plains and the Seven Kingdoms, Aaman, Faradun and even the Quan

Empire have taken a great interest in the fledgling settlement.

## THE FANGS OF GOLARIN

These twin spires of rock are located along the southern border of Golarin. Standing over 100 feet in height, the Fangs are a favored roosting place for ravengers while the predators scan the surrounding environs for food. Scholars are divided as to whether the rock structure is natural or the product of a lost civilization.

## THE FOUR NATIONS

The crumbling ruins of these four once-mighty city-states, which lie within a 100-mile region of the eastern plains, offer mute testimony to the madness of their former rulers, each of whom coveted the lands of his neighbors. The resulting “War of Four Nations” solved nothing, and in fact led to the destruction of all four of the participating countries. Barbaric hordes from Torquar rode in to finish off the survivors, and to steal as much as they could carry on their war-beasts.

The four nations faded quickly into obscurity; no one living even remembers the names of these archaic places. According to the reports of the Phaedran scholar Erastes, these ruins hold such treasures as:

*“...the gilded tomb of Irkhan, the mysterious Elixirs of Immortality, the soulstones of the four blind savants of ancient Elande, a great crystal golem named Satur, the Nine Books of Knowledge, the treasure-horde of Minra the Miser, and the mummified body of the great dragon, Orrix.”*

As Erastes makes no mention of where these purported treasures are to be found (or even definitions of what some of them are), many modern scholars have branded him a sensationalist; the term “fraud” has also been applied. Still, fortune hunters continue to come to Golarin, though none of Erastes’ treasures have ever been found.

## TAMARANTH

The eldest and most impressive of Talislanta's woodland regions, Tamaranth is dominated around the perimeters by light vegetation and thickets of low-lying trees, progressively becoming more dense as one approaches the deep woods of the interior. Here, giant span-oak and fernwood tower above a forest floor thick with a carpet of moss and trailing vines. Swift-running streams course through the underbrush, and the woods teem with an abundance of plant and animal life.

Travelers delving into the woods of Tamaranth may expect to find a number of unusual plant and animal species. Under no condition should one ignore a sighting of exomorph tracks, which may provide the only advance warning of this chameleon-like predator's presence. Assuming that this creature is possessed of mere animal intelligence is a common, and often fatal, error. Malathrope and shathane also dwell in this region, though the numbers of these predators in the forest is kept in check by hunting parties. The traveler is also advised to avoid nag-birds, whose incessant cackling often draws the unwanted attentions of predators. Beastmen prowl the westernmost outskirts of Tamaranth, but seldom dare to enter the forest itself. Dangerous when encountered in numbers, the savages are less so in small groups.

Given its name, the fact that stranglevine should be avoided is likely to come as no surprise. The second threat from the plant kingdom comes in the evening, when the ambulatory shrubs known as violet creepers begin to shamle about, causing dismay to unwary campers. The adhesive liquid exuded by the yellow stickler is more a nuisance than a threat, except for whisps,imps and similar diminutive beings.

Two intelligent races dwell in the Forest of Tamaranth: the Gryphs,

an avian species; and the Ariane, a reclusive and mystical folk.

### GEOGRAPHY OF TAMARANTH

Three features within Tamaranth are of special interest. In the north-central region of Tamaranth, surrounded on three sides by the purple-hued peaks of the Amethyst Mountains, is a sylvan valley of rare beauty. The woods here exude an ancient magic, as if permeated with the essences of a forgotten age. This is the Tamaranth Valley, and at the foot of the mountains lies the Maze-City of Altan, home of the mystical Ariane.

The violet-hued Amethyst Mountains surmount the northern forests of Tamaranth, encircling the



Tamaranth Valley and the Maze-City of Altan. Gryphs patrol the skies above, and predatory exomorphs, maiathrope, and peaceful herds of wild silvermanes roam the wooded lower slopes. There is a single, hidden trail which leads through the Amethyst Mountains into Tamaranth Valley. A rare type of violet stone, used in the making of the Ariane tamar, is found only In this region.

Once a great river which ran from the Amethyst Mountains through the Forest of Tamaranth and

beyond, Waning Brook has diminished considerably over the course of several centuries, and is currently little more than a wide, swift-flowing stream. The brook's present condition is attributed to the Ice Giants, whose southerly advances have sufficed to freeze many of the old river's former tributaries.

## THE GRYPHS

An impressive race of winged, man-like beings which has inhabited the Forest of Tamaranth for



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untold centuries, Gryphs stand up to seven feet tall, with wingspans in excess of 24 feet. Their bodies are covered with a thick feathery down (usually brilliant red or orange in color), and they have hawklike visages and bright, piercing eyes.

### CUSTOMS

Like the birds of prey they resemble, Gryphs are hunters by nature. They have exceptionally keen vision, which enables them to spot from great altitudes even the slightest movement on the ground. The clans subsist primarily on fresh game, usually large predators and other dangerous beasts. The Gryphs are skilled in the use of the duar (a type of two-pronged spear) and the heavy crossbow. They consider themselves to be the protectors of Tamaranth Forest, and groups of the avians regularly patrol the borders of the forestland.

Gryph families live in eyries built in the tops of the tallest span-oaks. Their dwellings resemble great bird's nests, and are constructed of woven vines, roofed with canopies of leafy boughs. Most stand at altitudes of over 100 feet, making access by non-avians a chancy endeavor. A Gryph settlement may consist of as many as 40 eyries, each housing a family of up to eight individuals. The largest settlements often include Council Eyries which span two or more trees in length and breadth.

Situated in the southern portions of Tamaranth Forest, Dhar is the largest of all the Gryph settlements, consisting of nearly a hundred communal eyries nestled high in the treetops. Among these is the Great Council Eyrie, where the chieftains of all the clans come to meet each year, during the first week of Jhang. The area around Dhar is regularly patrolled by heavily-armed Gryph scouting parties, who do not take kindly to unauthorized intruders venturing into their territory.

Innumerable species of avian creatures reside in Tamaranth, or migrate to the secluded woodland during the fall months. The Gryphs offer these beings their protection, and in return receive information gathered by their guests from all across the continent of Talislanta.

Although they are territorial by nature, Gryphs sometimes leave their eyries to travel to distant lands. Through the reports of such travels, and their

communications with other avian species, the Gryphs are often aware of events which have transpired in even the most far-away places.

Some of the avians occasionally take to adventuring for the sake of profit, accepting mercenary posts as scouts, guides or bounty hunters. The majority of Gryphs, however, consider the prospect of departing their beloved woods to be only slightly more desirable than contracting a case of gange (the dreaded disease of the avians, also known as the "slow death"). An independent and strong-willed race, the Gryphs prize their freedom above all other things—therefore, Gryph mercenaries can be difficult employees. They often quit a job after only a few months of work, typically claiming that they felt they were losing their pride or control of their lives by tying themselves down to a single task and master.

### THE ARIANE

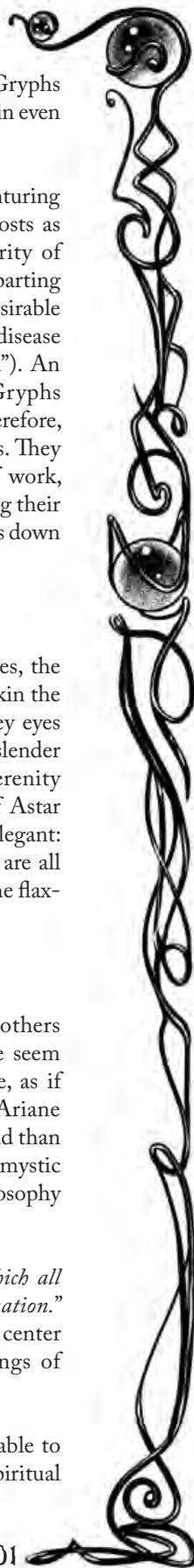
Perhaps the oldest of Talislanta's many races, the Ariane are striking in appearance. They have skin the color of onyx, long snowy-white hair, and grey eyes flecked with sparkling silvery motes. Tall and slender of build, the Ariane exhibit a grace and serenity approximated only by the enchanting folk of Astar or Thaecia. Their mode of dress is simple but elegant: their capes, flowing garments and high boots are all made of spinifax, a silken cloth derived from the flax-bearing pods of the thistledown plant.

### TRANS—ASCENDANCY

The ways of the Ariane are difficult for others to comprehend. On the surface, these people seem closed, devoid of emotions, and introspective, as if dreaming or lost in thought. In truth, the Ariane possess an altogether different view of the world than most Talislantans, and are practitioners of the mystic doctrine known as Trans-Ascendancy—a philosophy seemingly incomprehensible to non-Ariane.

To the Ariane, time is "*the river upon which all living things flow enroute to their next incarnation.*" The river's source is the Green World—the center of the Omniverse, according to the teachings of Trans-Ascendant Mysticism.

Masters of Trans-Ascendancy claim to be able to *read* a person, revealing the past lives of the spiritual





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essence within the subject. High Masters of the philosophy are reportedly able to become fully aware of their past lives, to maintain a constant consciousness throughout any number of their future incarnations, and are even said to be able to determine the nature of their successive future reincarnations.

While the great majority of the Ariane do not possess such impressive talents, the practice of Trans-Ascendancy enables all members of their race to develop other useful abilities. For instance, all possess the ability to commune with nature, enabling them to communicate telepathically with the elemental spirits which reside within such natural entities as plants, stones, the winds, water, and so forth. (Such spirits are normally invisible on the material planes, though they exist in tangible form on the Green World.) It is not unusual to see an Ariane engrossed in silent communion with an avir, tree or boulder – a disconcerting sight to the uninitiated.

Different results can be gained, depending on what the Ariane is communicating with. Earth and stones are often reluctant to answer questions in haste, preferring instead to ponder for a time before making their reply. Lakes, streams and other bodies of water possess knowledge of events transpiring within their depths, but have a distorted view of occurrences reflected in their surfaces (due to the action of waves and ripples). Carried upon the winds are countless secrets, many from far-distant lands. Even the modest breeze may know a thing or two, though the elemental spirits of the air are unable to discern whether the words they bring are true or false. Plants and trees, having a marked lack of interest in the affairs of the Men, often prove to be limited sources of information, but speaking with beasts may yield productive results.

Sometimes it is possible for the Ariane, by focusing their full powers on their surrounding environment, to discern the subtle emanations of past ages: sights, sounds or visions from another time, telling of events which happened long ago. In general, only the most vivid impressions —such as those pertaining to events of an exceptionally emotional, violent or otherwise significant nature—can be perceived with any degree of clarity.

## CUSTOMS

The Ariane belief in reincarnation has influenced their culture in many ways. Fearing to do harm to some reincarnating lifeform, the Ariane eat only ripened fruits and vegetables, and their tools and utensils are fashioned from stone or dead wood, never from living trees.

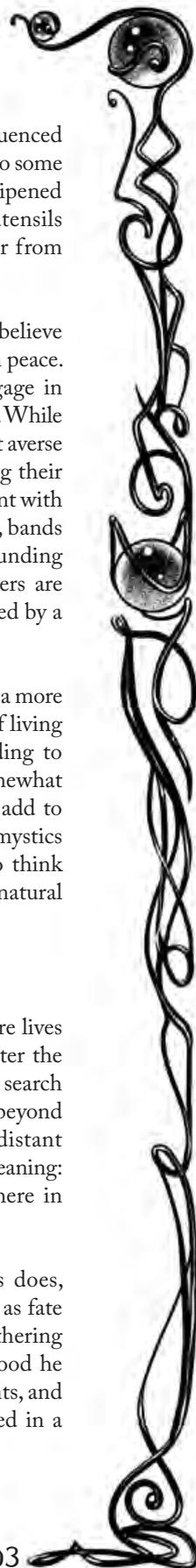
The forest people have no formal laws, but believe firmly in the right of all living things to exist in peace. However, individuals or creatures which engage in violent or disruptive acts are dealt with decisively. While the Ariane are a non-violent people, they are not averse to the use of force when it comes to defending their lives or land, and many are surprisingly proficient with their weapons. Mounted on swift silvermanes, bands of Ariane regularly patrol the heights surrounding their Maze-City of Altan. Unwanted intruders are sternly urged to depart, occasionally encouraged by a fusillade of arrows.

Intruding individuals who commit crimes of a more serious nature are often imprisoned in cages of living wood. The length of interment varies according to the severity of the infraction, the Ariane's somewhat abstract conception of time often tending to add to the duration of such stays. In severe cases, the mystics reserve the right to kill; the Ariane prefer to think of this as just another way of hastening the natural process of reincarnation.

## THE SEEKERS

The majority of the Ariane spend their entire lives in the city of Altan, where they strive to master the secrets of Trans-Ascendancy. Yet for some, the search for enlightenment requires them to journey beyond the Forest of Tamaranth, perhaps even to distant lands. Such an individual, known as a Druas (meaning: "seeker"), may be encountered almost anywhere in Talislanta.

There is a reason for everything a Druas does, usually associated with such esoteric concepts as fate or destiny, and always concerned with the gathering of unique experiences. He forages for what food he needs, makes his own garments and implements, and prefers to sleep in natural surroundings, seated in a meditative position.



## THE TAMAR

The Ariane highly value the experience of existence, and consider knowledge to be the greatest of treasures. The mystics record the collective histories and experiences of their people on tamar – orbs of violet stone, magically imbued with the thoughts, feelings and memories of those who create them. For example, it is the custom of the Seekers to return to Altan once every seven years in order to relate what they have seen and learned in their travels. This information is magically inscribed upon the tamar, allowing other Ariane to partake of the Seeker's experiences.

Each of the Trans-Ascendants has his own tamar, within which is contained the sum total of that individual's experiences. By the exchange of tamar, the Ariane are able to communicate their thoughts and feelings in ways which mere words cannot convey.

When an Ariane passes away, the individual's life experiences are transferred to the great obelisk which

stands at the center of the Maze-City of Altan. This structure is actually a giant tamar, and has served as a repository for the accumulated knowledge of the Ariane for countless centuries.

The creation of a tamar takes seven days and nights, and requires the individual's complete and total concentration. At the end of this time, the tamar is imbued with a minor enchantment, allowing the stone to receive telepathic impressions from its maker. Thereafter, the tamar's crafter may store his thoughts and memories in the violet stone as they occur, or as desired.

To "read" a tamar, an Ariane need only hold the orb in his hands and concentrate. If the individual is properly attuned to the artifact, he will be able to perceive the information contained within the stone; typically, as a torrent of vivid sights, sounds and images.

## URAG

Urag is a harsh and wind-swept region of arid plains, winding canyons and sprawling mountain ranges. Once a thriving forestland, the area has slowly been reduced to a near wasteland by centuries of neglect and abuse. Its streams are fouled with offal and refuse, its woods have been felled for timber and fuel, and its hills and mountains have been ravaged and plundered by crude and polluting mining techniques.

Few natural animals are found here, and those that are have generally wandered from elsewhere: herds of graceful silvermanes, which run up and down the Dead River Canyon and sometimes cross into Urag's interior; and giant ogronts, mindless herbivores of incredible strength that browse for food along the borders of Golarin. The fabled smokk, found only in Urag, is an odd-looking bird reputed to have an unerring ability for locating precious stones and metals.

The individuals responsible for defiling this land are known as the Ur, a savage race of sub-men who settled in the region after being driven from southern Narandu by advancing hordes of Ice Giants.

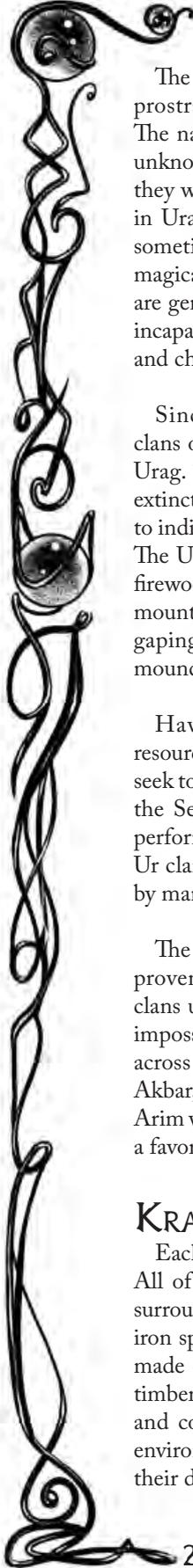
## THE UR

Standing between seven and eight feet tall and weighing upward of 500 pounds, the Ur are a vile and brutish race. They are frightening to behold, having leathery hide of a yellow-green color, curved fangs, and facial features of a most unendearing sort: furrowed brows, pointed ears, and deep-set black eyes, the pupils of which gleam either white or red.

## CUSTOMS

The Ur are members of a warlike race, and rule strictly by force of arms. They ride ogriphants outfitted with crude spiked armor, and build massive siege engines and catapults. Their warriors wield throwing axes, and war clubs made from the mummified claws of yaksha and other predatory species. Necklaces of teeth and bone, pieces of hammered plate armor, and various filthy garments made of fur and hide constitute the typical Ur clansman's wardrobe. Rings of black iron are also favored, and are commonly employed to restrain their hair, which the Ur wear in double or triple topknots.





The Ur profess to have no god, but are known to prostrate themselves before immense stone idols. The nature and origin of these monstrous effigies is unknown, even to the Ur themselves; scholars believe they were fashioned long before the Ur clans settled in Urag. Icons depicting these three-eyed idols are sometimes worn by Ur shamans, and are said to have magical properties. However, the shamans of Urag are generally regarded as charlatans, most seemingly incapable of performing any but the simplest hoodoos and charms.

Since their arrival from the Northlands, the clans of the Ur have succeeded in ravaging much of Urag. They have hunted many animal species into extinction, killing great numbers of creatures in order to indiscriminately harvest the hides, claws and meat. The Ur have felled entire woodlands for timber and firewood, and have ruthlessly stripped the hills and mountains of valuable ores, leaving behind perilous gaping pits and abandoned shafts, and malignant mounds of toxic slag.

Having squandered much of Urag's natural resources, it is supposed that the Ur clans must soon seek to expand into "fresh" territories—perhaps Arim, the Seven Kingdoms, or the Plains of Golarin. To perform such a conquest, the unification of the three Ur clans would be required—an event greatly feared by many of the peoples of Talislanta.

The Onyx and Obsidian mountain ranges have proven effective barriers against the expansionist clans until the present time, as the Ur have found it impossible to transport their massive siege engines across such rugged terrain. The Arimite citadel of Akbar, a towering stone fortress which bars access to Arim via the traversable gorge at Akbar, has long been a favored target of the Ur and their underlings.

## KRAG, VODRUK AND GROD

Each of the three clans of Ur has its own *capital*. All of the settlements resemble one another, being surrounded by circular stone barricades topped with iron spikes, and consisting primarily of crude hovels made of packed earth, cracked stone and rough-cut timbers. These places are havens for disease and filth, and contribute much to the pollution of the local environs. Conflicts between the three Ur-kings and their disparate factions are common.

Stationed at each of the three Ur settlements is an Ur-King (commanding a personal retinue of several hundred dansmen), ten or so warlords (each commanding a force of at least a hundred clansmen), a number of Stryx scouts, several battalions of Darkling slaves, and a contingent of beast-drawn and slave-powered siege towers, fire-throwers, battering rams, and scourges.

The Ur-king of Krag, a particularly huge and ugly member of his race, resides in a "palace" in the center of his settlement—a garish structure made of mud and rock, and said to house stolen treasure.

The settlement of Grod is surrounded by a ditch filled with raw sewage and crawling with scavenger slimes, urthrax and other vermin. The Ur-king of Grod considers it great sport to have captives lowered into the moat by means of a rope-and-winch mechanism, where the victims are used as bait to catch whatever predators may be lurking beneath the surface of the water.

Nothing remarkable is known about Vodruk and its Ur-king, but if such facts were available, they would no doubt be as insalubrious as the descriptions of Grod and Krag.

## THE STRYX

A race of avian man-like beings resembling a cross between vultures and horned devils, the Stryx would stand over six feet tall if they didn't tend to be hunchbacked or stoop-shouldered. Their angular bodies are covered with dark grey or black feathers, and typical specimens have a wingspan in excess of 20 feet. They excel at gliding, and can cover great distances and remain aloft for hours without difficulty. Both their hands and feet are equipped with sharp talons. Stryx have superior night vision, but see poorly in daylight.

The avians typically make their homes in caves dug into the sides of sheer cliffs, though a few clans prefer a nomadic lifestyle. Stryx live in clans which may number as many as 60 adult males, as many or more adult females, and about half as many young. The old and infirm are slain to provide food for the rest.

Tenuous allies of the Ur clans, the Stryx serve the Ur-kings as scouts, spies and messengers. Generally

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speaking, the Ur regard them as useful, if treacherous and untrustworthy, subordinates. Some say the Stryx associate with the clan armies only because this allows the avians to scavenge battlefields for carrion, which it is their nature to feed upon. The avians are skilled in the use of spears, snaffle-hooks and other pole-arms, but do not possess the manual dexterity required to employ more sophisticated weaponry. Not all of the Stryx enjoy serving the Ur—a few leave Urag to hire out as mercenaries. The hated rivals of the Stryx are their fellow avians, the Gryphs of Tamaranth.

The Stryx revere an entity known as Taryx, the so-called "*Scavenger of Souls*." Their Necromancer-Priests possess some capacity for the reading of omens and certain black magics, but generally are said to exhibit little facility in the arcane arts.

### THE DARKLINGS

A wretched race of man-like beings which once controlled the region known as the Darklands, the Darklings are short and wiry of build, rarely exceeding four feet in height, with soot-grey skin, large pointed

ears, sharp fangs, and distorted features. They exude a foul odor, are physically weak, and have no great talent for the arcane arts (in fact, most Darklings fear magic greatly). However, Darklings have acute senses, including superb night vision, and the ability to scent intruders up to 100 feet away.

Driven underground by the Great Disaster, this race has become accustomed to living in darkness, and now shuns the light of day. Most dress in rag loincloths, scraps of discarded metal and slag serving as rude ornamentation. They consider art in any form a blight upon the senses, but regard lying as a talent to be perfected through long years of practice. Other skills considered worthy of cultivation include sneak-thievery, hoarding, knife-play, and the torturing and tormenting of lesser creatures for sport. Darklings are forever gibbering, cackling or grumbling over one thing or another. They revere an obscure entity known as Sham the Deceiver (also called the "Master of Lies"), but are not known to have any priests or shamans of note.

The Ur employ Darkling hordes as light (and expendable) infantry, and force them to labor as slaves in mines and timber-cutting operations, at which the Darklings are only minimally effective.

### ACID PLAINS

This stretch of foul-smelling flatland, dotted with pools of bubbling lye, acid and other noxious compounds, sprawls across eastern Urag. The Acid Plains are largely devoid of life, with the exception of abominations, urthrax and other types of vermin.

The Ur are responsible for despoiling this region, which for several centuries has served as a dumping ground for waste products derived from the Ur's massive slag furnaces. Crews of Darkling slave laborers, assigned to dump or retrieve wagonloads of toxic wastes, are generally the only man-like beings who ever enter the Acid Plains.



## THE SMOKE RIVER

The Toxic Hills, in northwestern Urag, are the source of the Smoke River. This area was once used for the testing of poisonous alchemical agents, which Ur shamans hoped to develop for use in warfare. The chance discovery of a substance known as quintoxin led to the inadvertent contamination of the entire highland. The clans evacuated the area post haste, leaving behind several hundred gallons of quintoxin in large, open cauldrons. The status of this virulent substance remains unknown; Darkling slave crews sent into the area have never returned, and the region is considered completely uninhabitable.

Running south beyond the Toxic Hills, the Smoke River is so polluted that it boils, giving off clouds of noxious steam or smoke. No natural lifeforms can tolerate these waters, though abominations are rumored to dwell in the roiling deeps.

The river empties into Skag Lake, which lies like a great, steaming cesspool near the border with Arim. The formidable stench of the lake pollutes the air throughout much of northwestern Urag. A species of horribly mutated lake kra is believed to dwell in the rank waters, which can otherwise be tolerated only by urthrax.

## THE DARKLANDS

The mountainous southern realms of Urag together comprise the region known as the Darklands—a hostile wilderland, long since stripped of much of its natural resources by the Ur. Above ground, erosion by wind and rain has rendered the land barren of vegetation, and unable to support anything but the most persistent varieties of chokeweed, lichen and briars.

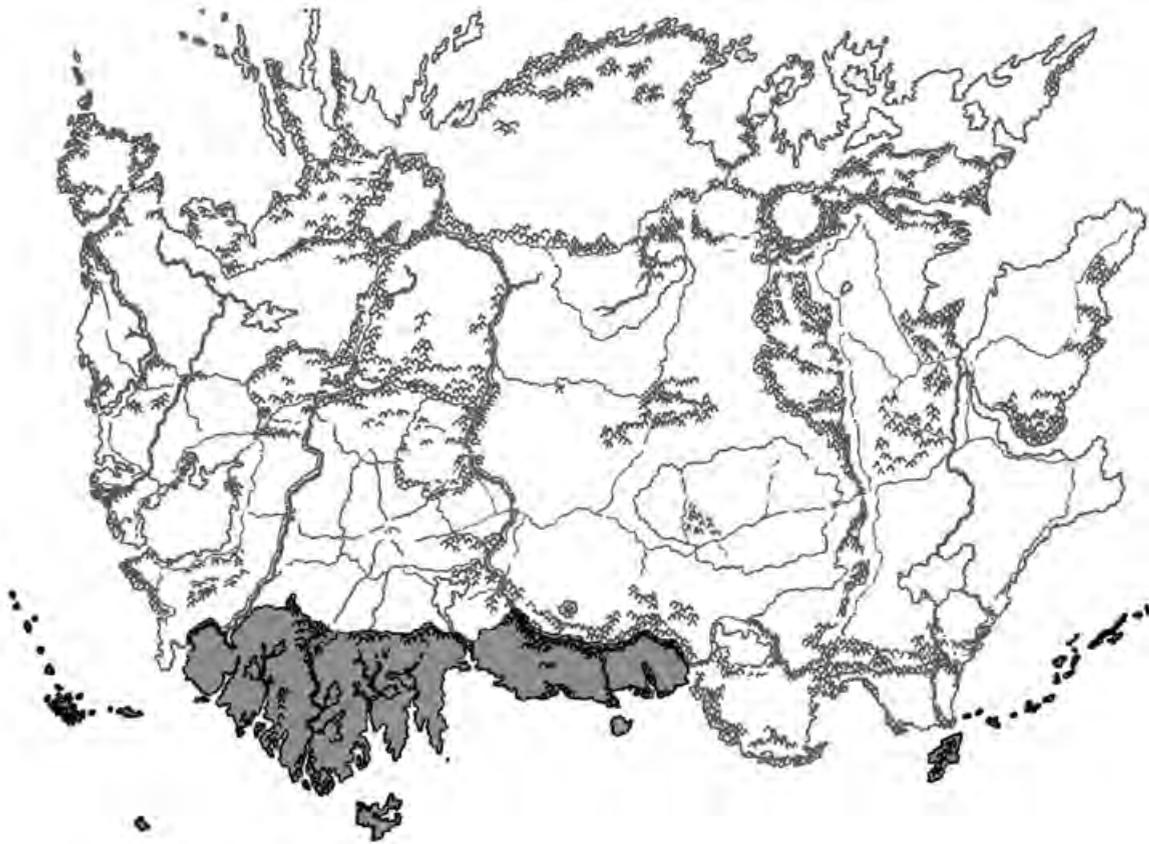
Far beneath the earth, crews of Darkling slave-miners toil ceaselessly in the played-out mines, tunneling in search of a few remaining veins of silver and black-iron ore. A handful of Darkling tribes fortunate enough to have eluded or escaped the Ur make their home in the furthest of the cavernous deeps, fearful to emerge from hiding lest they be captured and put to use as slaves. Giant land kra also dwell in these underground regions.

The glistening black peaks of the Obsidian Mountains form a natural barrier between Urag and Durne of the Seven Kingdoms. Yaksha and other hostile predators prowl the mountains in numbers; Stryx nest in the upper altitudes, and Darklings tunnel below the surface. A network of underground trails winds its way through this region, some few of which are utilized by marauding bands of Satada, which sometimes venture here from subterranean haunts in Durne and the Wilderlands.

The Onyx Mountains likewise lie between Urag and Arim, and are naturally rich in silver and black iron, as well as precious stones. Having despoiled the regions which lie within their borders, the Ur covet the portions of the range which are claimed by the Arimites. Yaksha, Stryx and Darklings all reside in the mountains, from which they raid Arimite mining camps and prey on travelers.



## THE SOUTHERN RIM



### BATRE

A small tropical isle located to the south of the Dark Coast, Batre is a jungled land, abounding with fruiting trees, crystal streams and scenic waterfalls. Dense and forbidding, the interior affords numerous opportunities to meet with disaster, including aramatus (armored leeches), exomorphs, marsh striders and jungle dractyl. Many varieties of rare herbs and plants are also found here, such as green lotus, tantalus and necromantium.

Long a popular stopover point for vessels seeking fresh water and supplies, the island is well known to sailors, who, until recently, considered it one of the few safe havens in the Azure Ocean. Batre is even more notable, however, for its ivory-skinned inhabitants.

### THE BATREANS

A primitive people, Batreans dress in crude garments of coarse cloth, and dye their hair with indelible blue pigments. Male and female of the race bear so little resemblance to each other that they seem to be from separate species.

The males are huge, slope-shouldered, hairy, and remarkably ugly. Slow and ponderous, they possess the manners of ogronts, and are constantly arguing and fighting among one another.

Batreat females, on the other hand, are engaging creatures, slender and lovely beyond compare. Their movements are graceful, and their manner of speech is charming and at times most eloquent. Batreat males seem unmoved by the beauty of their females, whom





they largely ignore — except during the males' brief, week-long mating season.

## CUSTOMS

It was the peculiar custom of Batrean males to sell their womenfolk for gold, which they hoarded in secret underground caches. For many years, entrepreneurial seafarers risked the perils of ocean travel in order to purchase Batrean females, since the island women bring exorbitant prices as concubines in lands such as Zandu, Arim, Faradun, and the Quan Empire.

As for the Batrean females themselves, few evinced any great sadness at being separated from their boorish, slovenly mates. On the contrary, some were even known to help pay for their release with coins pilfered from the hidden treasure caches of their husbands. None appeared to miss the mud-and-thatch hovels which the Batrean males called home, and most seemed to adapt to their new surroundings with very little difficulty. Once established in their new residences, more than a few Batrean females

exhibit an uncanny ability to influence their masters by various subtle and effective means, a talent attributed by some to magic.

All this is in the past however. In 602 N.A. Imrian slavers, who had long been making slave raids on Batre decided to cut out the middlemen when they invaded and then annexed the island. Since that time, the vast majority of the Batrean males have been massacred and the lovely females are held in slave pens. It is thought that only a handful of males remain alive and then only as breeders under their Imrian overlords.

## THE ISLAND VILLAGES

There once were two extensive settlements on the island of Batre: the villages of Domal and Lal-Lat. The Imrians razed Lal-Lat in 602 shortly after their invasion, and moved the surviving inhabitants to Domal, which is further inland, and easier to defend. This primitive settlement is surrounded by hedgerows of thornwood, and accessible by means of a single path that winds its way through jungles inhabited by winged vipers and horned apes.



A heavily armed contingent of about a sixty Imrians is currently stationed on Batre. They built a lookout tower and crude harbor facilities, but otherwise merely took over the existing Batrean fortifications and

upgraded them. Encircling the only remaining Batrean settlement is a living wall of thornwood, augmented by rows of sharpened stakes and hidden snares.

## THE DARK COAST

To the north of the isle of Batre lies the uncivilized region known as the Dark Coast. Hemmed in to the north by the low-lying Topaz Mountains, the Coast's terrain consists predominantly of thick and tangled jungle, interspersed with sections of marshland and tropical forest.

The Dark Coast is home to many unusual species of plants and animals. Of these, the sylvian—a vicious predator capable of gliding from tree to tree—is perhaps the most notorious. It is hunted for its single horn, which is reputed to have potent magical properties. Green and scarlet varieties of lotus grow throughout the region, being most common in the central swamplands. Amber wasps also proliferate in this portion of the coast, an indicator that the swamps may well be rich in amber.

The Boru and Kiru Rivers effectively divide the Dark Coast into three territories: the western rainforests, home of the Green Men; the central swamplands, home of the Moorg-Wan; and the eastern junglelands, home of the fierce Ahazu. The Kiru River is infested with aramatus and chang, and is wholly unsafe to cross except by means of boats or rope bridges. Mud rays, skalanx, and various types of fresh-water mollusk are common in the waters of the Boru River.

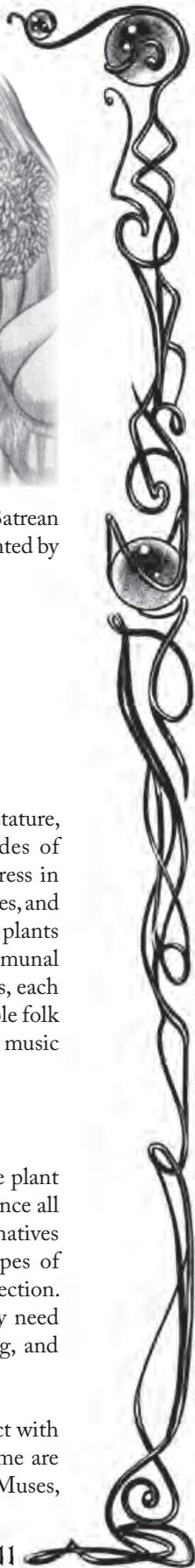
## THE GREEN MEN

Peaceful beings, the Green Men are small in stature, with skin, hair and eyes all of varying shades of green. Almost imp-like in appearance, they dress in abbreviated garments made of soft, woven mosses, and make their homes in the boles of great, living plants which they call D'Oko. Green Men are a communal people, living in groups of up to 80 individuals, each related to the other. The language of these simple folk is pleasant to the ear, being reminiscent of the music of wooden flutes.

## CUSTOMS

Green Men speak the secret language of the plant world, and possess an uncanny ability to influence all things that grow in the earth. The rain-forest natives have a symbiotic relationship with many types of plants, which they tend with great care and affection. In return, the Green Men derive all that they need to survive in the rain-forests: shelter, clothing, and sustenance.

Gentle and shy, the Green Men avoid contact with most other of the intelligent races, though some are said to have a certain fondness for the Ariane, Muses,





and the Gnomekin of Durne. Scholars wish they could study this folk, being fascinated by the process through which they reproduce, which is said to bear a marked resemblance to cross-pollination.

The Green Men are often preyed upon by slavers from Imria, who invade their domains in numbers during the rainy season when the Green Men's young are just beginning to mature (Green Men reach adulthood in about six months' time). As they do not employ weapons of any sort, the forest natives are highly vulnerable to such raids. Their only defenses consist of a variety of ingenious snares and pitfalls, which they excel at making. Many of these devices employ living plants—such as yellow stickler, strangervine and violet creeper—none of which ever molest the Green Men. When threatened, the natives usually flee deeper into the forest in order to entice pursuers into their cleverly laid traps. The Green Men never engage in hand-to-hand combat, however, and surrender without a struggle if caught or cornered.

Although Imrians find the capture of the forest folk to be no simple matter, the demand for Green Men as slaves—since they are docile in captivity, and make superior servants and gardeners—is deemed high enough for the slavers to warrant the risks involved in their capture. Unscrupulous buyers in Faradun, Rajinnar, the Quan Empire, and (less commonly) the Citystate of Hadj of the Wilderlands deal exclusively in such exotic slave-types. Curiously, the Moorg-Wan and Ahazu never harm the Green Men, believing that doing so arouses the wrath of the jungle. The uncommonly mild and sensitive disposition of these benign forest creatures is such that, exposed to unfamiliar surroundings, many Green Men gradually wither and die from sadness.

## THE MUD PEOPLE

A brutish folk, the semi-amphibious natives of the central swamplands are squat of build, and covered with thick folds of loose brown skin. The Mud People have four legs, heavy tails and toad-like visages, and

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are very strong. The semi-amphibians are considerably faster in the water than on land. The language of these creatures consists mainly of grunts and gurgling sounds, said to be almost impossible for man-like beings to replicate.

### CUSTOMS

The Mud People—or Moorg-Wan, as they call themselves—live along the banks of the Boru River, and the sodden territories between the two rivers are their ancestral breeding grounds. Their mud-palace dwellings resemble great, oozing piles of mud and silt, and are connected by networks of above-ground tunnels.

Industrious folk, the Moorg-Wan are constantly engaged in building and excavating, and dredge the riverbanks for amber, as well as sapphires and other semi-precious stones, found here in abundance (so, too, are bog devils, swamp demons, and aramatus). The Mud People consider the lotus plant to be a delicacy, and jealously guard their supplies.

The customs and culture of the Moorg-Wan are largely unknown, this due in great part to the unsociable attitude of these folk. The magician Malderon, who was unfortunate (or foolish) enough to have been captured by a tribe of Moorg-Wan, gave an account of the experience in his otherwise mundane treatise on the denizens of the Dark Coast:

*'The Mud People, gross though they may appear to us, exhibit certain of the attributes of civilized peoples. They covet riches; particularly sapphires, which they spend an inordinate amount of energy dredging from the muck and mire of their environs. They are religious, as is evidenced by their reverence of Moorg, the giant Mud God (the Mud People, in fact, call themselves the Moorg-Wan, or "Spawn of Moorg"). They raise their offspring from egg to larval newt, then set the young adults to work in the mud mines. Those who find sapphires are rewarded with food; those who do not are slain and served up as their brothers' next meal.'*

The sworn foes of the Ahazu, the Mud People frequently engage their hated enemies when the yellow warriors enter the swamplands, and sometimes launch reprisal raids into the jungles across the Kiru River. Their favorite weapons are the bwan (a heavy club,

lined with rows of six-inch long thorns, made from the stump of the thornwood vine) and thorn daggers. At close range, the powerful creatures sometimes drop their weapons and attempt to rend opponents with their webbed claws, or to butt them to the ground and trample them underfoot.

The Mud People fear the Imrians—being somewhat slow and cumbersome, the swamp dwellers are easy prey for the slavers' nets and capture-poles. Despite their aggressive nature, the Moorg-Wan are easily cowed when they are taken into captivity. The prisoners are valued for their strength, the Imrians employing the Mud People as slave-laborers in their Lagoon City of Kragan.

### THE AHAZU

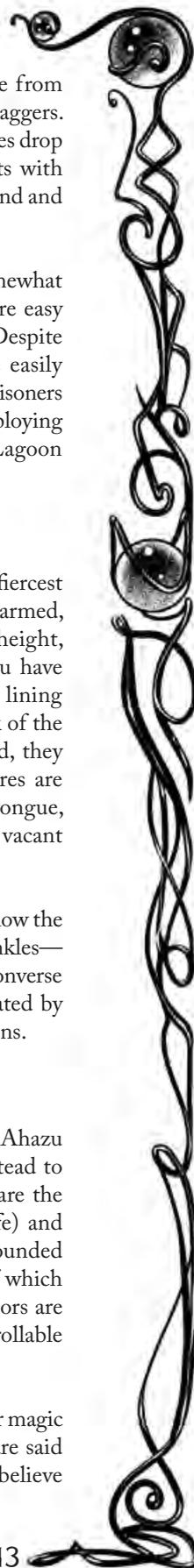
The natives of the eastern jungles are the fiercest of the Dark Coast's inhabitants. These four-armed, man-like beings may exceed seven feet in height, and are quite imposing to behold. The Ahazu have bright-yellow skin, with fiery red markings lining the face and neck and running down the back of the arms, legs and spine. Though slender of build, they are surprisingly strong and agile. Their features are almost demonic: sloping forehead, forked tongue, thin nostrils, and dark-green, pupil-less eyes vacant of mercy or compassion.

Reptile-hide loincloths and thongs—tied below the shoulder and at the elbows, wrists, knees and ankles—serve as the savages' only clothing. The Ahazu converse in harsh shrieks and yells, frequently punctuated by violent gestures and the brandishing of weapons.

### CUSTOMS

A warlike and exceptionally hostile race, the Ahazu make no permanent dwellings, preferring instead to sleep in the treetops. Their favored weapons are the gwanga (a heavy, three-bladed throwing knife) and the matsu (a two-handed warclub, with a rounded stone head and a long, flexible shaft), both of which they employ with great skill. The yellow warriors are also subject in battle to the *shan'ya*, an uncontrollable urge to kill.

The Ahazu have no spell-casters, and consider magic the domain of cowards and weaklings. They are said to revere a secret warrior-deity, whom they believe determines the outcome of all battles.



The yellow warriors attack without hesitation any creatures which enter their territories. They are fearless in battle, but not to the point of recklessness. If outnumbered, the warriors generally retreat, then attempt to ambush or circle back on pursuing enemies. When hunting for food, the Ahazu never venture beyond their own borders. The appearance of a group of the yellow warriors anywhere outside of their junglelands is a certain indicator that the Ahazu are on the warpath, launching a raid, or tracking a fleeing opponent.

The jungles of the Ahazu are also populated by batranc, pseudomorphs and malathrope, and so are generally avoided by most sensible folk. The Imrians never venture here except in heavily-armed groups of 50 or more individuals. The Imrians employ captured bands of Moorg-Wan, the dire enemies of the Ahazu, as decoys in order to capture slave-warriors. Once a

war party has engaged the hapless pawns, the slavers attack, employing throwing nets and vials of toxic powder. Once captured, an Ahazu will never try to escape, the rigid warrior code of these people prohibiting such a practice. For this reason, Ahazu slaves command high prices, and are greatly valued as bodyguards, gladiators and slave-warriors.

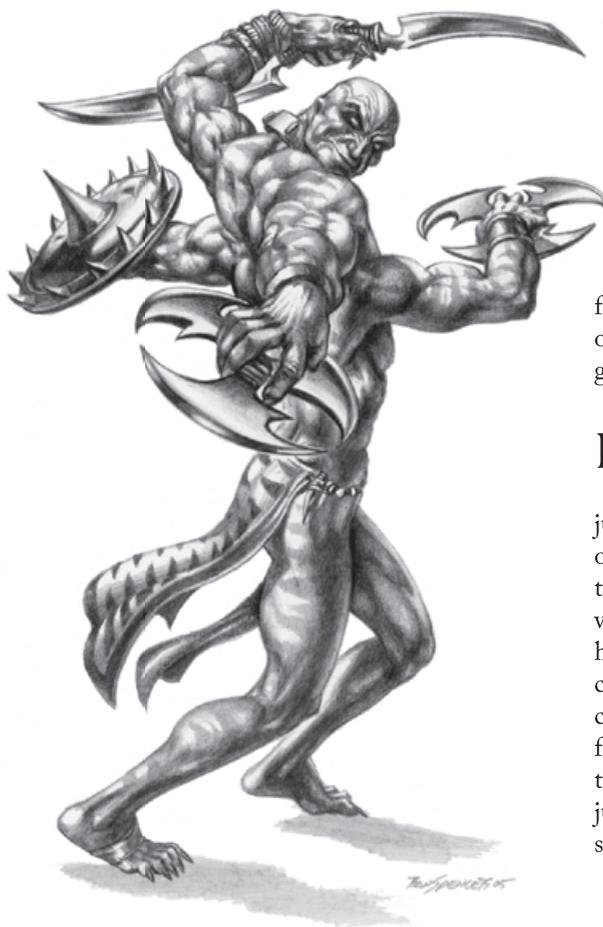
## ANCIENT PIRATES

Zandir legends associate the Dark Coast with the Baratus, an ancient, man-like race of seafaring thieves and pirates, which roamed the oceans preying on merchant vessels and terrorizing coastal settlements for two centuries. The Baratus are long since gone, their jungle sanctuaries now the domain of the Mud People and the Ahazu, and their once-splendid sea vessels rotting on the ocean floor. According to legend, the pirates buried countless chests of stolen riches in the coastal jungles. Certain Talislantan historians believe that the greater part of this treasure remains moldering in the ground, awaiting discovery by some fortunate explorer or entrepreneur.

The Baratus may be the former inhabitants of a series of ruins, said to be found within the interior of the forbidding junglelands of the Ahazu. The so-called Unknown Ruins have never been explored by civilized beings, at least as far as anyone knows. This is due almost exclusively to the presence of fierce Ahazu warriors, who range far and wide throughout the region. It is the practice of these sentinels to attack intruders on sight, neither granting nor asking any quarter.

## LEAPER'S RIDGE

These wavering cliffs stand amidst the eastern jungles of the Dark Coast. A narrow stream drops over the cliff in a 400-foot-long ribbon of water, terminating in a rainbow-hued cloud of mist and vapor. The waterfall is not the region's main attraction, however—at least, as far as the local indigenes are concerned. Rather, Leaper's Ridge is a place where certain Ahazu tribesmen, despondent over having fared poorly in battle, come to hurl themselves to their deaths. Victims of this traditional ritual litter the jungle floor beneath Leaper's Ridge, attracting such scavengers as urthrax and aramatus.



### THE LOST CITY OF AURAN

In Farad legend, Auran is known as the fabled "*Lost City of Gold*"—a ruined city strewn with golden idols and riches beyond imagining; it can supposedly be found somewhere in the western rain-forest; ostensibly, amidst the territory of the peaceful Green Men. Countless expeditions have been launched by greedy Farad Monopolists, each eager to seize the riches of Auran. Most of these have never returned, falling victim to the hazards of the jungle.



## FARADUN

An exotic land located on the southern coast of Talislanta, Faradun is bordered to the north by the rugged peaks of the Topaz Mountains. Also to the north lie two topographical anomalies: the Sea of Glass and Emerald Mountain. Arid and hostile terrain dominates the central region, gradually giving way to patches of jungle and mountains along the coast. Driven by winds from the Far Seas, Faradun's climate is uniformly hot and oppressive.

### THE FARAD

The people who live here, known as the Farad, are a dark and saturnine folk of above average height. They have flint-grey skin, stony visages, and narrow eyes as black as coal. The customary mode of dress for Farad males includes an elaborate headdress, voluminous robes, broad sashes, and velvet boots, all hung with ornate tassels, fringes, and beads of colored glass. Men over the age of 20 wear their beards in twin braids bound with silver fastenings, the length and the degree of ornamentation employed being considered signs of status.

The women of the Farad wear long silken gowns and veils, and adorn themselves with necklaces of silver loops, and rings on each of their fingers. Both the males and females exhibit an air of haughtiness and arrogance that might charitably be described as distant or aloof.

### CUSTOMS

The social and political hierarchy of Faradun reflects the nation's utter obsession with commerce. The ruler

of Faradun, known as the Cral, wields absolute power, and is responsible for determining market prices for all goods which are to be bought or sold in the capital city.

Second in line of authority are the Monopolists, individuals given power by the Cral to determine the availability of various wares. Each is responsible for a single commodity, such as slaves, contraband, gemstones, metals, narcotics, and so forth. Some Monopolists are wizards, who dabble in magic in order to further their business interests.

Next come the Usurers, who lend money at exorbitant rates to finance commercial ventures approved by the Monopolists. Dependent upon the Usurers are the Procurers, who travel far and wide, acquiring merchandise from various sources and establishing new trade contacts. Finally, there are the Mongers: the shopowners, peddlers and hawkers who make up the vast majority of Faradun's citizenry.

Few Farad are employed in any non-mercantile line of work. The country's labor force is composed almost entirely of indentured servants, slaves and convicted felons, while the army and navy are manned by highly-paid foreign mercenaries.

The mercantilists have a religion of sorts, revering the god Avar, deity of material wealth and personal gain. Avar's followers do not erect temples in his name, but prostrate themselves before golden idols purchased in the shops of the capital. Farad merchants pray to Avar that they might obtain more lucrative contracts than their competitors, and that their profits might



increase in proportion to their desires. According to the priests of Avar, deception and treachery are astute business tactics, and greed an admirable trait.

Wealthy foreigners and prospective clients may be feted in grand style by the Farad, who can be quite charming when it suits their needs. Conversely, the mercantilists possess a capacity for cold-blooded, emotionless behavior that is matched only by the soulless logic of the barbaric Harakin.

## THE PORT CITY OF TARUN

The sprawling port of Tarun, with its ominous and impregnable defenses, is the capital of Faradun and its center for trade. Through the towering sea-gates pass the ships and merchants of many nations: imrian slavers, Zandir gem dealers, Aamanian ore traders, and even corsairs from the Mangar Isles and Gao-Din – the Farad are notable for their singularly unscrupulous business practices, and the mercantilists will buy or sell anything from anyone, with no questions asked.

Although the Farad are involved to some degree in importing and exporting, they much prefer to allow business to come to them. In order to stimulate this type of trade, the mercantilists make every effort to attract merchants and traders to Tarun. Prices for food, drink and lodging are quite reasonable, and tariffs and duties are minimal. Further, any sort of entertainment or diversion imaginable can be arranged through the auspices of the Farad Procurers, who claim to be able to grant their customers' fondest desires...for the right price.

## THE SEA OF GLASS

A flat expanse of fused green crystal, the Sea of Glass is believed to have been created during the Great Disaster. Scholars think this might have occurred when Emerald Mountain erupted, spewing forth molten glass which eventually cooled and hardened to a crystalline state.

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The Cymrilians operate a mining facility on the western "shore" of the sea, harvesting the green crystal utilized in many Cymrilian constructions. The folk of Cymril pay Faradun a handsome price for the privilege of mining the green crystal. There is always work available here for miners, guards, laborers, and caravan drivers, though amenities for such positions are somewhat limited. Windships and wagons laden with glass depart from the area every few weeks, headed for Cymril of the Seven Kingdoms.

Few living things dwell in this region, though miners occasionally stumble upon the sleeping forms of glass dragons, glass imps, and other crystalline oddities; creatures trapped in green glass, and thereby magically preserved and transmuted into crystal. These creatures bring a high price in many lands, where they are regarded as objects of great wonder.

### EMERALD MOUNTAIN

Much to the dismay of the Farad, Emerald Mountain is not truly made of emerald. Neither is it made of green glass, but rather some sort of hard, metallic green ore. The mercantilists considered erecting a mining installation at the base of the mountain, but decided that it was better not to test the veracity of the old legend which describes the cloud-covered summit as being home to the diabolical Shaitan.

Adventurers from faraway lands sometimes attempt to scale the mountain, seeking the favor of the Shaitan. Never numerous, the ranks of these stalwart heroes seem destined to dwindle further still.

### THE GHOSTLANDS

Beyond the Sea of Glass lies a land so arid and barren that not even snakes and vermin dwell here. Necrophages, shadow wights and unclean spirits, being somewhat less particular with regard to their accommodations, haunt the region in force. Called the Ghostlands, this area has long been used as a place of banishment by the Farad for those convicted of embezzling funds—a crime considered more heinous than murder, in Faradun.

Somewhere in this waste is the shadowy ruined city which the Farad refer to as Maledictus, which means "cursed," or more aptly, "haunted." Precisely who or what it is that haunts the ruins is uncertain. Some

claim that a cabal of Shadow Wizards inhabits the city. Others theorize that phasms, ghastrs, or the ghost of the legendary warlock Mordante are responsible. Most frightening to the Farad is the idea that Maledictus is haunted by the disembodied spirits of all those who have been cheated or ruined by the unscrupulous merchants and monopolists of Faradun. Whatever the case may be, no Farad would ever dare set foot within the vicinity of these ruins.

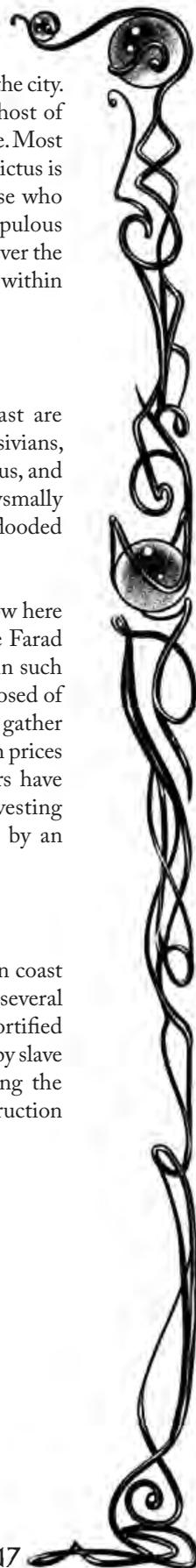
### THE COASTAL JUNGLES

The jungles of Faradun's southeastern coast are best avoided, primarily due to the presence of sivians, death's head vipers, malathrope, alatus, aramatus, and other unpleasant creatures. The climate is abysmally hot and humid; the terrain alternates between flooded swamp and mountainous jungle.

Costly k'tallah, tantalus and scarlet lotus grow here in substantial quantities, a fact not lost on the Farad Procurers. Oblivious to the dangers inherent in such work, the mercantilists send work crews composed of slaves and convicted felons into the jungles to gather k'tallah (an insidious narcotic which brings high prices on the Black Market in Tarun); the Procurers have determined that the profits realized by harvesting the jungles outweigh the cost in lost slaves by an acceptable margin.

### SARD ISLAND

A man-made isle which lies off the southern coast of Faradun, near Tarun, Sard Island is home to several of the wealthiest Monopolists, who live in fortified castles of elaborate design. The island was built by slave laborers, many hundreds of whom died during the ten years which it took to complete the construction of the isle.



## GAO DIN

A small and rocky isle, Gao-Din is located some ten miles off the southwestern coast of Mog. It is a dismal place, with treacherous swamps and jungles lining its shore. Inland, limestone cliffs rise above the murky vegetation, culminating in a great central mound of stone. Here, looking out across the Azure Ocean, stands one of the most curious of Talislanta's settlements: the Rogue City of Gao Din.

Formerly a penal colony of the old Phaedran Empire, Gao was abandoned by both the Orthodoxists and the Paradoxists during the Cult Wars of the middle New Age. The prisoners incarcerated in this heavily fortified installation, mostly thieves, rogue mages and political dissidents, were simply left behind to fend for themselves. Showing a degree of ingenuity born of desperation, the convicts salvaged an derelict Phaedran vessel and embarked upon a career as sea-roving pirates.



Soon thereafter, Gao-Din was declared an independent state, and the Rogue City of Gao was made its capital. Since that time, the Sea-Rogues of Gao have prospered, primarily at the expense of such folk as Imrian slavers, Zandir freetraders, and the Farad.

### THE SEA ROGUES

The citizens of Gao consider themselves to be thieves of the most gallant sort, their swashbuckling antics at the very least setting them apart from the murderous tactics employed by the Mangar Corsairs of the Far Seas. The formal penal colony of Gao-Din has grown into a tiny nation of sorts, the old fortifications of the prison having been expanded upon and modified for purposes of defense. The citystate's current population, composed mostly of thieves, outcasts and freed slaves, is a remarkable admixture of racial and cultural types: defrocked Aamanian priests, Zandir charlatans, Thrall mercenaries, Ahazu warriors, Batrean concubines, and many others.

### CUSTOMS

Rivals or even deadly enemies under other circumstances, the inhabitants of the Rogue City generally coexist with a minimum of difficulty within Gao. At least part of the reason for this seems due to the city state's unique form of government. The Rogue City of Gao is ruled by an individual known as "the King (or Queen) of Thieves," elected by popular vote once each year.

The king's primary duties are to arbitrate disputes, set fair prices for black market and contraband goods, and enforce the three basic tenets of the "*Thieves' Code of Honor*." Briefly stated, the three elements of the Thieves' Code are:

- 1) it is illegal to kill a fellow thief (i.e. any citizen of Gao-Din) while within the city's boundaries.
- 2) it is illegal to reveal the seven secret passwords of Gao-Din to any non-citizen.
- 3) It is illegal to steal any item worth more than 20 gold lumens from a fellow thief/citizen, while within the city's boundaries.

In essence, the Code prohibits the citizens of Gao from engaging in acts of violence or thievery against their fellows. All other Talislandans are considered

fair game, though as a general rule unwarranted acts of violence within the city are discouraged (and are considered in poor taste).

The punishment for failure to comply with the Code's tenets is variable, based on the king's appraisal of the exact circumstances surrounding the incident in question. In most cases, individuals found guilty of breaking the first or second tenets of the Thieves' Code are bound, gagged and fed to the sea demons.

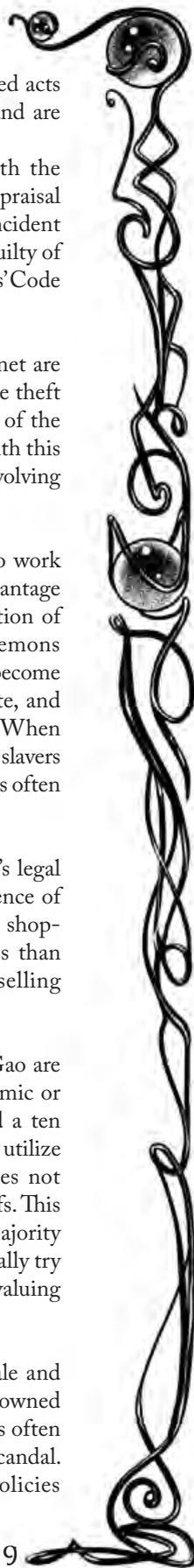
Those found guilty of breaking the third tenet are given two weeks to reimburse the victim of the theft by an amount equal to three times the worth of the item(s) stolen. Failure or inability to comply with this edict once again brings to the fore the option involving the sea demons.

The Sea-Rogues' system of justice is said to work as well as any other, and bears the distinct advantage of obviating costly facilities for the incarceration of incorrigible felons. Furthermore, the sea demons which live in the waters around the island have become somewhat fond of the citizens of the citystate, and generally refrain from attacking their vessels. When the Sea Rogues are able to feed captured Imrian slavers to the demons, relations between the two species often border on cordiality.

An unfortunate side effect of the city-state's legal system is that, in order to avoid a high incidence of theft, most of the city's black marketeers and shop-owners rarely value any of their wares at less than 21 gold lumens, and they often insist on selling inexpensive items in large lots.

Other strictures governing the citizens of Gao are minimal, most being related to various economic or cultural concerns. The government is allowed a ten percent cut of all booty captured by ships which utilize the city's walled-in harbor facilities, but does not otherwise burden its people with taxes or tariffs. This arrangement has proved satisfactory for the majority of Gao, though unscrupulous captains occasionally try to cheat the government of its due by undervaluing the worth of their cargo.

While polygamy is permitted (for both male and female citizens) by Gao-Din law, adultery is frowned upon. Individuals accused of such indiscretions often simply get married, thereby avoiding possible scandal. However, as a result of the city's liberal policies



concerning marriage, individuals born in GaoDin may have any number of legal “fathers” and “mothers,” and countless relatives of various races and nationalities.

Restrictions pertaining to religious beliefs are nonexistent, and diverse cults and religions proliferate in the Rogue City. This isn't to say that the citizenry doesn't have a few well-known prejudices: slavers are detested, the Orthodoxists of Aaman are despised (for trying to reclaim Gao-Din during the latter part of the Cult Wars), and the Rajan death cultists are ridiculed for their obsession with the afterlife.

Gao-Din citizenship is not easily obtained, though it is technically available to any thief, outcast or scoundrel who seeks it. In order to reduce the chance of spies or informants infiltrating Gao's close-knit society, all individuals applying for citizenship must allow themselves to be subjected to scrutiny by the king's personal advisors, a group traditionally composed of thieves, rogue wizards, astrologers, charlatans, and the like.

Those who pass the test are granted citizenship without further delay, and taught the seven passwords required to gain access to the city. Those who fail are seldom heard from again (unless one happens to be a sea demon, that is).

The citystate of Gao-Din has no formal relations with any other government, religious group, or secret society. Neither has the King of Gao-Din ever ruled out the possibility of associating with other governments or individuals, providing there is a profit to be made by doing so.

## IMRIA

Imria is a large island located off the southern coast of Mog, in the Azure Ocean. Its dense jungles, twisting inlets and underwater grottos teem with such dangerous creatures as kaliya, sivians, crag spiders, and giant, sightless cave kra. Mount Talus, a large and intermittently active volcano, rises above the jungle to the northwest, and sea demons prowl the coastal waters in force. Perhaps the most dangerous inhabitants of the isle, however, are the amphibious man-like beings known as the Imrians.

### THE IMRIANS

Tall and muscular, the Imrians have sloping shoulders, scaly yellow-green skin (typically covered with a light coating of translucent slime), and dark, deep-set eyes. Their hands and feet are webbed, and their powerful jaws are lined with a double row of sharp teeth.

Having both gills and rudimentary lungs, the amphibians are capable of living both on land and under the sea. All Imrians are powerful swimmers—in the water they are surprisingly swift, belying the somewhat slow and awkward movement displayed by Imrians on land.

### CUSTOMS

The customs and culture of the Imrians are generally unappreciated by the other intelligent races of Talislanta. Most consider the amphibians' taste for slugs, worms and leeches to be disgusting, and find it impossible to enjoy a decent meal in their presence.

Although most of the amphibians are able to speak a crude version of the Talislantan tongue, their slurred and burbling manner of pronunciation does not endear them to foreigners. Imrians prefer instead to converse in the Piscine tongue, the language of fish and other aquatic creatures, when among their own kind.

The light coating of slime which covers the body of a healthy Imrian is likewise unappealing to some—especially clothiers and launderers, who dread the appearance of an Imrian in their establishments. As Imrians drink only brine, their presence in the port-side taverns of other lands often portends trouble.

The amphibians worship no deity, since any position or level of status possessing greater esteem than that of the King of Imria is beyond their comprehension.

Nor do the Imrians have much tolerance for those who worship the various deities of Talislanta—they consider such beliefs and the associated rituals to be primitive and infantile.

### THE CORAL TABLETS

The Imrians consider themselves to be superior to the other races of Talislanta. They claim to be the *First Race*, from whom the “lesser species” (the man-like races) supposedly descended. They cite as evidence certain ancient coral tablets, held in their possession for many generations. Retrieved from a sunken crypt by their early ancestors, the tablets purportedly contain the secret history of the Imrian race, dating back over 20,000 years.

Those Talislantan scholars who acknowledge the existence of the Imrian tablets (there are thought to be several thousand of the coral slabs) believe that they do indeed contain priceless historical information —not relating to the Imrians, but telling of an ancient and advanced civilization which sunk beneath the waves untold ages ago.

### THE SLAVE TRADE

The Imrians are among the few Talislantans who do not fear to sail into the open sea. Imrians range far and wide in their massive, barge-like coracles, which are constructed from the bones and hide of kra. Smaller vessels of woven reeds, tethered to the coracles until needed, are used for shore raids, to negotiate winding and narrow channels or shallow swamplands, and to transport cargo (often bamboo cages filled with captives) back to the larger ships.

Slavers by trade, Imrians prey upon the primitive tribes which dwell along the southern coasts and isles of the Talislantan continent: the Witchmen of Chana; the Mud People, Ahazu and Green Men of the Dark Coast; the Batreans and Sawila from their respective isles; and the Mogroth of Mog.

In former times, before the founding of the Seven Kingdoms, the slavers ruled a large stretch of Mog and Taz, but the Thralls finally united and cast the intruders back into the sea—to this day, the two races hate one

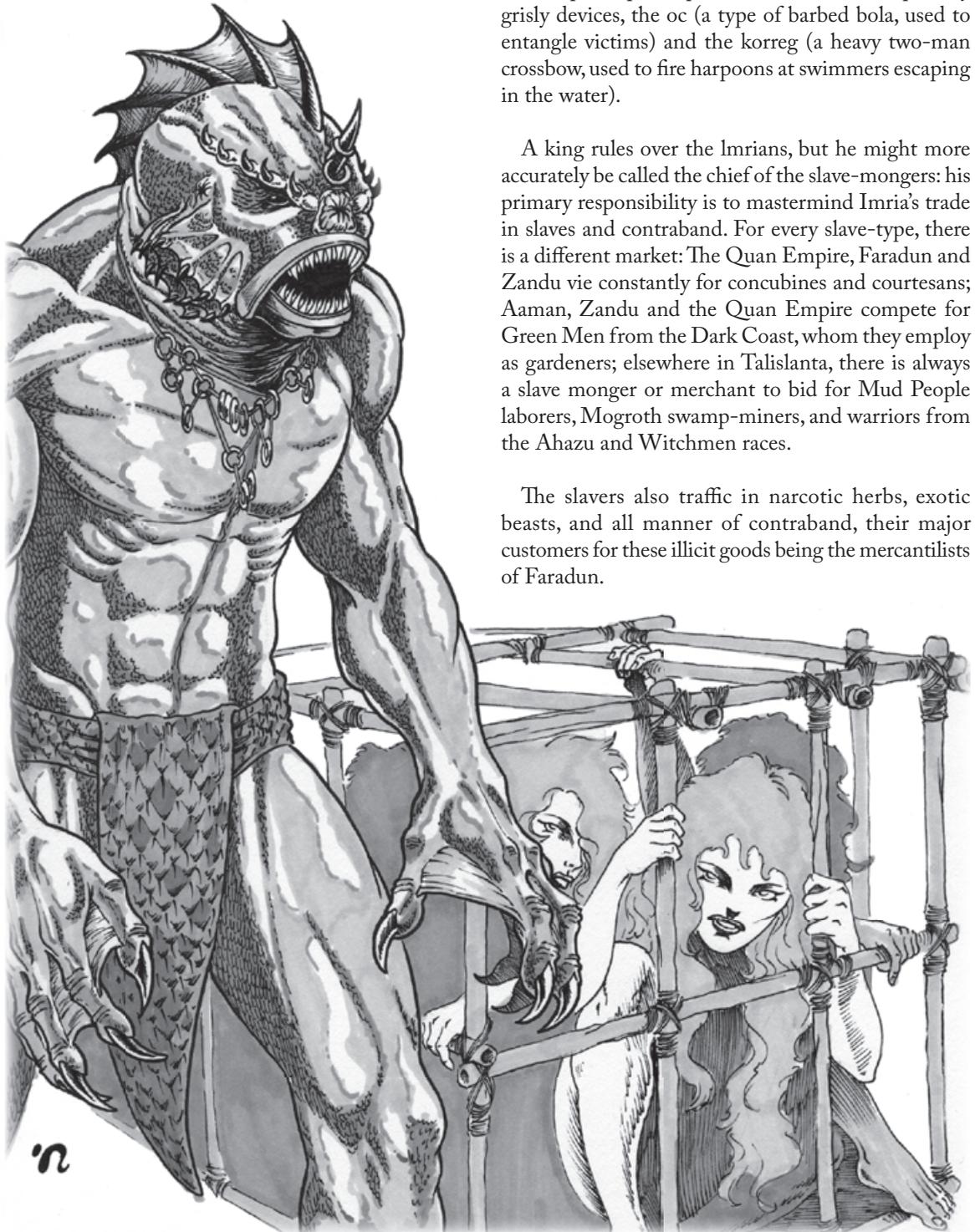


another. Several bloody defeats inflicted by the Grand Army of the Seven Kingdoms have also persuaded the Imrians that slave raids into Astar to capture Muses are no longer profitable.

The slave trade has influenced and shaped nearly every aspect of Imrian culture. For instance, the amphibians employ a number of different weapons, most of which are also used to snare captives: throwing nets, capture-poles, pole hooks, and two especially grisly devices, the oc (a type of barbed bola, used to entangle victims) and the korreg (a heavy two-man crossbow, used to fire harpoons at swimmers escaping in the water).

A king rules over the Imrians, but he might more accurately be called the chief of the slave-mongers: his primary responsibility is to mastermind Imria's trade in slaves and contraband. For every slave-type, there is a different market: The Quan Empire, Faradun and Zandu vie constantly for concubines and courtesans; Aaman, Zandu and the Quan Empire compete for Green Men from the Dark Coast, whom they employ as gardeners; elsewhere in Talislanta, there is always a slave monger or merchant to bid for Mud People laborers, Mogroth swamp-miners, and warriors from the Ahazu and Witchmen races.

The slavers also traffic in narcotic herbs, exotic beasts, and all manner of contraband, their major customers for these illicit goods being the mercantilists of Faradun.



2

### THE CITY OF KRAGAN

The Imrians have but a single settlement, the City of Kragan. The metropolis is accessible from the sea by several hidden, winding inlets, each heavily guarded by slave warriors, wild beasts and Imrian guards.

Located in the great lagoon situated in the center of the island, the city consists of hundreds of reed and thatch hovels, each plastered with mud and supported on stilt-like poles. The tallest of these structures tower 40 feet or more above the lagoon, and are occupied by the wealthiest Imrians—the King of Imria dwells within the highest. The least prosperous Imrians own hovels which stand just above the water or are

partially submerged, depending upon the tide. Slaves awaiting sale—and those kept by the Imrians for use as laborers—are housed in floating pens, moored by heavy lines to the lagoon bottom.

### MOUNT TALUS

A large and intermittently active volcano rises above the northwestern jungles of the island of Imria. A trail of acrid vapors constantly issues from the mouth of Mount Talus, within which are believed to reside both earth demons and pyro-demons. The volcano has erupted several times in the past, each time wreaking havoc on the local populace.

## JHANGARA

Bordered to the east and west by twin forks of the Axis River, Jhangara is a hot and humid land, traveled by few civilized people. Its terrain consists of jungle, murky swamp and bog, becoming progressively more dense and inhospitable toward the southern coasts, where untamed marshes predominate. The land is populated by numerous species of unfriendly animals and plants: specifically, kra, stranglevine, violet creeper, kaliya and water raknids.

### THE JHANGARANS

The man-like denizens of this land are the Jhangarans—a backward race, odd and ungainly in appearance. The marsh-dwellers have marbled brown-and-sepia-colored skin, elongated limbs, elliptical craniums, and pinched, angular features. Both the males and females are hairless, and may attain heights in excess of six and a half feet.

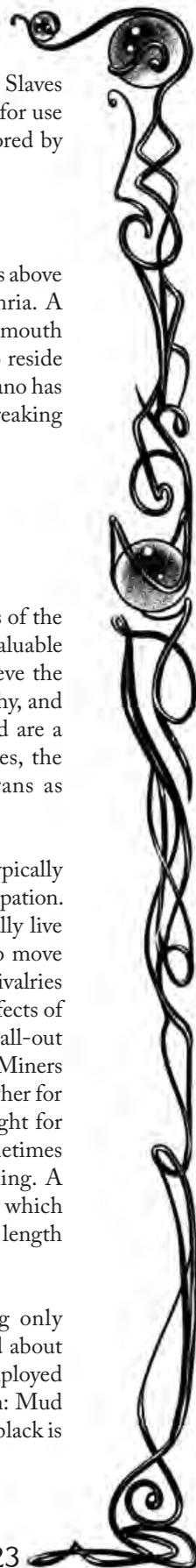
### CUSTOMS

The Jhangarans are a sullen and superstitious people, prone to displays of hostile or even violent behavior. They subsist on sea-slugs and raw meat, do not use fire, and have no knowledge of metalworking or magic. Jhangarans have a great weakness for alcohol, and are particularly fond of Zandir wine and Arimite chakos, both of which drive them mad and make their actions unpredictable.

The Aeriad and Zandir tolerate the excesses of the Jhangarans in order to obtain the natives' valuable trade goods, but most other Talislantans believe the marsh dwellers to be thoroughly untrustworthy, and not worth the risk of dealing with. The Farad are a noted exception—lacking scruples themselves, the mercantilists regularly employ the Jhangarans as guards and trackers.

The marsh dwellers live in tribal groups, typically comprised solely of individuals of the same occupation. The Mud Miners and Marsh Hunters generally live in crude settlements, but other clans prefer to move from place to place as circumstances dictate. Rivalries between the various tribes are common, the effects of which may range from prejudicial behavior to all-out warfare. There is no love lost between the Mud Miners and Marsh Hunters, who have resented each other for centuries. As for the Mercenaries, they will fight for anyone who can afford their services, and sometimes attack the other tribes just to keep in training. A number of the tribes own crude river craft, which they use to ply their various trades along the length of the Axis River.

Jhangarans go about barefooted, wearing only loincloths, and bands of coarse cloth wrapped about their arms and legs. The color of the cloth employed denotes the individual's status and occupation: Mud Miners wear grey, Marsh Hunters wear green, black is for the Mercenaries, and red is for Outcasts.



## THE OUTCASTS

Strangest of all the Jhangarans are the Outcasts, tribesmen who wander the furthest swamps and jungles. Though few in number, they wield great power. It is the belief of the other Jhangarans that the Outcasts bear with them the “*stigma of doom*.” Being so much as touched by one of the Cursed Ones is enough to immediately brand a person as an Outcast. He or she then has only two choices: to commit suicide, or to join the Outcasts.

In order to avoid being tainted by tribes of Outcasts, the other Jhangarans offer bribes of food, gold or other valuables, always placed at some distance from the supplicants’ encampment or settlement. If the Outcasts find the gifts to be sufficient, they depart from the area; if not, they typically threaten to approach the village or camp, bearing with them their accursed stigmas.

There is no simple solution to the plague of Cursed Ones—to kill an Outcast, the Jhangarans believe, brings the curse upon the murderer and his family.

The natives sometimes try to persuade or trick foreigners into killing the Outcasts for them, though few knowledgeable visitors will risk undertaking such grim and dangerous work.

## THE VILLAGES OF JHANGARA

There are only three settlements of any note within the boggy and humid land of the Jhangarans. Two of these are located along the eastern fork of the Axis River, and the third lies near the mouth of the western fork where it enters the Azure Ocean. All are constructed of crude axe-hewn timbers, and are fortified against attack from Mercenaries, wild beasts, and murderous hordes of water raknids.

The inhabitants of Karansk are Mud Miners, and make their living by dredging the riverbanks and swamplands for sapphires, amber and gold.



## Hotan's History of the World

The mud-mines of Karansk are dangerous places—virtual quagmires, teeming with aramatus, urthrax and other vermin. The Mud Miners trade with the Aeriad of Vardune, who dwell just 200 miles upriver, receiving in return goods from the Seven Kingdoms.

The denizens of Tabal are Marsh Hunters, who trap wild beasts in order to earn their sustenance. The hunters trade captured beasts, hides, feathers, and horn to Zandir freetraders, who travel to this southeastern harbor in their swift vessels, hugging the coast to avoid pirates and the terrors of the ocean.

The Marsh Hunters of Tabal supplement their income by hunting for caches of scintilla—silvery globes several inches in diameter, which emit a sparkling glow. When removed from the translucent casings which bind them together, scintilla produce a long-lasting and pleasant source of illumination. These unique items are valued at up to 100 gold lumens apiece, but are difficult to come by. Scintilla are actually the eggs of water raknids, which infest the marshlands around Tabal in numbers...and bear a distinct hatred for poachers.

Jhangkin is situated on the banks of the western fork of the Axis River, and is a military installation where Jhangaran Mercenaries gather while awaiting their next assignments. The swamps around Jhangkin abound with water raknids, marsh striders, batranc, and bog devils, and are entered only at risk.

Beyond this village lies Jhangkin Bay, an irregularly-formed waterway in which deposits of silt and sediment have accumulated over the course of many thousands of years. The sludge and quicksands render the waters unsafe except for the smallest and lightest of ships. Only the flat-bottomed Aeriad barge-forts are able to ply these waters safely, but the appearance of such vessels so far to the south is a rare circumstance.

## THE SEPTENARIAL CONCORDANCE

The Jhangaran tribes, despite their differences, are of one mind concerning the subject of the Septenarial Concordance. This peculiar event occurs once in every seven months, when all seven of Talislanta's moons align themselves in the evening sky.

The Concordance remains in alignment for 14 days, during which time no citizen of Jhangara will dare to venture forth into the swamps at night. The marsh dwellers claim that the Horag, a monster of immense proportions, stalks the swamps during the Concordance, searching for man-like victims. Though no native has ever claimed to have seen the Horag, their belief in this legendary creature is quite unshakeable—during such times, tribesmen accidentally caught in the swamps after sun-set have reportedly slit their own throats, rather than face the terror of this fearsome monster.

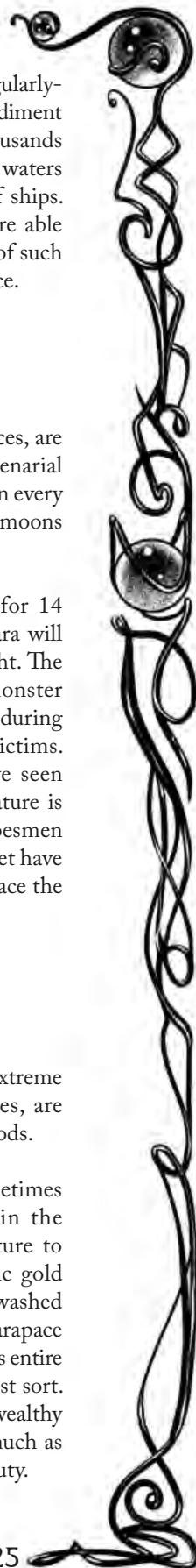
## MOG

A vast swampland, Mog is crisscrossed by countless small tributaries of the Axis River. Travel on foot is impractical, and recommended only to those who possess an unreasoning fondness for wading in knee-deep, murky waters.

The swamps teem with a variety of unusual plants and animals. Morphius, a parasitic plant whose blossoms emit a sleep-inducing fragrance, grows among the branches of certain trees; as does serpentvine, an obnoxious, biting species of vegetation which subsists on small birds and reptiles. Deadman, whose pale white leaves exude a deadly contact poison, is of use in deterring wood whisps and flits, both of which are a great nuisance to travelers. Patches of

ktallah and black lotus, herbs which possess extreme hallucinogenic and mind-altering properties, are highly sought for by dealers in contraband goods.

Cave bats, giant leeches, and lurkers (sometimes known as swamp demons) are all found in the swamplands. By far the most unusual creature to inhabit Mog, however, is the rare and exotic gold beetle. The insect feeds on tiny bits of gold washed down the Axis River. In time, its wings and carapace begin to take on a golden lustre; by adulthood, its entire body has been transmuted to gold of the purest sort. Gold beetles are highly treasured as pets by wealthy Zandir and Quan. Fine specimens bring as much as 2,000 gold lumens each, such is their rare beauty.





The amber wasp, a pestiferous relative of the gold beetle, also inhabits the swamps. As its sting is quite painful, it is sought after with considerably less vigor than its more benign counterpart.

Explorers and entrepreneurs who venture into this realm generally do so in flat-bottomed boats, the gnarled roots of giant bombo trees serving as suitable anchorages for this type of craft. The region's primary asset is amber, which is a lure to freetraders, prospectors and opportunists from Zandu, Arim, and the Seven Kingdoms.

## THE MOGROTH

Of the intelligent species native to this region, the Mogroth are the most common. Huge, sloth-like beings of man-like form, they live in crude huts erected in the branches of large mung-berry trees. Mogroth subsist on the remarkably bitter leaves and fruit of these trees, which are shunned by other creatures; the swamp-dwellers maintain that only those of refined

tastes are capable of appreciating the mung tree's distinctive savor.

## CUSTOMS

Mogroth are slow-moving creatures of placid temperament. They almost never argue among themselves, and are patient to a fault—Mogroth have been known to sit for days waiting for a single cluster of green mung-berries to ripen, rather than search for other provender.

The swamp dwellers live in communal groups composed of their large extended families: silver-backed elders, mature adults with brown- or buff-colored fur, and tawny-hued offspring. The young cling to their mothers until age two, after which they are too large to carry. Each family has its own tree-hut, and gathers its own food. When too many families congregate in a single area, several wander off to establish a new settlement.

## Hotan's History of the World

Though Mogroth generally shun the ways of civilized peoples, some have taken to dredging the swamps for bits of gold and amber, which they trade for casks of grog. The most ambitious of these creatures sometimes travel to Jhangara or the Seven Kingdoms, bearing sacks of gold and amber. Slow and somewhat dull-witted by nature, the swamp dwellers seldom strike a hard bargain for their wares, a fact which draws unscrupulous merchants to them like whisps to nectar.

### THE AMBER RIVER

This waterway runs from the Cinnabar Mountains to Rogue's Bay in the Azure Ocean. The river is rich in deposits of costly amber crystal, but its currents are inhabited by skalanx, chang, and other hostile and predatory organisms.

The river has its source in the crimson-peaked Cinnabar Mountains, which extend across northern Mog and serve as a natural border between the Seven Kingdoms and the swamplands. Kite-winged batranc can be seen gliding among the upper altitudes. A fleet of six Phantasian windships is thought to have recently crashed here enroute to Cymril, but the wrecks—along with their precious cargo of dream essence and magical paraphernalia—have never been located.

South of the peaks, the river flows into the Boglands, the murky home of bog devils, aramatus and similarly unpleasant entities, and where the Mogroth come to gather mung berries. The Aeriad of Vardune claim that a rare variety of lotus grows in this region, the blossoms of which are golden amber in color. Supposedly created by the fabled magician Viridian, the plant is said to have arcane properties, the details of which remain unknown.

The largest of the Mogroth settlements is located here, since the Boglands are rich in amber, rare herbs, and gold washed down from the mountains. Consequently, the site is also coveted by the Imrians and the Farad; to protect themselves, the Mogroth have dredged a moat around the village of Mogran, and have lined the riverbanks with triple rows of sharp wooden stakes. These precautions have thus far served to deter invaders, as has the presence of the Tazian fly—an insect whose bite is said to cause swamp fever.

As the Amber River draws to the ocean, it pours through a channel between the Mountains of Mog. The heights are draped in jungle, and shrouded in fragrant green mists exuded by giant blossoms known as euphorica. The pollen is a potent intoxicant and mood enhancer, and commonly sells for upward of 75 gold lumens per dram—a single euphorica blossom may contain as much as four drams of pollen.

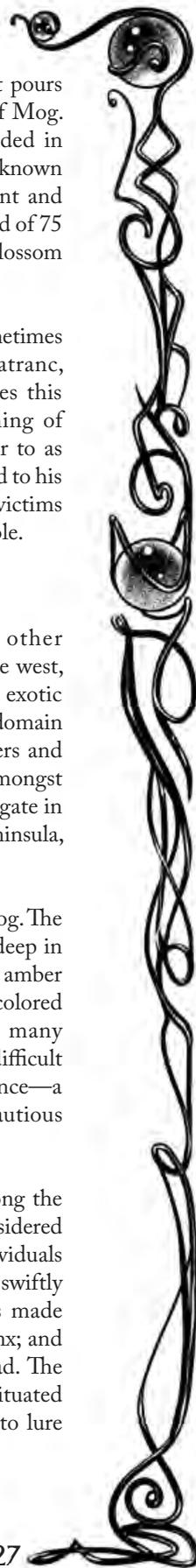
Individuals hoping to make their fortune sometimes brave these jungles, but the presence of batranc, ravengers, and other noxious predators makes this a difficult undertaking. This is to say nothing of the euphorica itself, which the Mogroth refer to as "mantrap." More than one hunter has been lured to his death by the intoxicating vapors, which draw victims near in order that they may be swallowed whole.

### THE SWAMPS

Besides the Boglands, there are four other swamplands of special interest in Mog. To the west, Devil's Swamp is rich in amber, quaga, and exotic forms of plant life. Unfortunately, it is also the domain of bog devils, which come here to hunt lurkers and to search for water-raknid eggs (a delicacy amongst the devils). The Mogroth who live here congregate in settlements near the mountainous southern peninsula, avoiding the lowlands.

The other three swamps are all in eastern Mog. The sallow-hued swamps of the Yellow Marshes, deep in the interior, teem with unusual flora and fauna: amber wasps and gold beetles, sulphur trees, topaz-colored winged vipers, yellow marsh-striders, and many others. All blend into the environs, making it difficult to distinguish a hazard at any kind of distance—a situation presenting certain hazards to incautious explorers.

The Great Morass, located to the south along the coast, is a wild and treacherous swampland considered by the Mogroth to be utterly impassable. Individuals who attempt to traverse this region on foot sink swiftly below the murky waters; passage by boat is made impossible by the presence of hordes of skalanx; and kite-winged batranc patrol the skies overhead. The reputed presence of an island of solid amber, situated in the midst of the Morass, is not sufficient to lure sensible entrepreneurs here.



The Fells, along the easternmost coast, are arguably the most dangerous and foreboding of Mog's swamps, being inhabited by such menacing entities as swamp demons, alatus and giant mantrap. Dealers in contraband sometimes come here to obtain black lotus and euphorica.

## THE COASTAL WATERS

The wide body of water which separates the swamplands of Mog from the Dark Coast is known as the Gulf of Mog. The waterway is primarily the province of Imrian slaver-ships, and the vessels of Sea Rogues from the island of Gao-Din. Still, skittish

Zandir and Farad captains occasionally brave these waters, always preferring to follow the coastline rather than venture into the open sea. Giant zaratan and skalanx are sometimes spotted in the gulf, and sea demons are not uncommon.

A tiny island, draped in steamy jungle, lies between Mog's southern coast and the isle of Imria. Mog Island is said to be a plentiful source of rare and costly herbs, including tantalus, scarlet lotus and k'tallah. The isle is also reputedly a breeding ground for bog devils, which come here in droves to mate, usually during the month of Laeolis.

## THE FAR ISLES



## THE CRESCENT ISLES

The body of water known as the Far Seas stretches across a vast area, from the island of Nefaratus to the northern tip of the Quan peninsula, and from there far to the east. Uncharted at its southern and easternmost extremes, the Far Seas are often wracked by tropical storms, particularly during the spring months. Giant sea scorpions, sea demons, and other malefic entities are known to infest these waters.

The Crescent Isles are a chain of small islands located in the western reaches of the Far Seas. Small and relatively insignificant atolls, they appear on few maps or sea charts. Some are ages-old coral reefs or mounds of water-worn stone, barely visible above the waves—a hazard to all but the most experienced (or prescient) navigators.

Those Islands of note, whether in fact or legend, are (in order from west to east):

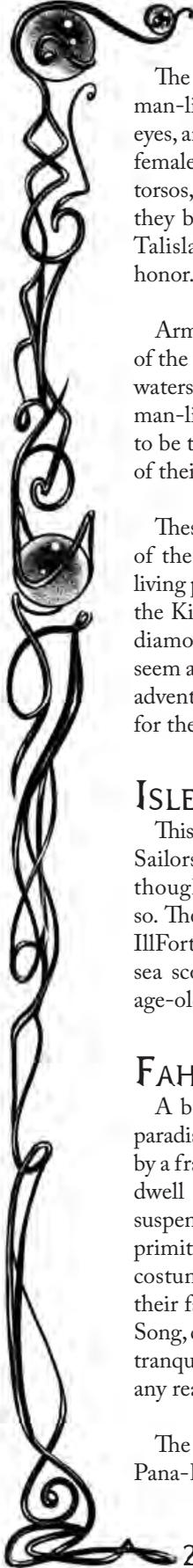
### NAUTICUS REEF

This great mass of coral and accumulated detritus was discovered by the ancient mariner Nauticus, whose ship struck the reef while sailing on a clouded, moonless night. Nauticus' vessel went down with its cargo of gold and silver ingots, none of which have ever been recovered. Since that time, Nauticus Reef has claimed an untold number of ships, and the ocean floor around the reef is said to be strewn with sunken treasure. Sea demons and rainbow kra abound in the vicinity, making the retrieval of such valuables a perilous undertaking.

### PANA-KU

A volcanic isle, Pana-Ku is wreathed in jungle and ringed by a dozen or more reefs and lesser atolls. The isle is home to the Na-Ku, an horrific race of demonoids—miserable sorcerous creatures, half-man and half-sea demon.





The Na-Ku are cannibals who feed on the other man-like races. They have indigo-blue skin, yellowish eyes, and gaunt, skull-like visages. Both the males and females are fanged, and have clawed hands, hunched torsos, and serpentine tails. They revere Aberon, whom they believe to be the ruler of all of the demons of Talislanta, and erect massive stone effigies in his honor.

Armed with poison arrows made from the branches of the venomwood tree, the Na-Ku nightly prowl the waters surrounding the Crescent Isles. They prey on man-like beings of all sorts, whom they capture alive to be the main course at grisly feasts held at the base of their isle's largest volcano.

These gory banquets are presided over by the King of the Na-Ku—a giant demonoid, fattened on the living prey fed to him by his vile subjects. It is said that the King sits upon a throne studded with rare black diamonds, though confirmation of this tale would seem an endeavor best suited to those whose thirst for adventure is exceeded only by an utter lack of concern for their personal well-being.

## ISLE OF ILL FORTUNE

This rock-bound island is believed to be uninhabited. Sailors have long considered the isle to be cursed, though none recall precisely why this should be so. The fact that the waters surrounding the Isle of Ill Fortune are the traditional mating grounds of giant sea scorpions may have something to do with this age-old superstition.

## FAHN

A beautiful island, Fahn is considered a veritable paradise by those who have visited here. It is populated by a frail, albino race known as the Sawila. The natives dwell in huts cleverly made of woven vines which, suspended from tall trees, sway gently in the wind. A primitive and peaceful folk, the Sawila wear elaborate costumes of colorful feathers, designed to protect their fair skin from the rays of Talislanta's twin suns. Song, dance and procreation are integral facets of their tranquil culture, which forbids the use of violence for any reason.

The Sawila are preyed upon by the cannibals of Pana-Ku and by slavers from the Isle of Imria. The

lovely female albinoids are highly valued as courtesans, and bring as much as 2,000 gold lumens apiece in some lands. The only defenses which the Sawila employ against such threats are their enchanting songs, which possess the ability to effect changes in the weather, tides, wind and—some claim—to have the power to influence various sea creatures. Most scholars consider these songs to be a peculiar and primitive form of elemental magic.

## THE BLUE ATOLLS

These small islands are composed entirely of a brilliant variety of royal-blue coral. Rainbow kra secure their egg sacs to the numerous small inlets and outcroppings of the atolls, so that their young might find safety from predators until they can mature.

## DONANGO

This seemingly peaceful isle is similar in appearance to Fahn, and in fact, less-than-expert navigators have been known to mistake Donango for its placid counterpart. As the island fairly seethes with hordes of sea demons, such errors seldom go unnoticed for any great length of time. The sea demons of Donango are said to scavenge treasure from the sunken hulks of ancient ships, and to keep the plunder hidden in island caves. Certain adventurous types (most of them lacking in what is commonly referred to as "intelligence") have sometimes been known to come here in the hope of making their fortune.

## THE MANGAR ISLES

A cluster of four small islands located in close proximity to one another, the jungled Mangar isles possess many hidden lagoons and grottos, which are home to numerous small pirate bands, known collectively as the Mangar Corsairs.

Justly renowned as murderers and cut-throats, the Corsairs are the bane of ships that traverse the waters of the Far Seas. There are a number of different pirate bands, all rivals of one another. In lean times they prey on each other, even fighting over potential plunder. The make-up of these bands is quite diverse: captives freed from Imrian vessels, shanghaied sailors, exiles from foreign lands, and even Chana Witchmen have been found amongst the crews of the dark-skinned, shaven-headed Mangar. Their sleek-hulled carracks are

## Hotan's History of the World

arguably among the swiftest of Talislantan ships.

Like most sensible seafarers, the Corsairs steer clear of Nefaratus, and give the Black Savants' eerie vessels a wide berth. They mark the cannibals of Pana-Ku as enemies, and regard the Sea Rogues of Gao-Din as hated rivals. When not on the hunt, the Mangar favor *ska-wae*, a dangerous game played with curved daggers and dice.

### SCIMITAR ISLES

These four small atolls, situated near the perilous Mangar islands, are thought by most experts to be inhabited only by a few exotic species of wild beasts—including the rare silver draconid, prized by naturalists and collectors, and valued at over 5,000 gold lumens or more.

The Mangar tell tales of a colony of Sunra renegades living in hiding on one of these isles. According to the Corsairs, the Sunra escaped from the Quan Empire in a dragon barque, and now hunt sea dragons as their ancestors did before being conquered by the Quan. Scholars speculate that this story might only be a ruse by the Mangar to divert Quan warships here (away from their regular stations, protecting the sea lanes).

### RUNE ISLAND

A barren and precipitous mound of volcanic stone, Rune Island is notable primarily for the countless



runes and hieroglyphs etched across the entire surface of the rocky isle. Talislantan scholars have long argued over a variety of subjects concerning the isle: the meaning of these cryptic runes, the identity of the individuals or creatures which created them, and their purpose of such beings in undertaking so vast and time-consuming a project.

A thorough study of Rune island has never been completed, owing to such factors as time, the requisite cost (in labor and materials), and a natural aversion to the less-than-hospitable inhabitants: giant sea scorpions and echinomorphs.

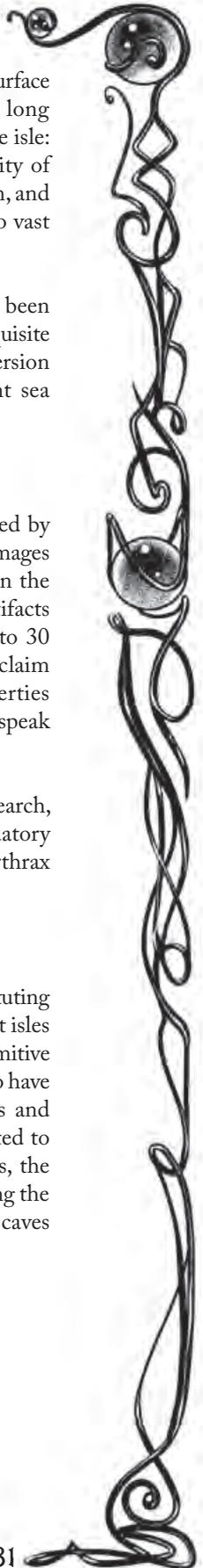
### FETISH ISLAND

Scholars of many lands are likewise intrigued by Fetish Island, named for the hundreds of stone images and totems which can purportedly be found in the jungles of its interior region. Most of these artifacts are one or two feet in height, and weigh up to 30 pounds. The cannibalistic Na-Ku of Pana-Ku claim that these stone fetishes have magical properties (specifically, that the totems are "alive," and can speak in all languages), and favor them greatly.

Unfortunately for the future of academic research, the isle is infested with several virulent predatory and parasitic species, including grey ikshada, urthrax and alatus.

### GRAMARYE ISLES

These four tiny islands, together constituting the easternmost element of the Crescent isles chain, are swathed in crimson jungle. Primitive cultists known as the Orad are thought to have once made their home here. The seers and diviners are believed to have been hunted to extinction by a colony of sea scorpions, the only traces of their former existence being the strange paintings found in numerous caves scattered throughout the isles.



# NEFARATUS

Rising ominously above the waters of the Far Seas is the Isle of Nefaratus, a shadowy mound of black stone rimmed with jungle. Bleak towers of stone dot the isle, each a hundred feet in height and decorated with the graven images of leering devils. Within, the inhabitants of Nefaratus gaze into mirrors of polished obsidian, and work their dire enchantments and divinations. These are the Black Savants, members of a secret magical order that may date back as far as the Forgotten Age.

The Nefaratans carry staves and blades made of black adamant, a rare alloy which Talislantan alchemists believe to be a union of black diamond and silver. Only the Black Savants know how to make this arcane metal, which reportedly has potent magical properties.

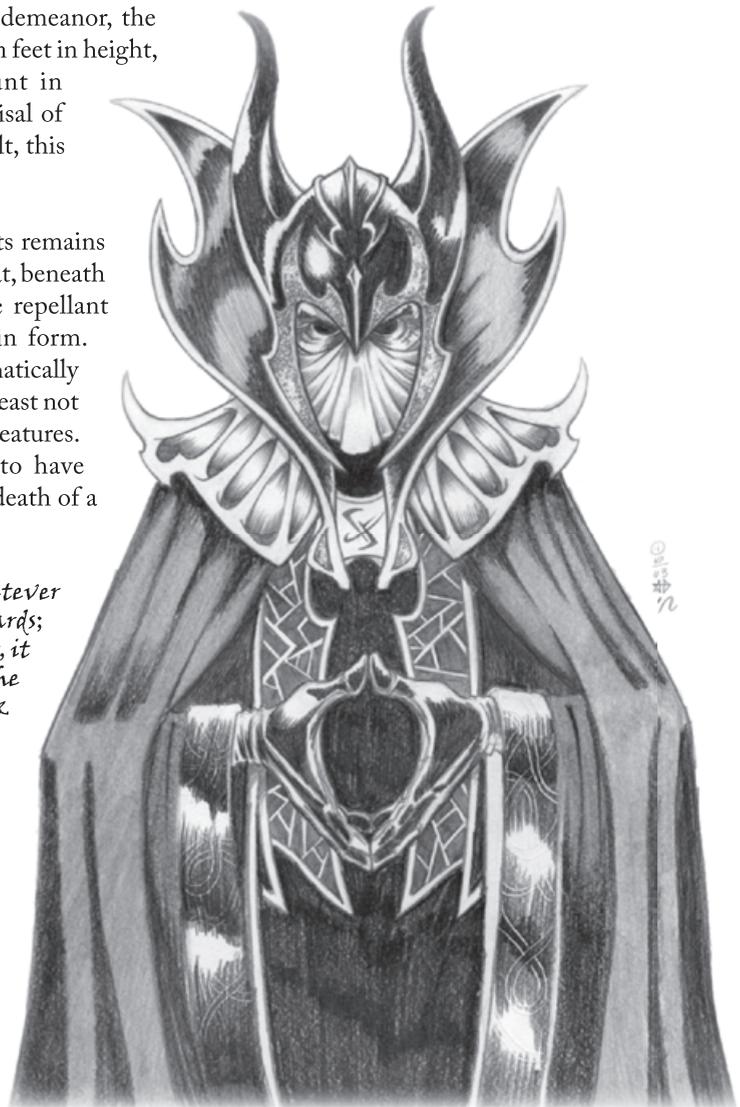
## THE BLACK SAVANTS

Alien in appearance and outward demeanor, the Savants of Nefaratus stand nearly seven feet in height, and are stoop-shouldered and gaunt in appearance — though accurate appraisal of their physical characteristics is difficult, this due to their style of dress.

The true nature of the Black Savants remains unknown. Some Talislantans claim that, beneath their black robes, the Nefaratans are repellant creatures, deathly pale and gnarled in form. The Jaka of the Brown Hills state emphatically that the Black Savants are not alive, at least not in the same manner as other living creatures. The fabled mystic Hotan claimed to have witnessed what he believed to be the death of a Black Savant:

*"The creature, or man, or whatever it was, suddenly reeled backwards; uttering not so much as a whisper, it collapsed, falling soundlessly to the ground. The form within the black robes seemed to wither rapidly, diminishing in size. I approached, to find naught but a pile of smoking, black garments."*

The traditional costume of the Black Savants includes high boots, gloves, a cloak, and loose-fitting robes, all of black and satiny cloth, and hooded and veiled so as to obscure their features. Only their dark eyes are normally visible: cold, unfeeling orbs like twin shards of onyx.



## CUSTOMS

The Savants are said to claim to be no more than scholars of the occult, with interests which extend to all aspects of the lower planes. Most Talislantan experts, however, believe the sinister race to be diabolists, receiving advice and counsel from the race of giant devils known as the Shaitan. Aamanian theologians, on the other hand, believe the Savants to actually be a species of devil.

Koraq, the greatest sorcerer of ancient times, wrote of the Black Savants in Volume Nine of his renowned *Guide to the Lower Planes*:

*"The Black Savants of Nefaratus are adept in the lore of the dark dimensions, and possess certain knowledge of these regions, particularly the Lower Plane of Oblivion. They employ enchanted devices known as obsidian mirrors, which function as viewports into the nether realms."*

Kabros, the self-proclaimed scion of Koraq, claimed to have first-hand knowledge of the Black Savants. He wrote a brief monograph on the subject, an excerpt from which follows:

*"The Black Savants are survivors of an ancient race whose homeland was ravaged during the Great Disaster. The Nefaratan credit the source of the catastrophe, not to the Mad Wizard Rodinn (as is commonly supposed), but to forces which they believe originated on the lower planes. The Savants claim to monitor activities in these regions as a precautionary practice, but are reluctant to reveal the exact nature of their methodology."*

*"As to other peculiarities associated with the Savants: the two who came to my home readily admitted to keeping demons as slaves, and expressed a decided preference for the company of devils. Does this in and of itself justify categorizing the Black Savants as an evil race? Perhaps, and perhaps not. Are not each of us, after all, obsessed with our own personal demons?"*

## THE ARCH-DEVILS OF TALISLANTA

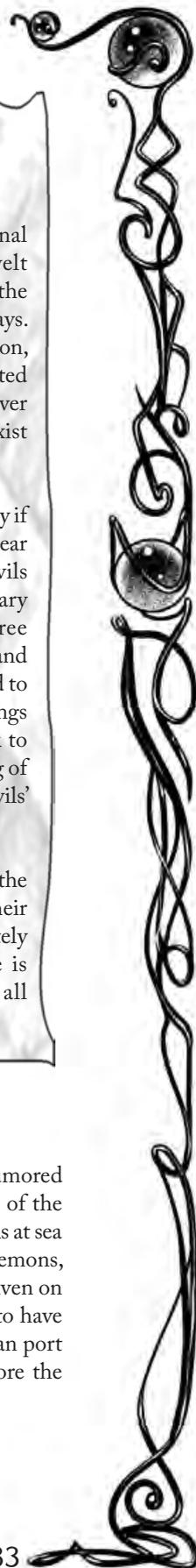
Legend has it that the extra-dimensional entities known as the Shaitan once dwelt amidst the heavens, but were cast out by the gods for their scheming and pernicious ways. Consigned to the Lower Plane of Oblivion, the Shaitan were imprisoned within enchanted cities of brass, and given absolute control over that plane and the various devils which exist there.

According to mystics and theologians, only if a Shaitan is summoned by magic can he appear on any other plane of existence. The devils must reward those who give them temporary respite from Oblivion by rendering three services, but unless the summoner is clever and wields certain power, such requests may lead to disaster – Shaitan resent having to serve beings of lesser stature than themselves, and seek to thwart a summoner by twisting the meaning of any command in whatever way suits the devils' perverse nature.

If the Shaitan are in some way allied with the Savants of Nefaratus, it is not clear what their goal could be. The arch-devils are ultimately perverse, and their only known purpose is a negative one: they hate and oppose all demons.

## THE BLACK SHIPS

The Savants' midnight-black vessels are rumored to sail the cursed waters which lie at the edge of the world. Sailors who have encountered such vessels at sea claim that they are propelled by the efforts of demons, chained to the oars with silver shackles and driven on by giant copper-skinned devils. Others claim to have seen the black ships pull into certain Talislantan port cities on moonless nights, only to depart before the coming of dawn.





## THE FORBIDDEN STRAITS

The narrow waterway which lies between the Chana peninsula and the island of Nefaratus is largely avoided by Talislantan sailors, and for good reason. It is within the territory claimed by the Black Savants, who patrol these waters in their ominous black-hulled vessels.

The Imrian slavers are rumored to have an arrangement with the Black Savants; in return for captive sea demons, they are supposedly allowed to pass through Nefaratan waters via certain prescribed routes. It is not known whether the Imrians deal with the Black Savants by choice, or because they were somehow compelled to do so.

# OCEANUS

A waterborne city, Oceanus was established some centuries ago by wandering tribes of Sea Nomads. The metropolis is built entirely upon great plant-fiber barges tethered to each other in intricate fashion, and has no permanent location.

Though apparatus which allows the city to be moored to the sea-bottom can be employed, Oceanus is most often left to float freely on the waves. Besides increasing the productivity of Oceanus' food-gatherers (fishermen and kelp farmers), the deliberate drifting makes the city impossible to track, and acts as a precaution against roving pirate bands.

## THE SEA NOMADS

The people who built Oceanus are a green-skinned, dark-haired folk of average height and slender build. Their style of dress is best described as eccentric: vests of iridescent scales, loincloths from the hide of the rainbow kra, and necklaces of colorful shells being most popular. Their warriors augment this basic wardrobe with shields of zaratan tortoise-shell and fierce-looking helms made from the skulls of sea creatures. The most commonly employed weapons are barbed spears, swords fashioned from the bones of rainbow kra, and the flange-bow (a light crossbow that unleashes a half-dozen sea-anemone spines with a single shot).

### CUSTOMS

The Sea Nomads of Oceanus are superstitious to a degree that makes them unique, and perhaps even bizarre. According to their historians, the nomads once dwelt on land, but when a disaster of cataclysmic proportion caused their homeland to sink beneath the waves, the inhabitants were forced to flee in boats.

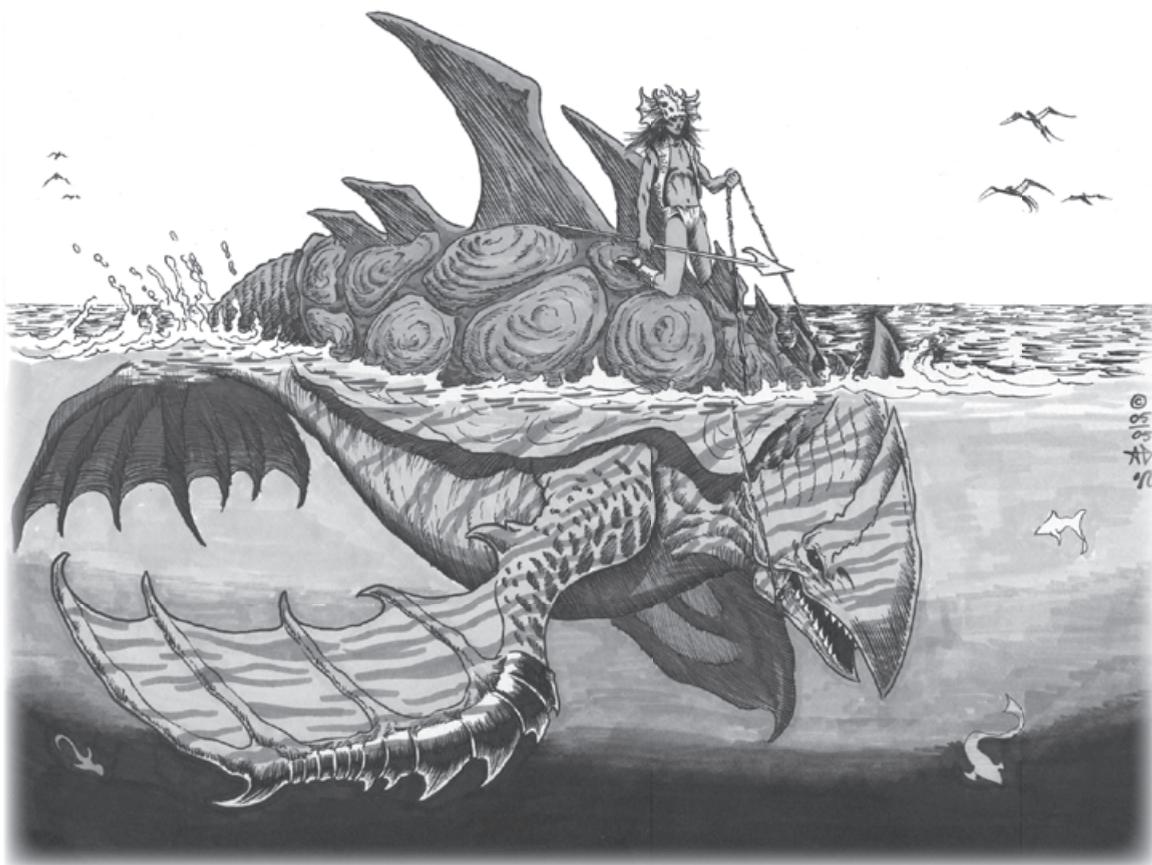
In their haste, or so the legends claim, the escapees left behind a certain hag named Jezem, noted as a practitioner of black magic. Out of spite, the witch placed a murrain upon her people, that they might never again dwell upon the land without invoking consequences of the most dire sort. Though the nature of these consequences was never specified, the survivors thought it best not to tempt fate by testing the efficacy of the hag's magics. Accordingly, they became nomadic seafarers.

At some later date, the Sea Nomads built Oceanus, deeming this to be a most clever way of foiling the hag's curse. To the present day, no Sea Nomad will set foot on land, believing that to do so would bring down some nameless doom.

The city of the Sea Nomads stands as perhaps the ultimate testament in all of Talislantan to an intelligent race's defiance of nature (or of common sense, depending upon one's point of view). Construction of the metropolis, begun some 300 years ago, remains an ongoing process; both to accommodate a growing population, and due to the ravages of wind, water and sea dragons.

The Sea Nomads utilize the ocean's natural resources to suit their needs. Materials used in construction include coral, sponges, the hide and bones of sea dragons and other aquatic creatures, and adhesives derived from the sticky secretions of various species of shellfish.

The primary source of building materials, however, is yellow aqueor, a giant species of kelp which grows to lengths of up to 500 feet. The plant's stalk, cut into sections and dried by exposure to sunlight, takes on a buoyancy and tensile strength similar to wood. The leaves are edible, and the fibrous stems can be used to make rope, parchment, mats, baskets, and even a type of coarse cloth. All of the products derived from



yellow aqueor are greatly resistant to rotting and water-logging.

Though incapable of swift or precise movement, Oceanus is capable of movement through the water, and can be steered along a designated course. A great profusion of sails, masts and riggings is employed to give the city impetus. The shoulder-blade of an ancient sea dragon serves as a rudder.

## PHANTAS

A small, semi-tropical isle measuring only 30 miles across at its widest point, Phantas is ringed on all sides by wavering cliffs of white stone. Its interior is cloaked in dense jungle, gradually thinning along the upper altitudes. A single river, the slow-moving Erutu, winds its way through the Valley of Dreams to the Azure Ocean.

Phantas is home to an uncountable number of strange plants, animals, fungi, and organisms which defy classification—many of which are to be found nowhere else in Talislanta. The astounding array of flora and fauna occasionally lures a few dedicated scholars and naturalists to the island, who must usually suffer the company of mercenary warriors in order to make safe their journey to this faraway place.

Otherwise, the isle of Phantas is seldom visited, as its rather isolated location serves as a deterrent to all but the most determined voyagers. The Imrians once invaded the isle, but the slavers fled upon encountering certain of Phantas' bestial population.

High above the island, tethered to the ground by unbreakable chains of adamant, is a singular structure: a great castle built in the douds, called Cabal Magicus. Here in the sky dwell the last descendants of an ancient race of magicians and thaumaturges, known as the Phantasians.

### THE PHANTASIANS

A pale-skinned people, the Phantasians are tall and very thin, with delicate features and hair of the color of amber. They dress in long trailing robes, and wear conical caps and necklaces of colored crystals. The Phantasians claim to be descended from the Elande, a race of magicians which supposedly lived in fabulous floating cities during ancient times.

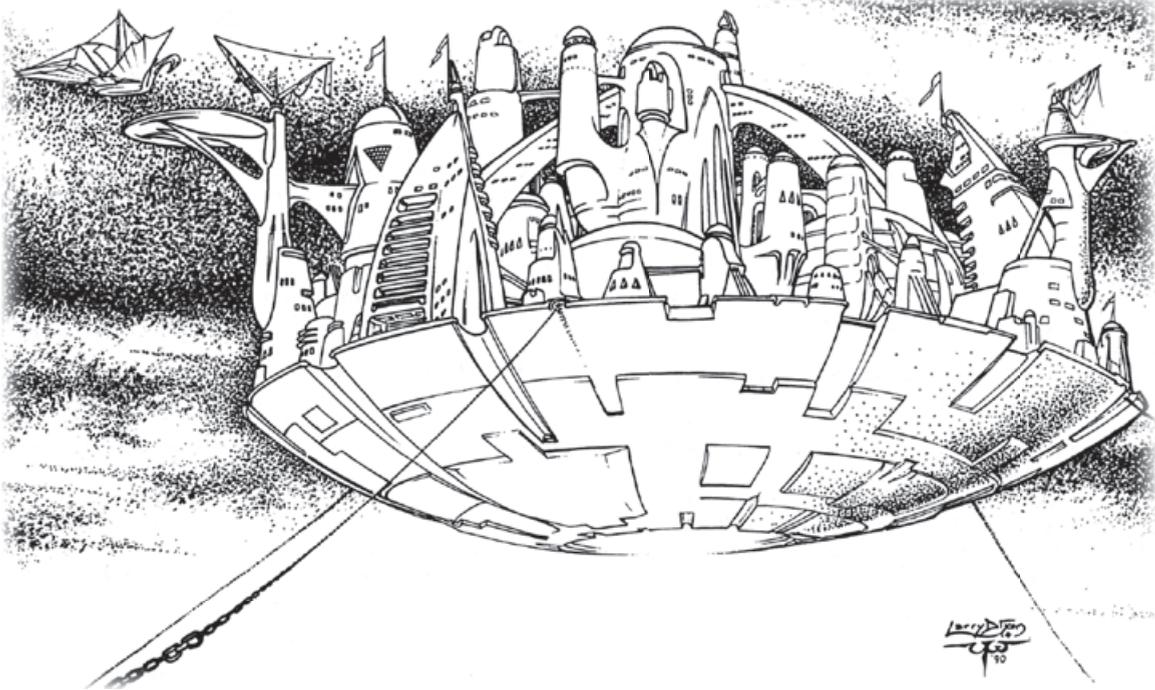
### CUSTOMS

Believed to once have been amongst the most skilled practitioners of the magical arts, the Phantasians have forgotten nearly all of the fabled knowledge possessed by their ancestors, who built Cabal Magicus and fostered the strange and unusual plant and animal species which populate the island. Among the few secrets left to them are the talents associated with the building of windships, and the art of distilling dream essence. Phantasian Astromancers also continue to be in demand throughout Talislanta as windship pilots and navigators.

It is the ability to concoct dream essence which provides the Phantasians with their livelihood, such as it is. By the utilization of certain ancient magical operations, the mages are able to capture the stuff of which dreams are made, and to contain the distilled fluid in amberglass vials. These the dream merchants pack in velvet-lined chests and transport in their windships to such places as Cymril of the Seven Kingdoms, Thaecia, Zandu, Faradun, and the Quan Empire.

Because dream essence sells for as much as 900 gold lumens per dram, only the wealthiest of individuals can afford to partake of this exotic substance. Many Talislantans consider dream essence to be over-priced and frivolous, especially since it has no practical use whatever.

The dream merchants seldom retain the profits of their wares. Most of their earnings must be used just to keep Cabal Magicus afloat, maintain their wind-ships, and feed their families. Nonetheless, the Phantasians continue to ply their trade, resolute in the pursuit of their dreams.



## CABAL MAGICUS

Built upon a disc-shaped platform measuring approximately one mile in diameter, the castle of the Phantasians is composed of solidified cloud-stuff, covered with a plating of magical quicksilver—perhaps fashioned utilizing the same manner of construction which was used to create such legendary places as the City of the Four Winds. The foundation is over three feet thick, and equally resistant to harm from projectiles, magical energy, and the elements.

The Phantasians have long since forgotten the secret of manufacturing such materials. Now it is all they can do merely to keep Cabal Magicus from descending permanently.

Four great adamant chains anchor Cabal Magicus to the isle below, and channel the harmful energies from lightening and electrical storms to the ground below. A system of wind-powered winches can raise or lower the flying structure as desired, up to a maximum altitude of 2,000 feet. A gondola, suspended by chains from the bottom of the platform, is available for low-altitude reconnaissance.

An observation tower rises from the top of this flying castle, allowing sentinels to keep watch for hundreds of miles in all directions; smaller towers

mount catapults and fire-throwers, and would be used to defend the flying fortress if it were attacked.

Cabal Magicus is defended by the Guardians, an elite military order which has been in existence for untold generations. However, the decline in the fortunes of the Phantasians has led many of the Guardians to seek employment elsewhere as mercenaries. The Wizard King of Cymril maintains a contingent of Phantasian Guards (on his personal windship), as do certain private concerns in both Cymril and the City-state of Hadj.

## A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO CABAL MAGICUS

*"Cabal Magicus is a shining example of how mighty the Archaens once were, and how far their descendants have fallen."*

*- Callistro, Callidian Cryptomancer*

## THE POPULACE

Once a fabulous symbol of magical prowess from a halcyon era, Cabal Magicus is slowly falling into ruination, and with it the hopes, dreams, and pride of the Phantasians who dwell there. Originally home to

over 30,000 citizens, the population of the sky-city has dwindled over time to a mere 14,000, as fewer resources has meant fewer births, and increasing numbers of Phantasians are forced abroad to earn enough money to live and maintain the failing structure. Cabal Magicus has few visitors, due to the obvious requirement of aerial transport, and as a result, only Farad negotiators, and Cymrilian diplomats and scholars visit the sky-city with any regularity.

## HISTORY

According to the detailed records kept by the Phantasians' ancestors, the Elandar, Cabal Magicus was constructed 248 years before the dawn of the New Age. During the chaos of the Great Disaster, the sky-city Elande lost altitude, and began to descend rapidly. In a panic, the Elandar fled south in their windships, but were attacked by the Baratus fleet, and all but one of their vessels destroyed, along with many of their greatest minds, and artifacts. The sole surviving ship reached the isle of Phantas, and there constructed Cabal Magicus, using what little they had left in the way of knowledge and resources. Sadly, when those survivors died out, most of their knowledge died with them. Now named after the isle over which they hover, the Phantasians, descendants of the Elandar, struggle to keep the sky-city aloft.

## VISIONS OF CABAL MAGICUS

### A VIEW FROM AFAR

A fortress of towers hangs suspended in the firmament, shimmering like a silver mirror in the reflected light of the twin suns. It seems to skim on the wisps of clouds, four fragile lines connecting it to the tiny speck of greenery far below amid an ocean of blue. Several windships glide about the structure like delicate butterflies.

### ON APPROACH

Gargantuan silver chains connect the colossal argent disk that forms the base of this mile-wide city, to the chalk-cliffed isle far below. Elegant multi-tiered and domed towers cluster the top of the disk, interconnected with graceful sheltered walkways, colors of alabaster, chrome, and gold. A deceptively slender tower looms ahead, bearing a windship platform and dock.

## THE STREETS OF CABAL MAGICUS

All of the sky-city's streets, parks, etc. are actually located indoors, as the city is effectively a vast, self-contained arcology. No one sets foot outside, on the foundation disk itself, except when essential repairs need to be made.

## GHOST CITY

Given the sky-city's reduced population, a large number of apartments are unoccupied or derelict, and streets that were once a bustle of activity see little traffic, making the city feel somewhat empty and deserted. Farad overtures to convert the largely empty sky-city into a resort for wealthy foreigners, have been met with disgust and prideful scorn.

## THE CITY INTERIOR

Wide promenades of gold-veined marble are flanked by twin rows of small, intricately carved pillars, each surmounted by an exquisite statuette bearing a glow globe. Here and there, darker areas of passage draw attention to missing or damaged globes. A great vaulted tunnel of stained glass covers the promenade, casting multi-hued light from the sides and above. The air tastes sterile, and certain areas are chilly where heating mechanisms have ceased to function. Hovering benches stand at regular intervals, though many show signs of wear. Levitational disks are used to gain rapid access to upper or lower floors in the arcology, though some have lost their enchantment, forcing lengthy detours.

## CABAL MAGICUS AT NIGHT

The great silver sky-city stands above a slowly roiling sea of cloud, the sky a blanket of darkness, dusted with stars. The disk and towers glitter in the moonlight, scattered with the pinpricks of light from windows all over, and surrounded by the mournful howl of the wind.

## THE TYPICAL DWELLING

### AN EXTERIOR VIEW

A 20-story tower of silver and ivory tapers up from the great silver disk, studded with windows, many of which are dark and unlit. A rounded dome of gold caps the construct, a huge ornate skylight at its center. A golden disk-shaped landing platform thrusts from the tower beneath the observation dome, permitting up to two windships to dock.

### THE TOWER INTERIOR

The core of the tower consists of a great hollow shaft, at the base of which is a hydroponic garden. Light shines down from the huge latticework skylight far above. Each story features a ring-shaped balcony that overlooks the open shaft, and two circular doors that lead to that level's two apartments. Two pairs of levitational disks, each set within an etched crystal tube, stand on either side of the central vault, permitting access to any level. All too often, one or two of these disks are inoperative.

#### The Apartment

A circular doorway dilates open, surmounted by a flickering, aged glow globe. The apartment is shaped like a half-ring, and separated into two separate rooms.

#### The Recreational Room

Occupying two-thirds of the available space, this room is a combined lounge and bedroom, featuring a full-length window through which the endless sky may be viewed. Glow globes are set into the walls themselves at regular intervals, and books line a curving shelf of rich hardwood that runs under the window. Several well-padded chairs hang on twisted chains from the ceiling, and a chipped levitating disk of polished marble serves as a table that can be easily raised, lowered, or moved. A twisting crystal cabinet, lit from within, stands to one side, once bearing exotic intoxicants, but now holding only the cheapest of wines. Threadbare silks cover the worn-looking oval mattress in the corner, shelves beneath it providing room for clothes and belongings. A single door leads into the bathroom.

#### The Bathroom

This small room features mirrored walls and ceiling, and contains a bath, toilet, and shower cubicle of marbled alabaster, all supplied with

water from the arcology's waste recycling and vaporization plant.

## PLACES OF AUTHORITY

### CABAL GATHERUM

Located in the resplendent stained glass dome that caps Cabal Magicus' most ornate tower, this elegant circular hall contains a large circular table of colored marble, inlaid with a mosaic of Talislanta, and surrounded by deep velvet levitating chairs. It is in this hall that the members of the Phantasian Cabal, the sky-city's ruling body of the foremost seven magicians, convene to discuss matters concerning the city. Meetings are traditionally held every High Day, and are always presided over by the Magister, the elected head of the Cabal.

### INCARCERATION VAULT

Serving as the city's gaol, this collection of cells in the city's foundation, features enchanted sourceless lighting, and "open" doors that keep malcontents in by means of walls of magical force, dispelled and reinitiated by means of the guards' ancestral wands. Magic-inhibiting glyphs are carved over every surface, including the ceiling and floor, effectively prohibiting the use of any spells or magical items.

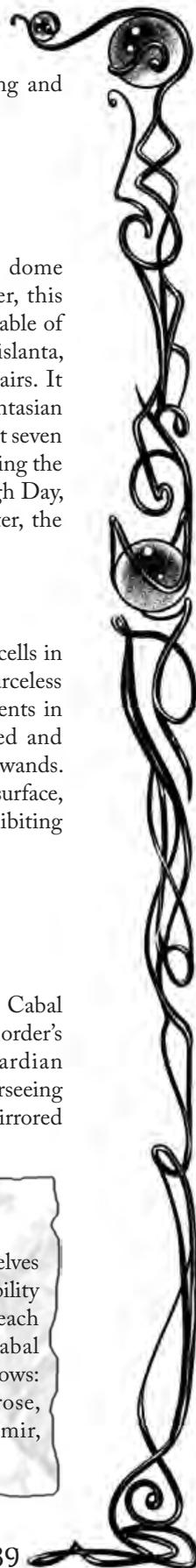
## MILITARY BASES

### WIND TOWER

Towering above all the other structures in Cabal Magicus, this austere tower is the Guardian order's duty barracks and headquarters, the Guardian Excelsior, Quaesatori, residing therein, and overseeing all Guardian duties. The top of the tower is a mirrored

### THE HIGHEST NOBILITY

Although all Phantasians consider themselves elite, ten families are actually regarded as nobility among the Phantasians. These families, each descended from the members of the cabal that once governed the Elandar, are as follows: Bandaric, Tellorian, Dachantes, Shardrose, Weirthorn, Mordredir, Kassilmar, Raemir, Xavios, Sirdrake.



dome, containing many enchanted viewing devices and telescopes, permitting the Guardians inside to observe the skies for hundreds of miles around.

### GUARDIAN TOWERS

Evenly spaced about the sky-city's perimeter, these small and unobtrusive towers serve as defense posts for the city's force of Guardians. The polished silver domes that top each of these towers, are actually one-way mirrors covering observation telescopes, and a powerful incendiary sphere hurler. In case of attack, each dome's cap unfurls like the petals of a flower, allowing the incendiary sphere hurler to be used on invading forces. Unfortunately, the petal mechanism is none too reliable, and the antique sphere hurlers have been known to malfunction.

### THE GUARDIANS

Membership in the Guardians, Cabal Magicus' traditional military force, is largely hereditary, with former Guardians training their most promising grandchild, before retiring when the potential new Guardian is ready to assume the role. The cherished antique armor and sword is handed down through the generations, and only slightly modified for fit each time. Given the diminished population in Cabal Magicus, it has become necessary for some Guardians to break with tradition, and accept apprentices from outside their family, although many are reluctant to do so.

### MILITARY DOCKS

Located around the base of the foundation disk itself, great silver iris portals lead into the city's military windship docks, which occupy an entire level of the disk, and include a huge, round, windship repair facility.

### OBSERVATION GONDOLA

Operated by a winch mechanism that allows it to be lowered up to 150-foot below the base of the foundation disk itself, the observation gondola is spherical in shape, plated with the same magical quicksilver as the disk itself. Numerous round

### A PROUD FLEET...

Once the pride of the skyways, Cabal Magicus' fleet of windships has fallen into a sorry state of repair, many vessels grounded, and the majority rendered obsolete by the superior arcanology of Cymril. A mere 19 windships of war now patrol the skies around the city, plated with magical quicksilver, and armed with rams and incendiary sphere hurlers, but markedly slow and lumbering when compared with Cymril's fine vessels. Besides its mediocre military fleet, Cabal Magicus also hosts perhaps 25 merchant windships, of which no more than 20 are operational at any given time, and around 50 operational windskiffs and windriggers, several of which are used by repair crews operating on the outside of the sky city itself.

windows cover the gondola, and several powerful telescopes are affixed to technomantic armatures inside. Four Guardians take regular shifts watching the surrounding skies for any signs of trouble. In case of attack, the gondola is raised within the belly of the foundation.

### MUSEUMS & LIBRAIRIES

#### LIBRAM GATHERED

Occupying an entire small tower near the center of Cabal Magicus, the Libram Gathered is one of Talislanta's most valuable, if not particularly useful, libraries. Each of its multiple levels is filled with row upon row of ring-shaped shelves bearing dusty antique tomes. Unfortunately, the bulk of the collection is composed of the lofty and arrogant observations of the Elande, concerning other cultures, races, and lifeforms, although there are obscure texts on windship arcanology, the creation of sky-cities, the arts of Dream Essence distillation, and copies of Laslovian's "Compendium of Dreams". The rarest archives are stored in a basement vault, and may only be viewed with permission of the Antiquarian Excelsior; a crotchety old woman called Filistrae, who is also a long-standing member of the Phantasian Cabal.

### PRIDE BEFORE A FALL...

Descended as they are from the magically elite Elandar, the Phantasians have long considered themselves intellectually, culturally, and magically superior, adopting a somewhat arrogant and snobbish outlook and bearing. The vast majority regard common and menial tasks and professions as beneath them, and have traditionally hired foreigners to perform all such duties. During their wealthier days, this arrangement worked well for the Phantasians, but times have changed, even if the Phantasians themselves haven't. Few Phantasians can afford to employ outsiders anymore, and most of the foreigners that once worked in the city have long since left for greener pastures. Sadly, few Phantasians will swallow their pride in order to perform the onerous or menial chores that kept Cabal Magicus clean, tidy, and well-maintained, exasperating the sky-city's current plight.

### VAULT ARCANE

Formed from a spiral of levels inside a gilt tower, the Vault Arcane is Cabal Magicus' museum - an adjunct of the Libram Gathered, also governed by the Antiquarian Excelsior. Much like a residential tower, the center of the Vault Arcane is a single hollow leading from floor to skylight, around which the museum's various levels, ascend. The hollow itself is filled with enchanted models of windship designs through the ages, flying and circling continuously. The railed ascending levels display cases of preserved flora and fauna, and sundry ancient artifacts and memorabilia.

## TRADERS, MERCHANTS & ARTISANS

### THE GLORY OF FLIGHT

Located on what was once one of Cabal Magicus' busiest promenades, this small semi-circular store now seems worn with time, and dust. The magically illuminated windows display flying scale models of various windships, and the interior is a small workshop, wherein a tired old Cymrilian makes enchanted toy windships, that no one can afford to buy anymore. Only the mysterious donations from an unknown benefactor prevent him from ruin.

### WARD FORGE

This ancient establishment has served the sky-city since time immemorial, created enchanted and decorative weapons and armor for the Guardians, as well as for export. Once highly regarded and honored, its fortunes have seen been steady dwindling, as even foreign markets seem unprepared to pay the high costs the ancestral Phantasian arcane-smiths demand.

### FRAL'S WHOLESALE COMESTIBLES

Run by a slick and lecherous Farad, Fral's is perhaps the only trade outlet in Cabal Magicus that actually makes a steady profit. Established in the empty halls of what was once a small complex selling garments of high fashion, Fral's stocks foodstuffs from across the continent, purchased in bulk, and sold with absolutely no frills or presentation. As loathe as many Phantasians are to shop in such a common establishment, the sheer monotony of their elixir diet, combined with their diminishing purchasing power, means that increasing numbers buy food from Fral's, albeit with obvious discomfort.

### PARKS

#### HUB PLAZA

Standing at the very heart of the sky-city's surface, Hub Plaza is a vast park of grass verges, crystal clear streams, groves of crafted whitewood, sorcerer trees, and willowood, standing around rock gardens of crystal filled with scented moss and blossoms. A monumental dome of etched crystal covers the entirety, and semicircular benches of variegated wood provide ample seating. Once a popular relaxation and meeting spot, painstakingly landscaped and tended, the park has begun to grow wild as few individuals can afford the time or money required to maintain it.

### HYDROPONIC GARDENS

Located at the center of each habitation tower, these large circular gardens through which paths of etched tiles twist, were once full of rare blooms, exotic trees, and verges of grass. These beautiful plants have now been replaced with monotonous rows of provender plant, and the occasional grove of fruit trees, such as red hairy blum fruit. These plants are harvested, pasted, and blended in the Nutrition Facility to form the bland nutritive elixirs that most Phantasians now consume.



## INNS, TAVERNS & RESTAURANTS

### THE DECANTER

Formed from a single small dome of crystal that seems to flow like animate water, The Decanter contains a central circular bar, and many tables and comfortable seats, each standing on small artificial islets of clear glass, set atop ponds of water containing exotic fish. The Decanter is the sole tavern and restaurant of any great esteem still operating in Cabal Magicus, and its exclusive clientele is composed of those few Phantasians that are still wealthy enough to dine there.



### ESSENCE ABUSE

Although the sales of Dream Essence are falling, because few can afford such a costly luxury, the abuse of the substance is becoming increasingly common among the jaded and depressed Phantasians.

### THE GOLDEN BATRANC

Roundly avoided by all but a handful of Phantasians, the Golden Batranc is a simple tavern of cut marble, and solidified cloudstuff, frequented by those foreigners who still work in the sky-city, such as the Yassan. The food is basic, but wholesome, and the alcohol served is average, but the atmosphere is relaxed and trouble free.

## TRANSPORTATION

### PUBLIC WIND-DOCKS

Every residential tower in Cabal Magicus features an internal, or external wind-dock, large enough for up to two windships, and a handful of riggers and skiffs. Sadly, few Phantasians can afford to repair and operate wind vessels any longer, and as a result, many docks are unused, or littered with derelict vessels.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### THE FOUNDATION DISK

Actually a concave disk, flat-side up, the foundation of Cabal Magicus is hollow, formed from solidified cloudstuff plated with magical quicksilver 9-foot thick, rendering it virtually impregnable. The interior of the foundation contains a huge spherical chamber at its heart, containing the Arcanomantic Gyroscope (see pp. XX); a level containing the now largely disused military wind-dock and repair facility; the city's great levitationals; huge storage vats; the waste recycling and vaporization plant; and the nutrition facility. Gangways of solidified cloudstuff, and levitational disks, riddle the foundation's infrastructure.

### THE CHAINS

Four awesome chains of silver adamant anchor Cabal Magicus to the tropical isle of Phantas far below, and prevent it from drifting. Each link is a stunning

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25-foot in length, and weighs several tons. Monolithic wind-powered winch mechanisms permit the sky-city to ascend or descend the chains at a rate of one foot per second, between altitudes of 500 and 2,000 feet. The chains are deeply rooted into the bedrock of Phantas, and ground the entire structure, providing protection from electrical storms.

### ARCANOMANTIC GYROSCOPE

Right at the gravitational center of the sky-city's foundation, this titanic spherical vault holds an intricate and arcane gyroscope of staggering proportions. Spinning on a constant basis, emitting bursts of magical energy, this stunning amalgam of magical and technomantic prowess, serves to keep Cabal Magicus on an even and steady level, irrespective of any storm effects. A dedicated team of Yassan engineers, led by a Phantasian magician, has been employed to keep the device in working order, following two nearly catastrophic breakdowns.

### STABILIZING FINS

These gargantuan quicksilver-plated fins are set regularly about the circumference of Cabal Magicus, and usually sit flush with the sky-city's foundation. In particularly strong winds, one or more are winched out, and adjusted to the prevailing winds, helping to maintain the structure's stability, along with the Arcanomantic Gyroscope.

### WINDSHIP PRODUCTION FACILITY

This short, broad tower is topped with an intricate framework of lift platforms, each large enough for a full-sized windship, and contains several large warehouses designed for the production and assembly of wind vessels. Given the Phantasians' collapse of fortunes, no new wind vessels have been constructed here since 592 N.A., and the facility has been shut down and abandoned as a result.

### WIND FUNNELS

Located all over Cabal Magicus, these large enchanted mechanisms are employed to harness the natural power of the winds, which the Phantasians capture and fashion into storm crystals. These crystals are then utilized to power the sky-city's Arcanomantic Gyroscope, and levitationals. Water vapor derived from this process is condensed and stored in the city's reservoirs.

### WASTE RECYCLING PLANT

Located in the foundation disk, this facility resembles nothing so much as the experiment of a colossal alchemist, vast and twisting glass tubes carrying bubbling wastes into massive tarnished vats of copper and glass. Here, the organic wastes of the sky-city are treated, providing the gasses that heat the city, distilling the water used for hydroponics and common plumbing, and providing a useful fertilizer for the city's hydroponic gardens. Water is also provided by wind funnels. Nearby, an enchanted furnace serves to recycle scrap metals, and glass is also melted down and reused.



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## NUTRITION FACILITY

Consisting of a number of large antique vats, the sky-city's foodstuffs are gathered and taken here, blended into the bland nutritive elixirs that all Phantasians consume when unable to afford anything else. One glass phial of elixir (just enough sustenance to live on) is provided to each citizen, per day, free of charge.

## STORAGE VATS AND RESERVOIRS

Directly connected to the Nutrition Facility and Waste Recycling Plant, these massive amberglass vats are used to store Cabal Magicus' water and nutritive elixir reserves.

## NOTBALE CITIZENS

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, encounters, or rivals (friendly or otherwise):

### *Sirr of the House Kalavas - Farad Negotiator*

The saturnine Sirr is one of several competing Farad negotiators attempting to convince the Phantasians to grant them permit to set up a resort on Cabal Magicus. Although she is finding the Phantasians more resistant than anticipated, Sirr is nothing if not patient, persistent, and persuasive.

### *Sharcanthus - Cymrilian Scholar*

Every inch the bumbling scholar, the unkempt Sharcanthus is among Cymril's Lyceum Arcanum's most adept researchers. Despite crumpled and unfashionable puce robes, and a shock of unruly green hair, he manages to mumble and muddle his way through life, and has currently been sent to Cabal Magicus to conduct research on windship design, with the aid of the Antiquarian Excelsior.

### *Mio - Yassan Engineer*

Among the small number of skilled Yassan employed on Cabal Magicus, Mio is one of the crew assigned to maintain the Arcanomantic Gyroscope, and performs her job with diligence, and skill commensurate with the high wages she demands. She has a wicked sense of humor out of all character for a Yassan.

### *Xashill - Phantasian Astromancer*

The pragmatic Xashill is very down-to-earth for a Phantasian, and is not afraid to get his hands dirty repairing a ship's levitationals or wind funnel. His robes are often worn and dirty, but he carries his tools everywhere, and is always willing to muck in and lend a hand.

### *Raishata - Phantasian Guardian*

With a long goatee, but no moustache, the experienced Guardian, Raishata, certainly makes an impression. Antique armor polished to perfection, he demands a great deal of less experienced, lower-ranking Guardians, and is disgusted by the recent moves to apprentice from outside the families.

### *Imoricos - Phantasian Dream Merchant*

The sleepy-eyed Imoricos is one of Cabal Magicus' most successful Dream Merchants, and has several wealthy clients in Hadjistan and Zanth. Unfortunately, his profits would be higher, were he not addicted to Dream Essence himself.

### *Khatelyna - Famed Phantasian Model*

Perhaps the most famous of Phantasians, Khatelyna has made her name and fortune by modeling clothes and makeovers for such famed individuals as Darual the Morphosite, Serazzio of Cymril, and Finesse in Zanth. Standing at 7'3" in height, with long slender legs, and an elegant natural beauty, she is almost constantly courted and dated by wealthy and influential men from across the continent.

### *Tik - Ferran Vagrant*

Having discovered that stowing away aboard windships was a rapid way to travel the continent, the opportunistic Tik found herself on Cabal Magicus, and set about exploring and exploiting the largely deserted sky-city, cunningly avoiding the notice of the Phantasians. She now departs and returns, stowed away on various windships, and has considered bringing some family members along for a "holiday".

## THAECIAN ISLES

A string of islands situated in the Azure Ocean off the southwestern coast of Talislanta, the Thaecian Isles consist of dozens of islands in a chain, some little more than rocky atolls sprouting tufts of tropical vegetation.

The islands are surrounded by the Azure Ocean, a great expanse of deep-blue water which compasses the whole of the western and southwestern coasts of Talislanta. This ocean is traversed by the ships of many lands, including Zandu, Aaman, Gao-Din, Imria, Parthene, and Faradun. Sea dragons are not unknown in its currents, and storm demons may be encountered in these waters, particularly during the months of the spring and fall.

### THAECIA

The island after which the group is named, Thaecia is a place of rare and splendid beauty, located at the far-eastern tip of the island string. Here, shimmering waterfalls cascade into shaded lagoons, and fields are filled with flowers swaying in the warm ocean breezes. Myriad species of avir songsters fill the air with subtle melodic variations. To the west,

the other Thaecian Isles curve northwestward in a graceful arc. Visitors from all of the Talislantan races and nationalities are welcomed here, provided they come in peace.

The island is home to an advanced and prosperous people known as the Thaecians. Slender and graceful in stature, they have silvery complexions and hair of a deep shade of blue. Like the Muses of Astar, to whom they may be related, the Thaecians dress in diaphanous robes, and show an aversion to hard work of any sort. They are partial to the nectar of rainbow lotus flowers, a secret distillation of which is used to create "Thaecian nectar," a drink noted for its exhilarating properties.

### THAECIAN CUSTOMS

Renowned throughout Talislanta for their hedonistic appetites, the Thaecians are devout pleasure-seekers who enjoy indulging in all manner of stimulating pastimes. The drinking of Thaecian nectar, the consumption of rare delicacies, and the pursuit of various romantic confluxes occupy much of the Thaecians' leisure hours.

When not relaxing in this manner, each Thaecian practices an art or craft of some sort. Some are weavers of gossamer, and others create the scintillant spheres of amberglass called Thaecian Orbs. These items and others the natives sell to traders at substantial prices, or proffer as gifts to the most respected of their people.

The island's enchanters and enchantresses are highly regarded for the wondrous images and illusions which they confine within glassine Thaecian Orbs. By placing these devices to the forehead, the holder is able to experience unequaled panoramas of color and sound. The Thaecians are also able to store spells within these spheres, which can be released by breaking the orb. The enchanters are also skilled in the making of philtres, powders, rare fragrances, and vivid-colored inks, all of which possess fascinating magical properties.

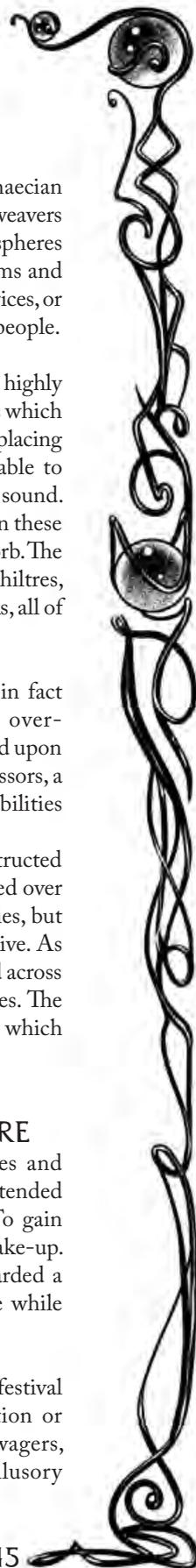
The Thaecians have no army or navy, and in fact disdain violence, which they consider an over-strenuous form of physical activity. They depend upon their enchanters to protect Thaecia from aggressors, a task that has proven to be well within the capabilities of these potent spell-casters.

The islanders live in elaborate pavilions constructed of translucent gossamer fabric, artfully stretched over frameworks of silken cords. They build no cities, but simply erect pavilions wherever they wish to live. As such, small "colonies" of Thaecians are scattered across the main island and certain of the smaller isles. The sole settlement of noteworthy size is Caprica, which is located along the southern coast of the isle.

### THE FESTIVAL OF THE BIZARRE

An annual Thaecian exhibition of oddities and diversions—the Festival of the Bizarre—is attended by diverse peoples from all over Talislanta. To gain entrance, one must be attired in costume or make-up. Wearers of the most outlandish garb are awarded a silver goblet, entitling them to drink for free while at the Festival.

Multi-colored tents and pavilions litter the festival grounds, each housing some sort of attraction or entertainment: a duel of spell casters for wagers, abominations from the Aberrant Forest, illusory



panoramas, romances, sensations, or improbabilities and other things which defy description. The visitor is invited to observe, partake of, or otherwise experience as he or she desires. Rare delicacies from all over the known world are available, as well as more standard fare, at nominal cost.

The climax of the festival is the awards ceremony, where valuable prizes are awarded in several categories. For those entries judged to be the “Most Unique,” “Most Provocative” and “Most Absurd,” the prize is 10,000 gold lumens. The final category, appropriately entitled “Most Bizarre,” carries with it a prize of 100,000 gold lumens. A committee of twelve Thacian enchanters judge the entries, registering varying degrees of approval or disapproval by means of magically exaggerated facial expressions and gestures.

## ORB ISLAND

This isle is uninhabited save for such noxious entitles as water raknids and the spawn of giant sea scorpions. A rare and exotic variety of crystal dendron grows here, the globular “fruit” of which is employed in the making of the finest Thaedan Orbs. Thacian enchanters commonly offer up to 50 gold lumens apiece for these crystalline objects, which they are understandably somewhat reluctant to gather for themselves.

## NEARWAN

This small tropical isle has traditionally been a place of exile for individuals convicted of crimes in Thaecia, including thieves, interlopers, and individuals rendered insane as a result of dabbling in unsafe magical practices. Thaecia claims Nearwan, and has declared the isle off-limits to outsiders.

There are perhaps 40 criminals consigned to Nearwan at any given time, each imprisoned in a web of perdurable force 100 feet in diameter. The convicts subsist on fruits and vegetables, which the exiles are allowed to grow within their enchanted prisons. Thaecians assigned to monitor these pariahs check the facilities daily, either by windrigger or in person.

## GARGANTA

Largest of the Thacian isles, Garganta is a great and irregular mound of volcanic rock. Here live the gigantic stone beings known as Monoliths, who some experts believe to be the most ancient living creatures in the known world.

Generally silent and implacable, Monoliths can sometimes be persuaded to reveal a portion of their knowledge, which is said to be quite comprehensive. Normally a period of several days or even weeks is



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required before a Monolith will deign to respond to any query; less, if the Monolith is one of the few demented sorts who are occasioned to acts of violence. As fewer than one in five of the Monoliths is predisposed to such irrational behavior, the chances of attaining enlightenment at little cost are fairly good. The traveler should beware of wind demons, however, which can be found here in number during certain times of the year.

### PERIDIA

A small and rocky isle, Peridia would be of little interest if not for its massive subterranean grotto, known as Caverncliff. Accessible only by means of an underwater entrance, this cavern is adorned with spectacular ceilings which glitter with encrusted gems and crystals. Climbing the slick and jagged walls is a difficult task, and the rumored presence of sea demons has given many entrepreneurs pause to consider another means of attaining affluence.

### TWIN ISLANDS

These two rocky isles lie off the north coast of Garganta. Each is actually an ages-old Monolith, worn and weathered by untold centuries of wind and water. On rare occasions, the two can be heard conversing with each other, their rumbling voices carrying for many miles in all directions.

It is said that one of these two Monoliths can utter nothing but the truth, while the other—a deviant sort—speaks only lies. Opinions differ as to which one is which, as neither of the two behemoths is particularly talkative, or cooperative with idle visitors.

### DALLA

Like so many of the Thacian Islands, Dalia is a place of scenic and peaceful vistas. Of particular note are a series of bluffs overlooking the ocean, located on the isle's western coast: the view at suns-set is said to be unsurpassed anywhere in the known world. Unfortunately, the occasional presence of neurovores (or "brain leeches," as these small, winged parasites are sometimes termed) can detract from the visitor's appreciation of nature's wonders.

### FARIQUE

There is an enchanted fountain on this mystical island, high atop a peak surrounded by dense jungle, the waters of which are purported to confer continued youth and longevity. A single ounce of the "Waters of Farique" sells for as much as 500 gold lumens in some lands, but is difficult to obtain; the fountain emits but a trickle of liquid, and the dense jungles of the isle are rife with ravengers, aramatus and water raknids.

### EROS ISLE

This sylvan atoll is one of the most beautiful islands in the Azure Ocean. A hedonistic cult of violet-skinned people, the Thiasians (not to be confused with the Thaecians) live here in fanciful dwellings constructed of woven vines, shells and bits of colored coral. The natives enjoy merry-making of all kinds, and are especially fond of their pets—quaal, dractyl, and the like. The Thiasians are extroverted, and justly renowned for their exotic dances and other colorful performances. However, they lack interest in most practical matters.

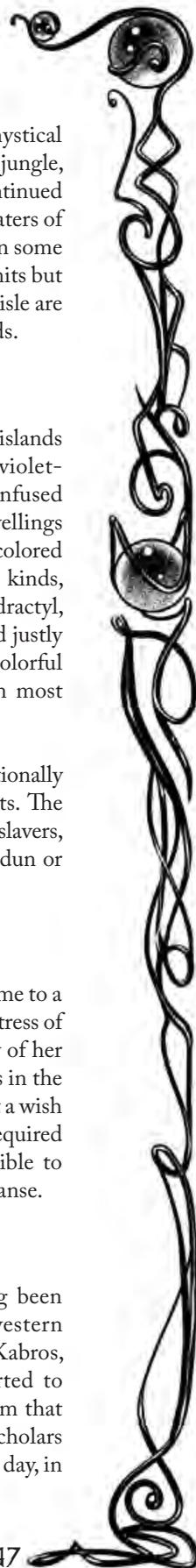
As both male and female Thiasians are exceptionally attractive, they are greatly favored as consorts. The islanders have often been victimized by Imrian slavers, who seek to capture Thiasians for sale in Faradun or the Quan Empire.

### CELLA

This pleasant tropical isle is reputed to be home to a Thacian temptress known only as the Enchantress of the Shoals. Reliable reports verify the potency of her magics, which are perhaps the most efficacious in the region. It is said that the Enchantress will grant a wish in return for a favor. The nature of the favor required by the Enchantress is, alas, a matter impossible to determine short of inquiry in person at her manse.

### SORCERER'S ISLE

This insignificant-seeming island has long been avoided, due to its proximity to the far-western isle of Parthene. It is here that the fabled Kabros, sorcerer-king of ancient Phaedra, is purported to have settled following his hasty departure from that strife-torn land. A few eccentric Talislantan scholars maintain that Kabros lives here to the present day, in an enchanted castle of his own making.

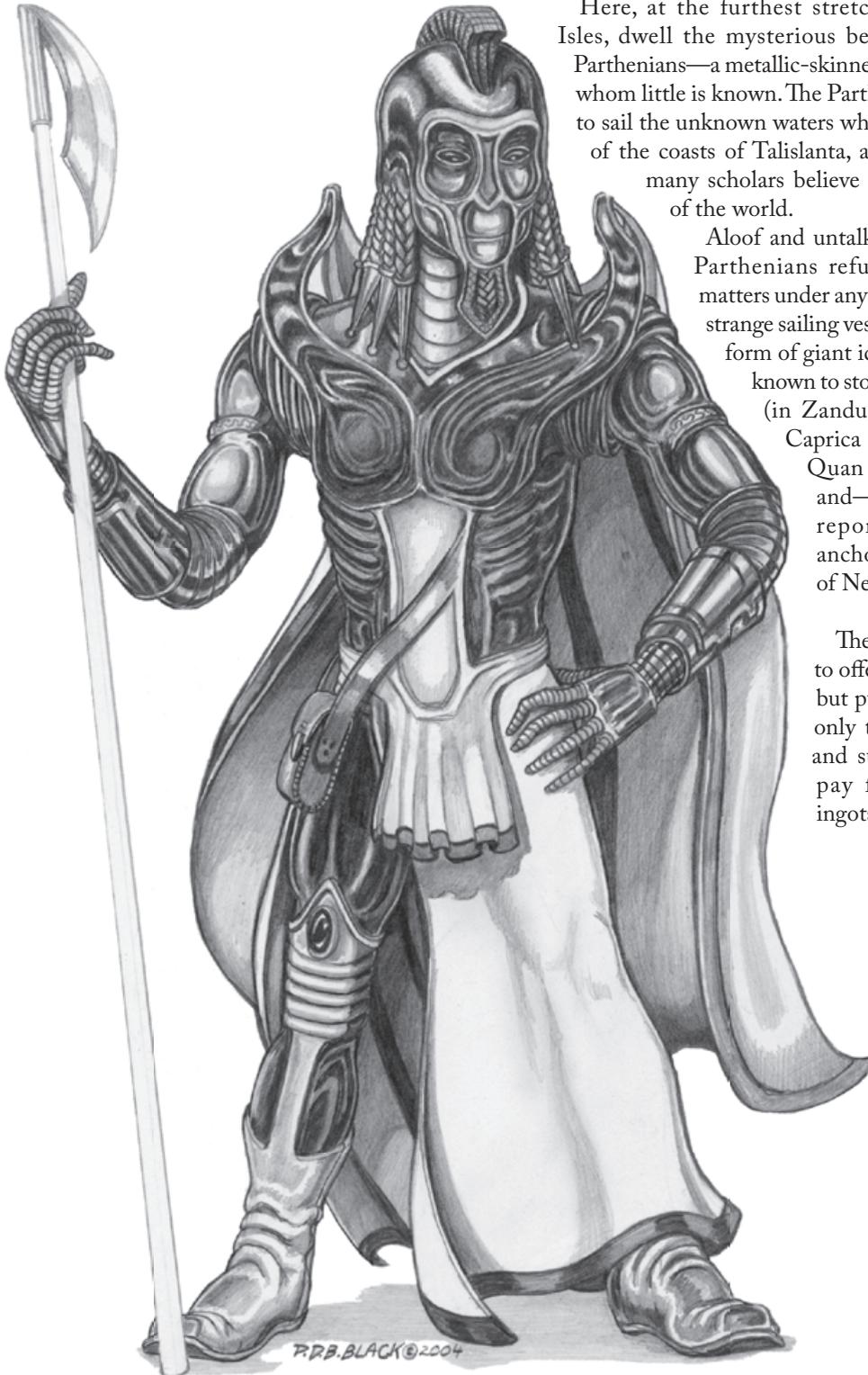


## PARTHENE

Here, at the furthest stretch of the Thaecian Isles, dwell the mysterious beings known as the Parthenians—a metallic-skinned race of seafarers, of whom little is known. The Parthenians are rumored to sail the unknown waters which are beyond sight of the coasts of Talislanta, across regions which many scholars believe lie at the very edge of the world.

Aloof and untalkative by nature, the Parthenians refuse to discuss such matters under any circumstances. Their strange sailing vessels, fashioned in the form of giant idols, are occasionally known to stop in such ports as Zir (in Zandu), Tarun (Faradun), Caprica (Thaecia), Tian (the Quan Empire), Oceanus, and—according to some reports—a mysterious anchorage on the island of Nefaratus.

The Parthenians are said to offer no wares for trade, but put into foreign ports only to obtain provisions and supplies, which they pay for in five-pound ingots of gold and silver.



# CYCLOPEDIA TALISLANTA



## A

**Aabaal:** Aabaal is a coastal settlement located in western Aaman. It is renowned primarily as a place where Orthodoxist cult relics are made, fashioned from iron by a cloistered order of artisan-priests. The artisans of Aabaal are forbidden to deviate from the traditional designs and forms approved by the Hierophant, and are notable for their reclusive habits.

**The Aberrant Forest:** The Aberrant Forest is a bizarre woodland region located in the southwest sector of the Wilderlands of Zaran, and believed to have been created by errant magical forces unleashed during the Great Disaster. Countless varieties of mutated flora and fauna are said to be found here, including talking Mang trees, giant species of slugs and scavenger slimes, weird insect-reptile hybrids, and intelligent plant-creatures.

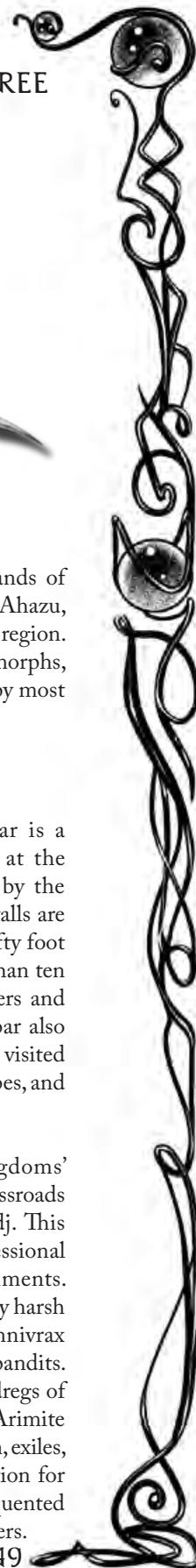
**Acid Plains:** To the east of the Smoke River lies the Acid Plains, a stretch of foul-smelling flatland dotted with pools of bubbling lye, acid, and other noxious compounds. The Ur clans of Urag are responsible for despoiling this region, which for several centuries has served as a dumping ground for waste products derived from the Ur's massive slag furnaces. The plains are largely devoid of life, with the exception of urthrax, crews of Darkling slave laborers (assigned to dump or retrieve wagonloads full of toxic wastes), and abominations (various types of mutated life forms).

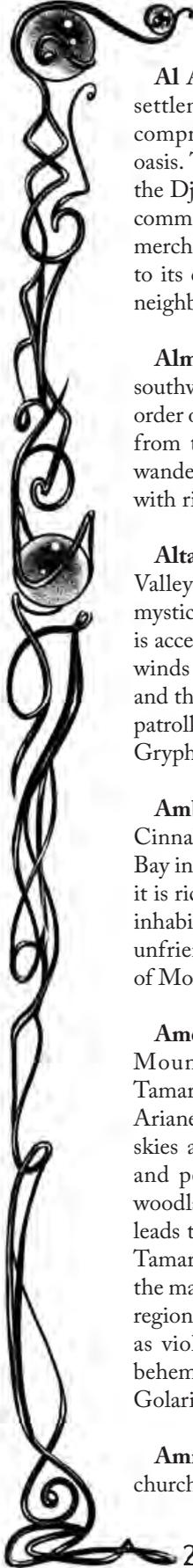
**Ahazu Lands:** The dense eastern junglelands of the Dark Coast are home to the four-armed Ahazu, whose fierce war-tribes range throughout the region. The area is also populated by batranc, pseudomorphs, and malathropes, and so is generally avoided by most sensible folk.

**Ahrazad:** *See Forbidden City of Ahrazad.*

**Akbar, Citadel of:** The citadel of Akbar is a formidable military outpost which stands at the mouth of a deep gorge, barring incursions by the Ur clans of Urag into the land of Arim. Its walls are over forty feet in height, and are flanked by fifty foot towers mounted with fire-throwers. No less than ten thousand Armite knife-fighters, scouts, archers and artillerists man this massive installation. Akbar also serves as a center for trade, and is occasionally visited by Jaka hunters, trappers, Djaffir merchant tribes, and Farad slave-mongers.

**Akmir:** Easternmost of the Seven Kingdoms' wilderlands outposts, Akmir stands at the crossroads between the city states of Maruk and Hadj. This archaic, walled fortress is regarded by professional men-at-arms as the most dismal of assignments. Situated far from civilization, Akmir is beset by harsh climatic conditions, wild beasts (such as omnivrax and malathropes), and clans of marauding bandits. Consequently, the fortress is manned by the dregs of Talislantan society: Jhangaran mercenaries, Arimite knife-fighters, renegade Ur clansmen, half-men, exiles, and so forth. Akmir also serves as a way-station for travelers in need of shelter, and is regularly frequented by Djaffir merchant tribes and Orgovian traders.





**Al Ashad:** Al Ashad is one of the two Djaffir settlements, the other being El Aran (q.v.). It is comprised solely of tents, arranged about a large oasis. The wells located here are heavily-guarded by the Djaffir tribes of Al Ashad, for water is a precious commodity in this region. It is said that the Djaffir merchant tribes prefer this settlement to El Aran, due to its close proximity to the Wilderlands Road and neighboring Carantheum.

**Alm:** Alm is a small village situated along the southwestern coast of Aaman. An especially fanatical order of Orthodoxists, known as the Flagellants, hails from this settlement. They can sometimes be seen wandering the roads of Aaman, beating themselves with ritual flails and chanting Cultist slogans.

**Altan, Maze City of:** In the midst of Tamaranth Valley lies the Maze City of Altan, home to the mystical race of beings known as the Ariane. Altan is accessible by means of a single, hidden trail, which winds through the Amethyst Mountains. The trail and the surrounding forest and mountain regions are patrolled by Ariane scouts and their allies, the avian Gryph clans of Tamaranth.

**Amber River:** The Amber River runs from the Cinnabar Mountains of northern Mog to Rogue's Bay in the Azure Ocean. The river is aptly named, for it is rich in deposits of costly amber crystal. It is also inhabited by skalanx, steely-jawed chang, and other unfriendly organisms. The large Mogroth settlement of Mogran lies downriver, towards the south.

**Amethyst Mountains:** The violet-hued Amethyst Mountains surmount the northern forests of Tamaranth, encircling the Tamaranth Valley and the Ariane Maze City of Altan. Avian Gryphs patrol the skies above, and predatory exomorphs, malathropes and peaceful herds of wild silvermanes roam the woodlands below. There is a single, hidden trail which leads through the Amethyst Mountains and on into Tamaranth Valley. A rare type of violet stone, used in the making of the Ariane's tamar, is found only in this region, as are numerous unusual plant species (such as violet creeper and stranglevine), and predatory behemoths and beastmen from the nearby Plains of Golarin.

**Ammahd:** Ammahd is the Capital of Aaman, a church-state ruled by the Orthodoxist Cult. The city

is part of the old Phaedran Capital of Badijan, which was divided in two following the long and bitter Cult Wars with the Paradoxists of neighboring Zandu. A towering structure, known as the Great Barrier Wall, now stands between Ammahd and the Zandir Capital of Zanth (q.v.).

**Anasa:** Anasa is a fortified Dracartan citadel which stands at the southern edge of the Red Desert, in Carantheum. It is primarily a military outpost, with its own fleet of duneships and a garrison of desert scouts. Some trade is done here, mainly with the Djaffir tribes.

**Andurin:** The Citadel of Andurin is Aaman's largest military installation, and an important center for trade and commerce. The Knights of the Theocratic Order maintain this facility, where a sizable contingent of armored infantry, ogriphant-mounted cavalry, and heavy crossbowmen are stationed. Orthodoxist pilgrims often stop here to visit the Abbeys of Andurin, where acolytes are trained in the tenets of Orthodoxist dogma.

**Arat:** Arat is a large port city which once served as an Aamanian naval installation during the Cult Wars with neighboring Zandu. The facilities are now utilized by Aamanian merchant vessels, which sail along the coasts from the Aaman Canal (to Aamahd) in the north, to the port settlement of Alm in the south. Aamanian sailors will not venture beyond these areas, fearing that to do so will invoke the disfavor of their patron deity, Aa the Omnipotent.

**Ashann, The Old City of:** *See Ashann, Old City of.* The shattered ruins of the Old City of Ashann consist of seven concentric rings, the outermost of which encompasses an area approximately two miles in diameter. At one time, these ancient stone structures may have measured nearly a hundred feet in width, and over forty feet in height. Now, the area lies in ruin, and is a veritable wasteland of parched terrain. Desert scouts from nearby Carantheum claim that the region is largely uninhabited, save for sand demons, winged azoryl, and the mysterious beings known as the Wanderers of Ashann - tall, shrouded figures, who can often be seen walking amidst the ruins. The Wanderers' motives remain unclear: some say that they search the ruins of the Old City of Ashann for some lost artifact or item of occult significance. Others claim that Ashann was once their home, and that the

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Wanderers come here to watch over the remains of their long-departed ancestors.

**Axis River:** The Axis River flows from Lake Venda in the north of Arim to the southern coasts of Jhangara, emptying at last into the Azure Ocean. Though it is very wide, the Axis is somewhat shallow, and can be navigated safely along its entire length only by flat-bottomed skiffs, barges, and the like. The slow-moving waters can be tricky to navigate in spots, due to the presence of sandbars, snags, and (less commonly) giant river kra.

**Azure Ocean:** This great expanse of deep-blue water encompasses the whole of the western and southwestern coasts of Talislanta. It is traversed by the ships of many lands, including Zandu, Aaman, Gao-Din, Imria, Parthene, and Faradun. Sea dragons are not unknown in these waters, and storm demons may be encountered hereabouts, particularly during the spring and fall months.

## B

**Badlands, The:** This sparsely-wooded sector of Yrmania is home to a race of sub-humanoids known as the Wildmen, whose loose-knit tribes may be found wandering aimlessly throughout the area. Yaksha, tundra beast and muskront also inhabit the rugged hills, ravines and tanglewood groves of this wilderness region.

**Banditlands, The:** Bordered to the west by the Red Desert, and to the east by the Zaran Mountains and Volcanic Hills, the Banditlands is the refuge of the Za - a clannish and barbaric race, who claim to be descended from the original inhabitants of the lost kingdom of Zaran. This land of arid hills and scorched dust flats is the bane of merchants and travelers alike, who must suffer the depredations of desert kra, manrak, and opteryx, in addition to marauding parties of Za bandits.

**Baratus Bay:** In ancient times, the waters off the Dark Coast were the exclusive domain of the Baratus - a semi-human race of sea-roving pirates, who terrorized the coastal regions of southern Talislanta for almost two hundred years. The Baratus are long since gone; their ships lay rotting on the ocean floor, their treasures buried in secret places scattered across the shores of the Dark Coast. Ahazu and MoorgWan

(Mud People) vie for control of their former jungle sanctuaries, and giant sea scorpions lurk within the sunken hulks of their once-splendid sea vessels.

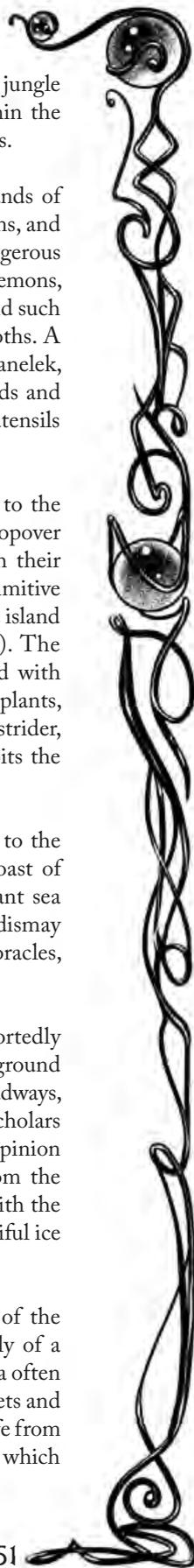
**Barrens, The:** This section of the Wilderlands of Zaran is predominated by salt flats, scrub plains, and craggy hills. It is an extremely wild and dangerous region, inhabited by cannibalistic Enim, earth demons, herds of land lizards, wild mangonel lizards, and such dangerous predators as omnivrax and behemoths. A tribe of primitive humanoids, known as the Danelek, lives here. They mine salt and hunt land lizards and rock urchins, which they trade for food, metal utensils and weapons.

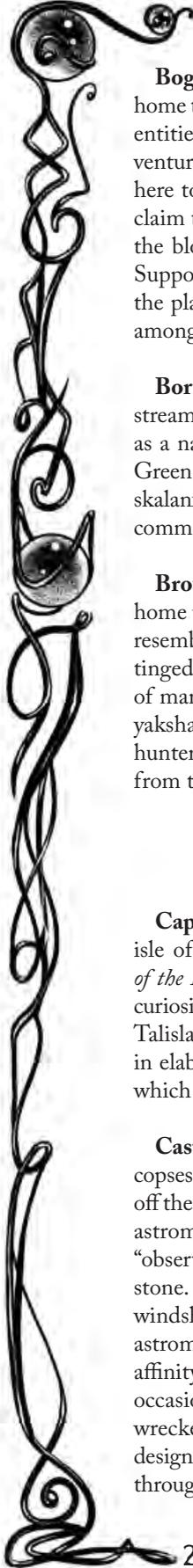
**Batre:** Batre is a tropical island which lies to the south of the Dark Coast. The isle is a popular stopover point for sailors, who come here to replenish their supplies of fresh fruit and water. A race of primitive humanoids, known as the Batreans, lives on the island in the villages of Domal and Lal-Lat (q.v.). The jungles around these two settlements abound with colorful avian species, fruiting and flowering plants, and predatory beasts (such as kaliya, marsh strider, and a tropical species of dractyl, which inhabits the hill regions).

**Bay of Cicz:** The Bay of Cicz lies adjacent to the eastern coast of Faradun, and the western coast of Chana. Mangar corsairs, sea demons, and giant sea scorpions are common to these waters, to the dismay of Farad merchant vessels and Imrian slave coracles, who must also traverse the Bay of Cicz.

**Black Pit of Narandu:** In legend, this purportedly bottomless fissure leads either to a vast underground sea, the entrance to a system of subterranean roadways, or the lower plane of Cthonia; Talislantan scholars seem to be unable to arrive at a consensus of opinion on the matter. Clouds of steam emanate from the depths of the Black Pit, freezing on contact with the frigid air and condensing into a variety of fanciful ice formations.

**Blue Atolls:** These small islands are part of the Crescent Isles chain, and are comprised solely of a brilliant variety of royal blue coral. Rainbow kra often secure their egg sacs to the numerous small inlets and outcroppings of the atolls, where they will be safe from giant sea scorpions and other marine predators, which infest the waters around the atolls.





**Boglands, The:** The murky Boglands of Mog are home to bog devils, aramatus, and similarly unpleasant entities. The only intelligent creatures who regularly venture into the Boglands are Mogroth, who come here to gather mung berries. The Aeriad of Vardune claim that a rare variety of lotus grows in this region, the blossoms of which are a golden amber in color. Supposedly created by the fabled magician Viridian, the plant's properties remain a source of speculation amongst horticulturists and botanomancers alike.

**Boru River:** The Boru is fed by numerous small streams from the Topaz Mountains. The river serves as a natural boundary between the territories of the Green Men and Moorg-Wan (Mud People). Mudrays, skalanx, and various types of fresh-water mollusk are common in these waters.

**Brown Hills:** The Brown Hills of Yrmania are home to the Jaka, a race of humanoids whose features resemble a cross between wolf and panther. The sepia-tinged forests of this region teem with wild beasts of many types, including muskront, wild greymanes, yaksha, werebeasts, nighthawks, and omnivrax. Jaka hunters often transport hides, horn and wild beasts from this region for trade in Arim and Zandu.

## C

**Caprica:** Caprica is the largest settlement on the isle of Thaecia, and the site of the annual "*Festival of the Bizarre*"; an annual exhibition of oddities and curiosities which is attended by visitors from across the Talislantan continent. The inhabitants of Caprica live in elaborate gossamer pavilions, and enjoy a lifestyle which is generally free from worry or strife.

**Castabulan:** Castabulan is a rocky isle, fringed with copses of tanglewood and stunted gall oak, and located off the western coast of Silvanus. A cabal of blue-robed astromancers resides on the island, in an eccentric "observatory" constructed of rough-hewn timbers and stone. Descendants of a group of Phantasians whose windship crash-landed on the isle in the year 447, the astromancers of Castabulan have developed a close affinity to the forces of nature, which they have had occasion to experience first-hand since being shipwrecked long ago. Using instruments of their own design, they monitor changes in the weather, and claim through practice to be able to predict storms, droughts,

and other meteorological phenomena. It is customary for Zandir captains sailing to or out of the port of Zantium to send a messenger to Castabulan, in order to obtain advice on prevailing winds, tides, and so on. The usual procedure is for the messenger to leave a gift (food, wine, or supplies) at the foot of the stairs leading up to the observatory, ring a gong placed conveniently nearby, and wait. A harbinger imp will respond within a moment or two, carrying with it a scroll bearing the astromantic predictions for the day.

**Castlerock:** Castlerock is a high promontory of jagged basalt overlooking the straits of Khazad, and situated on the northern coast of Werewood. The mount resembles a natural stone fortification, and in fact may have been utilized for such purposes during the Forgotten Age. It is thought to be a roosting place for wind demons, and is now avoided.

**Cella:** This sylvan island is part of the Thaecian Isles chain. It is notable for its exotic flora, and for its singular resident - a Thaecian temptress known only as the Enchantress of the Shoals, whose splendid manse stands on a hill overlooking the ocean. Here, it is said, one may petition the Enchantress to grant a wish in return for a favor. It is unclear what manner of favor the Enchantress requires in return for her aid.

**Cerulean Forest, The:** The Cerulean Forest of northern Quan is so named for the plants and trees that grow here, which are resplendent in various shades of blue. It is the practice of individuals who traverse these parts to string sturdy nets above all wagons and campsites; a precaution intended to ward against attacks by metal-plumed shriekers, who attempt to skewer prey by diving down upon them from the treetops. Costly cerulean dyes, rare herbs, and wild beasts (such as muskront, yaksha, and omnivrax) are found in this woodland region.

**Chana River:** The Chana River is a tributary of the River Shan. The murky waters of the Chana are infested with aramatus, skalanx, and hordes of grey ikshada: explaining, perhaps, the Chana Witchmen's extreme reluctance to cross almost any body of water. Many varieties of rare plants and herbs grow along the banks of the Chana River, and Imrian Slavers occasionally venture into these areas in order to obtain stores of fresh provisions; primarily, slugs and giant waterbugs, which the Imrians regard as delicacies.

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**Chasmrock:** Chasmrock is a great canyon located in the Jade Mountains of southern Quan, and flanked on both sides by rows of twisting stone spires. Nagra spirit trackers come here to hunt manrak - horrid manraknid hybrids, the heads of which bring a sizeable bounty in the Quan Empire, Faradun, and other lands. Black diamonds are also found in this forbidding region, where civilized men rarely dare to go.

**Cinnabar Mountains:** The crimson-peaked Cinnabar Mountains extend from the Axis River east to the edge of the Dark Coast, serving as a natural border between the Seven Kingdoms and the swamplands of Mog. Kite-winged batranc glide among the upper altitudes, where a fleet of six Phantasian windships once crashed enroute to Cymril. The vessels, along with their cargoes of dream essence and magical paraphernalia, have never been located.

**Cliffs of Khazad:** The sheer cliffs ringing the coastline of Khazad measure up to two hundred feet in height, and are impervious to all but the most skillful or desperate climbers (level of difficulty ranges from 6-12). Of interest to scholars of the occult are the giant diabolical visages carved into the cliff-sides along the northern coast, which are said to represent various members of the Shaitan hierarchy. A particularly odious clan of horned devil-men have made their homes in the mouths and eye-sockets of these immense stone effigies, further complicating attempts to study the cliffs at close range.

**Cliffs of Bahahd:** These precipitous cliffs have long protected Arim from invasion by the Ur clans of neighboring Urag. They stand over 300 feet in height, and are nearly impossible to scale (level of difficulty: 12). Bands of avian Stryx once lived in caves dug into the face of the cliffs, until they were smoked-out by Arimite knife-fighters.

**Conjuror's Point:** This rocky peninsula of land is named for the legendary magician, Cascal, who was reputed to have kept a small vacation cottage here during ancient times. An homunculus, left untended in one of Cascal's vats, supposedly escaped while the magician was away on business, and laid waste to his cottage. The inhabitants of nearby Zantium claim that this creature still lives on Conjuror's Point to the present day, and blame the homunculus for almost any occurrence for which there is no ready explanation, including incidences of missing persons, lost articles, and acts of violence.

**Coral City of Isalis:** *See Isalis, Coral City of.*

**Coven Island:** Situated off the coast of Khazad, Coven Island appears as a bleak and deserted-looking mound of stone. The isle is pock-marked with caves and tunnels, which some say once served as a hiding place for witches seeking to avoid persecution by the Orthodoxists of Aaman. It is not known if the isle is currently inhabited.

**Crystal Mountains:** The icy peaks of the Crystal Mountains extend from the Lost Sea to the borders of Tamaranth. Impassable except by means of a handful of little-known trails, the mountains are known to contain deposits of blue diamond - the so-called "permanent ice" of legend. Avalanches, ice dragons, frostweres and other hostile entities pose dangers to would-be prospectors.

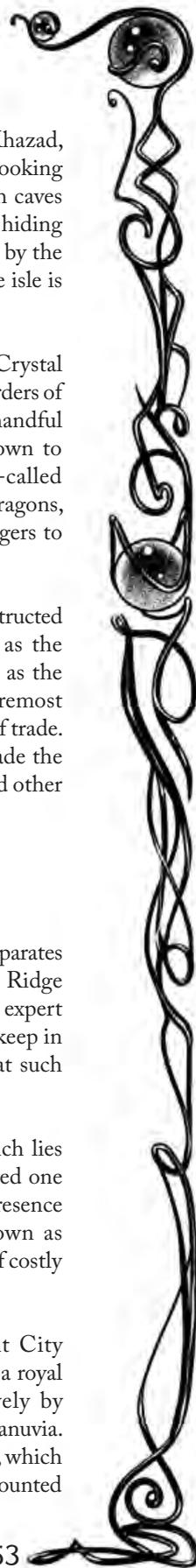
**Cymril, City of:** Cymril is a fabulous city constructed of glittering green glass, generally regarded as the Capital of the Seven Kingdoms. It is notable as the site of the Lyceum Arcanum, Talislanta's foremost institute of magic, and as an important center of trade. Cymril's enlightened views on magic have made the city a popular haven for wizards, magicians, and other practitioners of the arcane arts.

## D

**Dagger Ridge:** This line of knife-like peaks separates Kharakhan from the Shadow Realm. Dagger Ridge is considered impassable to all but the most expert climbers (level of difficulty: 10+). It is wise to keep in mind that satada are expert climbers, and that such creatures are not unknown in these parts.

**Dalia:** Dalia is a scenic tropical island which lies amidst the Thaecian Isles chain. It is considered one of the most splendid places in Talislanta, the presence of a species of small winged parasites (known as neurovores) notwithstanding. Many varieties of costly magical herbs grow wild on the island.

**Danuvia, City-State of:** The independent City State of Danuvia is a sovereign state ruled by a royal Gynecocracy - a government run exclusively by females, under the authority of the Queen of Danuvia. The city state is notable for its mercenary army, which is comprised solely of female archers, lancers (mounted



on aht-ra imported from Djaffa), and swordswomen. A great pageant, known as the Connubial Feast, is held here once each year, for the purpose of finding suitable mates for the Queen.

**Darklands, The:** The mountainous southern realms of Urag together comprise the region known as the Darklands - a hostile wilderland, long since stripped of much of its natural resources by the monstrous Ur clans of northern Urag. Above ground, erosion by wind and rain has rendered the land barren of vegetation, and unable to support all but the most persistent varieties of choke-weed, lichen and briars. Far beneath the earth, crews of Darkling slave-miners toil ceaselessly in the played-out mines, tunneling in search of the few remaining veins of silver and black iron ore. A handful of Darkling tribes fortunate enough to have eluded or escaped the Ur clans still make their home in the cavernous deeps, fearful to emerge from hiding lest they be captured and put to use as slaves. Giant land kra also dwell in these underground regions.

**Dead River:** The Dead River was once the greatest waterway on the continent, running from the Lost Sea (formerly the North Sea) south and east to the borders of Faradun. When the North Sea inexplicably dried up, so did all of its outlets. The Dead River is now a winding chasm; difficult to cross due to its depth (which ranges from ten-to-forty feet in the vicinity of Urag, to as much as a hundred and twenty feet throughout much of its southern end). It is less difficult to traverse the length and breadth of the Dead River, which forms a natural trail extending across much of the continent. Djaffir merchants, Orgovian traders, travelers, and merchant caravans sometimes follow this route. So, alas, do a variety of hostile creatures, including behemoths, malathropes, chasm vipers, Za bandits, and satada.

**Desertlands, The:** This stretch of parched terrain, located to the southeast of the City State of Danuvia, is one of the most desolate regions on the continent. Nothing grows here, for there is no water. The only creatures who can tolerate these environs are horned devil-men and sand demons, neither of which require moisture to survive. Both require sustenance, however, and so hunt each other relentlessly. Scattered across the landscape are the remnants of several ancient civilizations, along with the skeletons of unlucky travelers and their beasts; all almost perfectly preserved due to the excessively hot and dry climate.

**Desolate Hills:** The Desolate Hills of far northern Yrmania are largely uninhabited, save for yaksha, tundra beast, and the ungainly creatures known as lopers. Semi-precious stones can be found in low depressions throughout the hills, a factor which occasionally draws would-be prospectors to this region.

**Devil's Swamp:** The westernmost sector of Mog, known as Devil's Swamp, is a region rich in exotic forms of plantlife, amber, and quaga. Unfortunately, this area is also the domain of bog-devils, who come here to hunt swamp demons and water raknid eggs; the latter, a delicacy amongst bog devils. The Mogroth who live in this area tend to congregate in small settlements located around the mountainous southern peninsula, avoiding the lowland areas.

**Dhar:** Situated in the southern forests of Tamaranth, Dhar is the largest of all Gryph settlements, consisting of nearly a hundred communal eyries nestled high in the treetops. Among these is a large Council Eyrie, where the chieftains of all the many Gryph clans come to meet each year, during the first week of Jhang. The areas around Dhar are regularly patrolled by heavily-armed Gryph scouting parties, who do not take kindly to unauthorized intruders venturing into their territories.

**Dire Woods:** This unpleasant-looking region occupies that portion of Silvanus through which the Necros River runs. It is overgrown with thornwood and hangman's tree, all hung with strands of grey-black spidermoss. The woods bears its name from its awful inhabitants, which include ghosts, malathropes, necrophages and a giant species of river kra, to name but a few. Legends of hidden treasure, supposedly buried here by an extinct race of seafaring marauders, go largely unheeded. Even the Sarista, who love gold as much as any, have no desire to enter the Dire Wood.

**Domal:** Domal is one of two settlements located on the isle of Batre, which lies off the Dark Coast (the other is Lal-Lat; q.v.). The village consists of a number of mud and thatch hovels, currently inhabited by the overlords of the island: the Imrians. The beautiful females of the Batrean species are kept in 3 communal huts under constant guard while the brutish male Batreans have been reduced to only a couple of dozen individual kept for breeding purposes. A living "wall" of thornwood surrounds the entire complex.

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**Donango:** Donango is a beautiful tropical island situated in the Crescent Isles chain. Despite its placid outer appearance, the island literally crawls with sea demons, and is a virtual death-trap. The sea demons of Donango are rumored to keep vast hoards of treasure in their undersea caverns, scavenged from the hulks of sunken vessels.

**Dracarta:** The Crimson Citadel of Dracarta is the Capital of the Desert Kingdom of Carantheum, and a burgeoning center for trade and commerce. The city is famed for its thaumaturges, who constructed its three-fold walls and towering obelisks from solidified sand, plated with liquified red iron. Duneships, land barges and land arks depart from the Crimson Citadel throughout the year, bearing cargoes of red iron and thaumaturgical wares, or travelers headed for destinations in the west. They return laden with goods from many lands: precious stones from Arim, Cymrilian amberglass, crystals from Durne, scintilla from the swamps of Jhangara, and solidified blocks of water from Lake Zephyr, in Astar of the Seven Kingdoms. Dracarta maintains a large army of desert scouts, several hundred Yassan technomancers, and an impressive fleet of duneships. The King of Carantheum lives here, in the Crimson Palace.

**Dragonrock:** This immense, active volcano is the source of the River of Fire, and the Firefalls. Pyro-demons and earth demons are said to inhabit its depths, according to some Talislantan scholars. The local sauran tribes claim that the volcano's exhalations are actually the fiery breath of the dragon Satha, patron mother-deity of the sauran race.

**Dragon's Grave:** This dead volcano, located somewhere in the central region of the Volcanic Hills, is purported to be the fabled "dragon's graveyard" of many a Rajan and Dracartan folk tale. According to legend, it is traditional for all crested dragons to come here when it is their time to die. The interior of the dead volcano is believed to be littered with the remains of untold hundreds or thousands of these great monsters, popularly depicted as having carried their most treasured possessions with them to the grave. Treasure hunters and ivory traders have searched for Dragon's Grave for centuries, and some even claimed to have found the place, and become rich. Others no doubt met an untimely end at the hands of the sauran tribes, raknids, araq, or vasp.

**The Dread Forest:** This dense and tangled region lies adjacent to the Necros River in Werewood. It is a favorite haunt of ghastrs, necrophages and the like, and so is generally avoided except by certain varieties of pseudo-demon; most notably, fiends, who seem in some unknown manner to be drawn to the ancient ruins which lie scattered throughout the northern part of this region.

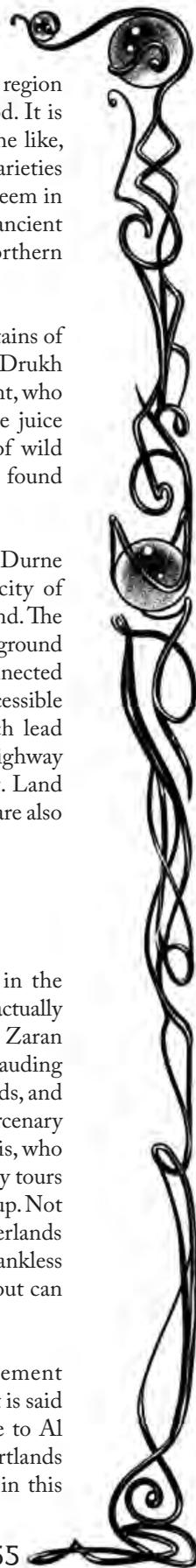
**Druk Land:** The wooded hills and mountains of northern Arim are the domain of the fierce Druk tribes - bestial sub-men of violent temperament, who dye their long hair, beards and skin with the juice of the purple barb-berry. Muskront, herds of wild greymane, exomorphs and yaksha can also be found in this region.

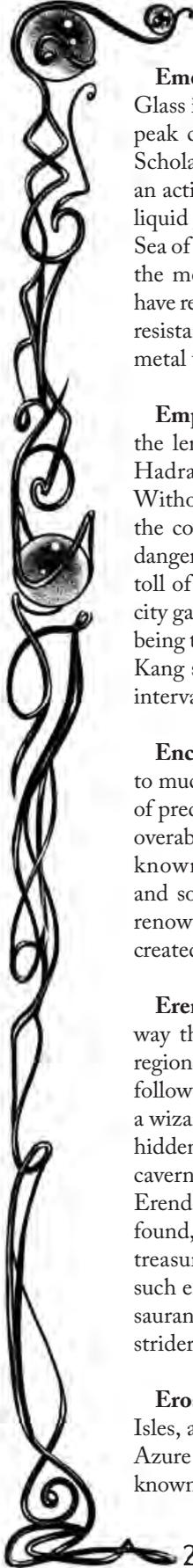
**Durne, Subterranean City of:** Capital of Durne of the Seven Kingdoms, the subterranean city of Durne lies some two hundred feet below ground. The settlement consists of numerous caverns, underground lakes, and moss-lined cave dwellings, interconnected by a complex maze of tunnels. The city is accessible by any of several hidden passageways, which lead deep into the earth, and via an underground highway which stretches across much of the continent. Land kra, darklings, and bands of malevolent satada are also found in these subterranean areas.

## E

**Eastern Borderlands:** The region known in the Seven Kingdoms as the Eastern Borderlands is actually the westernmost edge of the Wilderlands of Zaran - an arid expanse of terrain, inhabited by marauding packs of beastmen, lopers, wild mangonel lizards, and omnivrax. The borderlands are patrolled by mercenary scouts from the outposts of Karfan and Ikarthis, who are often required to complete grueling ten-day tours of the region without outside support or back-up. Not surprisingly, a tour of duty in the Eastern Borderlands is considered one of the most difficult and thankless assignments which a mercenary warrior or scout can draw.

**El Aran:** El Aran is a Djaffir tent settlement identical in most respects to Al Ashad (q.v.). It is said that the Djaffir bandit tribes prefer this place to Al Ashad, due to its isolated location in the desertlands of northern Djaffa. Sand demons proliferate in this region.





**Emerald Mountain:** Standing amidst the Sea of Glass in Faradun, Emerald Mountain is an imposing peak comprised entirely of a strange, greenish ore. Scholars have speculated that the mountain was once an active volcano, from which spewed forth a lake of liquid green crystal (which later cooled, becoming the Sea of Glass). Cymrilian glass miners who have tested the metallic green substance of Emerald Mountain have reportedly found it to be both incredibly hard and resistant to heat; so much so, that smelting the green metal was considered a practical impossibility.

**Emperor's Road, The:** The Emperor's Road spans the length and breadth of the Quan Empire, from Hadran to Ispasia, and from Karang to Vishana. Without doubt, it is the best-maintained roadway on the continent, showing signs of neglect only in the dangerous jungle regions of the south. A minimum toll of five gold lumens is charged at all bridges and city gates, the alleged purpose of these exorbitant fees being to keep the roads clear of riffraff. Heavily-armed Kang sentinels patrol the Emperor's Road at regular intervals.

**Enchanted Grove:** This scenic woodland is home to much of Astar's Muse population. It is largely free of predatory beasts, though the grove suffers from an overabundance of the pestiferous sprite-like creatures known as woodwhisps. Harpwood, whitewood, and sorcerer-tree grow wild in the region, which is renowned for the enchanting musical instruments created by the Muse Esthesians who dwell here.

**Erendor's Way:** This rugged trail, which winds its way through a good portion of the Volcanic Hills region, is the same one which some scholars claim was followed by none other than the legendary Erendor; a wizard of ancient Elande, who is purported to have hidden all his most precious possessions in a maze of caverns located somewhere in the vicinity. Neither Erendor, his possessions, nor his caves have ever been found, possibly due to the distractions which aspiring treasure-hunters must overcome while attempting such endeavors. These include, but are not limited to, sauran war parties, raknids, araq, land dragons, wild striders, and wasps.

**Eros Isle:** This sylvan atoll is part of the Thaecian Isles, and is one of the most beautiful islands in the Azure Ocean. A hedonistic cult of violet humanoids, known as the Thiasians, lives here in fanciful dwellings

constructed of woven vines, sea shells, and bits of colored coral. They are an intriguing people, renowned for their exotic dances, but lacking interest in most practical matters. As both male and female Thiasians are exceptionally attractive, they are greatly-favored as consorts. They have often been victimized by Imrian slavers, who seek to capture Thiasians for sale in Faradun or the Quan Empire.

## F

**Fahn:** Fahn is an island paradise, located amidst the Crescent Isles archipelago and inhabited by a peaceful race of plumed albinoids, known as the Sawila. They live in graceful dwellings made of woven grasses and suspended from the boughs of towering deodars. The Sawila are skilled in a peculiar form of white witchcraft, which enables them to "weave" spells through the use of enchanting songs and dances. It is rumored that the Sawila employ their subtle magics to charm great sea monsters and to effect changes in the weather; both methods being employed to discourage the depredations of Na-Ku cannibals, Mangar corsairs, Imrian slavers, and other hostile entities.

**Fangs of Golarin, The:** These twin spires of rock are located along the western border of the Plains of Golarin. Standing over a hundred feet in height, the "Fangs" are a favored roosting place for ravengers, as they scan the surrounding environs for food.

**Farnir, Ruins of:** Deep in the frigid heartland of Narandu lie the ruins of Farnir, a city frozen under layers of crystalline ice. Before the coming of the Ice Giants, Farnir was reputed to have been the site of an enlightened civilization, steeped in the arts of magic and alchemy. No less a personage than the great sorcerer Korak claimed to have visited here, and was reportedly impressed by the talents of the Farnir magicians. Apparently, these talents did not extend into the realm of military defense, and Farnir was overrun by the advancing Ice Giant hordes. The Mirin of L'Haan claim that some of the Farnir magicians are still alive, frozen in stasis by the extreme cold.

**Far Reaches, The:** Northernmost of the frozen territories of Narandu, the Far Reaches are inhabited mainly by frostweres, lopers, and ice dragons. Parts of the area are believed to have once been underwater, perhaps explaining the legends of shipwrecked vessels frozen in solid blocks of ice.

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**Far Seas, The:** The body of water known as the Far Seas stretches across a vast area, from the island of Nefaratus to the northern tip of the Quan peninsula, and far to the east. Uncharted at its southern and easternmost extremes, the Far Seas are often wracked by tropical storms, particularly during the spring months. Giant sea scorpions, sea demons, and other malefic entities are known to infest these waters.

**Farique:** The mystical island of Farique is part of the Thaecian Isles chain, which stretches in a three hundred mile arc across the western reaches of the Azure Ocean. There is an enchanted fountain on the island, located high atop a peak surrounded by dense jungle, the waters of which are purported to confer continued youth and longevity. A single ounce of the "*Waters of Farique*" sells for as much as five hundred gold lumens in some lands, but is said to be notoriously difficult to obtain; the "fountain" emits but a trickle of liquid, and the jungles around the isle are rife with drac, aramatus, and water raknids. Furthermore, the fountain seems to draw winged ravengers from the coasts of Mog, a fair percentage of which one may assume to be both youthful-looking and long-lived.

**Fells, The:** The Fells are arguably the most dangerous and foreboding of Mog's numerous swamplands, being inhabited by such menacing entities as kaliya, swamp demons, alatus and giant mantrap. Dealers in contraband sometimes send agents into this region to obtain costly black lotus, and the intoxicating pollen of the mantrap (known as euphorica).

**Fetish Island:** Part of the Crescent Isles archipelago, Fetish Island is named for the many hundreds of stone images and totems which can purportedly be found in the jungles of the interior region. Most of these devices are one-to-two feet in height, and weigh up to about thirty pounds. The cannibalistic Na-Ku of neighboring Pana-Ku claim that these stone fetishes have magical properties (specifically, that the totems are "alive", and can speak in tongues), and favor them greatly. The isle is infested with virulent predatory and parasitic species, however, including grey ikshada, urthrax, and alatus.

**Firefalls:** The River of Fire (q.v.) terminates in the spectacular natural phenomenon known as the Firefalls - a torrent of liquid flame, cascading downwards into a deep chasm. Viewed at night from the surrounding Volcanic Hills, the Firefalls are said to present a most

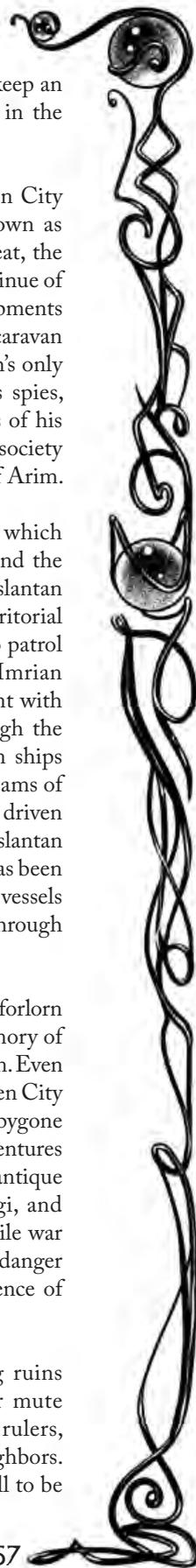
impressive display. Sight-seers are advised to keep an eye out for pyro-demons, which often swim in the River of Fire.

**Forbidden City of Ahrazad:** The Forbidden City is home to the ruler of Arim, a recluse known as the Exarch. Here, in his lofty mountain retreat, the Exarch lives in seclusion, surrounded by his retinue of bodyguards, concubines and royal wizards. Shipments of gold and gemstones are brought here by caravan once each month. Aside from this, the Exarch's only contact with the outer world is through his spies, who keep him apprised of the machinations of his most feared enemies: the Revenants, a secret society of assassins who may well be the true rulers of Arim.

**Forbidden Straits:** The narrow waterway which lies between the southern Chana peninsula and the island of Nefaratus is largely avoided by Talislantan sailors, and for good reason. These are the territorial waters of the Black Savants of Nefaratus, who patrol the area in ominous, black-hulled vessels. Imrian slavers - who, by virtue of a secret arrangement with the Black Savants, are allowed to pass through the Forbidden Straits - claim that the Nefaratan ships are made of black iron, and are propelled by teams of night demons shackled with silver chains and driven on by giant Enim taskmasters. While most Talislantan scholars question the veracity of such tales, it has been reliably reported that the Black Savants' dark vessels are impervious to fire, and appear to move through the water at astounding speeds.

**Forgotten City:** The name of this ruined and forlorn metropolis has long since faded from the memory of Talislantan scholars, hence its current appellation. Even so, the majestic spires and domes of the Forgotten City still conjure up visions of the grandeur of a bygone age, and continue to attract explorers and adventures intent upon unearthing its ancient treasures: antique seeing stones, faded scrolls, stone sarcophagi, and other valuable artifacts. The proximity of hostile war bands from neighboring Rajinnar poses some danger to would-be archaeologists, as does the presence of sand demons and predatory satada.

**Four Nations, Ruins of :** The crumbling ruins of these four once-mighty city states offer mute testimony to the madness of their former rulers, each of whom coveted the lands of his neighbors. The resulting "War of Four Nations" caused all to be



destroyed. Barbaric hordes from old Torquar rode in to finish off the survivors, and to steal as much as they could carry on their war-beasts. The four nations faded quickly into obscurity; no one living even remembers the names of these archaic places. According to the Phaedran scholar, Erastes, these ruins hold such treasures as “the gilded tomb of Irkhan, the mysterious elixirs of immortality, the Nine Books of Knowledge”, and more. The areas around the ruins are the domain of numerous small packs of beastmen.

## G

**Gao-Din:** This rocky isle was once the site of a Phaedran penal colony. After the fall of the Phaedran Dynasty, the prisoners took over the island and converted the facilities into a makeshift settlement, now known as the Rogue City of Gao-Din. Sea Rogue vessels from Gao-Din sail the waters around Mog, and pose a hazard to merchant ships attempting to pass through the area. A large colony of sea demons, purportedly on good terms with the inhabitants of the Rogue City, is located nearby.

**Garganta:** Largest of the Thaecian Isles, Garganta is a great and irregular mound of volcanic rock. The island is populated by Monoliths - gigantic entities of living stone, who are believed to be among the oldest creatures in the world. Wind demons also come here at certain times of the year to engage in their violent courtship and mating rituals (the gift of a live humanoid is an offering which few female wind demons can refuse, or so it is said).

**Ghostlands, The:** The arid and inhospitable region known as the Ghostlands lies in the northern part of the land of Faradun. No living creatures can tolerate the harsh climate of this forbidding locale, with the result that only necrophages, shadow wights, disembodied spirits, and pseudo-demons are to be found in these parts. The Farad claim that ancient crypts and barrows, rumored to contain the cursed remains and trappings of a vanished race of necromancers, are hidden beneath the scorching sands.

**Gnorlwood:** The Forest of Gnorlwood is located in the south central region of Werewood, adjacent to the Zandir border. It is one of the oldest woodlands in Talislanta, its once-tall trees now stooped and withered with age. The softly sloping hillocks of

this area are home to the Gnorls; an ancient race of humanoids which many scholars regard as the earliest known ancestors of the Gnomekin of Durne. The Gnorls of Gnorlwood live in underground hovels, and are generally reclusive by nature - a reasonable attitude, as the surrounding woods abound with banes, mandragore, and giant shathane.

**Gorge at Akbar, The:** This deep chasm runs through the Onyx Mountains, forming a natural passage from Urag to Arim which is blocked only by the Arimite citadel of Akbar (q.v.). Arimite scouts patrol the heights above the gorge, alert for signs of intrusion by the warlike Ur clans and their allies.

**Gramarye Isles:** These four tiny islands, together constituting the easternmost link of the Crescent Isles chain, are swathed in crimson jungle. A primitive cult of seers and diviners, known as the Orad, once made its home here. They are believed to have been hunted to extinction by a great colony of sea-scorpions, the only traces of their presence being the strange paintings found in numerous caves scattered throughout the isles.

**Great Barrier Wall, The:** Sixty feet in height and over forty miles long, the Great Barrier Wall stands between the two rival nations of Aaman and Zandu. An event known as the Clash of Champions is held atop the wall once each year, attracting spectators from across the continent.

**Great Morass, The:** The Great Morass is a wild and treacherous swampland considered by the Mogroth to be utterly impassable. Individuals who attempt to traverse this region on foot sink swiftly below the murky waters. Passage by boat is made impossible by the presence of skalanx, and kite-winged batranc patrol the skies overhead. The reputed presence of an island of solid amber, situated in the midst of the Morass, is not enough to lure any remotely sensible person to this region.

**Green Lagoon:** The Green Lagoon is a swirling quagmire - a sinkhole, into which the waters of the east Sascasm River are slowly and irresistibly drawn. Many different types of creatures visit this region to drink from the Lagoon, including banes, werebeasts, malathropes, ravengers, and shathane. More than a few fall prey to skalanx, which lurk below the surface, anchored by their tails to the roots of massive swamp trees.

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**Greylands, The:** The barren hills and steppes known as the Greylands were once the domain of numerous wild sub-men tribes, the scattered descendants of which are rumored to still remain in some secluded parts of this region. The Kang deny that any such tribes still exist, and claim that the only creatures inhabiting the Greylands are wild tarkus, striders, durge, winged azoryl, and perhaps a handful of crested dragons. Kang scouting parties keep watch along the western borders of this region, alert for signs of Sauran invaders.

**Grod:** Grod is one of three large fortified settlements located in Urag, the other two being Krag and Vodruk. Each is constructed of cracked stone, earth, and rough-cut timbers, the rude structures enclosed within an outer wall topped with iron spikes. Surrounding the entire settlement is a ditch filled with raw sewage and crawling with scavenger-slimes, urthrax and other vermin. The Ur consider it great sport to lower captives into their "moat" by means of a rope and winch mechanism, using the victims as "bait" to catch whatever may be lurking below the surface of the water. Stationed at any of the three Ur settlements will be an Ur-king (commanding a personal retinue of several hundred Ur clansmen), ten warlords (each commanding a force of at least a hundred clansmen); a number of stryx scouts, several battalions of darkling slaves, and a contingent of beast-drawn siege towers, fire-throwers, rams, and slave-powered scourges.

**Groves of Serenity:** The beautiful moss gardens, topiary mazes and shaded arbors of the groves are the product of untold generations of Mandalan savants, who created these patiently-crafted settings for use as places of relaxation and meditation. The area is still tended by Mandalans, though it is seldom used anymore due to the Quan, who have outlawed such practices.

**Gryph Lands:** The great forests of Tamaranth are the traditional territories of the winged Gryph clans, whose tree-top settlements are situated throughout this dense woodland region. Innumerable species of avian creatures reside here, or migrate to Tamaranth during the fall months. The Gryphs offer them protection, and in return receive information gathered from across the continent. Exomorphs,

malathropes and shathane also dwell in this region, though their numbers are kept in check by Gryph hunting parties.

**Gulf of Mog:** This wide body of water borders the swamplands of Mog and the Dark Coast. The gulf is primarily the province of Imrian slavers and Sea Rogues from the island of Gao-Din. Still, skittish Zandir and Farad captains occasionally brave these waters, preferring to follow the coastline rather than venture into the open sea. Giant zaratan and skalanax are sometimes spotted in the gulf, and sea demons are not uncommon here.

**Gulf of Quan:** The blue waters of the Gulf of Quan are seldom sailed, particularly since the building of the Imperial Canal. Sunra dragon barques still patrol the northern end of the River Shan, but rarely venture into the bay itself, which is now frequented mainly by sea dragons and giant sea scorpions.

**Gulf of Silvanus:** This narrow and winding inlet is considered unnavigable, due to the presence of maelstroms and unpredictable cross-currents. Ancient sea dragons are believed to sleep in the depths, another reason why Talislantan sailors prefer to steer clear of these waters.

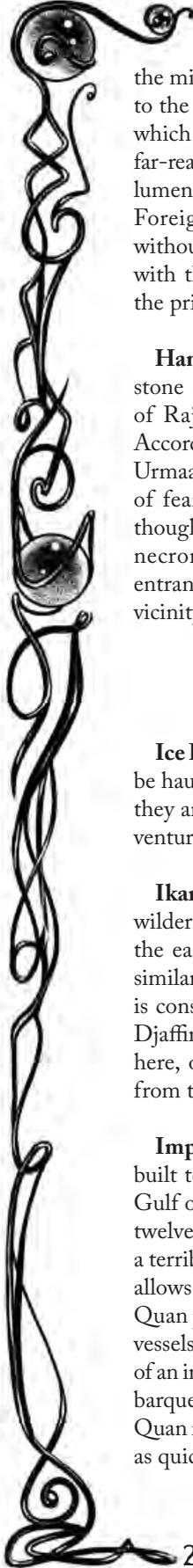
## H

**Hadj, City-State of:** The independent City State of Hadj is located south of Djaffa, in the Wilderlands of Zaran. It is home to the Hadjin, a fabulously wealthy people of lofty and elevated airs. The Hadjin Ruins, situated adjacent to the city, are a great attraction to itinerant adventurers, who come here in droves to tour or explore the ruins (the Hadjin charge a fee for such privileges, which do not come cheaply).

**Hadjin Ruins:** The area comprising the Hadjin Ruins is actually a vast burial ground littered with stone towers, each a mausoleum, in which are interred the remains of the Hadjin's early ancestors. The Hadjin provide tours of the ruins, and allow individuals to explore the mausoleum towers should they choose to do so. In either case, a fee must be paid to the City State of Hadj.

**Hadran, Citadel of:** The Citadel of Hadran is the largest military installation in the Quan Empire, housing thousands of Kang troops, strider mounts, tarkus and support personnel. Constructed of marbled green and black stone from the nearby Jade Mountains, the fortress serves as the headquarters of





the mighty Overlord - ruler of the Kang, and advisor to the Emperor of Quan. Hadran overlooks a bridge which spans a yawning chasm, allowing access to the far-reaching Quan Empire. A toll of one hundred gold lumens is charged to all visitors of foreign extraction. Foreign merchants cannot do business in Quan without an official permit; a leaden tablet stamped with the Emperor's seal, which can be obtained for the price of one thousand gold lumens.

**Hand of Urmaan:** This hundred and fifty-foot tall stone configuration, located in the Jade Mountains of Rajinnar, resembles a massive, grasping hand. According to the Rajans, this oddity was created by Urmaan, the first ruler of Rajinnar, and a necromancer of fearsome capabilities. Its purpose is unknown, though some say that the hand serves to ward the necromancer's underground sanctum, the secret entrance to which may be hidden somewhere in the vicinity.

## I

**Ice Peaks, The:** These frozen shards of ice are said to be haunted by frost demons. As far as anyone knows, they are the only creatures who possess any desire to venture into this region of Narandu.

**Ikarthis:** Westernmost of the Seven Kingdoms' wilderlands outposts, Ikarthis is situated adjacent to the eastern border of Kasmir. In most respects it is similar to the outpost of Akmir (q.v.), though Ikarthis is considerably less-isolated, and better-provisioned. Djaffir merchants and Orgovian traders often stop here, offering fresh provisions, mounts, and goods from the east.

**Imperial Canal:** This man-made waterway was built to allow access to the lake city of Tian, via the Gulf of Tian and the Far Seas. It was constructed in twelve years by large crews of Vajra slave laborers, at a terrible cost in lives. A system of locks and channels allows traffic on the canal to be strictly monitored. Quan pleasure barges, Sunra fishing vessels, and other vessels utilize the Imperial Canal, but the waterway is of an insufficient size to accommodate the large dragon barques of the Sunra - an oversight attributed to the Quan rulers, who insisted that the canal be constructed as quickly as possible.

**Imria:** Imria is a large island cloaked in dense jungle and swampland, lying off the southeast coast of Mog. A race of amphibious humanoids, known as the Imrians, lives here in the lagoon settlement of Kragan (q.v.). Elsewhere, the isle is infested with virulent lifeforms, including kaliya, horned apes, kra, crag spiders, man-eating plants, and swamp demons.

**Inland Sea, The:** The Inland Sea is located in the south central region of the Quan Empire, to the north of the jungle outpost of Vishana. Sunra dragon barques and fishing vessels ply this formidable expanse of jade green waters, which is fed by the River Shan. Here are found such exotic creatures as moon fish (a delicacy, reserved by law for the enjoyment of the Quan ruling class), nar-eels (sought for their ivory horns), silveray, spiny-shelled echinomorphs, and a variety of giant lake kra. The Coral City of Isalis, home of the Sunra, lies at the center of the Inland Sea.

**Irdan:** Irdan is a massive stone citadel which serves as the Capital of the desert kingdom of Rajinnar. Here the Khadun (ruler of the Rajan nation and Necromancer-Priest of the Black Mystic cult) resides within his sanctum in the Temple of Death, protected by his legions of fanatical followers: Rajan Necromancers, the elite Torquar, giant Shadinn warriors, and the nomadic Aramut, Zagir, and Vird tribes. Gold, mined in great quantities from the Jade Mountains, is smelted into ingots in Irdan, where it is used to purchase weapons and k'tallah from Faradun. Aside from the Farad, the city is closed to foreigners.

**Iron Citadel, The:** The Iron Citadel is a ruined fortress of ancient and unknown origins, inhabited by a cabal of other-dimensional entities known as the Malum (or, in popular usage, "Shadow Wizards"). Its towers have eyes of carved obsidian, which constantly scan the surrounding environs of the Shadow Realm. Various strange and unnatural creatures roam the area, including fiends, monitor imps, sardonicus, and abominations.

**Ironwood:** The forest of Ironwood occupies the western portion of the land of Durne. The steel-grey ironwood trees which grow here are much-favored for use in heavy construction, for the wood is nearly as tough and resistant to damage as black iron. The presence of malathropes and shathane above ground, and giant land kra below ground, has deterred attempts to take advantage of this natural resource.

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**Isalis, Coral City of:** Accessible by three outlets of the River Shan, the Coral City of Isalis is located in the midst of the Inland Sea. A natural reef serves as the foundation for the city, which is fashioned of pink, blue, red, and green varieties of coral. Isalis is home to a semi-aquatic race of humanoids, known as the Sunra. Slaves of the Quan Empire, the Sunra keep a great armada of dragon barques, merchant skiffs, and fishing boats moored at Isalis, which serves as an important naval facility. Sunra sea-farmers work the shallows around the city, harvesting crops of seaweed, algae, and edible mollusks. Moonfish, considered a great delicacy by the Quan, are also found here. The "streets" of Isalis are actually narrow waterways, which course in and around the long rows of elegant coral structures.

**Isle of Ill Fortune:** This rock-bound island is part of the Crescent Isles chain, and is believed to be uninhabited. Sailors have long considered the island to be cursed, though none recall precisely why this is so. The fact that the waters surrounding the Isle of Ill Fortune are the traditional mating grounds of giant sea scorpions may have something to do with this age-old superstition.

**Isle of Lost Souls:** This frozen isle, situated off the north coast of Khazad, is purported to be inhabited by the night demon, Thanus, and a number of his followers. It is believed that Thanus has a penchant for collecting souls, which his assistants gather by night and bring back to their island retreat. Here, Thanus stores the "lost souls" in enchanted amberglass vials, which he keeps on a shelf for his amusement.

**Ispasia:** Tucked away in the far northern corner of the Quan peninsula, Ispasia is a minor city state under the control of the Quan Empire. The local indigenes, known as the Ispasians, are mercantilists by trade. They perform a useful service to the Empire by transporting goods of all sorts across the length and breadth of Quan. Ispasian officials also help to regulate trade with other lands, and serve as economic advisors in most of Quan's cities and settlements. The Ispasians are loyal -- though hardly fanatical -- servants of the Empire, and perform their duties efficiently, and without complaint. In return, the Quan allow Ispasia a surprising degree of autonomy. Though a large garrison of Kang is stationed in the city state, the Ispasians are generally permitted to govern themselves (within the limits of Quan law).

## J

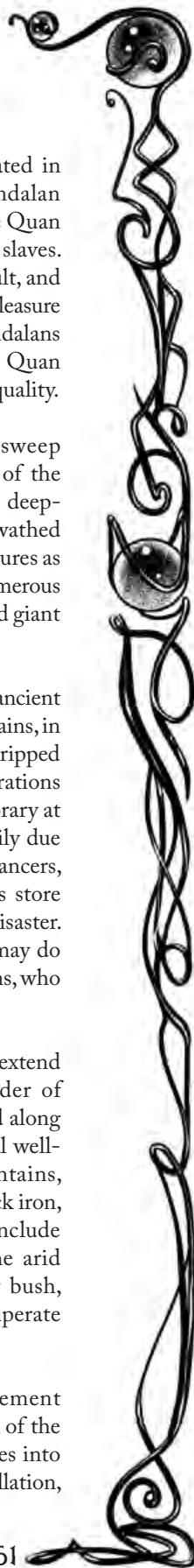
**Jacinthe:** The coastal city of Jacinthe, located in eastern Quan, was once the center of Mandalan culture. It is now primarily a resort area for the Quan ruling class, whom the Mandalans serve as slaves. Kang Dragon troops guard the city from assault, and Sunra warships patrol the harbor, where Quan pleasure barges are sailed. Articles produced by the Mandalans of Jacinthe are highly valued throughout the Quan Empire and beyond, due to their exceptional quality.

**Jade Mountains:** The Jade Mountains sweep northwestwards in an arc, from the borders of the Jungles of Chana to the Volcanic Hills. The deep-green peaks of these ancient mountains are swathed in thick vegetation, and inhabited by such creatures as batranc, ravengers, Nagra spirit trackers, and numerous species of tropical birds, poisonous serpents, and giant insects.

**Jalaad, Ruins of:** The crumbling ruins of the ancient city of Jalaad are located near the Zaran Mountains, in the Wilderlands of Zaran. Though long since stripped of most of its hidden treasures by many generations of Yitek tomb-robbers and Za bandits, the Library at Jalaad remains relatively intact. This is primarily due to the efforts of a cabal of Callidian cryptomancers, who have endeavored to protect the facility's store of iron tablets since the time of The Great Disaster. Individuals who wish to explore the Library may do so only under the watchful eyes of the Callidians, who deal sternly with looters and vandals.

**Jaspar Mountains:** The Jaspar Mountains extend in an irregular arc from the southern border of Kasmir, around the eastern end of Cymril, and along the northern border of Astar. There are several well-traveled trails leading through these mountains, which are known to contain veins of silver, black iron, tin and copper ore. Local flora and fauna include sponge-bristle, sickleweed, and satada in the arid northern reaches, and tanglewood, scimitar bush, malathrope and exomorph in the more temperate southern regions.

**Jhangkin:** Jhangkin is a Jhangaran settlement situated on the banks of the westernmost fork of the Axis River, at the point where the Axis empties into the Azure Ocean. It is primarily a military installation,



where Jhangaran mercenaries gather, awaiting their next assignments. The swamps around Jhangkin abound with water raknids, marsh striders, batranc and bog-devils, and are entered only at risk.

**Jhangkin Bay:** This irregularly-formed waterway lies at the mouth of the western fork of the Axis River. Deposits of silt and sediment, accumulated over the course of many thousands of years, have rendered the waters unsafe except as regards the smallest and lightest ships. Flat-bottomed Aeriad barge forts are able to ply these waters, though the appearance of these vessels so far to the south is a rare circumstance.

**Junglelands, The:** Ringing the southern coast of Faradun, the Junglelands is one of the most hostile regions on the continent. The climate is abysmally hot and humid; the terrain, alternating between flooded swampland and mountainous jungle. All sorts of unpleasant creatures are found here, including winged apes, malathropes, alatus and aramatus. Despite the considerable danger, Farad monopolists send slave-crews into the depths of the Junglelands, in order to harvest k'tallah - an insidious narcotic plant which brings high prices on the Black Market in Tarun.

## K

**Kang-Tu:** Kang-Tu is a walled fortress located at the furthest northern reaches of the Greylands, adjacent to the Cerulean Forest. It is primarily important as a base for Kang trackers, who regularly patrol the roads and trails around the borderland areas. There is some trade here with merchants from Kangir and Karang, but not much; Kang-Tu has long been a favorite target of the Saurans, who periodically storm the installation from their hideouts in the Volcanic Hills.

**Kangir:** Kangir is a fortified Kang outpost located at the eastern edge of the Greylands. It is essentially a training and supply facility, where great siege-engines are built, maintained, and refurbished. Several large garrisons of Kang warriors (predominantly strider cavalry) are stationed here, along with a sizeable contingent of Vajra engineers and artilleryists. Merchants and traders from across the Empire often stop here, enroute to or from Karang, Hadran, or the Capital of Tian.

**Karang:** Karang is a walled citadel located at the foot of the Opal Mountains, in northern Quan. Much of Quan's Vajra population lives here, serving as slave laborers in Karang's vast mining installation. Ingots of black iron, silver, and gold are shipped from here by caravan to Shonan and Tian, along with chests of precious and semi-precious stones. A large contingent of Kang troops is stationed at Karang, its purpose being to guard the citadel and its mining facilities from incursions by the barbaric Harakin tribes, and such predatory creatures as omnivrax, behemoths, and giant burrowing land kra.

**Karansk:** Karansk is a Jhangaran settlement constructed of rude axe-hewn timbers, sharpened like stakes and lashed together with ropes of braided hemp. The inhabitants of Karansk are mostly mud-miners, who make a living by dredging the riverbanks and swamplands for sapphires, amber and gold. The mud-mines of Karansk are dangerous places - virtual quagmires, teeming with aramatus (armored leeches), urthrax, and other vermin.

**Karfan:** Karfan is a small, walled fortress constructed in the northern region of the Eastern Borderlands by the Seven Kingdoms confederation of states. Like Akmir, to the southeast, it is a wilderlands outpost manned primarily by mercenary scouts and warriors. Facilities for travelers are woefully limited, however, and traders visit here only infrequently.

**Kasir:** Kasir is a wealthy Kasmir settlement, notable for its trapsmiths, who are considered unsurpassed in skill. The trapsmiths of Kasir are no doubt aware of their reputation, as evidenced by the exorbitant fees which they charge for their services (a minimum of one hundred gold lumens per day, plus expenses).

**Kasmir, City of:** The city of Kasmir is the capital of Kasmir of the Seven Kingdoms, and an important center for commercial and financial ventures of all sorts. The populace works and lives in windowless stone towers, intended to safeguard their considerable stores of wealth. The folk of Kasmir are shrewd money lenders and appraisers, and bear a well-deserved reputation as misers.

**Kasraan, Ruins of :** The Ruins of Kasraan lay to the southeast of the City State of Danuvia, in the area known as the Desertlands of Zaran. Though the city itself has been reduced to a shambles by the

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ravages of wind and time, the catacombs located below the ruins remain largely intact. These subterranean haunts contain the petrified remains of the kings and queens of ancient Kasraan, sealed within crypts of solid stone. Gaining entrance to these vaults is said to be a formidable task: the Kasraanians, early ancestors of the Kasmir, took pains to safekeep the bodies of their monarchs from tomb-robbers and other entrepreneurial types. The Yitek, in fact, consider the effort required to gain access to the Kasraanian crypts to be barely worth the reward.

**Khan Mountains:** The sheer peaks of the Khan Mountains extend across the southern end of the Quan peninsula. Fierce tribes of nomadic half-men, known as the Mondre Khan, inhabit this region, as do giant shathane, shriekers, and omnivrax. The Khan Mountains remain a largely untapped source of minerals and precious stones.

**Kharakhan Ruins:** Blackened by firestorms, the cyclopean ruins of Kharakhan are among the most remarkable and strangely disquieting sights extant upon the Talislantan continent. The megalithic structures, some towering over four hundred feet in height, appear to have been built by and for a race of veritable giants. The same is true of artifacts and objects recovered from the ruins: silver coins four inches in diameter, ten-foot long swords, rings the size of bracelets. Though scholars have long been fascinated by the Kharakhan Ruins, thorough archaeological research remains a remote possibility for the foreseeable future. Bands of marauding Araq prowl the ruins and surrounding environs, as do Kharakhan giants - monstrous creatures who may be descended from the original inhabitants of this region.

**Kharakhan Wastes:** This ruined expanse of barren wastes is inhabited by the Araq, a misanthropic hybrid species combining the worst attributes of saurans and men. Kharakhan giants sometimes pass through these areas, searching the towering ruins for usable weapons and gear or hunting for land dragon and other large prey.

**Kiru River, The:** The Kiru runs from the foot of the Topaz Mountains (the river's source) to the Far Seas. It serves as a natural boundary between the warring Moorg-Wan and Ahazu tribes. The river is infested with aramatus and chang, and is wholly unsafe to cross except by means of boats or rope bridges.

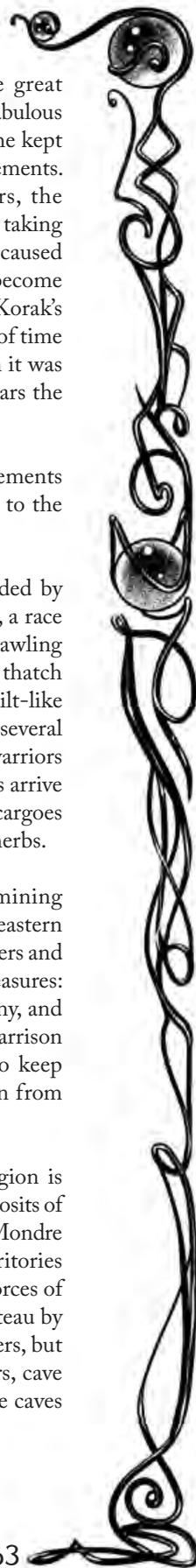
**Korak's Mountain:** In ancient times, the great sorcerer Korak had constructed on this spot a fabulous manse of eleven amberglass towers, in which he kept his collection of wonders, curiosities, and amazements. Harassed by throngs of curious sight-seers, the sorcerer finally retired to another dimension, taking all he owned along with him. A quirk of fate caused his manse and its collection of wonders to become trapped in a temporal rift, with the result that Korak's abode occasionally reappears for short periods of time (1-4 hours, generally) on the spot upon which it was originally built - the mountain which now bears the sorcerer's name.

**Krag:** Krag is one of three large Ur clan settlements located in Urag. It is similar in most respects to the fortified settlement of Grod (q.v.).

**Kragan:** Situated in a vast lagoon surrounded by hostile jungle, Kragan is home to the Imrians, a race of hulking, amphibious humanoids. This sprawling settlement consists of hundreds of reed and thatch hovels, plastered with mud and supported on stilt-like poles. It is accessible from the sea by means of several winding inlets, each heavily guarded by slave warriors and trained attack beasts. Imrian slave coracles arrive and depart from Kragan at all hours, bearing cargoes of slaves, wild beasts, gold, amber, and costly herbs.

**Ku-Chang:** Ku-Chang is an important mining installation located in the mountainous northeastern sector of Quan. Here, crews of Vajra slave laborers and engineers work to exhume a wealth of rich treasures: gold and silver, crystals, cinnabar and antimony, and a half-dozen varieties of precious stones. A garrison of Kang warriors and trackers is on hand, to keep the Vajra in line and to protect the installation from raiding parties of murderous Mondre Khan.

**Ku-Chang Plateau:** This rugged, rocky region is valuable to the Quan Empire, for it is rich in deposits of gold, silver and copper. It is also coveted by the Mondre Khan - tribes of half-men who occupy the territories to the south, and who have long resisted the forces of the Quan Empire. Kang patrols comb the plateau by day, searching for signs of the barbaric intruders, but do not dare to go forth at night. Crag spiders, cave bats, and other dangerous creatures occupy the caves and gullies of the Ku-Chang Plateau.



## L

**Labyrinths of Sharna:** These maze-like structures lie scattered across a desert region which was once known as the Kingdom of Sharna, an area located to the south of Carantheum. There are perhaps as many as six dozen labyrinths here, each with its own unique configuration. Artifacts retrieved from the Sharna Labyrinths are considered valuable, due primarily to their avowed scarcity. Packs of ferrans are known to lair in underground tunnels situated in and around the region, which is purported to be haunted by nightstalkers.

**Lake Lahsa:** Lake Lahsa lies in the snowy reaches of western L'Haan. The Mirin sail its frozen waters in double-bladed ice skiffs, hunting for frostwre, tundra beast, and ice dragon. Ice-fishing is also a popular pastime in this region, though one enjoyed almost exclusively by Mirin ice-divers, whose uncanny metabolism enables them to survive in the freezing-cold waters below the surface of the lake. The crystal eggs of ice dragons, the shimmering blue pearls of the northern quaga, and various species of edible aquatic creatures are the rewards of their endeavors.

**Lake Lir:** Lake Lir lies in the frozen reaches of central L'Haan. This frozen lake is similar in most respects to Lake Lahsa (q.v.), but is the domain of frost demons.

**Lake Myr:** Lake Myr lies in the frozen reaches of western L'Haan. This frozen lake is similar in most respects to Lake Lahsa (q.v.).

**Lake Rhin:** Lake Rhin lies in the frozen reaches of central L'Haan. In most respects, this frozen lake is similar to Lake Lahsa (q.v.). Lake Rhin is much larger, however, and is something of a fashionable resort amongst the Mirin, who like to vacation here in ice lodges built along the shores.

**Lake Venda:** Source of the Axis River, Lake Venda lies at the foot of the Onyx Mountains in Arim. Fed by numerous small streams and brooks, its waters are cold and clear. Despite its seemingly peaceful appearance, the lake is avoided by the Arimites, who say it is cursed. According to legend, Lake Venda is inhabited by nine great Shaitan. They live in the ruins of an ancient, sunken city, and prey upon unwary sailors and

fisherman. Each is said to possess a fabulous treasure: one of the Nine Keys of Knowledge, or one of the Devil-Rings of Oriax, depending upon which of the many conflicting accounts one wishes to believe. The Drukh tribes who inhabit the surrounding hills and mountains give the legend little credence, but shun the wide and watery expanses of Lake Venda in favor of the shallows around the shore.

**Lake L'Lal:** Lake L'Lal lies in the frozen reaches of eastern L'Haan. In most respects, this frozen lake is similar to Lake Lahsa (q.v.), though a fearsome species of arctic lake kra is known to inhabit the frigid depths.

**Lake Zephyr:** This scenic body of water, located in Astar of the Seven Kingdoms, is a favorite trysting place of the local inhabitants, called the Muses. Diaphanous-winged crystal moths, waterwhisps, and many colorful species of avian and aquatic creatures are common to the region, as are less-benign creatures, such as giant shathane and skalanx. On the far eastern banks of Lake Zephyr is a docking facility of sorts, comprised of a number of ornate wooden barges tethered together and moored to the shore. Here, Dracartan merchants come to trade sweet crystalline powders and Thaecian nectar to the Muses. In return they are allowed to take drinking water, which the Dracartans transmute to solid form, loading the ten-foot square blocks onto their land barges for transport to the desert kingdom of Carantheum.

**Lal-Lat:** Lal-Lat is one of two settlements located on the Isle of Batre, which lies off the Dark Coast. It was razed by Imrian invaders in the year 602 N.A. and is currently uninhabited.

**Lands of the Green Men:** The western rain forests of the Dark Coast are home to the Green Men, a race of diminutive plant-folk who dwell here in living plant-houses, called d'oko. They are a peaceful people, who enjoy a symbiotic relationship with their natural surroundings, and threaten no one. The same cannot be said of some of the other inhabitants of this region, particularly the plant grues and shathane who prowl this wide woodland region.

**Leaper's Ridge:** The wavering cliffs of Leaper's Ridge stand amidst the jungles of the Dark Coast, in the territories of the Ahazu tribes. There is a narrow stream here which drops over the cliff in a four

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hundred foot long ribbon of water, terminating in a rainbow-hued cloud of mist and vapor. The waterfall is not the region's main attraction, however, at least as far as the local indigenes are concerned. Rather, Leaper's Ridge is a place where Ahazu tribesmen, despondent over having fared poorly in battle, sometimes come to hurl themselves to their death. Victims of this traditional suicide ritual litter the jungle floor beneath Leaper's Ridge, attracting scavengers such as urthrax, aramatus, and pseudomorphs.

**L'Lal:** The walled city of L'Lal stands on the western shore of the lake of the same name, in L'Haan. The shining ice castles of L'Lal are inhabited by the Mirin, a blue-skinned race of humanoids known for their skill in the arts of alchemy, enchantment, and elemental magic.

**Lost City of Auran:** In Farad legend, Auran is known as the fabled "Lost City of Gold" - a ruined city strewn with golden idols, and riches beyond imagining. According to the Farad, Auran can be found somewhere deep in the rain forests of the Dark Coast; ostensibly, amidst the territorial lands of the peaceful Green Men. Countless expeditions have been launched by greedy Farad monopolists, each eager to seize the riches of Auran. Most of those who went have never returned, having fallen victim to such hazards as winged apes, shathane, strangle vine, and grues.

**Lost Sea, The:** Once known as the Northern Sea, the Lost Sea is a flat expanse of wasteland ringed by the mountains of Narandu and Yrmania. The demise of the Northern Sea occurred sometime around the beginning of the Age of Confusion, the cause of this calamity remaining a source of heated debate among Talislantan scholars. Arguments range from the "crack in the world theory" (through which the waters of the sea seeped away) to the idea that advancing hordes of Ice Giants froze all the sea's northern tributaries, thus causing it to dry up. Whatever its origins, the Lost Sea is a strange region, littered with half-sunken ships and the bones of ancient sea dragons. Its former tributaries have also gone dry (see The Dead River).

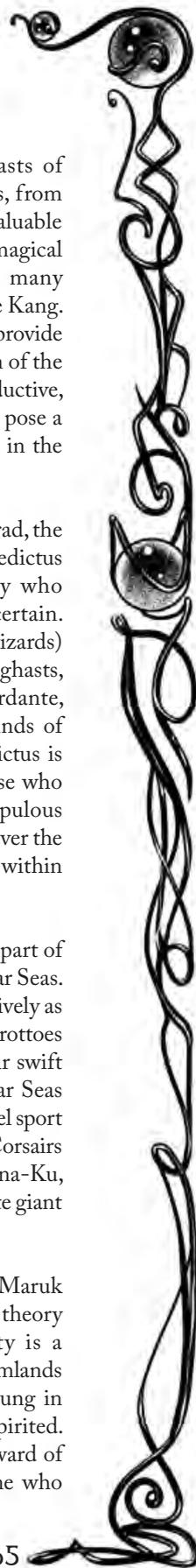
## M

**Mandalan Coast, The:** The wooded coasts of Mandala stretch on for several hundred miles, from Silver Groves in the north to Sunra Bay. Valuable hardwoods, incense trees and various sorts of magical herbs grow here in plentiful supply, as do many cultivated crops, planted in areas cleared by the Kang. Mandalan slaves tend these plantations, which provide grains, fruits, and vegetables for a large portion of the Empire. In general, these farms are very productive, though malathropes, winged vipers and kaliya pose a constant threat to those who are made to toil in the fields, and to their Kang taskmasters.

**Maledictus, Ruins of:** According to the Farad, the shadowy ruined city which they refer to as Maledictus is cursed, or more aptly, haunted. Precisely who or what it is that haunts Maledictus is uncertain. Some claim that a cabal of Malum (shadow wizards) inhabits the city. Others theorize that phasms, ghosts, or the ghost of the legendary warlock, Mordante, are responsible. Most frightening, in the minds of the Farad themselves, is the idea that Maledictus is haunted by the disembodied spirits of all those who have been cheated or ruined by the unscrupulous merchants and monopolists of Faradun. Whatever the case may be, no Farad would ever dare set foot within the vicinity of these ruins.

**Mangar Isles, The:** These four islands form part of the Crescent Isles archipelago, located in the Far Seas. A number of small pirate bands, known collectively as the Mangar Corsairs, operate out of caves and grottoes hidden amongst the jungle-covered isles. Their swift carracks prey on ships passing through the Far Seas region, plundering their cargoes and finding cruel sport with the members of their crews. The Mangar Corsairs hunt the cannibalistic demonoids of nearby Pana-Ku, and sometimes set traps to poison or incapacitate giant sea scorpions and other aquatic predators.

**Maruk, City-State of:** The City State of Maruk purportedly lingers under an age-old curse, a theory which cannot easily be dismissed. The city is a shambles: its once-prosperous orchards, and farmlands are barren; its people, forced to sell ogront dung in order to earn a living, are all destitute and dispirited. The ruling council of Maruk has offered a reward of one hundred thousand gold lumens to anyone who



can remove the curse, if indeed there is one. To date, all attempts to rectify the situation have been for naught.

**Maruk Mountain Range:** The wind-worn peaks of the Maruk Mountains, lying to the north of the City State of Maruk, are believed to be rich in precious stones, such as black opal. The folk of Maruk will not enter these regions, which they say are haunted by Kharakhan giants, manrak, and bandit tribes.

**Mazdak Mountains:** Former haunts of the barbaric Mazdak tribes, the Mazdak Mountains are now believed to be inhabited only by tarkus, wild striders, and a few crested dragons. It is suspected that a handful of Mandalan rebels have established a base in the region, though the Quan categorically deny the existence of any revolutionary factions operating within the Empire.

**Maze City of Altan:** *See Altan, Maze City of.*

**Mesalands, The:** This barren expanse of wind-worn peaks, rock promontories and chasms stretches throughout much of the land of Sindar. The area is rich in minerals, including copper, tin, and silver, plus an abundance of quartz crystal, marble, basalt, and some semi-precious stones. Underwater springs and geysers provide a plentiful supply of water for the local inhabitants, which include the race of Sindarans and such hostile creatures as satada, land kra, and scavenging stryx clans.

**Midnight Isles, The:** According to legend, the Midnight Isles are the abode of night demons, and other terrors of the darkness. More than a few Talislantan seamen believe that the end of the world lies but a few miles north of these isles. Thus, there is little enthusiasm for the area in general.

**Midnight Sea:** The Midnight Sea is a dark and ominous body of water lying to the north of the Talislantan continent. Icebergs and frozen straits pose hazards to vessels attempting to ply these waters, which are believed to be haunted by night demons, ancient sea dragons, and phantom ships from the long-dead kingdom of Khazad.

**Modor's Tomb:** In Ariane folklore, the Kharakhan giant, Modor, was buried somewhere inside this inert volcano, along with a store of stolen wealth reputed

to exceed one hundred thousand gold lumens. The process of locating Modor's Tomb presents many difficulties. First, the prospective adventurer must make the descent into the volcano (a two hundred foot drop, at least), hoping that the volcano remains cooperative in the meantime, and does not suddenly show signs of activity. Second, it is necessary to locate the single correct doorway (amongst seven possible choices) allowing entrance to a passage which leads to the tomb. The other six doors are warded by devious trap-mechanisms. Moving a one-ton slab which blocks the entrance, it is possible to gain access to the tomb itself. Once inside, one should be swift afoot, for touching so much as a single coin of Modor's treasure will supposedly "bring the deceased giant back to life". Provided that these steps have been taken, and that one is able to elude the pyro-demons and earth demons which also inhabit the volcano, the intrepid adventurer will have made his or her fortune, and may retire to a life of leisure.

**Mog Island:** This tiny island, draped in steamy jungle, lies off the southern coast of Mog. It is known to be a plentiful source of rare and costly herbs, including tandalus, scarlet lotus, and k'tallah. Mog Island is likewise known as a breeding ground for bog devils, who come here in droves to mate, usually during the month of Laeolis.

**Mogran:** Largest of the Mogroth's settlements, Mogran is located at the terminus of the Amber River. The area is rich in amber, rare herbs, and gold sediment washed down from the Cinnabar Mountains. Consequently, Mogran is coveted by foreign concerns, particularly the Imrians and the Farad. To protect themselves, the Mogroth have dredged a channel around the entire settlement, and lined the shore with triple rows of sharpened wooden stakes. These precautions have thus far served to deter potential invaders, as has the presence of the Tazian fly - an insect whose bite is believed to cause swamp fever.

**Monastic Hills:** This region of ancient, gently-sloping hills was once a Phaedran forest preserve, where countless exotic species of birds and beasts were allowed to roam freely. Following the conclusion of the Cult Wars, the Aamanians cleared much of the woodlands for fuel and timber, and planted acres of provender plant - a type of tuber from which is derived a bland but nutritious wafer, which is the staple food of Aaman.

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**Moon Lake:** Moon Lake is located in the western arm of the Cerulean Forest, in Quan. A freshwater species of moonfish, much-favored as pets by the Quan ruling class, is found in these placid waters. The deep-blue woods surrounding Moon Lake are populated by many unusual creatures, including shriekers, grues, and giant shathane.

**Mordante's Deep:** This forested region of Werewood derives its name from the legendary Black Magician, Mordante, who is believed to have lived here for a time after fleeing Faradun (legend has it that he was pursued by Xambrian Wizard Hunters). Supposedly, his castle still stands; covered now by vines and creepers, and haunted by ghosts and wind demons.

**Mount Mandu:** Mount Mandu is the tallest mountain in the known world, rising over thirty thousand feet in height. At its summit stands the Temple of the Seven Moons. Here, the Savants of Xanadas gaze into enchanted seeing stones, observing and recording all manner of events and phenomena. Scattered along the trail which leads to the mountain's summit are the frozen remains of explorers and adventurers who sought in vain to find the Temple of the Seven Moons. Aside from frost demons and ice dragons, few living things can survive for long in the frigid upper altitudes of Mount Mandu.

**Mountains of Mog:** The Mountains of Mog are draped in jungle and shrouded in green mists; the latter, a fragrant vapor exuded by a variety of giant blossom known as euphorica. The pollen of the euphorica is a potent intoxicant and mood enhancer, which commonly sells for upwards of seventy-five gold lumens per dram. Individuals hoping to make their fortune sometimes brave the jungles in search of the silvery-green euphorica, a single blossom of which may contain up to four drams of pollen. The presence of batranc, ravengers, and other noxious predators sometimes makes this a difficult undertaking - to say nothing of the euphorica itself, which is known in the local vernacular as "mantrap". More than one hunter of euphorica has been lured to his or her death by the plant's intoxicating vapors, which draw victims near in order that they can be swallowed whole.

**Mt. Talus:** Mt. Talus is a large and intermittently active volcano which rises high above the northeastern jungles of the island of Imria. A trail of acrid vapors constantly issues from the mouth of the volcano,

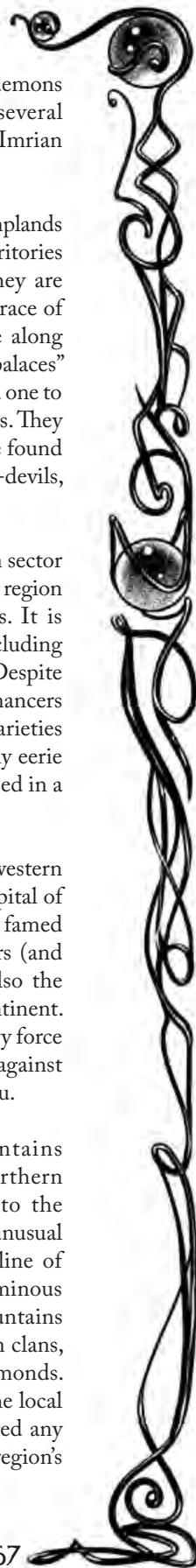
within which are believed to reside both earth demons and pyro-demons. Mt. Talus has erupted several times in the past, wreaking havoc on the local Imrian populace.

**Mud People Lands:** The sodden central swamplands of the Dark Coast region are the traditional territories of the Moorg-Wan (or "Mud People", as they are more commonly known), a semi-amphibious race of six-limbed humanoids. The Moorg-Wan live along the banks of the Boru River, in great "mud-palaces" - thirty-foot mounds of silt and mud, connected one to the other by networks of above-ground tunnels. They dredge the river banks for sapphires, which are found in abundance in these parts. So, two, are bog-devils, swamp demons, and aramatus.

**Mushroom Forest:** Located in the northern sector of Werewood, the Mushroom Forest is a murky region rife with giant fungi, toadstools, and molds. It is inhabited by numerous hostile organisms, including grues, pseudomorphs, and scavenger slimes. Despite this, Dhuna witchwomen and Gnorl rhabomancers sometimes come here to gather certain rare varieties of fungi. The Mushroom Forest is an especially eerie place by night, when the entire region is suffused in a weird, phosphorescent glow.

**Myr:** The walled city of Myr stands on the western shore of the Sea of Ice, opposite Rhin, the Capital of the far northern land of L'Haan. The city is famed for its shipyards, where graceful ice schooners (and smaller ice skiffs) are constructed. Myr is also the foremost supplier of blue diamonds on the continent. The greater part of L'Haan's formidable military force is stationed at the ice fortress of Myr, warding against possible invasion by the Ice Giants of Narandu.

**Mystic Mountains:** The Mystic Mountains separate the land of Xanadas from its northern neighbor, L'Haan, and Harak, which lies to the east. The mountains are so named for their unusual configuration, which some say resembles a line of towering stone figures, dressed in the voluminous robes of sages, or mystics. The Mystic Mountains serve as an impediment to the hostile Harakin clans, and are believed to be a source of blue diamonds. Bitter cold, precipitous terrain features, and the local frostwre population have together discouraged any concerted attempt to take advantage of the region's natural resources.



## N

**Nadan:** Nadan is a fortified Dracartan citadel located at the northern edge of the Red Desert, in Carantheum. It is similar in most respects to Anasa (q.v.), but is notable for its large population of Yassan technomancers - like the Dracartans, a race of former nomads displaced following The Great Disaster.

**Nadir:** Nadir is a Sindaran settlement built atop a flat-topped mound of stone over two hundred feet high. The place is renowned as the home of Sindar's foremost trivarian players, who are referred to as "nadirs" (the term is meant to convey the master's command of all areas opposite the "zenith", an unfavorable position in trivarian). Nadir is much-favored by the Sindarans for the cool breezes which blow through the region, and for the splendid view from atop the mesa settlement. A deep natural spring, coursing upwards through the mesa like a geyser, provides the settlement with water.

**Nankar:** Nankar is the largest Sindaran settlement, and the designated Capital of Sindar of the Seven Kingdoms. Several thousand Sindarans live here, in multi-tiered pavilions built atop an immense, flat-topped mesa. A bridge spanning the Dead River stands nearby. Nankar is a center for trade and commerce, visited by merchants from across the Seven Kingdoms.

**Nauticus' Reef:** This great mass of coral and accumulated detritus was discovered by the ancient mariner, Nauticus, whose ship struck the reef while sailing on a cloudy, moonless night. Nauticus' vessel went down along with its cargo of gold ingots, rubies, and emeralds, none of which has ever been recovered. Since that time, Nauticus' Reef has claimed an untold number of ships, so that the ocean floor around the reef is said to be littered with sunken treasure. Sea demons and rainbow kra likewise abound in the vicinity, making the retrieval of such valuables a perilous undertaking.

**Nearwan:** Nearwan is a small tropical island set amidst the Thaecian Isles chain, in the Azure Ocean. It has traditionally been a place of exile for individuals convicted of crimes in Thaecia, including thieves, interlopers, and individuals rendered insane as a

result of dabbling in unsafe magical practices. There are perhaps forty or fifty such individuals consigned to Nearwan at any given time, each imprisoned in a web of perdurable force approximately one hundred feet in diameter. They subsist on fruits and vegetables, which the exiles are allowed to grow in their enchanted "prisons". Thaecians assigned to monitor these pariahs make a spot-check of the facilities once per day, either by windrigger or in person. Nearwan is off-limits to outsiders; if caught, trespassers may themselves be imprisoned on the island.

**Necron:** Known in ancient legends as the "City of the Dead", Necron is believed to be located in the far northern wastes of Khazad. Here, or so the story goes, an entire city and all its inhabitants lie buried beneath the ground; the former residents all supposedly having been mummified and lain in massive stone sarcophagi. Very little reliable information is available regarding this archaic metropolis, or its peoples. Some claim they were a seafaring race, whose ships plied the waters of the Midnight Sea in bygone times. Those who lend credence to this theory postulate that there is an underground waterway which leads to Necron from some point along the northern coast of Khazad.

**Necros River:** The sluggish black waters of the Necros River run from the mountainous borders of Khazad southward, finally emptying into Zantium Bay. Issuing from some underground source, the Necros smells vilely, and is believed to be tainted by black magic. So much as a single sip is said to cause terrifying nightmares, though other effects have been cited as well. Unknown things dwell in the depths of the Necros River.

**Nefaratus:** Nefaratus is a shadowy island, comprised of black stone encircled by a ring of dense jungle, and located off the coast of Chana in the Far Seas. A mysterious magical order known as the Black Savants inhabit this isle, which is forbidden to all outsiders. Their black-hulled vessels have been seen as far to the east as the Sea of Madness, and as far west as the coasts of Khazad.

**Noman's Land:** This narrow strip of wasteland separates the forests of Tamaranth from the Shadow Realm. It is believed to be haunted by fantasms - pseudo-demons from the lower plane known as the Nightmare Dimension, a place ruled by the entity known as Noman. The region is generally shunned

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by intelligent creatures, though practitioners of black magic sometimes come here to study the phenomenon known as Mordante's Gate; a permanent magical portal located somewhere in Noman's Land which serves as an entrance into the lower planes.

**Northwood:** Northernmost arm of the vast forestlands of Vardune, Northwood is home to the Blue Aeriad. Herds of wild greymane are found in this region, as are malathropes, and dreaded forest grues. The giant viridia plant grows wild here, along with violet creeper, tanglewood, sorcerer tree and ironwood.

### O

**Obsidian Mountains:** The glistening black peaks of the Obsidian Mountains form a natural barrier between Urag and Durne of the Seven Kingdoms. Darklings, stryx, yaksha and other hostile creatures prowl the mountains in numbers; stryx nest in the upper altitudes, and darklings tunnel below the surface. A network of underground trails wind their way through this region, some few of which are utilized by marauding bands of satada, who sometimes venture here from their subterranean haunts in Durne and the Wilderlands.

**Oceanus:** The floating city of Oceanus is inhabited by a race of olive-green humanoids, known as the Sea Nomads. They are generally benevolent, subsisting on local species of mollusks, fish, and a variety of giant kelp known as yellow aqueor. The Sea Nomads trade with the folk of Phantas, and occasionally, the Parthenians. They mark the Imrians as foes, and attack their slave coracles on sight. Sea demons, sea dragons, and other aquatic predators are fairly common in the wide expanse of water traversed by the floating city.

**Old City of Ashann, The:** *See Ashann, Old City of.* The shattered ruins of the Old City of Ashann consist of seven concentric rings, the outermost of which encompasses an area approximately two miles in diameter. At one time, these ancient stone structures may have measured nearly a hundred feet in width, and over forty feet in height. Now, the area lies in ruin, and is a veritable wasteland of parched terrain. Desert scouts from nearby Carantheum claim that the region is largely uninhabited, save for sand demons, winged azoryl, and the mysterious beings known as

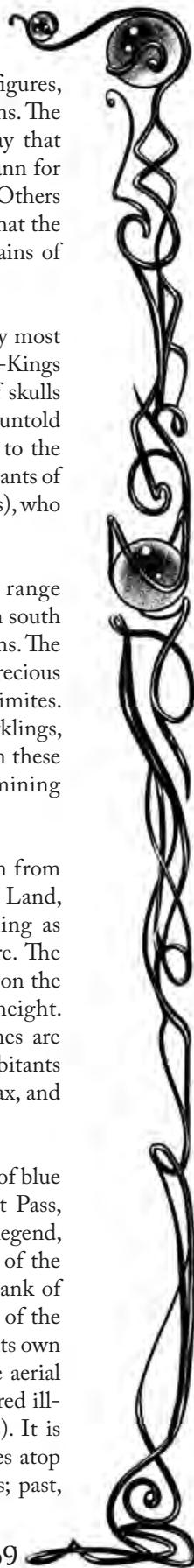
the Wanderers of Ashann - tall, shrouded figures, who can often be seen walking amidst the ruins. The Wanderers' motives remain unclear: some say that they search the ruins of the Old City of Ashann for some lost artifact or item of occult significance. Others claim that Ashann was once their home, and that the Wanderers come here to watch over the remains of their long-departed ancestors.

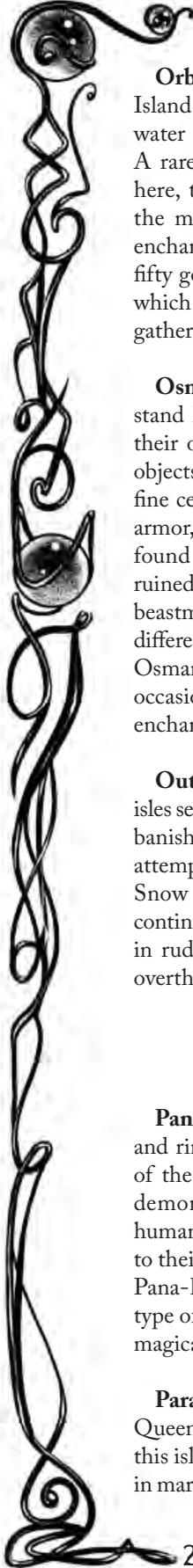
**Omen:** Omen is a cursed region, avoided by most Talisphantans. In ancient times, the Necromancer-Kings of Torquar erected on this site a mountain of skulls nearly a thousand feet in height, representing untold millions of victims. The mountain still stands to the present day, and is sometimes visited by descendants of the Torquarans' victims (such as the Xambrians), who seek commune with their departed ancestors.

**Onyx Mountains:** The Onyx Mountain range extends from the far northern reaches of Arim south to the borders of Durne of the Seven Kingdoms. The mountains are rich in black iron, silver and precious stones, and are mined extensively by the Arimites. Cliff-dwelling stryx, wandering tribes of darklings, yaksha, and other dangerous creatures dwell in these regions, posing problems for the Arimite mining operations.

**Opal Mountains:** The Opal Mountains run from the western border of Harak to the Sinking Land, encircling the land of Xanadas and extending as far south as the border of the Quan Empire. The mountains of this range are among the tallest on the continent, averaging nearly 20,000 feet in height. Black iron ore, silver, gold and precious stones are found here, particularly in the south. The inhabitants of this region include winged dractyl, omnivrax, and frost demons, among others.

**Oracle, The:** The Oracle is a sheer pinnacle of blue and violet porphyry which overlooks Serpent Pass, in the Wilderlands of Zaran. According to legend, an ancient mystic lives high atop the summit of the Oracle, at a point obscured from view by a bank of clouds, or mist. Three trails lead up to the top of the mount, each affording potential climbers with its own distinct set of hazards and disadvantages (the aerial route, while seemingly more direct, is considered ill-advised due to the presence of wind demons). It is widely believed that the great mystic who lives atop the Oracle knows the answer to all questions; past, present and future.





**Orb Island:** Part of the Thaecian Isles chain, Orb Island is uninhabited save for such noxious entities as water raknids and the spawn of giant sea scorpions. A rare and exotic variety of crystal dendron grows here, the globular “fruit” of which is employed in the making of the finest Thaecian orbs. Thaecian enchanters and enchantresses commonly offer up to fifty gold lumens apiece for these crystalline objects, which they are understandably somewhat reluctant to gather for themselves.

**Osmar, Ruins of:** The wind-worn towers of Osmar stand like silent sentinels on the Plains of Golarin, their occupants long since gone and forgotten. The objects which they created - blades of blue-black iron, fine ceramic vases, ornate helms and suits of archaic armor, enchanted amulets and bracers - can still be found buried among the ruins. Unfortunately, the ruined city is the domain of no less than six different beastmen clans, each of which has staked a claim to a different sector of the city. Beastmen who hail from the Osmar ruins are often well-armed, their pack-leaders occasionally dressed in full battle armor and bearing enchanted weaponry.

**Outcast Isles, The:** These frigid and rock-strewn isles serve as home to an exiled cult of Mirin anarchists, banished long ago for practicing black witchcraft and attempting to usurp the rightful ruler of L’Haan, the Snow Queen. The exiles, known as the Rasmirin, continue to live on the isles to the present day, dwelling in rude ice fortresses and plotting new schemes to overthrow the ruler of L’Haan.

## P

**Pana-Ku:** This volcanic island, wreathed in jungle and ringed by a dozen lesser reefs and atolls, is part of the Crescent Isles chain. A race of cannibalistic demonoids, known as the Na-Ku. They prey on humanoids of all sorts, whom they capture and feed to their ruler, a horrible half-demon known as Narug. Pana-Ku is said to be rich in black diamonds, a rare type of precious stone which is valued as much for its magical properties as its dark, lustrous qualities.

**Paramour Island:** In Mirin folklore, the first Snow Queen of L’Haan had a fabulous ice castle built upon this island for the many suitors who desired her hand in marriage. The situation became untenable when the

rivals began to plot against each other, causing great mischief. The facility was abandoned soon afterward, and remains deserted to the present day. Now, only frost demons inhabit the island.

**Parthene:** The island of Parthene lies at the far western reaches of the Azure Ocean, in the Thaecian Isles chain. Here dwell the mysterious beings known as the Parthenians; a seafaring race of humanoids, of whom little is known. The Parthenians are rumored to sail the unknown waters which lie far to the west, across regions which many Talislantans believe lie at the very edge of the world. Notably suspicious of other races, the Parthenians refuse to discuss such matters under any circumstances. Their strange sailing vessels, carved in the form of giant idols, are occasionally known to stop in such ports as Zir, Tarun, Thaecia, Oceanus, and - some say - Nefaratus. The Parthenians rarely trade any of their wares, but typically put into foreign ports only to obtain provisions and supplies, which they pay for in gold and silver talents (five-pound ingots, shaped like tablets and stamped with the Parthenians’ seal). They remain among the most enigmatic of the diverse races of Talislanta.

**Peridia:** Peridia is a barren and rocky island which is part of the Thaecian Isles chain. It is notable for a massive subterranean grotto, called Caverncliff, the ceiling of which is encrusted with gemstones and crystals. Caverncliff is accessible by means of a single, underwater tunnel - an entranceway also frequented by lurkers and sea demons.

**Phaedran Causeway:** Constructed during the reign of the old Phaedran Dynasty, this roadway stretches across Zandu and Aaman, all the way to the bridge at Vashay, in Vardune of the Seven Kingdoms. The Causeway is patrolled along its length, both in Aaman and (to a lesser degree) in Zandu. The road is poorly maintained, and is often in need of repair.

**Phaedran Tombs:** Scattered along the banks of the Sascasm River, in Werewood, are the ancient tombs of the Phaedran wizards. The eccentric taste in funeral accoutrement evidenced by these flamboyant magicians is widely known. It was the custom of the Phaedran wizards to be mummified in any of a variety of provocative poses; arranged like showpieces in mausoleums decorated to resemble sitting rooms, boudoirs, dining halls, or some other extravagant setting. Over the course of several centuries, many of

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the Phaedran tombs have been ransacked by looters. Others certainly remain undiscovered, hidden beneath canopies of vines, mosses and creepers. Explorers considering such an undertaking would be wise to prepare for encounters with banes, werebeasts, skalanx and mandragores, all of which are fairly common in this area.

**Phaedran Straits:** This narrow waterway is utilized by ships headed to and from the Sea of Sorrow. It was the site of many a terrible sea battle during the Cult Wars of the early New Age, when many Zandir and Aamanian ships went down in these waters. The presence of jagged rocks, scattered along the coastal areas, renders the straits difficult to navigate (level of difficulty: 7), particularly in foul weather.

**Phandril Forest:** Phandril Forest is the last of Aaman's truly wild woodlands, the others having been leveled for fuel, timber, or farmland. The dreaded monsters known as shathane prowl this forest, perhaps explaining the reluctance of the Aamanians to attempt to exploit the resources of this particular region for themselves. In the early Phaedran era, refugees from ancient Phandril buried their dead in these woods. Their old graveyards, now overgrown with vegetation, still litter the interior.

**Phantas:** The isle of Phantas is home to the Phantasians, a people descended from a renowned race of magicians. They live in a great floating castle called Cabal Magicus, which hovers high above the island, tethered to the ground by chains of adamant. Far below, the jungles seethe with strange lifeforms, many created in past ages through the process of sorcerous hybridization. Having forgotten much of the secret lore of their ancestors, many of the Phantasians have been reduced to selling dream essence in order to make a living.

**Phantom Island:** This forlorn and deserted isle is rumored to be haunted by shadow wights, or perhaps shadow wizards. No one knows for certain, nor do many folks seem eager to resolve this minor mystery. Ships from Nefaratus are sometimes seen in the waters off Phantom Island; another excellent reason to avoid the place, as far as most folks are concerned

**Plaguelands, The:** The Plaguelands is a cracked and barren plain, laid waste untold centuries ago by some unknown catastrophe which possibly occurred

in conjunction with The Great Disaster. It is a widely-held belief that any living thing which passes through the Plaguelands will be changed, or mutated, in some unpredictable manner. According to the stories told in neighboring Maruk, these purported mutations may take any number of bizarre, and often frightful, forms. Consequently, few intelligent creatures will willingly venture into this foreboding region.

**Plain of Blue Frost:** This vast expanse of frozen tundra derives its unique coloration from the pollen of snow lilies, which, carried upon the winds, settles across the terrain for hundreds of miles. Muskronts, lopers, and other beasts come here to graze on the lilies, and to lap up the plants' nutritious blue pollen. This in turn draws various predatory species, including frostweres and tundra beasts.

## Q

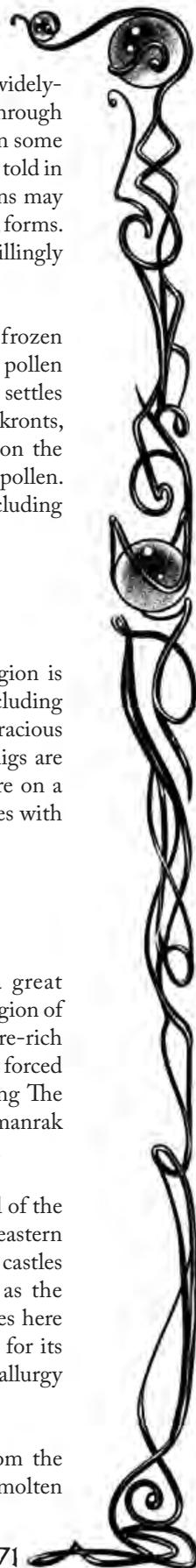
**Quan Forest:** This expansive woodland region is inhabited by many varieties of wild beasts, including ogriphant, malathrope, shathane, and chigs; voracious insectoids, which prey on other lifeforms. Chigs are so destructive that Kang trackers are sent here on a regular basis, to hunt and destroy their colonies with the aid of trained ibik.

## R

**Red Desert, The:** The Red Desert is a great expanse of scarlet sand located in the central region of Talislanta. The Dracartans have claimed the ore-rich sands as their homeland ever since they were forced to abandon their ancestral territories following The Great Disaster. Sand demons, desert kra, and manrak are not unknown in the region, nor are azoryl.

**Rhin:** The walled city of Rhin is the Capital of the far northern land of L'Haan. Located on the eastern shore of the Sea of Ice, this city of shining ice castles is inhabited by a blue-skinned folk known as the Mirin. The Snow Queen, ruler of L'Haan, lives here in a fabulous ice palace. The city is renowned for its alchemists, who are skilled in the art of metallurgy and the concoction of enchanted elixirs.

**River of Fire:** The River of Fire issues from the mouth of the giant volcano, Dragonrock. This molten



## S

river terminates in a deluge of liquid flame, at the place known as the Firefalls (q.v.). Pyro-demons commonly swim in the river, which crested dragons are rumored to drink from, enhancing their fire-breathing capabilities.

**River Shan:** The great River Shan runs across the length of the Quan Empire, from the north coast to the Inland Sea, and south to the Far Seas. Sunra fishing vessels, merchant skiffs and Quan pleasure barges ply the salt waters of the Shan, which teem with many varieties of edible fish, crustaceans, and mollusks. Echinomorphs, chang, and other hostile aquatic creatures likewise inhabit the Shan. The river is wide and slow-moving towards the north, becoming narrower, swifter, and more treacherous the farther south one travels.

**Ruins of Farnir:** *See Farnir, Ruins of.*

**Ruins of Four Nations:** *See Four Nations, Ruins of.*

**Ruins of Jalaad:** *See Jalaad, Ruins of.*

**Ruins of Kasraan:** *See Kasraan, Ruins of.*

**Ruins of Maledictus:** *See Maledictus, Ruins of.*

**Ruins of Osmar:** *See Osmar, Ruins of.*

**Ruins of Torquar:** *See Torquar, Ruins of.*

**Rune Island:** Situated amidst the Crescent Isles chain, Rune Island is a barren and precipitous mound of volcanic stone. It is notable primarily for the countless runes and hieroglyphs etched across the entire surface of the rocky isle, from one end to the other. Talislantan scholars have long argued as to the meaning of these cryptic runes, the identity of the individuals or creatures which created them, and their purpose in undertaking such a vast and time-consuming project. A thorough study of Rune Island has never been completed, owing to such factors as time, cost in labor and materials, and a natural aversion to the region's less-than-hospitable inhabitants; specifically, giant sea-scorpions and echinomorphs.

**Sad Plains:** Rows of aged and pitted stone statues, each portraying one of the Necromancer-Kings of ancient Torquar, separate this region from the Sursian plains (q.v.). Otherwise, the two areas are distinguishable from each other only by the great emptiness and featurelessness of the Sad Plains. On this site the nation of Xambria once stood, its cities shining brightly in the light of the twin Talislantan suns. Now, nothing remains, all trace of this once-prosperous civilization having been obliterated from the face of the continent over a thousand years ago by the merciless armies of the Torquarans. Since that time, the area has remained uninhabited except for wild beasts, such as ogront, land dragon, and malathropes. Marauding bands of Araq and Kharakhan giants sometimes pass through the Sad Plains, but few if any choose to linger for long in this place, which retains a strange and mournful aura.

**Sahar:** Sahar is a Sindaran mesa settlement, similar in construction to Nankar and Nadir. Excellent moonstones are found in the canyons around Sahar; so, unfortunately, are chasm vipers, satada, and the fearsome opteryx.

**Sanctuary Mountains:** The imposing peaks of the Sanctuary Mountains once served as a safe haven for the early ancestors of the Dracartans, who were driven from their homeland following The Great Disaster. The old stone forts built by these formerly nomadic people are now occupied only by Dracartan desert scouts, who use certain of these crude facilities as lookout stations and temporary outposts. Predatory satada, land dragons, and winged azoryl are also found in this region, as are a few abandoned gold and silver mines.

**Sapphire Mountains:** The pale blue peaks of the Sapphire Mountains stand to the north of Sindar of the Seven Kingdoms, separating this region from neighboring Urag, which lies to the north. These mountains are also the domain of chasm vipers, vaspas, and stryx.

**Sard Island:** Sard Island is a man-made isle which lies off the southern coast of Faradun, near Tarun. It is home to several wealthy Farad Monopolists, who live on the island in fortified castles of elaborate design.

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Sard Island was built solely by slave laborers, many hundreds of whom died during the ten years which it took to complete construction on the isle.

**Sardonyx Mountains:** The Sardonyx Mountains stretch from east to west, forming a natural border between Yrmania and Werewood. The lower-lying regions up to the timberline are thick with grey baobab and tanglewood. Kite-winged batranc soar above the clouds, safe from the depredations of yaksha, exomorphs, and tundra beast. Rumors persist that deposits of gold can be found in the easternmost reaches of the Sardonyx Mountains.

**Sascasm River:** The Sascasm River runs through Werewood and Zandu, emptying into the Azure Ocean. In ancient times, it was the fashion amongst Phaedran wizards to be buried in eccentric mausoleums constructed along the banks of the Sascasm. Skalanx and river kra live in these waters, which are infested with metal-scaled chang, among other things.

**Sathir:** Sathir is one of the two largest Sauran settlements (the other is Sathra; q.v.), and is located in the central Volcanic Hills region. This sprawling fortress is constructed of a motley assortment of materials: rough-hewn boulders, chunks of volcanic rock, along with stone blocks and columns pillaged from the ruins of Torquar, Jalaad, and other sites. several regiments of Sauran troops are stationed here, including dragon-riders, land lizard cavalry, Saurud heavy infantry, and artilleryists. Sathir boasts at least two dozen land dragons, each equipped with iron battle-towers and stone-throwers. A fair amount of trade is done here, mostly with Djaffir merchants and Orgovian traders, who offer high-grade metal tools and weapons in exchange for brilliant fire-gems.

**Sathra:** Sathra is a fortified Sauran encampment which stands at the southern end of the Volcanic Hills. In most respects, this place is similar to the Sauran settlement of Sathir (q.v.). Sathra is even larger, however, and houses nearly twice as many land dragons and troops as Sathir. The inhabitants of Sathra will trade only with Orgovians and representatives of other Sauran settlements.

**Scimitar Isles:** These four small atolls are situated near the Mangar Islands, in the Crescent Isles chain. They are thought to be uninhabited, except for a few exotic species of wild beasts, including the rare silver

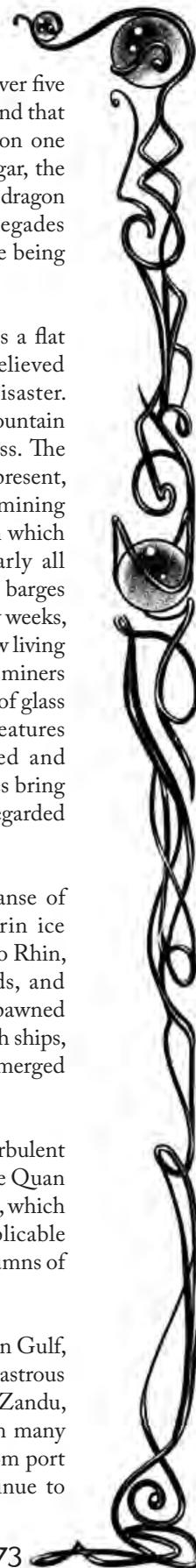
draconid (prized by collectors, and valued at over five thousand gold lumens). There is a Mangar legend that a colony of Sunra renegades lives in hiding on one of the Scimitar Isles. According to the Mangar, the Sunra escaped the Quan Empire in one of their dragon barques. The Mangar claim that these renegades hunt sea dragons, as their ancestors did before being conquered by the Quan.

**Sea of Glass:** The so-called Sea of Glass is a flat expanse of fused green crystal, which is believed to have been created during The Great Disaster. Supposedly, this occurred when Emerald Mountain erupted, spewing forth a sea of molten glass. The glass eventually cooled and hardened to its present, crystalline state. The Cymrilians operate a mining facility on the western "shore" of the sea, from which is derived the green crystal utilized in nearly all Cymrilian construction. Windships and land barges laden with glass depart from the area every few weeks, headed for Cymril of the Seven Kingdoms. Few living things dwell in this region, though Cymrilian miners occasionally stumble upon the sleeping forms of glass dragons, glass imps, and other oddities; creatures trapped in green glass, magically preserved and transmuted to crystalline form. These creatures bring a high price in many lands, where they are regarded as objects of great wonder.

**Sea of Ice:** The Sea of Ice is a wide expanse of shimmering, perpetually-frozen water. Mirin ice schooners traverse the frozen sea from L'Lal to Rhin, bearing cargoes of adamant, blue diamonds, and alchemical mixtures. Fearsome ice dragons, spawned in the frigid ocean-depths, pose a hazard to such ships, as do the razor-sharp edges of partially-submerged glaciers.

**Sea of Madness:** The Sea of Madness is a turbulent body of water which lies to the northeast of the Quan peninsula. Few ships venture into these waters, which are said to be subject to strange and inexplicable phenomena, such as maelstroms, spiraling columns of water, and raging storms of black lightning.

**Sea of Sorrow:** Once known as the Phaedran Gulf, the Sea of Sorrow was renamed following a disastrous sea battle between the navies of Aaman and Zandu, during which thousands perished. Ships from many lands now ply these waters, headed to and from port cities in Zandu and Aaman. Salvagers continue to



scour the sea-bottom for sunken treasure and other valuable cargo.

**Serpentine Mountains:** The Serpentine Mountains stand like shadowy sentinels along the northern borders of Silvanus and Werewood. The uppermost reaches are haunted by yaksha; the lower, by ghosts, banes, and grues.

**Serpent Pass:** Serpent Pass is a narrow gulch which weaves its way through the southernmost reaches of the Maruk Mountain Range. The pass offers shelter from sand and dust storms (common throughout the Wilderlands territories), and so is frequented by Maruk dung merchants, Orgovian traders, and Aamanian Orthodoxists making the pilgrimage to the Well of Saints. Consequently, this route also has its admirers among certain tribes of Djaffir bandits, beastmen, and Kharakhan giants.

**Seven Roads, The:** This system of roadways extends outwards from the city of Cymril to each of the other member-nations of the Seven Kingdoms, like the spokes of a great wheel. Each of these roads is known by its destination: i.e., The Road to Astar, The Road to Kashmir, and so forth. All are in reasonably good repair, though delays are common at all border crossings. Curiously, though the system is known as the Seven Roads, the actual number of roadways is six; the "Seventh Road" is the system itself, which connects all the other roads to the capital of Cymril (hence the Seven Kingdoms' saying, "All roads lead to Cymril").

**Shadinnar:** Traditional homeland of the giant Shadinn, the desertland of Shadinnar was conquered by the Rajans at the beginning of the fourth century. Many Shadinn still live in tent settlements scattered across the region, which is also inhabited by sand demons, satada, and desert kra.

**Shadow Ridge:** This high, roughly circular line of rocky hills is actually the edge of a great crater. To the east lies the Sinking Land; to the west, the Shadow Realm. In the evening, an individual seated atop Shadow Ridge and facing to the west may be treated to an eerie spectacle. At midnight, three spectral armies are said to appear on the shattered plain to re-enact a savage battle which occurred on this same spot centuries before. Creatures of habit, the ghostly warriors can find no rest, even in death.

**Shalihan, Vanished Kingdom of:** On this site, in ancient times, stood the fabled Kingdom of Shalihan - a land renowned for its formidable magicians, who were masters of illusion (the legendary illusionist, Cascal, may have hailed from Shalihan, or so some scholars believe). Where Shalihan is now, no one knows; apparently, the entire kingdom simply vanished into thin air. Individuals who aspire to search for the Vanished Kingdom must contend with the region's current inhabitants, which include beastmen, malathropes, and darkmanes.

**Shattra:** The mining and trade center of Shattra is located on the banks of the Axis River, in Arim. It is a filthy place, crowded with ramshackle wooden tenements and covered in a perpetual haze of smoke and soot. Raw ore from the country's many mining camps is brought here, to be smelted down into ingots and shipped by barge or caravan to Aaman, Zandu, the Seven Kingdoms, and beyond. The secret society known as the Revenants is believed to have its base of operations in Shattra.

**Shonan:** Shonan is a large military and trade complex located at the point where the River Shan intersects with the Emperor's Road. It is constructed of grey stone from the Volcanic Hills, and surrounded by a forty-foot wall topped with rows of sharpened black iron spikes. Hundreds of Kang troops are stationed here, along with Vajra artilleryists and engineers. Their primary duty is to guard against attacks by Sauran war clans from the Volcanic Hills. Among the diverse goods which pass through Shonan are precious stones and metals from Karang, moonfish from the Coral City of Isalis, Mandalan silkcloth, cerulean dyes, and costly hardwoods and rare herbs from the jungle outpost of Vishana. There is a bridge at Shonan spanning the Shan River, at which a toll of five gold lumens is charged to all who wish to cross.

**Silver Groves:** This scenic woodland rings the northernmost promontory of the Mandalan Coast, terminating just to the east of the City of Jacinth. Here, stately silver deodars tower high above the forest floor, where rainbow lotus, tantalus, shrinking violet, and other exotic herbs grow wild. Though splendid to behold, the Silver Groves are not as placid as they may appear. Giant shathane make their home in this place, as do exomorphs and mandragores.

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**Skag Lake:** Fed by the Smoke River, Skag Lake lies like a great steaming cesspool, its formidable stench permeating the air throughout much of northwestern Urag. A species of horribly mutated lake dra is believed to dwell in these rank waters, which can otherwise be tolerated only by urthrax.

**Smoke River:** The Smoke River runs through the Toxic Hills of northwestern Urag, emptying into Skag Lake, to the south. The river is so polluted with contaminants that it boils, giving off clouds of noxious steam, or "smoke". No natural lifeforms can tolerate these waters, though other things - far less than natural - may dwell in the roiling deeps.

**Sorcerer's Isle:** This insignificant-seeming island is part of the Thaecian Isles chain, and has long been avoided due to its proximity to the far western isle of Parthene (q.v.). It is here that the fabled Kabros, sorcerer-king of ancient Phaedra, is purported to have settled following his hasty departure from that strife-torn land. A few eccentric Talislantan scholars maintain that Kabros lives here to the present day, in an enchanted castle of his own making.

**Southwood:** Southernmost arm of the vast forestlands of Vardune, Southwood is home to the Green Aeriad. Here, countless exotic species of plants, shrubs and trees are found, including viridia, yellow stickler, green lotus, shrinking violet, tinsel tree, dryad bush, and many more. Exomorphs and bog devils stalk the woods of this region.

**Spectral Isles, The** This chain of Isles, situated in the Midnight Sea off the northern coast of Narandu, are perpetually obscured by clouds of ghostly grey mist. As far as anyone knows, none of these islands has ever been explored, possibly due to the belief that ice dragons dwell in these isolated areas.

**Steppes of Kangir:** The rocky hills and plateaus of Kangir lie to the south of the Greylands, in the land of Quan. The Steppes are the traditional hunting grounds of the Kang, whose tribes ranged throughout the area prior to their being absorbed by the Quan Empire. Kang Warlords still come here at times, to visit the lands of their ancestors, and to hunt wild tarkus, strider, azoryl, and megalodont.

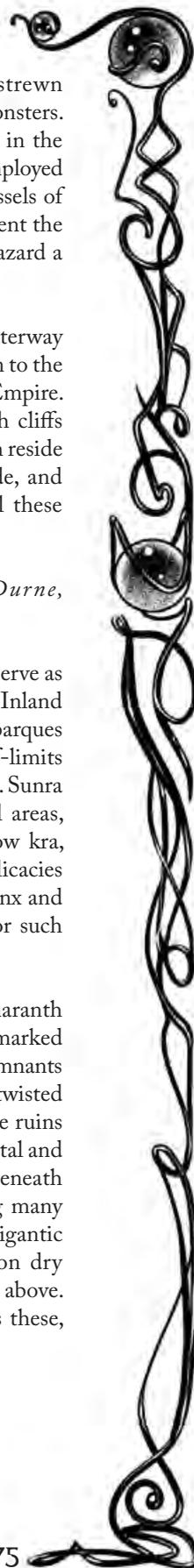
**Straits of Khazad:** This perilous, rock-strewn waterway is believed to be infested by sea monsters. The straits are considered unnavigable except in the late fall months, when ice-going craft can be employed to skim across the frozen waters. The dark vessels of the Nefaratans are sometimes known to frequent the region, though for what reason, few care to hazard a guess.

**Straits of Tian:** This expansive natural waterway leads to the Imperial Canal, which leads in turn to the Golden City of Tian, Capital of the Quan Empire. The straits are flanked on either shore by high cliffs dotted with countless small caves within which reside many species of avians, including avir, morde, and feather dractyl. Sunra dragon barques patrol these waters in force.

**Subterranean City of Durne:** *See Durne, Subterranean City of.*

**Sunra Bay:** The placid waters of Sunra Bay serve as an inlet to the River Shan, and beyond this, the Inland Sea and the Coral City of Isalis. The dragon barques of the Sunra ply these waterways, which are off-limits to foreign vessels, by order of the Quan Empire. Sunra fishing vessels can be seen along the coastal areas, trolling for moonfish, the egg-sacs of rainbow kra, and pearl-bearing mollusks; all considered delicacies by the ruling class Quan. Water raknids, skalanx and adolescent sea dragons also exhibit a taste for such delectable prey, and are ignored at one's peril.

**Sursian Plains:** South of the forests of Tamaranth lie the Sursian Plains, an arid grassland pock-marked with holes and craters. Here can be found the remnants of the once-mighty kingdom of Sursia: the twisted and charred hulks of terrible siege engines, the ruins of blasted stone towers, and shards of fused metal and glass. Ferran bandit packs live in tunnels dug beneath the plains, which form a network connecting many of the region's larger craters and crevasses. Gigantic ogronts wander mindlessly about, grazing on dry grasses, while azoryl glide across the sky high above. Aside from the presence of such creatures as these, the area often resembles a ghostland.



## T

**Tabal:** Tabal is a Jhangaran settlement constructed much like Karansk, using axe-hewn timbers lashed together with rope and vines. The inhabitants are marsh-hunters, who earn a living by trapping wild beasts and hunting for caches of scintilla - the luminous eggs of water raknids. They ply the banks of the Axis River and the marshy coastal areas in reed boats, or comb the inland areas mounted on trained marsh striders.

**Talisandre:** Talisandre is a small island which lies off the coast of Silvanus, in the Azure Ocean. The isle is a virtual paradise, populated by a plethora of wild flora and fauna. A race of xenophobic humanoids, known as the Azir, lives in this idyllic setting. They know nothing of the civilized world, a condition which they have adopted by choice; visitors from the outside world are greeted with fusillades of stones, and told in no uncertain terms to depart the Azir's island refuge.

**Tamaranth Valley:** This sylvan vale is surrounded by the Amethyst Mountains, and is accessible by means of a single trail. Herds of silvermanes make their home here, as do the Ariane, who dwell within the only settlement in this region - the Maze-City of Altan (q.v.).

**Targ Swamp:** Targ Swamp is a sodden marshland overgrown with mosses and trailing vines, located in the western jungles of Taz. The swamp is a favorite place of Thralls from the nearby settlement of Targ, who come here to sharpen their combat skills against bog-devils, swamp demons and batranc, which are found here in numbers. Individuals less-enamored of such forms of "sport" tend to avoid Targ Swamp.

**Targ:** Targ is a Thrall communal complex located in the jungles of western Taz, adjacent to Targ Swamp. Like all Thrall settlements, Targ is comprised of a number of simple dwellings set within a walled enclosure, and constructed of stone blocks. Individuals hailing from Targ typically bear tatoos which are predominantly yellow and green in color.

**Tarun:** The sprawling port city of Tarun is the capital of Faradun, and perhaps the most important center for sea-borne trade on the continent. The city boasts an impregnable system of defenses, including

the towering sea-gates which control access to its harbor, and the hundred-foot walls which enclose the city itself. Merchant ships from many lands come here, to buy, sell or trade with the Farad, a people notorious for dealing in all sorts of contraband and illicit goods.

**Territories of the Mondre Khan:** The wooded hills and mountains of the northeastern Quan peninsula are the domain of the Mondre Khan - a race of barbaric half-men, who are the last indigenous people to resist subjugation by the forces of the Quan Empire. A nomadic folk, the Mondre Khan have proved a resourceful and dangerous enemy. Holed up in their rugged mountain retreats, the Mondre Khan tribes have waged a successful guerilla campaign against numerically superior Kang forces for over four centuries. Their war clans continue to harass the Empire to the present day, launching surprise attacks against merchant caravans, military supply wagons, and the nearby mining settlement of Ku-Chang. Wild beasts, such as lopers, yaksha, muskront and tarkus, are also found in this region, which is rich in mineral resources.

**Thaecia:** Thaecia is an island of rare and splendid beauty, located off the southwestern coast of the Talislantan continent, in the Azure Ocean. The isle is home to the Thaecians, an advanced and prosperous people who have created for themselves a virtual utopia. Visitors of all races and nationalities are welcomed here, provided they come in peace.

**Tian:** Capital of the Quan Empire, the Golden City of Tian was built on an island situated in the middle of a man-made lake. Mandalan architects designed the city, which is considered among the wonders of the Talislanta world. Tian is home to the Emperor of Quan, who lives in the splendid Palace of a Thousand Fountains, protected by his elite corps of Kang Dragons and tended to by a vast retinue of Mandalan servants, nobles, Ispasian advisors, concubines, sycophants, performing troupes, and so on. The Golden City is accessible only by boat, and by windship.

**Tian Forest:** Tian Forest is as odd a place as one may find in Talislanta; a man-made woodland, comprised of orderly groves of silver deodars and shade trees, separated by neatly-mowed grass trails lined with arrangements of colorful shrubs and flowers. The Quan

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aristocracy had the forest “built” for the pleasure of the Emperor, so that he might come here to hunt “wild game”. In actuality, the forest is continually re-stocked with selected types of creatures, all rendered harmless by de-clawing, de-fanging, and the administration of sedative elixirs. The Emperor - borne aloft in his sumptuous palanquins and escorted by a vast retinue of Kang guards, trackers, servitors and aides - rarely does anything but watch. Tian Forest was fabricated by Mandalan Savants, under the strict supervision of the Kang.

**Topaz Mountains:** The Topaz Mountains run for hundreds of miles in a wavering line of cliffs and precipitous peaks, separating the Dark Coast from the Wilderlands of Zaran. Covered in thick jungle along the lower altitudes, the mountains are home to numerous strange creatures and beings, including batranc, manrak, chasm vipers, Nagra spirit trackers, and satada; the latter, having made their way into the region via the Dead River, a dry gorge which extends like an ugly scar across half the continent. Topaz crystals weighing up to twenty pounds have been found in these mountains.

**Tor:** Tor is a large communal complex which serves as the Capital of Taz of the Seven Kingdoms. Situated in the midst of the jungle, the settlement consists of a number of squat, rectangular structures built of stone blocks and surrounded by a defensive network of interconnected stone towers. Some three thousand Thralls live here, the majority of which (males and females) are active members of the Seven Kingdoms' mercenary army. Mangonel lizards, land lizards, durge, and other wild beasts are trained in Tor for military and civilian use.

**Torquar, Ruins of:** Despite the combined effects of centuries of time, the elements, and the cataclysmic upheavals resulting from the Great Disaster, the ruins of Torquar still stand as grim reminders of a dark and nearly forgotten age. Here, amidst the stark stone towers and blackened effigies, once flourished the most sinister empire in the annals of Talislantan history. Generations of occultists, black magicians, and tomb-robbers have come to this place, to sift through the ruins in search of the Torquarans' dark and macabre secrets: cursed tomes, diabolical artifacts, instruments of torture and death, and things too terrible to describe. Many articles have been retrieved from the ruins, often to the great regret of those who have found

them. Countless others still remain buried in tombs, vaults, and underground pits, awaiting discovery by those who covet infernal knowledge above all other considerations.

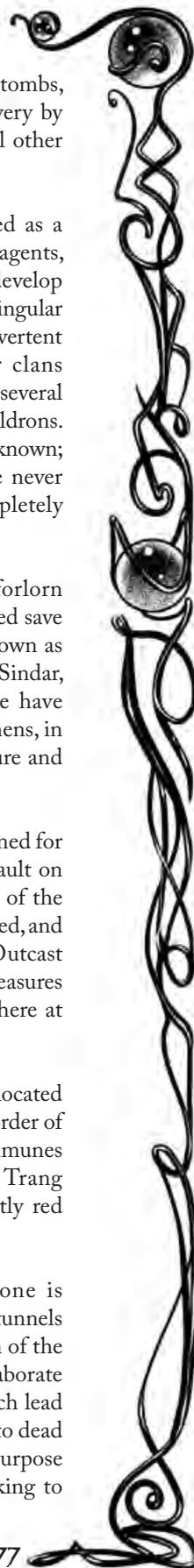
**Toxic Hills:** This hill region was once used as a site for the testing of poisonous alchemical agents, which the Ur clan shamans had hoped to develop for use in warfare. The chance discovery of a singular substance, known as “quintoxin”, led to the inadvertent contamination of the entire area. The Ur clans evacuated the area post haste, leaving behind several hundred gallons of quintoxin in large, open cauldrons. The status of this virulent substance remains unknown; Darkling slave crews sent into the area have never returned, and the region is considered completely uninhabitable.

**Trackless Wastes, The:** This frigid and forlorn sector of Narandu is rumored to be uninhabited save for a possibly mythical species of creature, known as the crystal kaliya. Naturalists from Vardune, Sindar, Cymril, Zandu, and even the Quan Empire have offered rewards (up to fifty thousand gold lumens, in at least one instance) for anyone able to capture and bring back one of these elusive creatures.

**Traitor's Bay:** This icy stretch of water is named for the infamous Rasmirin, who launched an assault on L'Haan's fleet of ice schooners during the fall of the year, 403. The treacherous Rasmirin were defeated, and thereafter banished to dwell forever on the Outcast Isles (q.v.). Their sunken ships, laden with treasures stolen from the city of L'Lal, still lay somewhere at the bottom of Traitor's Bay.

**Trang:** Trang is a Thrall communal complex located in the eastern jungles of Taz, adjacent to the border of Astar. It is similar in most respects to the communes of Targ and Tor. Individuals hailing from Trang typically bear tattoos which are predominantly red and blue in color.

**Tunnelrock:** This craggy mound of stone is honeycombed with winding passageways and tunnels - hence the name, Tunnelrock. The Gnomekin of the subterranean city of Durne fashioned this elaborate network of passages, only two or three of which lead to their underground homeland. The rest lead to dead ends, pitfalls, air shafts, and cul-de-sacs; the purpose of which is to baffle unwanted intruders seeking to



gain access to the Gnomekin settlement. Without the benefit of a map or Gnomekin guide, it is almost impossible for outsiders to find their way through Tunnelrock.

**Twin Islands:** These two rocky isles lie off the coast of the island of Garganta, in the Thaecian Isles chain. Each is actually an ages-old Monolith, worn and weathered by untold centuries of wind and water. On rare occasions, the two can be heard conversing with each other, their rumbling voices carrying for many miles in all directions. It is said that one of these two Monoliths can utter nothing but the truth, while the other - a deviant sort - speaks only lies. Opinions differ as to which one is which, as neither of the two is particularly talkative, or cooperative.

## U

**Unknown Isles, The:** These frozen northern isles appear on ancient sea charts dating back to the Forgotten Age, but have otherwise never been explored or accurately mapped. Consequently, nothing much is known regarding these places.

**Unknown Ruins:** Situated amongst the Jungleslands of the Dark Coast, the Unknown Ruins have never been explored by any civilized beings, at least as far as anyone knows. This is due almost exclusively to the presence of the fierce Ahazu warclans, who range far and wide throughout the region. It is the practice of these tribes to attack on sight, neither granting nor asking any quarter.

**Urmaan, Hand of:** *See Hand of Urmaan*

## V

**Vahana:** Vahana is an agricultural village situated in the Southwood region of Vardune, and is the largest of the Green Aeriad settlements. Here, Green Aeriad botanomancers and horticulturists grow countless varieties of hybrid plants, including giant species of fruiting and flowering vegetation. The majority of Vardune's viridia crop is produced here, tended and harvested on large, well-organized plantations. Barge forts, grown over sturdy wooden frames, are also produced in Vahana for shipment to the Blue Aeriad settlement of Valanis.

**Vajran Hills:** Traditional territories of the Vajra, the Vajran Hills are rich in minerals, timber and other natural resources. After the Quan annexed the region, the Vajra were forbidden to live here anymore, and were deported from their sub-earthen homes to slave camps in the vicinity of Karang, near the Opal Mountains. The Vajra's former settlements were sealed-up, pending the results of a government study examining the feasibility of turning the entire area into a vast mining installation.

**Valanis:** Valanis is a fortified river port situated in the Northwood region of Vardune, and the largest of the Blue Aeriad's settlements. Here are docking facilities for several dozen Aeriad barge forts, which are used to patrol the Axis River from the northern border of Vardune south to Jhangara. Mercenary scouts and trackers sometimes come to Valanis to hunt grues - hostile quasi-elementals, which pose a considerable danger to the local viridia crop. The Aeriad offer a bounty of five hundred gold lumens for every grue killed or captured anywhere in Vardune.

**Valley of Forgetfulness:** The Necros River runs through this densely-forested vale, which is considered part of both Werewood and Silvanus. Late in the evening, silver-grey mists rise upwards from the river and hang over the valley. Individuals who breathe these vapors can purportedly suffer partial or even total memory loss, the duration of which may last from one to ten days (or much longer, in rare instances). Werebeasts and banes prowl the slopes of the valley, where the bodies of convicted felons were once interred during the time of the Phaedran dynasty.

**Valley of Mist:** The Valley of Mist lies to the north of the Volcanic Hills, beyond the Firefalls. The place is renowned as the site of the Well of Saints, the sparkling waters of which are reputed to possess miraculous healing properties. Insidious mist-creatures, called vorls, proliferate in the valley, and are a source of dismay to pilgrims and others who attempt the journey to this isolated locale.

**Vanished Kingdom of Shalihan:** *See Shalihan, Vanished Kingdom of.*

**Variogated Forest, The:** The Variogated Forest is named for its wildly colorful flora and fauna, the like of which is to be found nowhere else on the continent. Here, plants and animals sport the most exotic and

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vibrant hues. For example, there are lime-green malathropes, groves of purple tanglewood, birds with six-colored plumage, xanthene yellow shathane, pink monitor imps, and a host of other lifeforms which have adapted to the uniquely colorful surroundings. There is a considerable market in Tian and elsewhere for plants and creatures from the Variegated Forest, which are regarded as wondrous curiosities in other lands.

**Vashay:** The river settlement of Vashay is the capital of Vardune of the Seven Kingdoms, and an important center for trade between the Seven Kingdoms and the Western Lands. Situated on the banks of the Axis River, the settlement consists of numerous three-tiered tree dwellings, constructed of artfully-woven vines. Boats made of dried pods from the giant viridia plant ply the river, along with the barge-forts of the Blue Aeriad. There is a bridge here, spanning the Axis River to the land of Aaman.

**Virdinnar:** Traditional homeland of the mongrel Vird tribes, Virdinnar was conquered by the Rajans around the early part of the fourth century. The nomadic Virids still live in this desert region, tending their herds of land lizards, durge, and such creatures as they have managed to capture from merchant caravans enroute to the bridge at Hadran. Sand demons, araq, wild duadir, and the much-feared opteryx are common to this arid land.

**Vishana:** Located in the sweltering southern jungles of Quan, Vishana is a military outpost of some importance to the Quan Empire. The fortress stands at a juncture of the River Shan and the Emperor's Road, adjacent to territories inhabited by the headhunting Witchmen tribes of Chana. Vishana is constructed primarily of local hardwoods, and surrounded by a barricade of wooden stakes, pits, and trenches. Several garrisons of Kang trackers and scouts man the fortress, ever wary of assaults by the Witchmen tribes.

**Vodruk:** Vodruk is one of three large Ur clan settlements located in Urag. It is similar in most respects to the fortified settlement of Grod (q.v.).

**Volcanic Hills, The:** This region is marked by twisted mounds of stone, craters, rivers of fiery magma, and both dormant and active volcanoes. The race of Saurans inhabits this area, which is also home to the hive-colonies of Raknids (deadly enemies of the Saurans), land dragons, azoryl, fearsome vasp,

and manrak. The Volcanic Hills are rich in firegems, precious stones valued for their beauty, as well as their reputed magical properties.

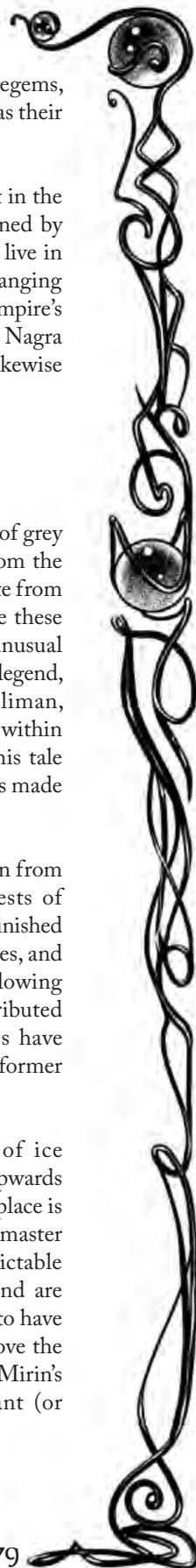
**Vulge:** Vulge is an isolated stone fortress set in the Jade Mountains of southern Quan, and manned by a contingent of Kang trackers. The occupants live in constant fear of the Manra tribes; shape-changing humanoids, who resent the intrusion of the Empire's forces into their traditional hunting grounds. Nagra spirit trackers, kaliya, and winged vipers are likewise native to this hostile land.

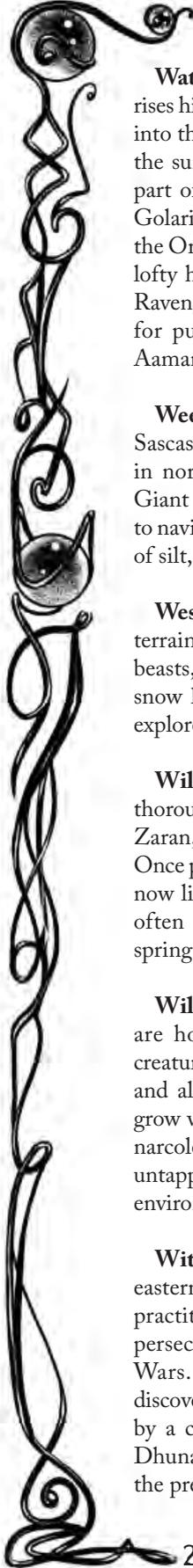
## W

**Wailing Mountain:** A high, twisting spiral of grey basalt, Wailing Mountain derives its name from the dismal groaning sounds which seem to originate from its uppermost reaches. Most scholars attribute these noises to the wind, and to the mountain's unusual configuration. Others cite an ancient Phaedran legend, which states that the great archimage, Soliman, imprisoned a treacherous Shaitan somewhere within the mountain. Those who lend credence to this tale say that the awful wailing noises are the sounds made by the giant, chained devil, lamenting its fate.

**Waning Brook:** Once a great river which ran from the Amethyst Mountains through the forests of Tamaranth and beyond, Waning Brook has diminished considerably over the course of several centuries, and is currently little more than a wide, swift-flowing stream. The brook's present condition is attributed to the Ice Giants, whose southerly advances have sufficed to freeze over many of the old river's former tributaries.

**Warlock's Keep:** This forelorn island of ice resembles a jagged crystal tower, protruding upwards from the Midnight Sea. In Mirin legend, this place is home to an ancient warlock named Nobius; a master of Grey Witchcraft, and a figure of unpredictable temperament. Lending credence to the legend are the reports of Mirin tundra scouts, who claim to have spotted matrices of colored light hovering above the island. To date, this has been the extent of the Mirin's curiosity regarding the purported inhabitant (or inhabitants) of Warlock's Keep.





**Watchstone, The:** This massive pinnacle of stone rises high above the Plains of Golarin, reaching almost into the clouds. Climbing the winding stone stairs to the summit (an effort normally requiring the better part of a day to complete), one can see clear across Golarin. The Watchstone is considered a holy place by the Orthodoxists of Aaman, who claim that from this lofty height, one may glimpse the gates of paradise. Ravens favor the high elevations as well, primarily for purposes of ambushing groups of incautious Aamanian pilgrims.

**Weeping River:** Northernmost tributary of the Sascasm, Weeping River runs from Mordante's Deep in northern Werewood, almost to Green Lagoon. Giant river kra lurk in these waters, which are difficult to navigate (level of difficulty: 5) due to accumulations of silt, mud, and tangled vegetation.

**Western Glaciers, The:** This stretch of bleak, icy terrain is inhabited mainly by herds of lopers, tundra beasts, frostweres, and ice giants. Blue diamonds and snow lily can be found here, for those who care to explore this bleak domain.

**Wilderlands Road, The:** This ancient and decrepit thoroughfare runs the length of the Wilderlands of Zaran, from Kasmir in the west to the Quan Empire. Once paved with sturdy hexagonal stones, the roadway now lies in ruins. It is unsafe in many places, and is often rendered impassable during the time of the spring rains.

**Wildlands, The:** The Wildlands of southern Quan are home to numerous sorts of jungle-dwelling creatures, including kaliya, winged apes, malathropes, and alatus. Many varieties of rare herbs and plants grow wild here, such as tantalus, red and black lotus, narcolesian, and devilroot. These resources go largely untapped, due to the hostile nature of the surrounding environs.

**Witchwood:** This woodland region, located in the eastern sector of Werewood is home to the Dhuna; practitioners of witchcraft, who fled here to avoid persecution by the Aamanians following the Cult Wars. Hidden deep in these woods, the Dhuna discovered a number of sacred groves, each demarcated by a circular ring of ten-foot tall runestones. The Dhuna settled in these areas, where they remain to the present day. There are known to be White, Black,

and Grey Dhuna covens in existence, each living apart from the others in a separate region of Witchwood. It is also known that werebeasts, mandragores, ghosts and banes haunt these areas. It is not known what secrets the Dhuna may have discovered, when they deciphered the ancient runestones that they found hidden in the depths of Witchwood.

**Woodlands of Zandu:** This forested area was razed by torch-wielding Orthodoxists during the Cult Wars of the early New Age. The Paradoxist government of Zandu restored the area after the war, according to its own eccentric designs. The Woodlands is now a forest preserve, resplendent with groves of quince, blue pomegranate, incense tree, and succulent barberry. Man-made streams and ponds dot the mossy terrain, interspersed with copses of spice tree and giant fern. A section of acreage has been reserved for the pleasure of the Sultan of Zandu, who is an avid bird-watcher, or so it is said. A troupe of Zandir swordsmen and swordswomen always accompanies the Sultan's entourage, conferring protection from the woodland's less-savory inhabitants. These include exomorphs, malathropes, and several varieties of poisonous, metallic-scaled serpents.

## Y

**Yellow Marshes, The:** The fallow-hued swamps of this region of Mog teem with a variety of unusual flora and fauna: amber wasps and gold beetles, sulphur trees, topaz-colored winged vipers, yellow marsh striders, and many others. All blend more or less into the surrounding environs, making it difficult to distinguish one thing from another - a situation presenting certain hazards to incautious adventurers who seek to traverse the Yellow Marshes.

**Yrman's Woods:** Yrman's Woods range throughout the central sector of Yrmania, a region of irregular hills, bluffs and deep gullies. The trees here are mainly old and gnarled: stunted spider-oak, withergall, and tanglewood, having little value as timber. Some claim that veins of black iron and silver run through the hills of Yrman's Woods. So too, do packs of two-headed tundra beasts, mated pairs of yaksha, and herds of vile darkmanes.

**Yrmanian Bay:** This open expanse of water is seldom frequented by ships, for the reason that there would be

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little purpose in doing so; the Yrmanian Wildmen are notable for their insane and unpredictable behavior, and Night Demons from the nearby Midnight Isles infest the area in numbers.

### Z

**Zadian:** Zadian is a fortified citadel situated along the central coastal regions of Zandu. A sizeable contingent of Zandir troops is stationed here, including units of ontra-mounted lancers, mounted archers, swordsmen and swordswomen, and border scouts. The citadel stands atop a hill overlooking the rich estates, vineyards, and groves of Zadian's wealthy aristocracy, who live much in the manner of feudal lords.

**Zandu, Woodlans of:** *See Woodlands of Zandu.*

**Zagiran:** Traditional homeland of the Aramut and Zagir tribes, the arid mountain region of Zagiran was conquered by the Rajans toward the end of the third century. Many Aramut and Zagir continue to dwell in the region, living much as their nomadic ancestors did some six hundred years ago. Satada, earth demons, azoryl, and land dragons are also found in this rugged, mountainous area.

**Zandir Moors:** This area of verdant knolls, flatland and bogs occupies a portion of western Zandu. It is notable for numerous exotic varieties of wildflower, from which are derived costly scents, essences, and enchanted philtres. Included among these is the rare "everblue starfire"; a magical hybrid reputed to possess extraordinary virtues, and valued at over a thousand gold lumens. Aspiring botanists and fortune-seekers are advised to beware of malathropes and bog devils, which are also known to inhabit the moors.

**Zandre:** Located to the south of Werewood, Zandre is a fortified border outpost housing a contingent of Zandir scouts. The outpost stands adjacent to an old stone bridge, which spans the Sascasm River. Zandre is frequented by hunters, trackers, and traders from the surrounding areas, as well as the fishermen of Zann; a stubborn and reckless folk, who sail their small skiffs upriver in order to sell their wares at the outpost. For ten gold lumens a day a Zann fishermen will convey a small party by boat to almost any destination desired, including Werewood.

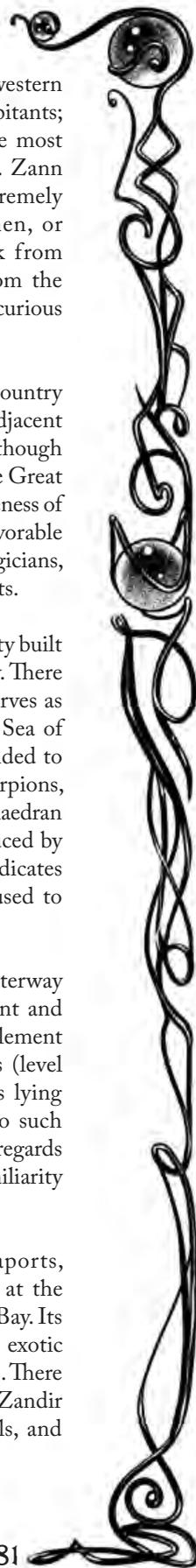
**Zann:** Zann is a seaport located on the western coasts of Zandu, notable primarily for its inhabitants; the Zann, who bear a wide reputation as the most steadfastly contrary folk in all of Talislanta. Zann rarely agree with other peoples, and are extremely opinionated. Most are fishermen, boatsmen, or woodland guides by trade. The Zann drink from streams thought to be tainted by waters from the Necros River, which may go far to explain the curious behavior of these folk.

**Zanth:** Zanth is the Capital of Zandu, a country ruled by the Paradoxist Cult. The city lies adjacent to the rival Aamanian Capital of Ammahd, though separated by a towering structure known as the Great Barrier Wall. Zanth is known for the permissiveness of its laws and customs, and enjoys a wide and favorable reputation among the continent's foremost magicians, charlatans, professional mystics, and con-artists.

**Zantil:** Zantil is a small Zandir coastal facility built on a peninsula overlooking the Sea of Sorrow. There is a lighthouse and watchtower here which serves as an aid to ships navigating the waters of the Sea of Sorrow, and as an early warning system intended to alert vessels of the presence of giant sea scorpions, which occasionally may enter the area via the Phaedran Straits. In the latter case, a red beacon (produced by torches reflected by a ruby-colored crystal) indicates danger by night; by day, bellows-horns are used to sound the alert.

**Zantium Bay:** Zantium Bay is an open waterway which is traversed mainly by Zandir merchant and fishing vessels headed to and from the port settlement of Zantium. It is tricky to navigate in spots (level of difficulty: ), due to the presence of rocks lying just below the waterline. Accidents owing to such circumstances are not unknown, particularly as regards foreign vessels, whose navigators often lack familiarity with these waters.

**Zantium:** Westernmost of Zandu's seaports, Zantium is a walled settlement constructed at the terminus of the Sascasm River, near Zantium Bay. Its exports include timber, costly perfumes, and exotic plants and wild beasts from the Zandir Moors. There is a trading post at Zantium where Jaka and Zandir trackers come to sell hides, captured animals, and other goods.



**Zaran Mountains:** The rugged peaks of the Zaran Mountains are the refuge of the Za bandit tribes, who hole-up in these parts in order to elude patrolling Dracartan desert scouts. The Za are believed to have numerous hideouts in the Zaran Mountains, where they temporarily store excess loot, equipment, and slaves. The region is rich in black iron ore and certain, small types of semi-precious stones. Vasps and manrak from the nearby Volcanic Hills are also fairly common here.

**Zephyr Lake:** *See Lake Zephyr.*

**Zir:** The port city of Zir once served as Zandu's largest naval facility, where warships were constructed for use in the Cult Wars. The shipyards now turn out more merchant vessels than warships, and Zir has become a haven for Zandir freetraders. Here, ships headed to and from such exotic locales as Thaecia, Batre, and Faradun can be found; taking on passengers and supplies, loading and unloading cargo, or awaiting repair



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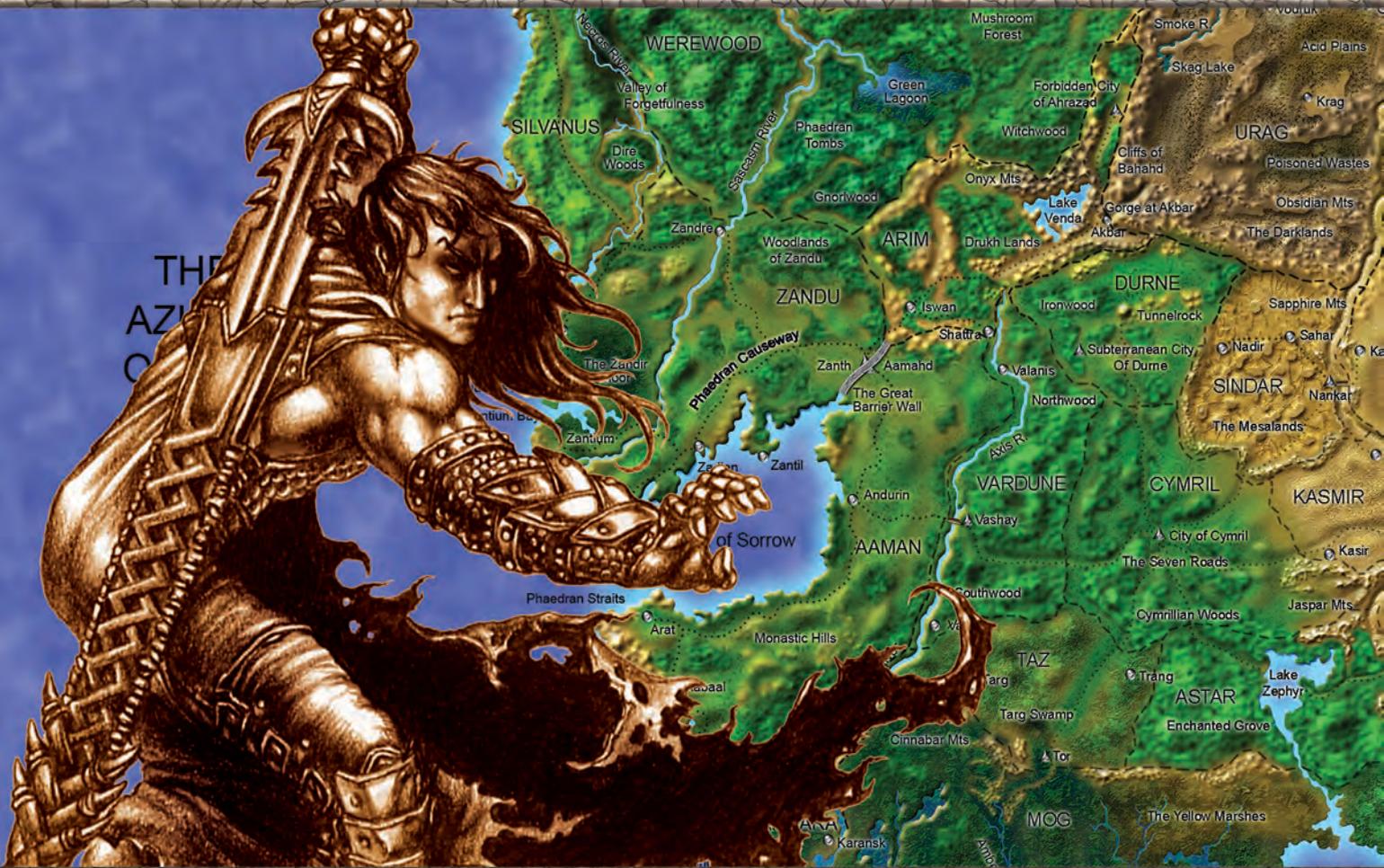
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