—フィアト・ルクス—

ANIMA

BEYOND FANTASY



GAÏA

BEYOND THE DREAMS

VOLUME I



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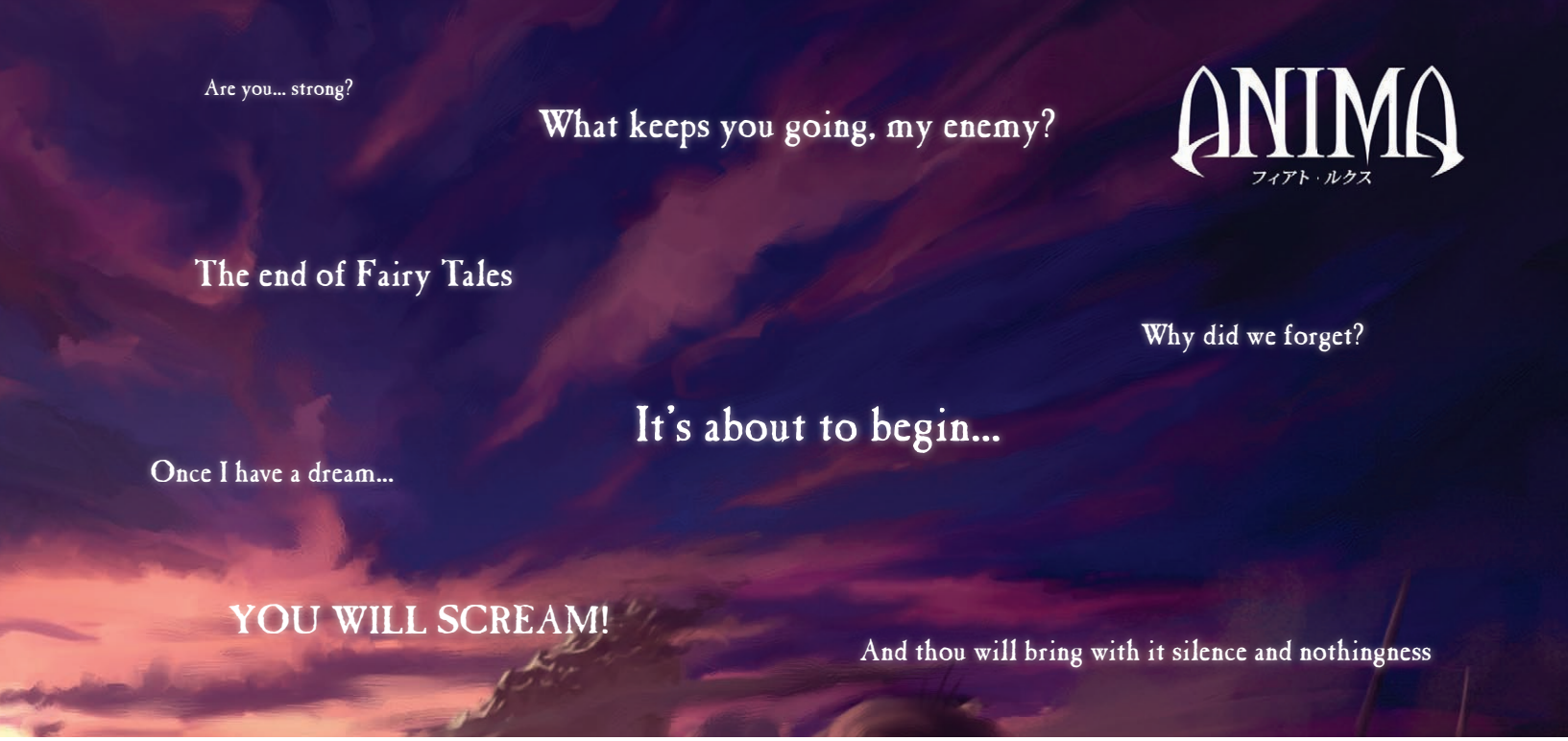
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 t can not end this way.” As he spoke, his tears mixed with the rain drops streaming across his face.

Rah contemplated the dark horizon from atop of the tower of the tribute. Around him, as far as the eye could see, only the agitated sea extended, illuminated periodically by rays of lightning. He could not see them yet, but he felt them approach inexorably. In a few hours the boats and citadels would reach the coasts of Tol Rauko and not even he could stop them all.

During several long minutes he remained thus, soaked in the middle of the rain like a black spot that split the gray firmament in two. He had the cape surrounding him completely, which gave him the aspect of a bird of bad omen between grotesque metal gargoyles. Through his head, thousands of plans still spun, desperate plays that could upset all of this and give him back control, although he knew that he was only lying to himself. The Brotherhood no longer existed. His armies, were devastated. He had lost the war and the world escaped inevitably from his hands without anything that he could do to return it. For someone who tried to destroy destiny, what awaited him in the future was becoming very clear before his eyes.

The dream cracked like fragile crystal.

Wandering in his thoughts, he would have remained thus for hours if not for a sensation that removed him from his lethargy. Even in the distance, hundreds of miles away, he could perceive a different presence from the others and an ironic smile was drawn on his face.

“Zhorne Giovanni...” He murmured between half closed eyes with certain melancholy. “After all this time, we will finally be able to meet.”

“It’s strange, you know? You and I look much alike, more than what either of us would be willing to admit. Both of us have fought against an unknown adversary and have lost everything. Comrades, friends, the people whom we loved...”

“What keeps you going, my enemy? What is it that makes you keep advancing towards me in the middle of all the chaos and the storm? Is it hatred? Hope, perhaps? Or is it possible that you are just like me...that simply, you no longer have anything else left...”

As if he had just finished waking from a bad dream, Rah raised his head slowly and watched the skies with arrogance, which answered him with a challenging powerful thunderclap.

“Thus you think that you have won again...that in the end, as always, everything happens just as you have planned it. I suppose that this will not have seemed to you more than a mere game. A stupid boy trying to do something too great for him.”

“You will probably never worry about anything I did.

Or perhaps... Or perhaps you will?

Not for what I am, nor why I have been. But because of what I represent.”

Distracted by that thought, Rah lowered his head while he adopted a burlesque expression.

“Tell me. Did you fear me? Me? A simple man? Do not worry, I will still give you many reasons to do so by far.”

And then, already on the brink of desperation and madness, he laughed, but his bitter outburst was dragged away by the strong storm winds.

He was not going to give up.

In his soul he knew what he had to do.

In fact, he always knew.



Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Chapter 1
A Vision of Gaïa

We human beings are fascinating creatures. We exist without knowing it in a world able to destroy us a thousand times over and, even so, we continue forward...

Bárnatas

Welcome to Gaïa. The book that you have in your hands is the first volume of a fantastic and unique world, full of mysteries, adventures and secrets. In it is told the histories of the Old Continent, a land that has seen the rise and fall of civilizations long since forgotten, a place full of stories that still wait for an end.

Frankly, years ago when I embarked on the project of creating *Anima: Beyond Fantasy*, I never thought that it would end up having this repercussion. Since then, all this time has been an incredible experience, which I would not change for anything. And now before you, long after our first publication, the result of all that work, spread out on more than three hundred pages is *Gaïa: Beyond the Dreams*.

People often ask me how Gaïa was born and I have never been able to give them a clear response. I suppose that the only way to answer it correctly would be to say that it arose from all those stories that influenced me during my childhood, added to the advice, ideas and suggestions that were submitted by those who collaborated in its development. Which, little by little, bit by bit and piece by piece, have shaped the enormous universe that this world represents and that we now show you.

At first, *Gaïa: Beyond the Dreams* was planned to be a single volume in which both continents would be compiled. Nevertheless, as we wrote each one of its cities and stories, we realized that, like our original project, the world of Gaïa did not want to be limited to so few pages. Ironically, with each line that I wrote, my heart only lamented on how many things I still had left to tell. Finally we had to make the decision to divide the book into two volumes, of which this is first. For us it was the only way to include more of the detail, even though it was only a half, of all those stories without which Gaïa would never be the same.

But above all, keep in mind one very important detail: The main objective of this book is to inspire. In no way does it tries to be an exhaustive guide to Gaïa nor all of its elements. Each one of its characters, stories and cities are hoping that you give them life using your imagination. Because remember, you and only you, are the true soul of Gaïa. Everything that appears in these pages is made to be tailored according to your needs, whenever you deem it to be more to your liking. In the end, it is your world, created solely so that you may play it.

Prepare yourselves. What you now hold within your hands is the effort of years of work in which we have poured our illusions. I only hope that you enjoy reading it as much as we did writing it.

Welcome to Gaïa. Welcome to the fantasy.

Anima Project Studio
Carlos B. García

How to use this book

This setting book is thought to be a complement to a roleplaying game. Therefore, in case you still do not have it, it is recommended that you get a copy of *Anima: Beyond Fantasy* first so as to make the most out of the ideas that appear in these pages. Either way, although *Gaïa: Beyond the Dreams* is mainly meant to be played with the rules of the core book, it is far from the only system that will benefit from its use. Gaïa is an immense world, which fits perfectly into any style of game that you want. For that reason, the choice of system is solely yours.

Naturally, as a setting book that it is, *Gaïa: Beyond the Dreams* displays the most important aspects of a vast world of fantasy, which is why it must be dealt with a different way depending on whether you are going to be a player or the Game Master. It's highly recommended that the players avoid reading details from the Old Continent chapter regarding cities or stories, since that would reveal a great deal of the plot and would possibly ruin their fun. Similarly, they should also avoid the Stories of Gaïa, since the tales narrated there are meant to give the Game Master adventure ideas for future sessions. By all means, if you are the one who is going to direct the game you do not have to abide by any of these limitations, and you should drench yourself in each and every one of these pages to understand Gaïa as a whole.

Gaïa: Beyond the Dreams is divided into seven different chapters, in which you will be able to find the following information:

Chapter 1: A Vision of Gaïa
The first chapter summarizes all the general aspects that you may need to know to play in the world of Gaïa. It is a basic introduction to the more essential elements, like the daily life of its inhabitants or the most common languages.

Chapter 2: History and Chronology
In the second chapter we will see an approach to the general history of Gaïa during last thousand years from the human perspective. The story is focused on the period between the appearance of the Messiah and the Fracture of the Heavens.

Chapter 3: The Old Continent
Here each of the thirty principalities of Gaïa are described with detail. In each section its society, customs, main cities and the more relevant geographic accidents of each territory are talked about.

Chapter 4: Religions and Beliefs
An approach to the more extended religious beliefs through the Old Continent, beginning with the Christian Church and finishing with the Enneath myths.

Chapter 5: Organizations
In the fifth chapter the most relevant organizations of Gaïa are talked about, like the ancestral Order of Yehudah and the mysterious Consortium.

Chapter 6: Stories of Gaïa
A compilation of stories and tales set in Gaïa, thought to give a subjective approach to the world and inspire a multitude of adventures.

Chapter 7: Optional Rules
And to end things, in the manner of an appendix there is a compilation of general rules, thought to put into practice all the elements that have been spoken about so far, like the Pacts of the Dragoon or how to carry out trials in Gaïa.

Now without further ado, feel free to turn the page and begin to enjoy the world that awaits you...

GENERAL ASPECTS

Before beginning to dive into the society and customs of Gaïa and the Old Continent, there are certain basic aspects that are necessary to clarify.

The Passage of Time

In ancient times, each culture measured the passage of time in a different way, by which consequently there existed an innumerable amount of differing calendars and almanacs. That chaotic system was unified during the Time of Expansionism of Solomon, in which the formulas that were created remain useful even to this day; the calendar of Aveh. The name comes from its discoverer, an investigator and archaeologist who found the remains of the method developed by Solomon.

The calendar of Aveh separates the years in periods of 12 months that sum up the 365 days, the time that it takes Gaïa to go around the Sun. Each month lasts a different number of days, between 28 and 31 of them, and receives a different name that coincides with our gregorian calendar. There is a leap year every four years, during which a day is added to the end of February.

Presently, according to the calendar of Aveh, Gaïa is in year 989, approaching December.

Cosmology and Celestial Bodies

It has been a long time since man discovered that he was not the center of the universe. According to the investigations of Solomon, it was proven that Gaïa is, in reality, a celestial body that rotates around the Sun along with many others. This theory originally was rejected during the time of the Holy Kingdoms, but centuries later a group of Ilmoran scientists managed to prove it irrefutable, having convinced the Empire to officially recognize it. Naturally, there are still cultures that think it is nothing more than a fallacy without meaning, and an innumerable amount of country folk have never even heard speak of it. For all those people, Gaïa remains the center of the universe and everything that exists revolves around it.

With the exception of the Sun, the most important celestial body for the inhabitants of Gaïa is the Moon. In ancient times, it was called Selene and she was considered a deity that watched over man from the heavens. Recent studies have shown that it is a smaller planetoid that rotates in a continuous orbit around ours. The truth is that, in some way, it has a certain influence on the supernatural forces of the planet and, the same way that it affects the tides, it influences the membranes that separates the real world from the sea of souls and the Wake.

The Geographical Aspect

Geographically, Gaïa is divided into two great continental masses separated by narrow waters. These territories receive the names Old and New Continent, respectively. In this first volume we are focused on the Old Continent, the biggest area of the known world. It is made up of a great mass of earth, vaguely circular and open in the east, wherein the center lies an enormous inner sea. The northern area is made up of great plains and frozen mountains, that become warmer as they approach the

Illustrated by Salvador Espin

All kinds of characters have a place in the world of Gaia

south. The central region, located in the western strip, is a green and leafy land characterized by a wide variety of climates and terrains. Within them, it is possible to find almost any kind of land. The south holds the warmest regions, among which great deserts and warm jungles can be found. Finally, in the East, the great Island of Varja is located, considered by many to be a continent in its own right because of its enormous size.

In addition to the solid land, one should never forget that there is a multitude of oceans and seas surrounding the Old Continent. Next is a brief reference to its more important waters.

The Ocean of the Children: Generally considered the most dangerous waters of Gaïa, this immense ocean located in the northeastern area is avoided by most of the ships. The storms are so strong and unexpected, and so numerous are the ships that have found their tragic end here, that the majority prefer not to travel very far from the coast when they sail through it. There are many legends regarding the origin of the strange name of this ocean, but almost everybody agrees that when a storm comes near it is because the sound produced by the surge is similar to the weeping of children.

The Calisis Ocean: The great ocean located to the south of both continents is a calm and gentle area. There are few commercial lines that cross it, simply because faster routes exist. It is said that it is plagued by thousands of small barren islands, so extremely tiny that they do not appear on any map.

The Eastern Sea: The waters that surround the island of Varja are called The Eastern Sea. They are calm most of the year, but when Spring arrives the strong storms whip the area making trips very dangerous. The sea enjoys the greatest school of fishes in of all Gaïa, which makes it a place very frequented by fishermen of the high seas.

The White Sea: These are the waters that separate the south part of both continents, renowned for their unpredictable summer storms, which are usually accompanied by strong hurricanes and typhoons.

The Inner Sea: Located in the heart of the Old Continent, without a doubt the waters of the Inner Sea are the most traveled by commercial ships, since it connects with the principal economic nucleus of the entire world. Generally it is a calm sea, but in its center is the island of Tol Rauko, which is usually surrounded by strong and dangerous storms.

The Sea of Guren: Or crimson sea, gets its name due to the color that it takes on during sunsets. They are calm waters, occasionally stirred by any storm of average force.

The North Sea: Located in the northwest part of the Old Continent, this wide sea is full of waters that are cold and seldom journeyed. The commercial routes that cross it are few, and the majority of ships that can be seen are dakkares or nordic karfis. This sea is especially dangerous because of the many icebergs that flood it, which can be a mortal danger when sailing at night.

RACIAL ETHNIC GROUPS

The great variation in Gaia's territories cause a numerous amount of racial ethnic groups to coexist within its lands. Generally, the majority are united by common cultural, linguistic and religious practices, although in the central territories of the Empire a great ethnic variety still exists, because during the years that followed the War of God, refugees from all the areas of the world met to found Abel. Therefore, the union of these towns is more and more frequent, making it slightly more difficult to delimitate it.

Even without being completely sure of its true number, the University of Lucrecio has classified more than two hundred different ethnic groups in the Old Continent alone. Nevertheless, to make its distinction simpler, they have been broken down further into nine primary groups, within which the majority of the others are included. Naturally, they are only archetypical images of ethnic characteristics that do not necessarily represent everyone. For example, ryuan can be enormous mastodons by the same token that there are small nordics with a feeble complexion.

Asher: The asher are the main ethnic group within the central areas of the Old Continent. They are physically characterized by a slender constitution, well formed features and brown or gray eyes. They can have any hair color, but darker hues, like brunette or brown, are the most common. It could possibly be argued that they are the native inhabitants of central Gaïa, although they are also found scattered through other more distant lands. It is impossible to place their origins, since from the time of the Holy Kingdoms they were the most plentiful and extensive settlers.

Aion: The aionenses are the second most extensive ethnic group of the central territories of Abel. They are usually slightly taller and more stylized than the asher, but they maintain a similar athletic constitution. Their features tend to be fine, they have light colored hair and eyes, and a high percentage tend to be blond and blue-eyed. The popular belief is that the aionenses are the descendants of the original settlers of the Empire of Solomon.

Tayahar: The tayahar population mostly live in lands of Al Enneth, although many of them have immigrated to distant lands, like Dwänholf. Their most notable racial characteristic is the color of their skin, slightly dark and burnished like metal. Generally their hair is of a subdued color, being most commonly brown and black. Their eyes can have any color, even clear tones. It is thought that they are originally from the desert areas of Kushistan and Salazar, although is impossible to determine their exact roots.

Zínner: Although people tend to think that the zínner population is made up of only The Zigeuner, this ethnic group actually encompasses many more people. Normally considered nomads, the zínner have spread themselves throughout all of the north and central regions of the Old Continent. Since they are usually in constant travel, it is difficult to place their origins, but everything seems to indicate that they must originate northeast of the Old Continent.

Ryuan: Also known as the Varja, these people settled mainly through the eastern islands, although there is a large concentration living in Phaion Eien Seimon as well. They are characterized by their almond eyes, their slightly golden skin and by their hair, always black in color. They tend to be of short stature and athletic, wiry builds. The origins of the ryuan are in the natives of Varja, who for several thousand years lived on the island with minimum interference from other populations. For that reason, it is easy to affirm that they are one of the ethnic groups that have remained more or less unchanged over the course of history.

Norne: The norne are the main inhabitants of the nordic regions, characterized by their girth, their severe personalities, their untidy blond or red hair and their pale skin tones. They share the same cultural roots and there are some that call them Caste of Holst. They are the original inhabitants of the Tip of the World, from where they settled to other lands.

Vildian: The vildians mainly occupy the strip between the territories of Al Enneth and the heart of the Empire. Most of them have an average complexion and while hefty, they are not too tall. Their skin is slightly dark, and the color of their hair has great variety, but it mostly falls between brown and black.

Daevar: The Daevar are most unusual ethnic group of Gaïa. They have dark skin and completely white hair, a characteristic that makes them stand out especially to other ethnicities. They have an athletic and stylized constitution, fine features and dark eyes. They are not very numerous, but generally the majority are found in the central area of the Old Continent, mainly in Togarini. The origin of the daevar is quite enigmatic, but it is suspected that, like the aionenses, they come from another group of settlers of the old Empire of Solomon.

Kwa: More than a single ethnic group, the kwa are the tree from which are born more than a hundred minority groups. They stand out for having their skin and hair completely black, a unique characteristic in Gaïa. Usually physically they are big and robust, and are without a doubt the tallest individuals in the world. Their origins lie in the southeastern area of the Old Continent, from which they have spread themselves through a multitude of countries in said territories.

Celsus: An ethnic group originally of the rainy forests of Alberia, they are individuals with pale skin, clear hair and eyes and a robust constitution. Theoretically they are descendents of the inhabitants of an old kingdom that was located in one of the lost continents, where they came from more than fifteen hundred years ago.

LIFE AND SOCIETY

If anything characterizes the Old Continent best, it is the enormous variety of cultures it has seen come and go. Each one of them has put its own grain of sand in the enormous amalgam of countries and societies that populate Gaïa in today's world and that lends it variety and color. Although each one of the territories that appear in this book have their own cultures and traditions presented, certain general aspects exist that, to a greater or lesser degree, repeat themselves in almost all of them.

Government

Considering that during the last seven centuries most of the known world has been unified under a single political power, the Sacred Holy Empire of Abel, it is not surprising that almost all of Gaïa has a similar government. Until only recently the countries were considered powers subordinate to the control of Abel, although they enjoyed almost absolute freedom in executive and legislative matters. To all effects, the Empire limited itself to supervise the course of global politics and to solve conflicts between the different States. It was possible thanks to two instruments: the High Senate, a chamber of decisions in which the main leaders of Gaïa met, and the figure of the four Lords of War, the maximum imperial generals. In spite of everything, the great independence of many countries allowed the appearance of really unusual political models, like the Illustrated Order of Ilmora, the Merchant Council of Arlan or the Association of Merchants of Eien, a private corporation that controls the country.

Nevertheless, all that has changed. Now after the fragmentation of the Empire, most of the principalities have become independent or have grouped together to form alliances against Abel. Ironically, except for rare exceptions like Togarini or Goldar, they all conserve the same governmental structure that they have maintained during the previous centuries.

As a general rule, in every country there is always somebody at the peak of power, be it a monarch, a prince or an individual with a similar title. He has jurisdiction over all of his territory and is solely in charge of dictating the laws as much as planning the future of his country. Depending on the place, he can be alone in power or endorsed by a council of aristocrats who second his decisions. In either case, immediately below him is the high nobility, who behave like small monarchs within the territories that they have been assigned. There are places in which their authority is so absolute that the prince can only ask for their support in lieu of demanding it.

Another political model that has a more recent appearance is the consensus government. In it, a governmental organism that arrives at its decisions by joint voting holds the power. In these cases, the members of said council can be chosen by an elite minority, like in Gabriel, or even by popular voting, like in Ilmora.

Of course, all these systems vary considerably from one place to another, and there are even places in which radically different models are used, like in Phaion or Baho.

The Upper Class

Within the structure of the society of Gaïa it is generally necessary to speak of two different levels regarding the position and privileges. The first of them is known as the upper class, that which gathers all those people who garner a certain level of favor over normal people or "the plebes." It is the leading class, the individuals that take charge of ruling over the rest. But even in this group, it is possible to find even further segmentations within the group.

First of all, on the highest level of the social roster rests the so-called high nobility, the most powerful people of a country. Normally they are related in some way with the royal families or they belong to one of the main houses of the nation. Generally their titles are accompanied with true political power, important possessions and even small personal armies. They are direct delegates of the monarch, are in charge of controlling vast territories, supervise the lower nobility, carry out justice and collect taxes. Because of it all, they enjoy enormous fortunes and their voices are always heard within their borders.

Immediately below them are the lower nobility, the most extensive class of aristocracy. Within this group there are a considerable number of individuals, from important counts or barons to small seneschals or marquises. Contrary to what occurs in the previous case, there is no reason for them to necessarily have large amounts of possessions or wealth; many are no more than normal people that have inherited little more than a title from their predecessors. Either way, typically they own some property, like a mansion or a small castle, and control the towns that are nearby their lands under the supervision of the high nobility.

In closing, it is necessary to speak of a new social class that has arisen in several countries during the last few centuries, but that has quickly acquired power that, on many occasions, rivals or even surpasses some of the most important nobles: the high bourgeoisie. They deal with retailers and merchants with an unequal buying capacity that has made them extremely powerful and influential people. Often they control banks, the transport of merchandise or even the manufacturing, which after all, is the true economy of a country. This high bourgeoisie earns many names, among which the term "gentile" stands out, one that has been coined in Gabriel. There are even countries in which some bourgeois families have supplanted the nobility and they themselves direct the government by means of a commercial council. Because of all these things, there are certain disagreements between the aristocracy and the gentiles, because the former often detest the influence that "mere people" of the mob have. Either way, the truth is that many bourgeois have acquired nobiliary titles by buying them or arranging marriages; thus, the line that separates both classes becomes harder to define.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

One of Arlan's bourgeois

Nobiliary Titles

Following is a quick reference to the more common nobiliary titles that have been used by the Empire during the last the seven centuries.

High Senator: A title that the members of the High Imperial Senate receive. Generally, they are the governors of the different principalities, although they can delegate such position.

Prince: A traditional title that the gentleman of one of the imperial principalities receives. It is the equivalent to the monarch of said territory, and has absolute power that answers only to the High Senate and Sacred Holy Emperor.

Viceroy: A title that the traditional monarchies received during the period of splendor in the Empire. For practical effects, it was equal to the one of prince.

Great Sultan: A title for the governor of Kushistan. Formerly equivalent to the one of prince, but at the present time it holds supreme power completely on its own.

King Pharaoh: Supreme Lord of Stygia, on who falls the temporal and spiritual power. Until the fracture of the Empire, it was equivalent to the prince title.

Archduke: Although it can generally be equivalent to the prince title, an archduke is a degree below this, since more than one can exist in a certain territory. It is the maximum degree of the high nobility, only below the monarchs.

Duke: Lord of a great province. Normally, it is the title immediately below that of prince or archduke. He has the power to name minor nobles, judges, and to supervise the functions of the courts.

Sultan: Equivalent to Duke, but used in territories of Al Enneth. Contrary to the previous one, the sultan also holds certain spiritual power as interpreter of destiny according to the Enneath religion.

Viscount: A level below Duke, it is the lowest title within the high nobility.

Count: The title of greatest prestige within the low nobility. He is a high lord, whose power is equivalent to those of a Duke in many aspects, but with less prerogatives of control.

Baron/Marquis: There exists very little difference between both titles, since generally the power and influence of both can vary considerably, depending on the territory.

Seneschal: Minor nobleman or "delegate", whose power depends exclusively on a nobleman of greater ancestry.

The Other Classes

The social levels known as middle-class and lower class include more than ninety-eight percent of the inhabitants of Gaïa (although there are those that assure the percentage is even greater). This is the sum of common people that populate the world, all those individuals that lack titles or extraordinary fortunes. Nominally called plebs by the nobility, these free men occupy a multitude of functions in society. In fact, the line that separates what is considered middle-class from lower class is very tenuous, given that it does not respond to anything but the personal wealth of each individual. A peasant can be considered somebody of lower class if he lives like a wretch, whereas another that lives more comfortably could be recognized as middle-class.

Normally, livestock dealers and farmers are found at the base of all social structures, the people who earn their living working in the field and taking care of animals. Their situation can be very different depending on if they own the land they cultivate and the animals that they take care of or not. Typically, the vast majority of territories do not have farming proprietors, but rather they do it by order of some of the local nobles. On the other hand there are other places, like Helenia or Baho, in which each person owns the land they work. Traditionally, there are principalities in which a bond of servitude exists between the worker and his lord. Even without being properly enslaved, because the lords preserve their freedom, they are completely subordinate to the will of the nobility.

Next are the craftsmen and workers of the cities who are dedicated to manufacturing all kinds of products, either for their own sake or for some rich bourgeois. Although they are generally well-respected, there are countries with a high level of industrialization in which they work from sun up to sun down for practically nothing. Within this group a large assortment of specialists exist, that can handle countless jobs.

Finally, at the apex of the middle-class are the retailers and merchants, who sometimes receive the title of bourgeoisie. They are people who have their own businesses, and sometimes they unite forming unions or large companies.

The Clergy

The clergy is a social class that deserves very special mention. In a majority of the societies of Gaïa, and in those countries of Christian majority especially, the members of the Church are highly relevant for being the esteemed spiritual guides of the people. Nevertheless, even within their own clergy it is necessary to distinguish between two different categories: the lower clergy and the high clergy. First are the priests, monks and canons, those assigned to preaching the word of God. They do not have any special benefits, but because of their position they are exempt of many taxes. Above these are the high clergy, the equivalent to Church aristocracy. They are its leaders: the ones who make the decisions, organize the day-to-day operation and economy of the different dioceses. The majority of them are high-class nobles, since many aristocratic families with several children make the youngest enter the Church to ensure their future, since not all of them can inherit equally.

Slavery

Contrary to servitude, slavery is something that has been completely prohibited in the Old Continent since the appearance of the Empire. According to its own doctrines by which Abel was formed, any man, woman or child, without regard for the color of their skin or their fortune, has the right to freedom. Unfortunately, in spite of these high ideals, many countries exist that have continued to unofficially allow slavery within their borders. The clearest examples are places like Stygia or Kushistan, where after the fragmentation of the Empire it hasn't taken long to legalize a practice that they've kept secret for years.

The slaves are the lowest class of the social levels; by their own conception, they are not even considered people, but objects or animals that belong to their respective owners. These owners are free to use them, mistreat them or sometimes even kill them without retaliation. After all, each one may do what they want with their own property.

Life in the Cities

The cities of Gaïa are generally boisterous places, full of activity and color. The more prosperous their home State, the more populated its large cities become, and the less people remain in the country. Places like Archangel and Du'Lucart are clear examples of this, which throughout the years have experienced a spectacular demographic increase, impelled by the abundance of immigrants attracted by the prospect of a good future.

But above everything, the cities are centers of commerce, culture and progress. All the advances that have made the lifestyle of Gaïa's inhabitants more comfortable have originated in some of their cities, which have given rise to new advancements as well. Within them there are often paved roads, schools, large markets and a never-ending affluence of products that allow the buyers to find any thing that they

desire. Cities also provide a certain level of security to its citizens, who stop worrying about looting, the storms or the overflow of rivers. However, the real reason for which people live in the cities is to easily find a job and to begin earning a living. There are many who dream of making their fortune due to a stroke of good luck.

A great truth is that cities offer their citizens more advantages than their rural counterparts, but there are also very serious disadvantages. A large city needs much more elaborate safety measures than those of a village. Rarely will a city be threatened by bandits or mercenaries, since only a large army can present a threat to its thousands of inhabitants. Nevertheless, the natural predator of large cities is not an invading army, but its own scavengers. After all, citizens are also the worse enemy of cities. In villages everyone knows each other, but among thousands of people, one face is the same as another. That causes groups of criminals, all protected in anonymity, to bloom. Thieves, assassins, cutpurses, rascals, paupers and other people with dubious lifestyles teem, exerting their offices at the cost of honest people's benefits. In order to fight this, the cities have their guards, independent military bodies that are in charge of maintaining order and limiting the criminal activities to acceptable numbers.

The control of the city falls on an organism of government, usually appointed by the princes or the high nobility, where they all receive different names (town hall, city council, mayorship or township). Regardless, they all serve the same function: to oversee construction projects, control crime and the militia, obtain the funds to pay the salaries of the civil employees necessary for the function of the Government and to grant the licenses to carry out activities within the city walls, a system to keep local commerce safe against possible intruders.

Life on the Farms

The daily life in the rural areas of Gaïa can be characterized by three principles: work, common sense and survival. Without farms, most towns would not be able to move forward.

In spite of everything, daily life on the farm is actually quite structured. The farmers work sun up to sun down, since their livelihoods depend on it, and when the time comes for the harvest, they work to collect what they have cultivated with the sweat off their backs. Similarly, the livestock dealers try to benefit from the few months of heat while they take their animals to pasture. Thereafter, they begin to prepare themselves for the winter, repairing their cabins, fixing the roads and preparing the barns for the arrival of the cold winter months. And thus, the cycle continues unchanging, year after year.

In most countries, farmers are practically considered a national commodity, since they provide raw materials and foods to all the social classes that, in spite of being considered superior, indirectly depend on livestock dealers, woodcutters and other workers of the land. Consequently, the local nobles make sure to take care of them and lend them their support when needed, since after all, they need them in more than one aspect. In exchange, the farmers must pay taxes and work those backbreaking jobs that must be undertaken for the common good.

Generally, towns tend to organize themselves and typically one of the citizens is elected mayor or town representative, be it because of his age, experience or leadership skills. This person takes care to mediate in smaller matters and organize the village. Occasionally, the local nobleman chooses the mayor.

Contrary to large cities, villages do not generally have protection in the form of a local militia. So, in order to have a defense against bandits, those that live in farms collaborate as much as those that live in small communities to insure the well-being of its citizens. Naturally, there is usually some nobleman in charge of protection, although their soldiers only act during certain emergencies. By all means, if a town grows sufficiently, the first thing that they do is hire a squad of guards to keep the peace.

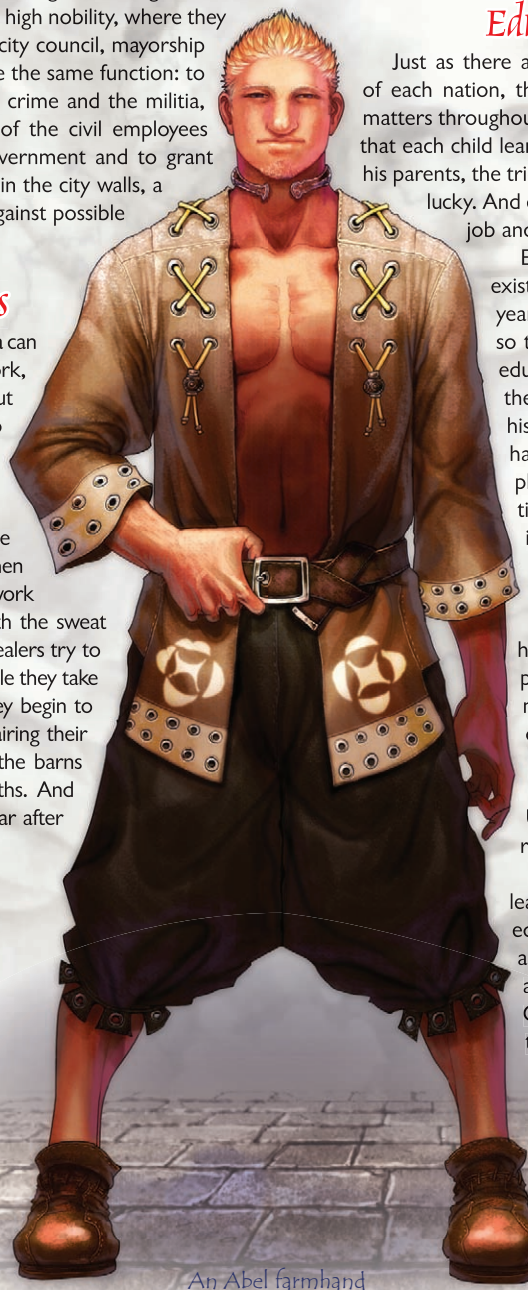
Education and Learning

Just as there are vast differences in the culture and tradition of each nation, there are remarkable inequalities in educational matters throughout the Old Continent. The most common thing is that each child learns everything they need to live by directly from his parents, the tricks of his trade, or even to read and write if he's lucky. And even if he lacks a family, he can still learn from his job and any experiences he has from day to day.

Either way, since nothing like mandatory education exists, many of the western principalities have spent years subsidizing public schools with imperial coffers so that any family can register their children for an education. Only basic knowledge is taught to kids in these schools, like mathematics, language and some history, but it's still better than what their parents had a few years back. Sadly, there are still many places in which education is viewed as a waste of time that detracts from what the children's best interest should really be: work.

In some principalities where the nobility or bourgeoisie have superior status, like Gabriel or Arlan, often the important families will hire personal tutors for their children. These particular teachers are highly valued, and the main aristocratic houses fight to acquire the best ones. Sometimes, if they want their children to receive an education of higher prestige, their parents will send them to Ilmora or the Great University of Lucrecio, for it increases a student's reputation enormously.

The universities of Gaïa, or centers of higher learning, are without a doubt the most important educational institutions. They are still very rare and few principalities have any (in fact, there are a total of ten universities in all of the Old Continent), but they often seem to surface in the most unexpected places. The best students (thanks to subventions) as well as members of the richest families are gathered there, forming a true social elite. Each university allows a specialization in various careers, although merely earning a master's degree in anyone of them represents enormous prestige in and of itself.



An Abel farmhand

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Universities

At the moment a total of ten great-recognized universities exist in all of the Old Continent. The following are the names and locations of the ten:

Imperial University of the Angel	(Archangel)
Academy of Letters of Yirath	(Yirath)
Academy of Sciences of Yirath	(Yirath)
Universitas Lectum	(Hausser)
Universitas Scientia	(Hausser)
Universitas Populum	(Hausser)
Academy of Eustace	(Eustace)
Le Ilustre	(Chaville)
The Great University	(Lucrecio)
The Sacred House	(Albidion)

Mental Institutions

From the same research in which madness was catalogued by the ilmorenses erudites as a disease and not as a demonic possession, some mental sanatoriums were constructed with the objective of studying and classifying such imbalances. At the moment there are very few institutions in Gaïa dedicated to mental rehabilitation and none of them are very renown. Most of them have made some small advances, although there are still places that believe the best way to treat dementia is by undergoing a dangerous brain operation that can have terrible consequences for the patient.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The exact level of technology in the Old Continent is difficult to gauge because of how very different one principality is to another. There are places that have gone beyond the Age of Enlightenment, whereas others haven't even advanced to the Middle Ages. At any rate, what can be argued is the fact that Gaïa has experienced a true revolution in the fields of technology during these last few years, carrying the world to a time of change.

Among all the technical advancements that deserve mentioning, perhaps the most relevant is the printing press. Thanks to this device, a stir in the world of letters has been created, allowing books to be produced at a low cost and hence spread them to all corners of Gaïa. Another very surprising aspect has been the great advances in artisan mechanics, especially with respect to clock gears. With them, they have designed complex machines, like precise clocks (both wall and pocket variety), music boxes and other similar devices. It is even possible in the near future that they could start construction on the first great windup motors. Similarly, the new styles of blown crystal have allowed the creation of very precise lenses, making the manufacturing of spectacles possible, or telescopes of all sizes to observe stars. It's interesting to note that in less than a decade they've found a way to mix dark liquids with these lens crystals, which results in translucent lenses allowing sight through them, but filtering the very bright light passing through. That way, dark glasses and other apparatuses of the same type have been created to protect against the sun.

All these advancements and many others are only a portion of the technology in Gaïa, because new and surprising innovations are made every day.

Scientific Disciplines and Medicine

Even before Abel was founded, Ilmora had already made a true distinction between various scientific disciplines, like astronomy, botany, physics, chemistry or even philosophy. Each one of them is presently understood as an individual and specialized science, in which there have been numerous advances in the last three centuries. Also, an complex understanding of the human body has been reached, explaining the function of the organs and the circulatory system, which has made impressive progress in the field of medicine and surgery. Although still a far cry from performing transplants or precise surgical operations, there are many hospitals in which true medical wonders have been achieved. Anesthesia, antiseptic medicines and even sterilized instruments all exist. Naturally, surgeons this well-prepared are terribly rare and few.

Powder and Firearms

Little over a century ago the world was revolutionized with the advent of powder, that benchmarked a before and after for the weapons concept of Gaïa. Thanks to gunpowder, the first firearms saw rapid development, like arquebus or matchlock pistols. Unfortunately, as of today, such devices are still extremely rare, unsophisticated and hard to come by, so the only manufacturers able to produce and market them do so at exorbitant prices. Consequently, today's armies cannot afford to completely equip themselves with arquebus or pistols. Only the richest and most powerful nations can pay for the luxury of a couple hundred infantry with firearms. On the other hand, the large cannons, that involve less training or complexity, have been multiplied in just a very short time, as well as explosive wick devices.

However, arms are not the only use for gunpowder. Shivatense engineer Yun Lu Fao discovered that, when mixing explosives with certain substances, it was possible to create beautiful multicolored explosions, thus the first fireworks of Gaïa were born: The Lights of Yun. Nowadays, there is not a single civilized country that does not use fireworks to provide ambiance during its most important celebrations.

The Wonders of Lucrecio

Since the arrival of prince Lucanor to the throne of Lucrecio, the country has endlessly surprised the world with its impressive wonders. Among many other things, their researchers have developed, landmark medical advances, new methods of construction and even a naval motor that intends to replace sail boats some day. Nevertheless, all this progress pales in comparison to the creation of Gaïa's first zeppelins, enormous flying devices that sail through the skies connecting several principalities. After works like this, people ask the enigmatic prince every day what incredible prodigy he will astonish them with next.

Lampyridae

One of the most important materials of the Old Continent is the strange mineral called lampyridae. It is an unusual stone of clear gray color that holds a strange property of powerful light emission when it makes contact with water or other liquid substances. Depending on the amount of lampyridae and how deeply it is immersed, its luminescence is may be increased. In general, the light that it emits is of pure white color, but it depends on the nature of the liquid with which it makes contact with. For example, it can acquire copper-like tonalities when it is put in oil, or red when in blood. Many scientists have tried to find out the cause of this phenomenon, but for now none have come to a proper scientific explanation.

Regardless of how it works, lampyridae actually has many practical applications in Gaïa, and there are many countries that make constant use of it. It's commonly used to illuminate houses and roads, be it as simple lamps or lampposts. There are all kinds of models, from a receptacle full of water with a fragment of lampyridae in its center, to much more complex ones, like crystal lanterns that contain pure water with a stone in its interior, supported by fine metallic cables.

Unfortunately, lampyridae is exhaustible, and although it takes several centuries for it to lose its qualities, it suffers some type of degeneration after prolonged contact with water. Consequently, after a year or two it begins to emit a strong and unpleasant scent that can produce dizziness. If the degeneration extends itself (sometimes after more than a century), it begins to emit a gas that can be deadly.

The Legacy of Solomon

It is widespread belief that the ancestral empire of Solomon possessed a technological level far beyond the present one. Although many historians have made dozens of conjectures on the matter, very little is known of that period. Simply put, it is possible that many of the wonders that have surprised the present-day world have the old discoveries of Solomon as a basis, re-invented from remains and ruins left behind by these artifacts.

ECONOMY AND COMMERCE

Economy and commerce are the angular stones of any nation in the world, and the principalities are no exception. In addition to its internal activities, the majority of the countries deal in varying degrees among themselves, creating an immense global market. The main nucleuses of commerce in Gaïa are centered around three points: the core of the Old Continent (which includes Abel, Togarini and Arlan), the Coast of Commerce and the island of Varja. However, many other countries have strong economies as well, based on their natural resources or their domestic trade.

The capital of each nation is based on the amount of gold that it has, which determines the wealth or poverty of a territory. More frequently, when large companies are created by the association of important merchants, they dominate the market, since their union creates a true predominance to which no small commerce can compare to. Luckily, there are still many places around the world where they have no influence, and in those places the old traditions still prevail.

Currencies and Exchange Rates

Each country of Gaïa mints its own currency following the fixed procedures that the Empire has only recently put into place. The shape and design of the currency can vary considerably from one place to another, but each country must always have the same mass of gold or silver to make sure that there is no variation in its value. For example, the yin of Lannet is long and oval shaped, and the pieces of Stygia have complex geometric forms, but both weigh the same and they are made of the same quantity of gold. Either way, the most common and well-known currency is the Imperial Crown, a traditional currency that has the standard of Abel on one side and the place where it was issued on the other.

Presently, as the Empire sits as fragmented as it is, there has been a temporary instability in currencies. Many countries have begun to mint their own currency again, replacing those of legal course with other models. Similarly, the currencies of foreign nations have begun to lose acceptance in certain places, or simply create an inferior exchange rate.

Banking Entities

For more than three centuries Gaïa has been developing a very well structured banking system. Its birth revolves around the basic need to keep all the money in a safe place. However, because of the boom of commerce, these banking companies did not hesitate to offer new services that have made them the true colossuses of economy they are today. At that time it was necessary to find a way to travel from one place to another without having to transport great sums of money to make transactions. As a solution to this, the first companies that formed made it their goal to deposit the money in their banks in one location, so that it could be withdrawn later at one of its other branches.

At first this system only worked within the same principality, but now there are many banks that offer their services in several countries simultaneously. Obviously, the precautions to deter fraud are exceptionally advanced, and the banks require multiple identifications, amongst which secret codes and signatures are mandatory steps for a money withdrawal.

Clients receive a small ledger that they must take with them to withdraw money. Whenever they conduct any transaction, the book must be stamped by the office that makes the payment. Naturally, the various branches send secret files in regard to their client's accounts, as a safety measure to assure that they do not get swindled and to maintain updated information on the actual amounts that they have deposited.

Work and Industry

The farmers work the land in the towns, the craftsmen create all types of wares in the cities, the retailers transport their products from one place to another and the great bourgeois organize the thousands of laborers under their charge. Generally, each and every one of the inhabitants of Gaïa occupy their time with a job that provides sufficient money for them to live (or on occasion, struggle with). Although it varies from one place to another, a simple working male usually earns between one to five coins of silver per day, a wage that allows him to support his family. Women usually receive slightly less and, in the places where the children work from a young age, it is difficult for them to earn more than five bronze crowns.

Nowadays, in the large cities, more and more highly specialized professions are cropping up. Therefore, it is possible to find gardeners, cartographers, hairdressers, bakers, detectives or a hundred more professions where previously there were only eleven or twelve.

A huge innovation that has revolutionized the market has been the invention of mass manufacturing in the factories of Chaville, Archangel and other advanced cities. This deals with large factories that use an assembly line, causing productivity to rise (although not without an in detriment of quality).

General Taxes

The majority of countries with a centralized government force their inhabitants to pay some type of tax to maintain the public coffers. Generally, the collection is made locally, within each villa, town or city. The one in charge is usually the nobleman of the area that he delegates to a body of tax collectors, seconded by the guards or the militia of the region. Since it is impossible to force everyone in a certain place to pay taxes, especially in the larger cities, the collection is normally made on the censused people, those that have possessions in the area, or those who wish to deal within a certain place. In fact, almost all the products that are put up for sale are assigned some type of tax, which increases its price considerably.

Tax on Weapons

During the reign of Lazaro Giovanni, the Empire introduced a radical tax on the sale of weapons that taxed them by more than seventy percent of their true value. The goal of this tax was to reduce the number of sword sales, crossbows and similar devices, to avoid the assembly of independent armies free of Governments and political forces. The enormous success Lazaro achieved caused the tax to remain in place until the present day, which is why weapons in Gaïa are usually priced quite a bit higher. Naturally, there are countries that have never respected this tax too much, like Goldar or Dwänholf, and others that have reduced the tax considerably to twenty-five or fifty percent after the fracture of the Empire, treating to impulse the sale of weapons.

TRIPS AND TRANSPORTATION

Although most people live tied to a single territory, often the people of Gaïa feel the need to travel from one side to another, be it for work reasons or simply pleasure. Long ago travel implied great danger, and it would be a lie to say they do not continue to do so, but the truth is that things have changed considerably now in contrast to how they were seven centuries ago. During the period of predominance and expansion of Abel, the Empire ordered the construction of more than fifty large roads to unite the different principalities to each other. That way, although the network was far from perfect, the ability to travel from one place to another improved incredibly.



One of the many inns on the road

In addition to the great roads, well maintained roads are not unusual on the main commercial routes between villages and nearby cities. The other pathways fall on the good disposition of villagers and local nobles, which do not always result in good paths of communication.

The most common form of travel is usually on foot, given that not everybody can allow himself the luxury of owning a mount. Nevertheless, the number of people that travel by horse, caravans or cart is increases every day. For some time now, travel companies have existed in Gaïa, large businesses that are dedicated to making caravan trips between various points of the continent. For a price that varies according to the route, it is possible to go from one side to the other with the security that the other people and escorts offer. Sprinkled along all these roads travelers can find boardinghouses or inns that serve to provide shelter and a good night's rest after a long day, in addition to not getting lost in the dark or having a bad encounter with fierce night creatures or assailants. It is worth mentioning that, with access to great rivers, the fluvial transport through the interior is also very common (even more so than by foot), because it offers as much security as it does a greater speed.

For sea voyages, the countries of Gaïa have their commercial fleet, among which various passenger ships can be found. All kinds of imaginable boats are at the modern traveler's disposal: Schooners, frigates, galleys and galleass. The most common way to sail tends to be to contract a commercial transport company, but there are also captains for hire that own their own boats. The problem with commercial companies is that due to the proliferation of piracy, they use escort boats and these war galleons are anything but fast. The free boats, however, offer speed and discretion, and are the best option when getting out of some place without embarrassing questions is crucial. Of course, it's less secure and costs more, but there are a select few who prefer to pay in exchange for a more personalized service.

But one cannot overlook the greatest transportation achievement that Gaïa has ever experienced in centuries: the creation of the four airlines of Lucrecio. Thanks to the appearance of zeppelins, the world has become a little smaller, since it is now possible to travel from one border of the Old Continent to the other in just a few days or even cross the oceans in the direction of Manterra. Nevertheless, it has not taken long for voices to arise regarding the accident that The Lady had months ago, proclaiming that if God wanted human beings to fly, he would have given them wings.

LANGUAGES OF GAÏA

Over the course of centuries, Gaïa has developed a multitude of interesting languages. In fact, in spite of the clear predominance of Latin as the official language of the Empire, each culture - having its own distinct personality - has at least one or two languages. Thus, it is no wonder that in Lands of Al Enneth jashú is spoken, or that on the island of Varja the two branches of yamato have always been used. Given the amplitude and variety of the borders, it is practically impossible to make an exhaustive list of all the existing languages at the present time. Also, the Trivium and the Great University of Lucrecio have classified at least fifty languages commonly used, and that is without counting the dozens upon dozens of different dialects. Thirteen of all these common languages are considered official in the different countries of the Old Continent, and as a result, are usually thought of as the main languages of the world.

In general, a character will initially know the languages of their native country within what their intelligence allows. Naturally, it is always possible that he masters some other, if he is able to properly justify learning it and the GM finds it appropriate. In order to know what language is used in a certain place, it is necessary to observe its origins, as explained in the third chapter.

Illustrated by Raúl Rosell

Latin: Without a doubt, Latin is the most extended language of Gaïa, because more than half of its inhabitants use it as a main language. It is simple but refined, as much in its oral form as written, which gives root to a multitude of dialects; at the present time, linguists have found more than two hundred varieties. They have its origins in the language of the ancient Empire of Solomon, although it is much more colloquial and has been simplified with the passage of years.

Arkes: A language of nordic origin, that finds its origins several centuries before the birth of Holst. It is very abrupt and noisy, and normally requires the raising of ones voice to differentiate a word from another. It is possible that it has a strong influence from the Jayan language, which coexisted with the nordics centuries ago. Its written version is very rudimentary, and allows for only limited literature.

Hermital: Although it has some words similar to arkes, hermital is a language with a radically different root. Much more complex and elaborate, each word has a multitude of endings that give meaning to the word. Its written version is terribly complex and long, since it means the learning of more than ten different symbols for each denomination. A book written in hermital could easily take up four times more than its equivalent in Latin.

Tarazv: An old dialect derived from a pirate code that sailors on the Coast of Pelegrí used. It is characterized by combining sounds with gestures. It does not have a written version.

Ailish: It is a clear and well-structured language that was developed in the forests of Alberia more than a thousand years ago. It is an extremely refined idiom, which takes a certain influence from the elvish languages. Its alphabet is made up of runes, each one of which represents the name of a different type of spirit.

Ogashima: A strange colloquial mixture between yamato and Latin, whose use has turned it into a language in its own right. It uses a simplified combination of both formats of writing.

Jashú: The second most spoken language in Gaïa, jashú, is characterized by its musicality and the fast succession of phonemes of its oral form. According to the affirmation by the followers of Jihamath, it is the language of the angels that was conferred to the Eyad to interpret the Book of Destiny. It has a certain phonetic similarity with the language of Ebudan, although their written forms are radically different.

Kannawa: Kannawa is the most spoken language of Nanwe. It is very archaic and its phonetics are filled with guttural sounds and clicks, extremely difficult to imitate for someone who has not practiced it since childhood.

Sheeham: A language with a multitude of dialects, spoken by a native of the savannahs. In spite of its slight complexity, it has a very advanced grammar structure. It is possibly the only written language that combines the colors of letters to express different terms. It has no similarity with any other known language.

Irula: Called "the language of knowledge", irula is the complex language that is used by the wise men of Baho. It has several alphabets and written formats that make speaking it as difficult as writing it. It is believed that it derives from the union of jashú with the Devas language, although presently it does not seem to bear any relation to these.

Kola: Generally known as the "forceful language", it is a simplified version of irula, although phonetically they sound very different. It does not have a written version.

Yamato: With more than five thousand years of history, yamato is the oldest language of man that is still spoken. It was born on the island of Varja and since it began has experienced numerous changes, phonetically as much as lexically. The Damiah language has had an enormous influence on it, so much that it could even be considered one of its dialects. It is a very structured language, with very set rules. It is easy to speak, but its written version is very complex, because a different spelling represents each word.

Yamato shun: A simplified dialect of yamato, whose changes are so notable that the linguists practically consider it a different language. Orally they both maintain a great similarity, but when prioritizing the simplicity and unification of symbols the written rules of Yamato Shun are absolutely different.

Dead Languages

In addition to the common languages, a multitude of missing languages or unused ones exist, which scholars call dead languages. Many presently known belong to the non-human ethnic groups that disappeared after the War of God. However, there are also many others from old empires that were extinguished by the passage of time, or whose origins are completely unknown. Normally, scholars of imperial universities study some dead languages, whereas others like nepranus or elium lacrimae are banned by a decree of the Inquisition or Tol Rauko, who consider them dangerous.

Contrary to the common or official languages of each country, knowledge of dead languages is something rare. Only some linguists, archaeologists or occultists have had the opportunity to master some of them. In game, some logical justification is necessary for teaching it prior to a game, something that allows the character to have been able make attempts at them in the past.

Following is a list of some of the better known dead languages in Gaïa, but of course, not the only ones.

Nepranus: The main language of the Duk´zarist, also called dark speech, is a complicated and harmonious language. It is characterized by its unusual form of writing, since each word registers in all directions: right to left, left to right, top to bottom and bottom to top.

Elium Lacrimae: The "language of the tears of light", is a select and strange language spoken mainly by light elementals and some Sylvain priests who adored C´iel and the Beryls. It is a unique language, since in place of words it uses musical tones and songs. It has a written version, more similar to a musical score, that can only be completely deciphered by interpreting it.

Legameton: The ancestral language of the upper class of Solomon. It has a detailed and tremendously complex written form, in which each letter seems to be a rune simultaneously made up a multitude of smaller ones. It is the programming language that is used by the Lost Logias.

Ultwe´alariel: The most common and extended language among the Sylvain. It has a grammatical structure very similar to the ailish of Alberia, although their phonetics and writing differ completely.

Dael: It is very difficult to pinpoint the origin of this language, since it does not seem to be associated with any race or ethnic group. To date, they've only found some written remains in ruins located in the lands of Al Enneth (mainly in the deserts of Salazar), which is why, speculatively, it had to be an old language used by an ancient empire. At the moment, it cannot decipher more than a limited number words, and it's oral form is still unknown.

Kamyu: The old language of the Kami, considered by the people of Varja to be like the language of the Gods. Its meaning has been lost with the passing of years, but some priests still use their words like spells.

Lileth: According to the Lilium tradition, lileth is the secret language of the spirits, and only the wisest priests are able to interpret it correctly. In its oral version, it is made up of extended words, whistles and guttural sounds. Written texts are very rare, but they use a system of curved lines and points extremely difficult to read.

Yvah: The refined language of the old empire of Yehudah, yvah is a language that contains numerous references to magical and supernatural formulas. Their letters simulate codes and magical pentagrams, intentionally facilitating the teaching of its students. Many magical grimoires written by the hand of man use it.

S´lish: An intrinsic and unknowable language used by certain supernatural entities. It is not easy to trace its roots, but it is assumed that it was born of a nonhuman culture that probably adored some aspect of Abaddon the Shajad. The Church considers it is the language of hell, and the truth is that the majority of demonic creatures either use it or know it. It has a sinuous tone, difficult to pronounce for human beings.

Knowledge of the Dead Languages

Here is a brief reference of what abilities a character must have initially to justify the knowledge of some of the dead languages. They are nothing more than recommended values, which is why it is in the hands of the Game Master to alter or ignore this guideline.

Nepranus	*Occult 40, History 40*
Elium Lacrimae	*Occult 40, History 40, Music 40*
Legameton	*History 60, Science 40*
Ultwe´alariel	*Occult 40, History 40*
Dael	*History 80*
Kamyu	*Occult 40, History 20*
Lileth	*Occult 80*
Yvah	*Occult 40, History 40*
S´lish	*Occult 120*

THE LAW

Due to the influence of Sacred Holy Empire, the law in the Old Continent is established following very modern legislative principles. Which is why, in the majority of countries the same laws apply to both nobles and plebs, which creates a certain theoretical equality between the different classes. Naturally, legal practice tends to be very different, since each site has its own court and, generally, the aristocrats receive many more procedural privileges. At any rate, each country traditionally will dictate its own laws within its capacity whenever it can, as long as it doesn't abandon the principles of Abel. Sometimes this makes the legal differences between the territories more than just notable. Nobody expects that in the frozen wastelands of Goldar, where the law barely exists, somebody understands the idea of a court such as it is in Abel.

The most advanced legal principle of the Old Continent is probably the fact that everyone has the right to be judged for his crimes. That does not mean in the slightest that people are innocent until proven guilty, but that, at least, they will be able to be heard before a judge so that he evaluates the weight of his crime and he emits a just sentence. Often, this rule is not even upheld in the heart of the Empire, and some misdemeanors are punished immediately by the authorities. Nowadays, nobody expects the guards to bother themselves with detaining a petty crook that has robbed some apples and bring him before the judge. It is more likely that they resort to giving him a good scare instead (or even a few blows if he is a repeat offender), before making the busy magistrates waste their time.

Another element that demonstrates an advanced legal system states that in the great majority of territories pertaining to the Sacred Holy Empire, as well as in the principalities with a similar culture, all defendants for crimes whose punishment may be greater than six months in jail have the right to a pro-bono public lawyer who defends them. Unfortunately, these public defenders are forced to take hundreds of cases, which is why they can only dedicate a very small amount of time to them.

Generally, the word of the authorities is considered more than sufficient proof everywhere, which is why if any person is caught in the act of committing a crime, it's possible the trial is little more than a mere formality to arrive at a fast sentence. Indeed; criminal investigations are very infrequent, and are limited to crimes of certain relevance. Even so, the majority of culturally advanced countries have sections dedicated to the investigation and elucidation of the most important crimes.

Punishments and Penalties

Much as the law varies from one territory to another, the punishments and penalties do so as well. What in one location a crime can be sanctioned as a misdemeanor, another can reach places where it is considered a terrible insult against the established power.

For smaller thefts or unsuitable language there are the stockades and public whipping. Jail is reserved for most crimes of a certain importance, like robbery or contraband. It is important to note that prison is not seen as an act of redemption nor does it try to reinstate the delinquent into society; it is nothing more than a punishment that tries to discourage people from committing more crimes. The deprivation of freedom usually entails some type of forced labor, making the captives earn their meals. A long time ago Abel prohibited the use of physical torture, but there are still countries like Stygia or Togarini that continue to use it as punishment. Lastly, the death sentence is carried out only as a result of very serious crimes, like high treason, murder or crimes of great gravity.

As a general rule, all crimes entail some kind of pecuniary fine, disregarding its nature. Thus, a person condemned to prison can see himself forced to pay strong economic sanctions as much to the court as to the victims of his acts.

Ecclesiastic Law

The Christian Church has its own law and courts that function in a parallel way to governmental law. If a person fails to fulfill an ecclesiastic law, the Church can persecute him by its own means or ask the official authorities to detain him. Normally ecclesiastic law is more permissive and lenient than the layman, but the punishments are much more terrible, since in no way do they contemplate pris on. The penalties can carry terrible consequences, like being stoned, whipped or other much worse things. The division of the Inquisition is particularly known for judging witches, whose most common punishment usually is death by bonfire.

DIVERSION AND ENTERTAINMENT

People need to amuse themselves to live and that is not an exception in Gaïa. Each and every one of the principalities has its own particular pastime, forms of escaping the daily monotony and give something of color to life. The truth is that in spite of the great cultural differences between the diverse territories, generally everybody shares a similar tradition when it comes time to have fun. After all, entertainment is something intrinsic to people wherever they live.

Diversions for the Privileged Classes

Normally, rich people usually enjoy refined and proper entertainments worthy of their social position. Their superior economic ability allows them to spend large amounts of money on their pastimes, anything so as to give some interest to their lives and prove that they are above the mob.

Places like the opera or the theater are frequented by the nobility and the bourgeoisie, where the luxury is at the level of what the privileged demand. The opera houses or theater presentations spare no expense to satisfy their demanding public, and invest great sums on stage scenery, clothes and anything that can elevate the quality of what they offer to their spectators.

Other places frequented by the upper class are museums and the art exhibitions, where they can observe the talent of renown artists and be surprised with wonders from all parts of the world. Equally so, zoos are also recurrent places, especially for women and children.

Hunting is another unquestionable favorite, mainly among the young people who look for dangerous excitement. Contrary to the mere local hunters, the majority of nobles and bourgeoisies attain restricted private hunts, extremely exclusive clubs in which one can chase exotic animals brought in from all corners of the world. This hobby is enormously popular in some very refined principalities like Gabriel, where it is normal to make trips to "wild places" like Nanwe or Goldar to find the best prey and later boast about them before their friends. It does not have to be said, that professionals usually accompany them so that they can help them and watch over their safety.

Nevertheless, of all the diversions of the privileged classes, nothing even compares to the popularity of dances and society dinners. It is a grand reunion of high lineages that various families hold periodically. Their reasons can be diverse, from presenting somebody new into society to celebrating any kind of festivity. In them the nobles chat, dance and have fun, as well as close business deals or make important decisions. There are some people who prepare themselves for weeks to correctly attend to the etiquette or to stand out in the dance.



A dance of the high society in Gabriel

Illustrated by Luis NCT

The island of Paradís Paradís deserves a special mention, because in spite of their recent creation, the attractions that it offers have become tremendously popular in all the countries of Gaïa. Of course, other competing parks have not taken long to provide some competition, but for the moment none come remotely close to the quality and spectacular experience of marvelous island.

Diversions for the Lower Class

Contrary to the wealthy people, the lower class do not have access to too many refined entertainments, but of course the boredom and imagination of some plebs has caused them to have an almost equally varied repertoire. Normally, these individuals distract themselves going to street spectacles that jugglers and traveling artists provide daily. All the large towns or districts of the important cities usually have a street filled with comedians and actors to ready to entertain the plebs in exchange for a few coins. Games with animals, juggling or public representations are the most common diversions to escape routine. This interest has caused diverse traveling circuses to visit the cities more and more, announcing their arrival with loud voices. For a simple silver coin or even a smaller amount, a person and his family can see a unique spectacle that makes them feel like they're on top of the world.

More common places of entertainment include bars and taverns, which many workers go to rest when they finish their day. To have a little wine or beer while some musician or singer brightens up the atmosphere is a traditional scene in any place of the world. Of course, one can't forget the importance of festivities and fairs, where people can dance, eat and enjoy things grandly, relegating any other problems.

Then there's the much wilder diversions in the most recondite places of Gaïa. In places like Goldar or Haufman, there are combat arenas where fighters face-off against each other or against wild beasts for entertainment of the public. In such gladiatorial spectacles, blood and human life can be currency for trade with bets.

Music

Music is an element of considerable importance in most cultures and societies. In Gaïa, each country usually has one rooted musical tradition, with its own styles and tendencies. Without going too far, the nordic zones are known for the uproarious force of their songs, the eastern islands for their slow and refined style, and the western territories for their varied tones. Nevertheless, during the past few centuries Gaïa has experienced a true musical flourishing, very similar to what it has developed culturally and technologically. Therefore a multitude of new styles has arisen, like jazz, flamenco, blues or even an archaic version of pop music. Similarly, trying to keep pace with the new types of musical advances, a plethora of unusual instruments have been invented, some of which are surprisingly modern, like pianos, saxophones, organs or even drums.

The recent emergence of musical idols deserves special mention, who have been appearing with an unstoppable force for almost thirty years. These are singers or groups who receive strong promotions and publicity by part of interested private parties. They're usually young, especially attractive girls or boys with a rebellious look that employ the most original musical styles. Some of them are famous all around Gaïa, and people follow them with fervor.

The singing sensation of the moment is the mysterious Andiel, a precious young girl whose voice captivates all that hears it. In truth, she has obtained that talent from doctor Schwarzwald, who fulfilled the dream of the young girl to become a famous singer.

Festivities

If there is something that there is never enough of in Gaïa, those are holidays and festivities. From the distant corners of Baho to the heart of Abel itself, there are a multitude of celebrations, with as much of a religious scope as cultural. Many have been sprung as a reminder of great events, whereas others are no more than "fictitious" celebrations created by economic interests to sell products. Each country has approximately twenty or thirty annual festivities, without counting with the ones that each town or city can celebrate independently. The following is a list of some of most well-known holidays and celebrations throughout the whole world.

Day of the Infinite Skies

15th of April *(Stygia)*

This stygian holiday is consecrated to the God Amenhotep, and its celebration is centered on the King-Pharaoh who is his descendant. Hundreds of pilgrims head towards the capital to celebrate an immense festival, while that King-Pharaoh receives the most ostentatious gifts from the nobles who try to please him.

Magatama Matsuri

13th of August *(Varja)*

This day is celebrated in very different ways in both empires of Varja, because it recalls the appropriation of the Soulstones on the part of Lannet. Lannetens celebrate it like a day of exaltation of national spirit by means of banquets, music and competitions in which samurai face of with each other, proving their strength before their lords. Contrary, in Shivat it is a day of melancholy, meditation and prayers, since it is said that it is the moment of the year in which the spirits of Ashura are closest to the world. People go to the temples and make offerings, trying to avoid establishing conflicts that can attract the monsters of war.

Week Of Gifts

First week of April *(Salazar)*

Once a year, the nomads of Salazar meet during one week to deal and distribute the areas of the desert. All the weddings are celebrated and carious festivities take place that include dances and other competitions.

Imperus Magnus

16th of September *(Sacred Holy Empire, Azur Alliance, Episcopal States)*

Possibly, it is the layman's most important celebration in Gaïa. Within it celebrates the day in which the Sacred Holy Empire was founded. Everywhere it is a day of the great rejoicing, because the end of a dark period is commemorated. Presently the day has lost its meaning in many countries far from the heart of the Empire, but it continues being celebrated in a grand way. In Abel it is the greatest of all the festivities and Archangel fills with visitors for a spectacle that has no equal.

Lácryma

9th of June *(Sacred Holy Empire, Azur Alliance, Episcopal States)*

The 9th of June is a dark and sad day, in which the death of Zhorne Giovanni is commemorated, the founder of the Sacred Holy Empire. In many places the custom is to have toll the bells of all the churches throughout the entire morning, and fill the houses with candles.

Festival of Ayakashi

First week of August *(Varja, Phaion)*

This festivity commemorates the memory of the deceased. Relatives ignite lamps and leave them on the sea to guide their spirits to the beyond.

Velhazzar

First night of April with a full moon *(Territories of Al Enneth)*

The "moment destined" recalls the date in which the Eyad received the revelations of Jihamath. It is a time of oration and meditation, in which each one of the believers must reconsider the path that they have chosen in its life. At night, great celebrations are common, with dances and feasts.

Winter Solstice

21st of December *(Gaïa)*

Called the "festivity of the mirror" or "the perpetual dark", this date marks the longest night of the year. Depending on each culture, it can be celebrated with joy and feasts, or respect and fear. In the north they believe that it is the only moment in which the Gods sleep and darkness blossoms over the world, while in the areas most attuned to the Empire the tradition exists to disguise one's self and set of fireworks.

Summer Solstice

21st of June *(Gaïa)*

The longest day of the year, this festivity is celebrated throughout all of Gaïa in very different ways. In many places great bonfires form and people dance around it, because tradition says that it purifies the soul and protects from the demons. In some cultures, this date is called "the Day of the Door", and it is believed that the membrane that separates the real world from the spirit one is more fragile then.

Vernal Equinox

21st of March *(Gaïa)*

A smaller festivity that praises the arrival of spring. It is a day for couples and lovers, where the declarations of love and weddings are tremendously common. For years, the Providence company has begun to promote the custom in which during the equinox a gift for the loved one must be made. Surprisingly, it has had a fast acceptance and has become a very widespread habit, especially in the Empire and Varja.

Autumnal Equinox

23rd of September *(Gaïa)*

The well-known day of harvest is celebrated by almost all the farmers of Gaïa, who are used to giving thanks for their hard work throughout the year. Great festivals are common, that of course includes dances and drinks. It is mainly a rustic festivity without too much of a repercussion in the large cities.

Sanctus

7th of April *(Christian States)*

The day of mourning and weeping for the believers of the Christian Church, Sanctus is the date in which the Messiah died on the walls of Solomon. Although each country has its own traditions, processions and attendance at holy masses in memory of Christ are most common.

Celebration of the Souls

18th of February *(Moth)*

A profane celebration of unknown origin, whose purpose is to expel the bad spirits and to protect one's self against curses. People go out and throw salt everywhere, leaving a small pile in front of each door.

Weihnacht

24th and 25th of December *(Christian States)*

The so called "night of blessing", one of the main Christian festivities, it commemorates the appearance of the Messiah into the world. It is celebrated with great rejoicing and it is normal to get together with families and do a gift exchange.

New Year

31st of December *(Gaïa)*

Generally, all the cultures that use the calendar of Aveh celebrate the end of the year the night of the 31st of December. No one works that day, and people gather to first have supper with family and later leave to party at the precise moment that midnight arrives.

Eden

If there's anything that really awakens the interest of practically all the people and cultures of Gaïa it's the common interest for Eden. It is a sport of masses that attracts the attention of hundreds of thousands of people throughout the entire world and has managed to become a true social phenomenon. Its origin is very old and, for what is known, was played even before the arrival of the Messiah. Some historians even theorize that perhaps it was not even developed by man, although naturally everybody denies it.

The rules of Eden pit two teams of six people whose goal is to project a heavy ball into the net of their rival. It is played in a round stadium, enclosed by high walls and filled with columns between fourteen and fifteen feet high. The ball can be struck with fists, feet, elbows or head, and is free to bounce between the columns or the walls. In fact, many of the best passes and plays are done taking advantage of seemingly random bounces.

The sport calls for strong physical contact, both in the form of collisions and attacks to the opposing team in the form of punches and kicks. However, no confrontation can last more than three seconds, or in game terms, a single turn of blows. After which, it is mandatory to wait for thirty seconds before initiating a new attack. Another possibility is using the ball to hit your adversaries hard enough that it really causes damage. Even as the ball is only leather, it is sufficiently heavy to take a player out.

A game lasts four sets of fifteen minutes each, between which there is a brief rest in order that the players can recover. To assure the correct enforcement of the rules, official games have four referees, who watch the fouls and control the time of the confrontations.

As a general rule the matches are played at ground level, but the best players can get to dispute parts of the encounter jumping on the columns of the stadium. This is due to the popularity of this sport, where there are thousands of players in Gaïa, among which exists a very small percentage that have even developed Ki Abilities. Consequently, the great stars are even able to take prodigious jumps, move at inhuman speeds and extrude their physical energy into the ball to give their shots greater power. Because of the incredible visual spectacle of the game, it is no wonder people cheer such gymnastics, and consider the abilities of their idols as mere game talent.

Eden is played in the majority of countries and principalities of Gaïa. The most culturally advanced, like Abel, Phaion or Togarini, have their own leagues, whereas in other wilder places, like Goldar or Hauffman, games for entertainment are simply common. Some professional players have been able to obtain fame and recognition at a worldwide level, and gain crazy annual salaries for being on their teams. Although it is not very common, it is a mixed sport, so there are also some elite female players in the leagues.

Traditionally every five years a world cup is played in which the national teams gather from all the countries in the world. The next one was scheduled for the beginning of next year in Lucrecio, although given the present situation in which the Empire finds itself, nobody knows for sure if it will end up being played or not. Anyway, because of the social impact that it would cause, the countries attuned to The Holy Empire and those that make up the Azur Alliance are trying to reinforce their teams to the max, since if the competition takes place, neither would wish to lose the game.

The last the two world cups have been won by Phaion Eien Seimon, and its team is considered as one of the best (if not the best) in all of Gaïa. Ironically, both times they reached the finals against Shivat, who they defeated by an only slim margin.

An Entire World Ahead of You

Even now you have only scratched a small part of what Gaïa offers you, but you must not forget that, above all, this world has been born with the objective to acclimate itself to your games. Therefore, there are many elements you must consider whether you are the Game Master or not. First, it is very important to determine the gaming style that you want to play out with your characters. Depending on your preferences, you can alternate between mystery, terror and political intrigue or wild action and epic supernatural confrontations. All that and much more is what you can find in the world before you.

If you like games with a dark and horrific atmosphere, just remember that the supernatural is a force forgotten by man, mere fairy tales that are narrated around bonfires. However, tenebrous entities mix among us, and unnamed terrors rest lethargic waiting to show themselves before humanity. In these cases, you have places like Moth at your disposal, where the darkness awaits around each corner, although any location in the civilized world can serve you. In the end, the important thing will be to correctly adjust the world perspective naturally. Also, do not to forget the great possibilities for political intrigue that are offered to you. In the present situation of Gaïa, where the Sacred Holy Empire has lost almost all of its influence, we find ourselves on the brink of several wars that everyone wants to avoid. Now more than ever, espionage and intrigue are vital for the future of the world. In these cases, any of the powers interested in these conflicts is an appropriate element. But mainly, remember that Gaïa overflows with dangers and supernatural threats that will allow you to experience exciting and epic encounters. Never forget that the characters are special individuals and that, on many occasions, only they will be able to confront the terrible threats that hang over the destiny of man.

When you play in Gaïa, you can choose one of these styles, mix several of them simultaneously or simply invent new ones. After all, we never get tired of saying it, the world is in your hands.

The Characters in Gaïa

Generally, the traditional adventurers, in the strictest sense of the word, are not very common in Gaïa. It is true that there are an infinite amount of individuals that leave their homes in search of excitement, but it's not natural for them to form groups for "going on adventures". Logically each person has his own motivations, their own unique reasons to embark on what awaits them (probably not insignificant). Often, everything begins with a character's presence at or contribution to a life-changing event. It could be, after experiencing something that has no place in the world for him, he sees the need to discover the truth that is hidden behind what he is familiar with. On the other hand, it is possible that his destiny will guide him, like looking for somebody beloved or take revenge on whomever has snatched that which mattered most to him. Who knows, maybe he is simply trying to escape a past that he can't manage to leave behind. Either way, it is important to stress that most characters usually have something special in their background that makes them different from others.

But then... what exactly will the characters focus their efforts on within Gaïa? Firstly, the most traditional role that they can incarnate is usually the one of mercenaries or investigators. That is to say, people who work for the behest of others, in exchange for some kind of payment. Other times, they will be attuned to the ideals or interests of some organization, like the Order of Magus or the Black Sun, and it is even possible that they work actively for them (although they themselves may not know it). Nevertheless, the most important thing to remember is that, in a near future, all of them will find something that channels their lives towards a certain goal, motivates them to a story that will engulf them and find themselves emerging victorious in the end.

A World of Secrets

Even now, not every secret of Gaïa has been unveiled. Little by little, with each one of the following setting books, new elements of the world will be revealed, uncovering part of the immense plot of what has really happened... and continues happening. What did Rah really mean to do? What is that Eljared has started? What are the consequences of the Fracture of the Heavens?

Naturally, if you have already read the Anima core book you have many of these answers, but also many more questions. We hope that, with time, you discover new clues that allow you to add your own material to your games.

Chapter 2
History and Chronology

Those that do not know their history
are condemned to repeat it.

Keith Khaiel Sith

Why do we forget?

Every time I begin to tell this story, our story, that question always comes to my mind. And still today, at the doorway to a new millennium, I am still incapable of an answer.

We lost everything. In an instance, what was ours was snatched away, drowning us in the darkness of our own knowledge. Like tears forgotten in the vast ocean of history, we advanced through a path of uncertainty, ignorant of our condition, while the world that we had created collapsed around us.

Was that our sentence?

Or our salvation?

The Age of Chaos

From the perspective of man, everything in respect to history before the coming of the Messiah is rather confusing and vague. The Church and Tol Rauko resolved those issues in their own way, hiding or destroying the information that they did not wish to be leaked to the public. In spite of everything, be it by oral tradition or the meticulous and secretive work of historians, there are still some fragments remaining from previous eras that are preserved.

The beginning of the time period known as The Age of Chaos has some uncertain origins. If most sources determine that its beginning was a result of an apocalyptic conflict, referred to as the War of Darkness, then there are very few testimonies of anything that traces back more than ten thousand years before the arrival of the Messiah. We can only assert that this cycle was extremely long, and saw the rise and fall of great empires. In fact, many of the cultures that exist nowadays in Gaïa germinated during these centuries.

Honoring its name, it was a chaotic age, full of inexplicable wonders as much as horrors. During that time man walked alongside what we might today consider fairy tale beings. Each population forged its own legends of the end of this era, like myths of Holst in the deserts of the north, the revelations of Eyad in the burning sands of the deserts or the disappearance of the Eternal Emperor in distant Varja.

Nevertheless, those are stories for a separate occasion.

The Arrival

It was then, at that time of confusion and chaos, when somebody appeared and changed everything. From the shadows of our own history a young man arose who would show us a new destiny undreamt of; a simple boy who, with time, would cause the very pillars of the world to stagger. He was of humble beginnings, but even the greatest kings and emperors would bow before him. Today he is called by many names, like the Illuminated One, King of Kings or Son of God, but the first by which he was known was Abel.

Although there are countless ecclesiastical controversies on his childhood, which remains shrouded in mystery, the first known fact in Gaïa regarding Abel was that he lived in a small village in a region currently known as the Dominion. At that time, the whole territory was surrounded by constant war, being only natural that various lords would dispute the control of towns and cities. That day, the village of Netzath was under attack by a minor military company that had no other intention than to sack the town and capture it. Abel appeared in the heat of battle, slowly walking towards the proud captain of the soldiers. Nobody raised their arms against him; they were incapable of doing so. Once before the captain, the little one, who was barely ten years old, calmly smiled. The first words that they would hear him say and those which he would pass on to history would be: "Today a new age begins." Next he spoke with the innocence of a boy and the wisdom of an old man, and none of the soldiers could turn his attention from him.



Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

The captain was overwhelmed and when he discovered that the child was nothing more than a mere wandering vagabond, he decided to follow him wherever it may take him, even to the depths of hell itself. That man would be the first of his disciples, and when the moment arrived, also the first of his Apostles: Pietro Giovanni.

Abel traveled from one side of the world to the other, spreading his word to all countries. Everywhere he went, people abandoned their conflicts in favor of common goals, following the lessons of an unknown God until then, a God of all things that granted the people power over life and death.

His philosophy had no room for either magic or the supernatural, which he considered to be the root of all evils humanity had suffered up to that point. If man wanted salvation, he had to return to his origins, before unfamiliar forces invaded his life. Thus, wizards, spirits and other supernatural creatures saw how a creed that only rejected them now rose against them with an alarming force that they had never imagined. For that reason, when he had just turned sixteen, some of his detractors decided to finish all the problems that Abel was causing them, taking advantage of the fact that he had arranged a sermon before a great crowd in the city of Ilion. The attack was orchestrated by the Order of Yehudah, a power convinced that those who benefited from the Gift were the legitimate rulers of the world. Its objective was not only the assassination of Abel; but a rowdy

demonstration to prove to everyone where the true power resided. However, the wizard lords never would have imagined what the outcome was going to be. That night, Abel would teach us that God brought not only love and mercy, but also just punishment and revenge. When the arch mages manifested before the crowd and began their brutal show of force, the young one gathered a fallen soldier's sword from the ground and advanced towards the wizards with tears in his eyes.

Poor fools. In a certain way, I feel pity for them.

They never understood what they faced.

The Wars of the Cross

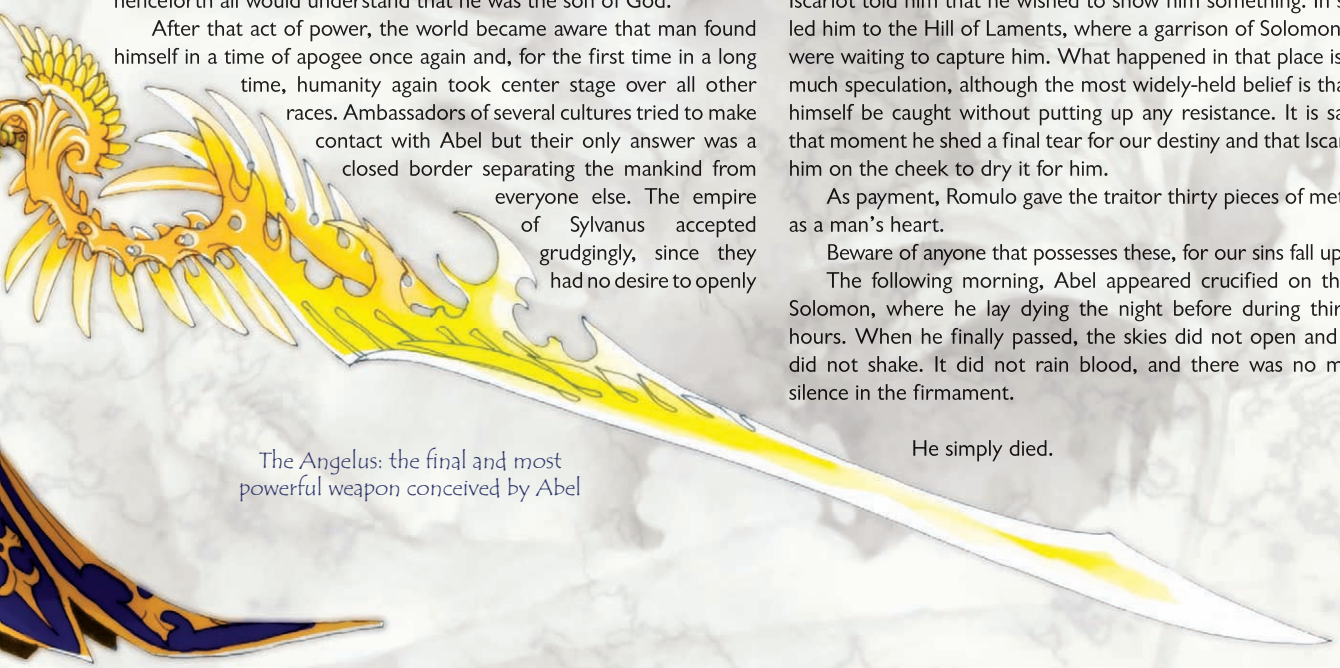
Following those events, Abel's passive nature receded. He gathered his closest followers, whom he granted the title of Apostles, and explained to them that the moment to change the order of the world forever had arrived. Thus he initiated a crusade in the name of unification, gathering us all under a single flag, a single dream and the same heaven.

And the Wars of the Cross began.

Kingdoms and entire nations surrendered before him, lords of war and emperors turned over their weapons and stately crowns, all fascinated by the overwhelming figure of Abel. And those who refused, were subjugated by the force of an army that was compelled by the vigor of faith. Sometimes, the monarchs who were unwilling to follow his rules found themselves fighting with their own rebellious subjects, who rose against them complying with the lessons of The Savior. Throughout the years, Abel moved forward with his dream, uniting all the nations of humanity. Only the Empire of Solomon, long ago the greatest power of mankind, refused to waver and managed to resist the reformation of heaven's chosen one, who ignored them for a time, favoring other principalities.

After the years, the religious unification was regarded with disdain by the deities that are known today as the False Idols, and some of them decided to take an active role in the matter. At the doors of the Peak of the World, Abel personally faced Fenrisulf, a living God that had manifested himself in the world at full power. Tradition and the Church have called that entity "The Great Beast", which perhaps was not entirely inappropriate. Against all prognoses, Abel destroyed the deity, spilling the blood of a God with his own hands. At that moment Saulo, high priest of the False Idols, dipped into the blood of Fenrisulf and marked Abel's forehead with a cross. Thus the name of "Christ" would be given to him, which means the Anointed One, and from henceforth all would understand that he was the son of God.

After that act of power, the world became aware that man found himself in a time of apogee once again and, for the first time in a long time, humanity again took center stage over all other races. Ambassadors of several cultures tried to make contact with Abel but their only answer was a closed border separating the mankind from everyone else. The empire of Sylvanus accepted grudgingly, since they had no desire to openly start a war, and the Jayan tribes in human territories were expelled by force. The remaining races, ethnic groups and cultures gradually followed suit, forgetting man and his matters. Only the citizens of the shadows posed a true threat. In spite of merely having a fraction of the power that they had years before, the Duk´zarist were a force to be reckoned with. Their pride would never allow them to accept denied passage to any place.



The Angelus: the final and most powerful weapon conceived by Abel

But, once again, Abel did something that nobody would have predicted. Completely alone he entered Khronos, the floating capital of the Duk´zarist, where no human had previously set foot on without receiving an invitation. While everyone stood in shock, he walked through the very doors of the dark palace and demanded to see the empress Phometeum Noah. His audacity piqued the curiosity of the Mistress of Khronos, who accepted a reception with the Messiah. Some say that, when she was with Abel, the Dark Empress saw the shadow of God behind him and trembled. I think that in reality, she felt as dazzled by his magnetism as everyone before her had, so the dark lady decided to give humanity an opportunity to prove their potential.

For one reason or another, she agreed not to take part in the matters of mankind and Abel then returned to his disciples, determined to finish the Kingdom of the Heavens. He was only twenty-eight years old.

He would not live to see twenty-nine.

The Kingdom of the Heavens

After securing his borders to the north, south and east, the attention of Abel and his Apostles was centered on the decadent Solomon. Its present governor, emperor Romulo, known for his despotic behavior and cruelty, had openly announced his rejection of the Messiah's doctrines. The plebs supported him whole-heartedly, decadent and clinging to the old dreams of greatness they once had. Because of all this, it promised to be a difficult campaign, although nobody doubted the final outcome.

Shortly, and with less problems than expected, the armies of the Messiah managed to arrive at the outskirts of the capital of Solomon, setting camp just a few miles from its walls until daybreak. That night, Abel congregated with his Apostles and ate supper with them. Some say that they found him strange, and others say that he announced implicitly what was going to happen to him, although at that moment they did not understand it. When he finished, he met in private with Pietro and then with Iscariot, another of his close followers. The content of these conversations is completely ignored, but apparently, Iscariot told him that he wished to show him something. In silence, he led him to the Hill of Laments, where a garrison of Solomon's soldiers were waiting to capture him. What happened in that place is cause for much speculation, although the most widely-held belief is that Abel let himself be caught without putting up any resistance. It is said that at that moment he shed a final tear for our destiny and that Iscariot kissed him on the cheek to dry it for him.

As payment, Romulo gave the traitor thirty pieces of metal as dark as a man's heart.

Beware of anyone that possesses these, for our sins fall upon them.

The following morning, Abel appeared crucified on the walls of Solomon, where he lay dying the night before during thirteen long hours. When he finally passed, the skies did not open and the earth did not shake. It did not rain blood, and there was no moment of silence in the firmament.

He simply died.

THE ELEVEN HOLY KINGDOMS

Contrary to what Romulo and the leaders of Solomon thought, the death of the Messiah did not end his dream. After the treason of Iscariot, the eleven remaining Apostles took control of the army and in just few hours collapsed the walls of the city, crushing all resistance. There was no mercy for those who had tortured and executed their lord. There, on the ruins of the capital, the eleven raised the tomb of the Messiah and met in what would be remembered as the first Holy Council. The Wars of the Cross were over, but now, without the figure of Abel to guide them, an uncertain future loomed ahead of them. Even so, the Apostles believed in the dream for which they had lived and fought for during a decade and it weighed strongly on their hearts, which is why they made an effort in keeping the dream alive.

The eleven began a long discussion that lasted several days; finally, they wound up exhausted and they had to rest. That night they dreamed about the Messiah, who explained to them that as of that moment his life's work would fall into their hands. Upon awakening, they decided to divide the principalities of man into eleven parts and take the role of its leaders. Thus they would be able to carry on his destiny and maintain the stability that had cost them so much to reach. It would be the beginning of a new time known as the Era of the Holy Kingdoms. The world began to change and every man, woman and child could feel it.

Three years later, on the ruins of Solomon the city of Archangel was founded with the purpose of being the capital of humanity, while the Apostles declared the birth of the eleven kingdoms in their respective principalities. Thus began a long period of splendor, although certainly not one free of problems. Applying the doctrinal principles of Abel, the use of the supernatural was prohibited and the borders were closed to the other races of Gaïa, with which man ceased all relationship with. Engrossed in their own matters, the other races did not give this act the importance that it deserved. On the other hand, the Apostle Thanos Shetep could not wait to make good on his objective, since his obsession to take revenge on Iscariot made him abandon his kingdom. Kushistan thus became a serious problem for the territorial unity of man, and there would always be a great tension between the Enneath people and the Holy Kingdoms of the south.

With the passage of time, years after the death of the original Apostles, the Holy Kingdoms began to distance themselves from one another, even reaching the point of generating friction among them. They finished grouping into four large blocks that had completely forgotten the objective with which they were created. In a sad irony, the grand dreams and ideals of the past could not stop the nature of the human spirit.

And it was then, at the doors of disconnection, when the world would confront its darkest hour. Soon, everything that we knew would end up sinking into terrible of madness.

Given that between the shadows of our own history, a twelfth kingdom of man had formed.

THE WAR OF GOD

Rah Sith, the last descendant of the Apostle Judas Iscariot, had secretly created an unknown power to all forces of the planet: the Empire of Judas. How he managed to do it without anybody noticing is still a mystery, but its power was absolute. He possessed part of the lost technology of Solomon, which gave him complete superiority over the rest of the nations. Self-proclaimed Lord of the Rejected, all those that did not seem to have a place in the world rose up beside him. Wizards, summoners and a plethora of supernatural beings all joined him, united under the ideal to change Gaïa forever. Nevertheless, those were not the only forces that he had at his disposal. Thanks to his knowledge of science, Rah created a multitude of new creatures by means of supernatural genetic manipulation, new races born with the sole purpose of being his weapons, to which primeval horrors and great beasts would join them. He had an army the likes of which had never been seen; even in the War of Darkness...

However, luring the young Duk´zarist empress Ark Noah to the stronghold of Tol Rauko was his most clever strategy yet. Ark Noah was the daughter of the deceased Phometeum, and under the false promise that his technology could find a cure for her people's racial weakness towards metal, Rah made her a prisoner so as to force the Duk´zarist to support him in the conflict.

On the 13th of September of the year 223 Rah declared war on the world, and nobody was prepared for his arrival.

The first enclave to fall was the city of Acheon, the greatest metropolis of the era. In spite of its great technological achievements and powerful defenses, the large city was reduced to little more than ashes in less than a day. Hours later the hoards of Judas spread out throughout the coasts of the Inner Sea, creating a symphony of destruction. The Holy Kingdoms, preoccupied with their minor disputes, were incapable of properly responding to the onslaught and were devastated one after another. Three separate attempts were made to gather an army that could face them, but all three of them failed. Soon, the troops of Rah changed their objectives to diversify their conquest, also attacking the nonhuman powers and the old empires with deadly effectiveness. Realizing that Rah and his monsters represented a threat to the future of Gaïa, the Sylvain nations led by emperor Taumiel UI Of Sylvanus, decided to join the conflict. At first, they offered their aid to the remaining Holy Kingdoms, trying to sign a temporary alliance with them, but received a full out rejection in response. In spite of everything, seeing the plight of the Duk´zarist, they understood that they too would soon be targets of the offensive and being unable to halt the advance of Rah on their own, looked for the support of the powers that had fought together in the War of Darkness. The strength of the Sylvain produced a temporary swing in the situation and the forces of Rah finally began to experience defeats. Regardles, when the Duk´zarist citadels commenced their offensive, it was abundantly clear that the power of the elvish nations would be incapable of stemming the advance of Rah. Only six months after the beginning of the War of God, the Empire of Judas had had proven beyond a doubt that they were the true rulers of Gaïa.

But, against all odds, one man rose above the rest and brought hope. Zhorne Giovanni, the young descendent of the ancestry to Apostle Pietro, stood defiant against Rah in the conquered principalities. After a few months, what began as a simple revolt turned out to be the greatest threat for Judas' domination. Armed with a natural talent for combat, a brilliant tactical mind and a charismatic leader, he was able to reunite the remaining forces of the Holy Kingdoms coordinating a series of fast and devastating strikes to the hoards of Rah. Even so, the absolute superiority of the forces of Judas continued to endure, which was why Zhorne made contact with the Sylvain nations and accepted the proposal offered by Taumiel. In spite of the great distance that separated them, both were able to create a true upset in the war when they combined their armies' actions. The Empire of Judas began to lose ground and many of their forces were exterminated. When the floating Duk´zarist citadel of Ordos Xenos was destroyed, crashing into a chunk of Rah's forces, all of Gaïa realized that the outcome of the conflict hadn't been as final as it was first believed to be.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li



Illustrated by Luis NCT

The Duk´zarist assault during The War of God

The Arrival of Rah and the Conclave

The bitter moment of the war, one that would mark its first point of inflection, was the Battle of Ashes, when Rah realized that his armies were backing up and left the island of Tol Rauko to confront them personally with the Conclave, his most powerful agents. the Lord of Judas and his eight companions descended onto the middle of the battlefield before a combined force of more than five million men, Sylvain and other races commanded by Taumiel. The words that he pronounced when he spoke for the first time to the world would forever be etched in history.

"You are guilty. You are responsible for your own down fall. Do you not see it? As lambs you faithfully follow the ideals of a destiny that does not belong to you. Blind and chained, you have forgotten what it even means to be human.

Ready yourselves. The world will change, although we must stain it with blood for that. The hour has arrived for the God - that arrogantly we have created in our own image and likeness - to die. With our hands we will destroy the heavens."

Afterwards he ordered his troops to withdraw, while just he and the Conclave advanced alone towards the armies of Taumiel and the Holy Kingdoms. In just a few minutes, the nine had already slaughtered a third of the allied forces...

When more than a third of his armies had been destroyed, and seeing that his adversaries were like living Gods, the lord of the Sylvain nations ordered the retreat. This was a blow much harder than anyone suspected, for many began to consider Rah more like a deity than as a mere man. After that battle, the members of the Conclave split the command of all the different forces of Judas, attacking every corner of the world in unison.

Only Zhorne and his armies continued to win their battles, making him the only person who could possibly stop Rah. Recognizing how threatening the young man was for him and his objectives, the Lord of Judas ordered the eight members of the Conclave to find Zhorne and to destroy him at whatever cost.

After several confrontations that put him on the verge of dying, Zhorne would end up being intercepted by Karla Edil Sith, the adoptive daughter of Rah and member of the Conclave. Both became involved in a terribly personal foray, during which the young girl unleashed several powers against him. In the climax of the duel, Karla invoked the Dark Aeon Tawil Ay-U'mr, the Lord of the Gates, attempting to drag her antagonist towards the infinite nothing. But Keith Khaiel Sith, the Conclave leader, had been watching the fight secretly from the shadows. Keith took advantage of the situation trying to destroy both of them simultaneously, triggering a holocaust of pure destruction that did not leave a sign of either of them.

During the following months, the forces of Judas, headed by Keith and the remaining Conclave members, continued their war with deadly effectiveness. Soon they completely undid all the accomplishments that Zhorne Giovanni had achieved the year before. With a majority of the Old Continent in their power, they extended to principalities beyond the oceans, reaching first Varja and later Khalis and Lunaris, where they continued their assault. The feeble alliance that was forged against Rah began to waver as emperor Taumiel saw himself unable to do anything other than defend himself the best he could. Little by little, hope began to smother under the terrible weight of cruel reality.

Once again, the destiny of Gaïa seemed to be decided.

But there was still more blood to spill...

The Conclave

Karla Edil Sith (Summoner, ♀)

Adopted daughter of Rah Sith and possibly the only being whom the Lord of Judas showed some affection to. She is only fifteen years old during the War of God, but her power was immeasurable. She had a unique gift that nobody was able to understand; she could control creatures of elevated Gnosis, binding even smaller Gods to her service. She is motivated by the affection and admiration that she felt towards her adoptive father. During the war, she meets Zhorne and both of them were trapped within Yggdrasil. Although her mission was to kill him, she felt in love with him (a feeling which was almost mutual) and between the two of them they were able to leave the clock through pure luck. She was even on the verge of leaving with Zhorne, but knowing that he loved a childhood friend named Lucia, she decided to return to her father. She ends up dying in the same incident in which Keith theoretically passes away, once again helping Zhorne stop her stepbrother's plans, although not before telling him, the man whom she loved, what she truly felt for him.

In many ways, a tragic ending.

Yukari Nozuel (Warrior Summoner, ♀)

Yukari, one of the most complex members of the original Conclave, is the racially mixed daughter of a Daimah and the Kami Umetsuki Nozuel, the most powerful elemental deity of water, as well the mother of Yagarema no Mikoto. She was raised by her mortal father until the age of twelve, at which time Umetsuki tried to kill them both on a whim. Yukari survived thanks to the sacrifice of her father, developing an intense hatred towards her mother. She obsessed so much with destroying her that she joined Rah waiting to find an opportunity to do it. She spearheaded the attacks on Varja and, after a series of epic confrontations, completed her goal thanks to the intervention of Keith. Indebted to him, she aids him in carrying out a strange ritual, although its purpose is unknown.

The only thing that motivated her life was hatred and, when she completed her revenge, Yukari became empty and withered. It is ignored if she managed to survive the holocaust generated by the activation of the machine.

Demeter Stratos (Dark Paladin, ♂)

Known as the Lord of the Dragons, Demeter is a mortal knight who followed Rah because he fervently believed in his ideal to end all the religions and change the world. Demeter is Rah's personal paladin and the person he trusts the most (although, really, the Lord of Judas does not trust anything or anybody). His main characteristic is that he is spiritually bound by one of the Pacts to an Ancient Dragon, Zibrialraserun, which grants him a power without equal in combat. He maintains a love-hate relationship with Remiel, his main companion on the Conclave missions. He ends up seriously wounded after the war, but he survived and is in torpor with Zibrialraserun in an unknown location.

Millenium (Unknown, ♀)

Amongst all the members of the Conclave, none was so enigmatic and mysterious as this woman. Nobody knew exactly why she united with Rah or what reason she had for serving him. Supposedly, her powers were the most minor of the entire group, but occasionally she did things that escaped the reach of her companions. It is suspected that she had some connection to the strange disappearance of Keith, and there were even rumors that in the past she would have influenced in the creation of gods of greater or smaller power. Before the activation of the machine, she spoke with Rah and told him that, very regretfully, it seemed that the time for world change had not yet arrived. Shortly after, she disappeared without leaving a trace.

Since somebody who had been in the service of Eljared also responded to the name of Millennium in the New Conclave, she is assumed to be immortal, although nothing verifies that it is the same person.

Lemunia (Shadow, ♀)

Lemunia, the Hand of Death, was a legendary assassin who descended from the personification of a Shajad. Apparently, there was nothing or anybody that she could not kill. She was sent by the darkness to finish Rah, but instead of destroying him, she placed herself in his service when becoming fascinated by him and his philosophy. She was the most active member of the Conclave during the War of God, although also the least known. After spending a long time among men she became more humanlike, developing an older sister complex in respect to Karla, who ended up being her best friend. She is in charge of assassinating Zhorne Giovanni, but she fails and is left half dead, being taken in and cared for during many months by a young doctor who did not know her identity. When he discovered who she was, Lemunia finds herself in the obligation of killing him, but she is incapable of doing it upon realizing that she has fallen in love with him. She returns a little later to the Conclave, but she does not arrive in time to save Karla. Finally, Lemunia must choose between immortality, as the Hand of Death, or to live among men as a mortal. She takes the second path and returns to the young doctor with whom she had fallen in love with.

Lemures, the leader of the Brotherhood is her descendent.

Remiel (Warlock, ♀)

Remiel is an elemental deity of fire that took the human form of a young blond girl with red eyes. She joined the Conclave of Rah because of the fascination such an enigmatic human being produced in her. With time she learned about Demeter Stratos and, although at the outset they did not do more than argue, she soon became interested in him sentimentally. During the final confrontation, she will sacrifice her physical form to save Demeter, finally admitting that she loved him. The Great Barrier catches her in one of the Intereings, and since then she has tried to return to Gaïa to be with the man she is in love with.

Markus Eruth Sith (Mentalist, ♂)

Markus, older stepbrother of Rah (adopted by Amon Sith when his true son was already nine), was a somber individual of machiavellian personality. For years he was a shadow of Judas, acting according to his own plans and objectives. He planed to replace Rah at the moment of his maximum potential and become God, absorbing part of the accumulated energy in Upnapistim. His quasi-divine mental powers came from hundreds of cerebral implants that he received due to the techno magic of his brother. He died at the very hands of Rah (who knew of his machinations from the start), only hours before the machine was activated.

Keith Khaiel Sith (Unknown, ♂)

Keith was the young leader of the Conclave and the only child of Rah (the identity of his mother is unknown). Presumably, he would be no more than twenty years old during the War of God. Most of the details surrounding him are a mystery, but it is known that he could devastate armies with simple gestures. Although considered the most powerful member of the Conclave, the true nature of his maximum potential is still a mystery. During his childhood, his father and Millennium put him through strange processes and torturous experiments for a boy his age, awakening powers in him that Keith himself never got a chance to understand. He maintained a love/hate relationship towards his father, since he always sought his approval, and also tried to destroy him on more than one occasion. During the final stage of the War he attempted a plan of unknown nature but, in theory at least, died when carrying it out because of the joint intervention of Zhorne and Karla, causing her own demise as well.

It is believed he has some relation to Eljared, if so the nature of such a bond is unknown (if it even exists at all).

Terminus and the End of the World

After spending months missing when all believed him dead already, Zhorne suddenly returned to put himself at the forefront of his remaining armies. With renewed forces, he once again turned the tide of the war, reconquering the central area of the Old Continent, and even defeating several members of the Conclave. With blood, sweat and tears, he managed to arrive onto the plains of Terminus, where he gathered all the remaining forces of the alliance. Taumiel and the other leaders of Gaïa's great kingdoms and powers congregated to his call, as well as some dragons and other ancient beasts. In front of them stood the formidable armies of Judas, the most powerful army in history. The greatest battle that the world would ever be witness to was on the verge of exploding, a battle in which everyone were certain that Rah would stand victorious.

But something happened that foiled the Lord Judas' plans. While he prepared himself for the final confrontation, a Duk´zarist calling himself Larvae was able to infiltrate Tol Rauko's security and reach the location where Ark Noah was being held prisoner. How he managed it is unknown, as was the frightful discovery that he found in the depths of the stronghold. There stood an immense machine created with the technology of the Lost Lodges of Solomon, a massive artifact that fed on the souls of all the victims of the war, channeling its power towards an unknown result. Hundreds of miles away, Rah sensed that somebody had breached the watertight cameras of the Tol Rauko and returned to the stronghold, hours before the battle of Terminus began. Thus, Rah and Zhorne would never get to meet face to face, and the ironic destiny continued its course in a way that even the heavens could not foresee.

When more than twenty million opponents threw themselves against each other, the fields were flooded with blood. Over the course of several days a war of epic proportions raged on, although after the first round, the superiority of the forces of Judas was already clear. Hopelessly, the armies of Zhorne still marched forward. It had been such a long time that they no longer fought for ideals, creeds or revenge.

But... What else was left to them?

However, before the end of the second day, when the end of the conflict seemed imminent, the news of Noah's liberation reached the forces of the Duk´zarist giving way to a surprisingly turn of events. When discovering the reason they had been forced to participate in the war, something that was kept secret from the darklings, they withdrew from the positions they were holding until then, devastating all the forces of Judas that stood in their way. That provided the long awaited opportunity that Zhorne and his allies needed, and the young general did not let it escape. With everything he had left, he threw himself against the broken and divided forces of Judas. At sunset of the third day, the armies of Rah were forced to retreat and wait for an opportunity to regroup, an opportunity that would never come. Without losing a second, Zhorne advanced through the uncultivated farmlands devastated by the war up to the Coast of Yearnings, where he sailed his remaining troops to the heart of the Inner Sea so that he could finally destroy the War of God at its source once and for all.

And far away, in Tol Rauko, Rah realized that everything had come to an end. The world that he wanted to save rejected the "liberation" that he offered it. Thus, being a prisoner of that bitter irony, he committed the greatest of atrocities.

If he could not save the world, then he would destroy it.

Before Zhorne could arrive at the stronghold, Rah descended into the bowels of the earth, where he started up the machine that he had been constructing. At the moment of its activation, a deluge of power without equal struck Gaïa, creating a terrible distortion that devastated the physical plane as much as the spiritual one. Today we still do not know the full consequences or the purpose of the machine, but from that moment on everything changed.

The truth is, the world ended that day.

Only we did not realize it.

THE DARK DAY AFTER

Rah, being physically connected with the machine during its activation was swept from existence, which marked the end of the conflict that had sunk Gaïa into desperation for the last three years. However, with hundreds of millions dead and several civilizations extinct, nobody dared call it a victory. Two entire continents disappeared, erased by the power that the Lord of Judas had triggered in his madness; more than half of the world as we knew it ceased to exist... And those were not the only consequences that Rah's machine had wrought. It had destroyed the very basis of supernatural essence in Gaïa, thus leading to the death of magical entities. Many of the oldest and most powerful creatures, like the dragons or titans, were forced into hibernation, while other mystical races like the Sylvain or the Daimah felt that they lacked something that was as vital to them as the air they breathed.

What little was left of Gaïa found itself in the darkest of chaos. The Holy Kingdoms and most of the nonhuman nations were no more than a vague memory, while pillagers, beasts and nameless horrors destroyed whatever got in their way. Racial hatred between the different populations had reached unfathomable levels, and the different races killed each other without the slightest provocation. In that withered, desolated world, the survivors of the holocaust asked themselves if there was any reason to continue living.

In that moment of declivity, Zhorne Giovanni, still commanding the remaining forces of the Alliance, requested the support of emperor Taumiel UI Of Sylvanus to try and create a new order. Unfortunately, the High Lord rejected his offer and withdrew with his diminished armies to garrison what was left of the elvish nations after the disappearance of the Sylvain's main continent of Khalis. Despite practically being alone, Zhorne tried to bring peace in times of chaos and death to all injustices within his reach. He killed off the plunderers with whom he crossed paths with, allowing those that surrendered to join his crusade. Soon, countless abandoned people followed, seeing within him the only light that still shone in an era of darkness.

When Zhorne arrived at the ruins of Archangel months later, he ordered the reconstruction of the city while he began to try and bring order to other lands. At each territory that he incorporated was granted the title of Abel and, without realizing it, he created the roots of what would become the most important empire in Gaia. During the first years, Zhorne tried to maintain an open and permissive mentality towards the supernatural, trying to designate a home within Abel for the nonhuman ethnic groups and the wizards. Unfortunately, interracial hatred and fear towards magic proved to be too deep, and many battles erupted making coexistence complicated. The situation became volatile when a group of wizards, who had proclaimed themselves the heirs of Yehudah, attacked the southern edge of Abel, while several Devas that lived in interior lands initiated a grand scale assault against Archangel. Both conflicts ended not only with large casualties, but the suspicion Zhorne most feared was confirmed: that coexistence was completely impossible. From that moment on, he expelled all the supernatural entities that he found from his lands, forcing them to withdraw under the threat of being completely exterminated. Little by little, the mystical beings began to disappear, hiding themselves from the eyes of mortals or intermingling secretly among us. Since then, man would eventually begin to forget the supernatural, considering magic and the unexplainable as a shadow of the distant past.

And ten years after the end of the war, Zhorne returned to Archangel, where he made what would be his most important decision. The 16th of September 233 years after the Messiah, the same day in which he got married, Zhorne Giovanni founded the Sacred Holy Empire of Abel.

THE SACRED HOLY EMPIRE OF ABEL

The Sacred Holy Empire of Abel was born with the objective to unify Gaïa under a single flag. Zhorne proclaimed himself spiritual and imperial leader, appointing into his crown all the military and ecclesiastical power. The territories annexed to the Empire became principalities, dependent countries to the Sacred Holy Crown that acted as subordinate regions. Following this, Zhorne granted the title of Lords of the War to his four most important generals, giving them control of the armies of Abel, and reconstructed the Church in all of its splendor.

But even then the young Emperor did not rest. He soon returned to his travels, trusting that many principalities would join the Empire of their own free will. By that time, his fame had spread through all parts of Gaia, and in every corner of the world they knew that Zhorne brought with him stability, order and justice. Nevertheless, he didn't always march peacefully. First he had to face the threat that Nazhael posed, one of the old marshals of Rah who had conquered part of the principalities on the Coast of Commerce. Then he opposed the two remaining powers that had reemerged in that chaotic time, the Lands of Al-Enneth and the Empire of Lannet. For years, he traveled from one place in Gaïa to another, chasing the goal that he had established upon Abel's conception whatever the cost. Once the entire Old Continent was unified under the flag of the Empire, Zhorne rested his sight on more distant lands, first conquering the island of Varja and later the New Continent. It was a time of changes, on which the majority of the current countries and nations were founded.

It was also during this period when the emperor restored two of the most important organizations today: the Inquisition, created with the purpose of ending supernatural dangers that were hidden among men, and the knights of Tol Rauko, whose mission was to protect and conserve the knowledge from eras past.

Finally, after decades of continuous conflict, Zhorne could now return to his beloved empress and rest by her side. Just as he wished, although his hands had been stained with blood, the legacy that he would leave the children of Gaïa would be a world very different from the dark times that he had had to live through. And it was so, in year 355 of our era, having reached 149 years old, Zhorne Giovanni passed away as he had always wanted; placidly, in his bed.



The Seven Centuries

At the time of his death, the only son of Zhorne, Lazaro Giovanni, inherited the Crown of Abel and the heavy responsibility that it entailed. However, possessing the same talent as his father and having instructed him since he was a child, Lazaro proved to be more than worthy of his father's legacy. The first great challenge that he had to face was the declaration of independence that Lannet and Shivat proclaimed as a result of the previous Emperor's death. With intelligent and capable decisions, Lazaro not only maintained the cohesiveness of the Sacred Holy Empire by stopping the insurrection of Varja with minimum bloodshed, but also managed to create a true unity between the different principalities when constituting the body of the High Senate, in which the leaders of all the countries participated. In this way, the long period known as the Seven Centuries began, during which the Sacred Holy Empire, led by the Giovanni lineage, governed with absolute power over all of Gaïa.

It is true that during this time there were problems of great importance, such as the attack of the Thurizung clan on Haufman, that ended in numerous deaths and a certain disorder in the principalities to the north, or the two new armed insurrections by Lannet and Shivat. Nevertheless, the action of the Giovanni emperors was always commendable, proving to be in complete control of their power at any given moment, and having the talent to come out on top in any situation, no matter how complicated it was. Even at the beginning of the sixth century when a violent earthquake passed through the Old Continent, producing hundreds of thousands of victims and causing enormous economic losses, the Empire knew how to confront the problem, creating aid divisions and investing great amounts of money in the reconstruction of all affected principalities.

Without a doubt, one of the best-chosen decisions in part of the emperors of Abel was the one to create the arbitration wars, by means of which the conflicts between the various countries and principalities were solved, following a series of guidelines laid down by the Imperial Arbiters. That way, it was possible to resolve wars as if they were complex games of chess, avoiding damage to cities or unnecessary bloodshed.

As a reflection of this prosperity, great improvements were made at economic and cultural levels throughout the Seven Centuries, and countless advances were introduced in Gaïa the likes of which nobody could imagine happening years before.

For the first time in history, man made exponential leaps towards a brilliant future.

Illustrated by Luis NCT



The Giovanni Lineage

Throughout nearly the whole Seven Centuries in which the Giovanni lineage has been in power, their members have always proven to have exceptional qualities. Normally, people thought of them as divine gifts granted by God himself, who had chosen them as his representatives in the world.

True or not, all the Giovanni were inexplicably long-lived, and some of them even got to live more than two hundred years. In addition, they aged at a very slow rate, appearing to be twice as young as normal people their age. Another unusual characteristic of their lineage is that each one of them had borne a single child and he has always been male. This fact, in addition to their long lifespan, meant that during their rein of power the Sacred Holy Empire only sat eight emperors on the throne of Abel.

Name	Reign	Cause of the death
Zhorne Giovanni	233-355	*Natural Causes (Old Age)*
Lázaro Giovanni	355-431	*Natural Causes (Old Age)*
Avidan Giovanni	431-522	*Natural Causes (Old Age)*
Elijah Giovanni	522-617	*Natural Causes (Old Age)*
Gad Giovanni	617-695	*Natural Causes (Old Age)*
Joshiah Giovanni	695-782	*Natural Causes (Old Age)*
Baldemar Giovanni	782-899	*Natural Causes (Old Age)*
Lascar Giovanni	899-957	*Assassinated*
Lucanor Giovanni	Has not reigned	*Still alive*

The End of a Dynasty

One may ask themselves if it is possible for a few, or even for one person, to reach world-changing potential. Too frequently history has replied to this question affirmatively, although unfortunately, not always for good; since a single man destroyed the ideals of the Empire with his own hands.

Even before becoming Emperor, Lascar Giovanni, the last member of the imperial lineage, had demonstrated very different conduct from any one of his predecessors. Ever since he was a child he was prematurely capricious, arrogant and malicious; he held back nothing when it came to getting what he wanted and, despite of having the same talent characteristic of his family for generations, he did not seem to use it for anything but his own benefit. Many people, including his father, thought that he would reform once the weight of the imperial Crown fell upon his head; they could not be more mistaken.

When Lascar ascended the throne, he demonstrated that his behavior up to this point was no more than a shadow of what awaited Abel. Once adorned with the absolute power of the Holy Emperor, he brought with him a time of depravation and cruelty unsurpassed in the Empire. He took women as he wished, ordered executions without reason, and when he grew bored he even caused wars just for pure entertainment. Lascar even got to the point of assassinating his wife (although it was publicly declared a suicide), the former princess of Lucrecio, for attempting to abort Lucanor his first-born son.

His actions reached such a degree of immorality and depravation that the Lords of War even requested that he refrain and yield the crown to his son, just barely a child. Because of his refusal, the idealist Lord of War Elias Barbados, in charge of watching over the safety of the heart of the Sacred Holy Empire, believed it necessary to remove Lascar from power whatever the cost. He met in secret with his companions, as well as with the High Archbishop Augustus and the marshal of Tol Rauko, and between all of them they agreed to carry out a bold plan. Gathering his most elite soldiers in Archangel with the excuse of organizing military games and taking advantage of the fact that most of the Heaven Order, the personal army of the Emperor, were absent, Elias prepared himself for an assault on the imperial castle to force Lascar to abdicate in favor of his son. That way, everything would be over quickly with a minimal number of lost lives.

Going along as planned, on the night of March 11th the year 957, the elite forces of the Lord of War stormed the Castle of the Angel. The knights of the Heaven Order proved their worthiness and, in spite of having an overwhelming superiority over their adversaries, they were only able to restrain the attack for several hours. Nevertheless, Lascar knew from the beginning that resistance would be completely futile, thus he waited calmly in the throne hall with a sardonic smile on his face. Just minutes before Elias finally got to him, he ordered his son to stand in front of them all, and forced the young boy to murder him with the assistance of the Imperial Lawgiver of Zhorne. In the moment in which the first drop of blood hit the ground, the destiny of young Lucanor as future emperor was condemned, because he had just committed a sin against the Empire.

That would be Lascar's dark legacy and his parting gift to the whole world: the end of his dynasty and the imbalance of Gaïa.

THE LAST EMPEROR

When Lucanor killed Lascar, it completely destroyed Elias' plans, since the boy no longer could aspire to the throne. Without another successor, the future of the Empire was compromised, because up until that moment the conception of Abel was maintained in the quasi-divine figurehead of the Giovanni lineage. The problem was very serious, and to solve it, the greatest powers of Gaïa divided into two factions: those who supported Lucanor's ascent to the throne in spite of his crime and those who preferred that a new dynasty ascend to power. Ironically, the boy himself gave the answer to the problem when he declared openly that, given the circumstances, he was not fit to ascend to the throne. Thus it came about that Elias Barbados, the closest descendent to the title, would be proclaimed the Holy Emperor due to the backing of the Church and the remaining Lords of War. Incapable of blaming the son of Lascar for the occurrence, the first decision of the new Lord of Abel was to send the boy to Lucrecio and grant him the title of prince, which rightfully belonged to him through his mother's lineage.

Naturally, the ascent of Elias to the throne caused an enormous uproar throughout the world. Many principalities that had always set their sights on independence took advantage of the moment to try and sway imperial policy, and they even reached the point of suggesting possibly modifying the structure to create something more like the first Republic of Abel. Little by little the atmosphere of agitation increased and there were those that feared that Elias wouldn't be able to stand the tension. But, contrary to all the rumors, the previous Lord of War demonstrated a great shrewdness in politics just as he always had on the battlefield. Backed by the intelligent Archbishop Augustus, one of the most liberal leaders in the whole of Church history, he was able to maintain imperial unity with bold reforms and refined ingenuity. Compared to Lascar's old regime of terror, the changes in Abel were welcomed with joy and optimism even by the most radical sectors, so for three decades the Empire enjoyed a time of prosperity.

Unfortunately for Elias, his political successes were not mirrored in his personal life, which was plagued with constant misfortune. The tragedy that hit him the hardest of all was the death of his wife who died in childbirth while bringing his daughter Elisabetta into the world. Torn by the pain of his loss, the Emperor blamed his wife's death on Elisabetta and separated her from his side, leaving the child in the care of the knights of the Heaven Order.

The Beginning of the End

After the death of his friend and mentor, the High Archbishop Augustus, Elias found himself in the difficult position of having to choose a new spiritual leader for the Church. The decision proved to be much more complicated than the Emperor first thought, because not only did it seem impossible to find an appropriate person amongst the applicants, but also that the rivalry for the position was heated and caused great conflicts amongst the principalities. In spite of the time that he had been on the throne, Elias had to be very careful, because a bad decision could cause a shift in the power structure of Gaïa.

After meeting with dozens of applicants, during one of the hearings the Lord of Abel crossed paths with a young abbess who would change his life. Her name was Eljared and, just twenty-six years old, she had reached the highest station that a woman was able to obtain within the structure of the Church. She was completely mysterious, but possessed a supernatural beauty and incomparable talent that captivated Elias at first sight. Elias couldn't stop thinking about her for a moment, and began seeing her assiduously to pass most of his time. After several months, to the shock of the entire world, he publicly announced that Eljared would be the new Supreme Archbishop, a title that until then had never been granted to a woman. Of course, there were many principalities that were not in absolute agreement with the appointment, but could not openly oppose the throne of Abel's designs without greater cause.

Once at the head of the Church, Eljared began to accumulate incredible personal power, greater than any other Supreme Archbishop had ever had. The Emperor, blinded by his feelings towards her, yielded her all the imperial prerogatives, which actually converted her into the true Empress of Abel. Once in possession of absolute power, she began to act with impunity all over Gaïa, making strange decisions that very few understood. She put the main organizations of the Empire in the control of several of her confidential agents, while she ordered the unearthing of dangerous secrets of the past. With care, as a meticulous chess player would place her pieces on the board, Eljared prepared to initiate the greatest game ever played.

For a second time the world that we knew was about to change before our eyes, but once again, we would not be aware of it.

The Fracture of the Heavens

The behavior of Eljared did not go unnoticed by the principalities near the Empire for long. Soon, many governors began to publicly protest her acts, warning her that her decisions and behavior were not proper of her position. Nevertheless, the Supreme Archbishop turned a deaf ear to such warnings, and she even began to act more brashly without any apparent justification. It was as if, at heart, she wished to push the world into a rebellion. The situation reached critical mass when Maximillian Hess, Lord of Remo, openly accused her of witchcraft and having the Emperor subjugated. Investigating on his own, prince Hess had unearthed the fact that the abbess called Eljared had never existed, and that her entire past was nothing more than a convenient lie. It's a matter of debate whether or not it was Eljared herself who leaked that information deliberately.

In response to those accusations, the Supreme Archbishop ordered the complete destruction of Remo and to reduce everything there to ashes. A personal friend of Elias, the Lord of War Tadeus Van Horsman, refused to carry out such an order and asked his old companion to reconsider, but Eljared responded by jailing him and replacing the knight with someone who would carry out her designs. Just a week later, the proud principality of Remo lay in ruins, and the lifeless body of Hess hung like trophy surrounded by the rubble of his own capital. The general reaction within the Empire was deafening; many countries immediately tried to cut their ties with Abel, which caused the Supreme Archbishop to declare war against all their leaders. A conflict of titanic proportions threatened to devour all of Gaïa for the first time in seven centuries.

And even as she brought chaos to every corner of the world, Eljared prepared to put her true plan into effect.

What did she really want? Perhaps we will never entirely know. In her own way, she carried a heavy legacy on her back, one that pushed her to her limits regardless of the consequences. Just as Rah had done in the past, she also wished to change the world in her own way.

On New Year's Eve, a chain of events would take place during a tragic festivity: the fateful night known as the Fracture of the Heavens. From every corner of the globe, the agents of the Supreme Archbishop initiated a complex supernatural structure centered in the city of Archangel that created an alteration in existence. The earth shook, the oceans darkened and the skies of Gaïa turned red like blood.

What happened next is shrouded in uncertainty. Officially, forces commanded by the Lord of War Tadeus Van Horsman attacked the Castle of the Angel that night, attempting to stop the madness of the Emperor. However, recent studies confirm that Tadeus was not released until the following morning, making the previous versions unverifiable. At any rate, the truth is that while the armies raged through the entire city, an explosive battle ignited inside the imperial palace, reducing much of its infrastructure to rubble. At the height of the attack, the Emperor's daughter approached her father begging him to stop the madness, but he, completely insane with grief, tried to kill Elisabetta, accusing her of being the cause of the sad situation the Empire was going through. Seeing that the girl who he had mentored for years was in danger Kisidan, one of the highest-ranking knights of the Heaven Order, was forced to slay the Emperor. Only minutes later, Eljared, appeared in the tower of the great guardian angel of the city, with her arms extended towards the sky. Her last words resonated through the entire city.

"Is man only a failure of God, or is God only a failure of man? Everyone, who have wandered in the darkness of your own history like small children, open your eyes. It is about to begin. Be witness to how we take this step forward. In the end, to deny God will be the only way to save the world".

For better or worse, in less than an hour everything had ended, and Eljared disappeared forever.

The death of the Holy Emperor produced serious consequences for the Empire. Anticipating the great instability that hung over Gaïa, the young Elisabetta demanded her right to the throne and began working hard towards world stability. Unfortunately, many of the principalities that had declared independence from Abel months before refused to accept her as Empress, while one of the Lords of War named Matthew Gaul and some select principalities formed the Azure Alliance, an opposing faction of power that struggles towards the ideal of becoming the center of the new empire one day. Without knowing with whom to side with, the Church has remained a neutral faction for the moment, proclaiming a new Supreme Archbishop on their own without the approval of the young Empress.

And Now...

Now it is the year 989. Six months have passed since the death of Elias and the tensions between the Empire, the Azure Alliance and the Church have only increased. With Abel fragmented, the young Empress makes an effort to maintain control of her remaining principalities to avoid devouring the entire world in the flames of war, while other countries prepare for imminent conflicts. Due to the influence of Eljared, reality has been seriously altered and the supernatural forces grow more intense every day, while the barrier that separates the real world from the Wake is thinning. And in this time of change, the unseen forces have decided to intervene again.

The dark legacy that man inherits is on the verge of fruition. Nothing is over. Deep down, this story has only just begun.

And as I was present at the beginning...
So shall I be here to witness its end.

CHRONOLOGY

Date	Events
-10.000 *apr.*	*The Kami descend to the world.*
-4.000 *apr.*	*The Forgotten City disappears from history.*
-3.000 *apr.*	*Nomadic tribes base themselves on the Iometh river and found the city of Al Kairr.*
-2.700 *apr.*	*The Eyad receive the revelations of Jihamath, becoming the first of the Illuminated ones.*
-2.500 *apr.*	*The Empire of Solomon is founded.*
-2.400 *apr.*	*The Empire of Solomon disappears during the Seven Hours of Fire.*
-2.200 *apr.*	*The Era of the Ten Cities in Kushistan begins.*
-1.900 *apr.*	*The citadel of Elura´amman descends on the lands of Al-Enneth, giving rise to the first War of the Sultans. One decade later, Maatalla Al Alexandria is named Great Sultan thus founding Kushistan.*
-1.500 *apr.*	*The elvish nations face the Old Ones Gods. Most of them are sealed inside the Mountain range of the Winds.*
-1.400 *apr.*	*Floating citadels of Elura´amman and Nogos Roxxas face off in the skies over the city of Al Abyan. The resulting cataclysm destroys the capital of Kushistan.*
-1.200 *apr.*	*Kuon Teikoku attacks the coast of the Old Continent founding Eien Seimon. Next, the Shogun Hideyuki organizes a military rise against Amaterasu. The Eternal Emperor finds himself forced to call his troops and they lose the principality of Eien Seimon. At the end of the coastal battle, the Confederation of Arion is founded.*
-1.185 *apr.*	*The eastern empires of Lannet and Shivat are formed.*
-900 *apr.*	*The armies of Lannet rob the two Magatamas of Shivat, thus initiating the eternal animosity between both countries.*
-850 *apr.*	*The tribes of Sherena, Thirghu and Tiz travel towards the lands of Baho.*
-800 *apr.*	*The Empire of Lannet initiates its invasion of Phaion Eien Seimon.*
-750 *apr.*	*The Great War of the Devas explodes.*
-700 *apr.*	*The Cycle of Glory of Stygia begins. The desert of Meskhenet becomes a fertile zone.*
-600 *apr.*	*The settlers of Sherena and Thirghu return to the outer world.*
-540 *apr.*	*The Pelegri Wars begin. The city of Mnemosite disappears.*
-500 *apr.*	*Holst unifies the lands of the north and founds Haufmarsormen, initiating a great offensive towards the lands of the south with great success.*
-400 *apr.*	*Shivat initiates an offensive against Baho that will fail because of the awaking of an Aeon named Parvati.*
-300 *apr.*	*The Sultan Abdel Majid Al Karjah again unifies Kushistan after defeating an army of elementals and Yinnun.*
-200 *apr.*	*The head of the Alfarinn clan conquers the Bastions of the Warm Deserts and gives them the name of Hendell.*
-16	*Abel appears for the first time in history in the village of Nezath.*
-10	*The Wars of the Cross begin.*
0	*Abel dies on the cross at the walls of Solomon.*
3	*The Holy city of Archangel and the 11 Holy Kingdoms are founded.*
11	*Thanos Shetep disappears from Kushistan and the country returns to its old traditions.*
64	*The War of the Masters of the Shadows explodes in Moth.*
206	*Zhorne Giovanni is born.*
223	*The War of God begins.*
226	*Rah activates his machine, creating a cataclysmic disturbance in all of existence. The War of God ends with terrible consequences; more than half of the known world has disappeared through the machine's influence.*
227	*Dalaborn is established as the first subordinate territory to Zhorne Giovanni.*
228	*Zhorne Giovanni unifies Asphasia and Helenia. They pass along to form part of Abel Empire.*
229	*The first contact of Abel Empire with Galgados. Zhorne leaves a small contingent of troops in Hecate Passage.*
230	*Togarini and Bellafonte incorporate themselves into Abel's principalities.*
231	*The Order of Yehudah resurfaces in Togarini and the wizard kings declare themselves rulers of the nation. Similar conflicts begin in Bellafonte and Lucrecio.*
233	*The Sacred Holy Empire of Abel is founded. The territories that comprised Abel become independent principalities.*
235	*Kanon and Lucrecio become principalities of the Sacred Holy Empire. A group of priests begin to reconstruct the sacred city of Albidion on the island of Narses, opening a door to the creation of the Dominion.*
236	*Phaion becomes a territory of the Sacred Holy Empire. Argos formally asks to be accepted into Abel Empire.*
238	*Lannet mounts an attack on Phaion and converts it into part of its Empire.*
239	*Goldar is nominally incorporated to the Abel Empire, although they continue their battles against the clans alone.*
240	*Hendell becomes a principality of the Abel Empire.*
241	*Gabriel becomes a principality of the Abel Empire.*
242	*Remo becomes a principality of the Abel Empire.*
245	*The Wars of the Desert begin.*
247	*Kushistan finds itself forced to join the Abel Empire. Thus begins what the Enneath now call "the Occupation".*
248	*Stygia summits to the Crown of Abel and becomes a principality of the Empire.*
250	*The Supreme Archbishop Jud founds the Dominion with the consent of the Emperor.*

255 *The Battle of Memories begins, where the last of the supernatural creatures in Gaïa are destroyed or dispersed by the forces of Zhorne Giovanni.*

256 *Dwänholf becomes a principality of Abel.*

257 *The Inquisition is established.*

258 *Zhorne is able to liberate the principalities of Phaion that were under the control of Lannet. Immediately, he initiates a grand-scale attack on Varja.*

260 *Lannet submits to the Sacred Holy Empire.*

261 *Brui Sterki divides Hendell between his two children.*

262 *Shivat submits to the Sacred Holy Empire, with which all Varja falls under the control of Abel.*

263 *Zhorne enters the forests of Alberia and begins a widespread assault on the supernatural entities that try to finish off the clans of the area.*

265 *Alberia becomes a principality of Abel.*

267 *Moth becomes a principality of Abel.*

272 *The Emperor establishes Tol Rauko with the purpose of preserving the history and the supernatural beings of Gaïa.*

274 *The boats of the Empire reach the coasts of Nanwe.*

276 *Baho is forced to become a principality of the Sacred Holy Empire.*

284 *Arlan officially separates from the Empire of Abel and becomes a principality.*

289 *Zhorne enters the Combat of the leaders of Goldar and successively defeats all twenty-nine leaders of the clans. This will be his last public display of combat.*

295 *Salazar reaches a deal with the Empire to become a principality nominally.*

301 *Abel's armies enter the valleys of Galgados and unite them to the Empire.*

320 *The absolute unification of the Old Continent is completed.*

323 *The unification of the New Continent begins.*

327 *The last member of the Bruningham dynasty passes away and the first Commercial Council of Arlan forms.*

330 *The city of Magburaka is founded, giving the jungle of Nanwe a reason be considered an imperial territory.*

331 *The Emperor grants the government of Moth to the Bram dynasty.*

332 *Phaion is attacked by an army in the service of the Pirate Kings. After the conflict, it changes its name to Phaion Eien Seimon.*

336 *Helena becomes the first saint of the Church.*

347 *Lannet is able to permanently conquer the island of Yagarema and definitively stop the Eternal War of the Shadows.*

355 *Zhorne Giovanni dies. It is considered a dark year and a tragedy for everyone.*

359 *Lannet and Shivat declare their independence from the Empire and initiate the first rebellion with the death of Zhorne as their inspiration. Months later, they are quelled by the forces of Lazaro Giovanni and the Lords of War.*

373 *The Arrival of the White Night begins. Haufman undergoes an attack by an extraordinary army of undead.*

374 *The scholar Calandra Ilmora passes away and in his honor the name of the principality of Asphasia changes to Ilmora.*

391 *The Sterki dynasty of the north comes to an end.*

411 *The island of Tarvos incorporates itself to the Dominion.*

420 *A tribe of Jayan attacks Khon Thami, the capital of Kahsmir. The entire savannah experiences a temporary state of chaos.*

463 *The capital of Dalaborn is transferred to Eron.*

472 *The mythical fortress of Serrano, devastated during the War of God, is reconstructed.*

501 *The viceroy of Galgados transfers the capital of the principality to Hecate.*

515 *The second rebellion of Lannet and Shivat begins.*

516 *A revolution explodes between the peasantry of Dalaborn. The prince returns from the island of Varja to stifle the uprising.*

543 *Agamemnon the wise one fails to try to bring a god of antiquity to the world.*

547 *The clan Thurizung of Goldar initiates a war against the principality of Haufman that is resolved with numerous deaths.*

580 *The conflict of the harvesters in Kushistan begins.*

622 *The Association of Merchants of Eien is founded in the principality of Phaion Eien Seimon.*

652 *An arbitrated conflict between Kanon and Lucrecio explodes, ending with a victory for the former.*

678 *The valley of Adalia of Galgados rises in arms without a reason causing immense destruction between the neighboring valleys. All of its inhabitants are massacred.*

701 *The second conflict between Kanon and Lucrecio explodes, with identical results to the first.*

711 *An immense earthquake ravages the entire Old Continent. More than 100,000 people perish throughout all of Gaïa.*

811 *The third rebellion of Lannet and Shivat begins. Like the previous times, the uprising is quelled by the might of the Lords of War.*

946 *A group of Black Sun searchers discover the Book of the Dead in some old ruins.*

957 *Lascar Giovanni is assassinated and Elias Barbados ascends to the throne of the Holy Empire. It is the end of the Giovanni lineage in power of Abel.*

962 *Argos yields a great part of its coast to the Dominion.*

970 *Jean Pierre Delacroix buys the island of Alessa and establishes a strange complex there.*

972 *Castle Deniesil suffers a strange plague and is abandoned after the death of almost everyone who resides there.*

973 *Cardinal Malfleur Bourne is executed publicly for heresy.*

983 *Phaion declares war on Dwänholf as revenge for the support that they offered the Pirate Kings.*

986 *The island of Paradis Paradis is founded.*

987 *Eljared becomes the Supreme Archbishop.*

988 *The Fracture of the Heavens begins. Emperor Elias passes away and his daughter Elisabetta ascends to the throne of Abel. The Empire crumbles and a many principalities declare their independence from Abel.*

989 *Present time.*

CHAPTER 3
The Old Continent

Open your eyes and watch.
This is the world that has been born at the cost
of the tears of the innocent.
of the infinite lives that we have snatched away.
Make it worth the trouble.

Zhorne Giovanni



Illustrated by Raúl Rosell



Now that we already know its generalities and history, in this chapter we are going to delve into all the countries of the Old Continent. On the following pages is a map of Gaïa's western zone, on which each one of its nations appears, its most relevant populations and the more remarkable acts of nature. The principalities are grouped according to their present areas of influence.

Keep in mind that not all the cities and towns are described in detail. Across the length and width of Gaïa there are thousand o f tiny villages and towns so small that they never appear on the maps. Similarly, some of the less relevant cities are only mentioned at the end of each section. That does not mean that they are any less important, but that they do not stand out because of any special relevance. All the noteworthy locations on the map are shown with crosses in front of their name.



The Seal of Abel

Each of the principalities has an informational header with the following statistics:

Capital: The name of the city officially recognized as the capital of the country.

Population: The number of inhabitants living within its borders. This is only an approximate value that just includes those people officially on the census, not all the ones living there.

Main Ethnic Groups: The main ethnic groups of its population. The percentages given are generated from the calculations that the Great University of Lucrecio has made on the population.

Government: The type of government presently enforced.

Languages: The main languages of the country. Those officially recognized are included as well as those that are not.

Religion: This indicates the prevailing religious beliefs in the principality. The first one listed always represents the religion officially recognized by the government of the country.

Technology: This indicates the degree of technological advancement that a certain nation has. It is indicated by a number between 1 and 5, the technological level being more advanced when the number is higher. A 1 represents almost no degree of technology, whereas a 2 and 3 are similar to those that existed during the High and Low Middle Ages in Europe. A level 4 approaches the Renaissance and Enlightenment, whereas a 5 slightly surpasses even that.

Denomym: The normal lineage of the country or principality.

Flag: A brief description of the official flag.

Masculine Names, Feminine Names, and Last Names: A small listing of typical first and last names found in the region.

Cultural Roots and Social Position

If you wish, you can use the statistical header in the various principalities to determine the social class to which your character initially belongs. The Game Master decides if you must roll the dice or if you may freely choose it. Those social classes marked ("Priv".) grant an enormous advantage over the others, which it is why it is not possible to conventionally hand them out. In order to do it, it is necessary to acquire the advantage Social Position, as indicated in the final chapter. Similarly, if the Game Master deems it appropriate, you can use the information that appears there to determine your initial equipment, instead of using the core book.

Each one of the principalities has an additional a section titled Cultural Roots. Within it appears a series of special bonuses that the character receives to his secondary abilities at first level, in the event that he acquires the advantage Cultural Roots in **Chapter 7**. Depending on the social class, the advantages may vary.

The Sacred Holy Empire of Abel

The Sacred Holy Empire of Abel is without a doubt the first cultural, economic and military power of Gaïa. Presently, after the fall of the Emperor, it consists of only eight principalities, but all of them have very similar cultural, ethnic and racial origins.

The principalities of the Holy Empire are located in the central part of the Old Continent, which largely have the same climate and vegetation, with very few exceptions. It is a very diverse area, with leafy forests, great green plains and steep mountain ranges. The majority are warm regions, with moderate winters and periods of rain interspersed.

The Empire is actually relatively young, at least in comparison with other cultures of Gaïa. Although many historians date its beginnings immediately after the death of Christ, the present Abel has little in common with the legendary Holy Kingdoms. This is due to that, during the War of God, the area was almost completely destroyed by the armies of Rah, which practically reduced all its cities to ashes. For this reason it is easier to confirm that the Empire was built starting with the million refugees who were based in the area after the war, inheriting a great cultural and social variety which would bloom over the course of 700 years.

The politics of the Sacred Holy Empire preserve the old traditions that were established five centuries ago. Elisabetta embodies all the political and religious power, although each principality is virtually independent. The Empress, as supreme authority, has the authority to assign and mediate any matter among her subjects, which includes the decisions of the great lords. However, she normally allows the leaders of each principality freedom to rule as they please, interfering only when she considers it strictly necessary. Although each lordship usually has his own army of different sizes, the greatest military power of the Empire is found in the figure of the Lord of War and his regiments that are located all around the Sacred Holy Empire. The Lord of War is the supreme general of the armies of the Empress, and is in charge of keeping the security and cohesion of Abel against everything that threatens it. Rarely does he mediate on internal disputes, although he usually keeps watch to ensure that, when these occur, no lord fails to fulfill the principles imposed by his lady. In ancient times, before the fragmentation of the Empire, internal wars between the various principalities were common, but the confrontations had a Lord of War as its referee and the damage to towns or civilians was prohibited. Once a side had taken sufficient losses or reached the objective marked by the Empire, the end of the dispute was declared.

If necessary, adding the regiments of the Lord of War, the private armies of each principality and the forces of the Heaven Order, the Sacred Holy Empire could have around a million soldiers, without a doubt the greatest military force in all of Gaïa. Nevertheless, because of the enormous principality that it covers and the recent incidents, its troops are currently slightly disorganized. Relations are very tense with the kingdoms that have rebelled or declared independence. Officially, the Empire still considers them part of the Sacred Holy Crown, although at the moment it does not really have the slightest control over them. This situation becomes especially problematic in respect to Togarini and the so-called Azur Alliance, who are openly against Abel.

In the past few months, Elisabetta has passed an imperial edict that allows anyone the right to declare himself atheistic (although other religions are still officially unaccepted), which has also undergone certain rejection on the part of the Church, and a small schism with the High Archbishop Magnus, who continues to remain undeclared in favor or against the young Empress.

The legal system of the Sacred Holy Empire is extremely advanced, with laws characterized by their great social progresses. Although inequalities still exist between the different classes (what translates into a specialized court for the noble class and another one for the clergy), the laws are considerably just and presumes the innocence of the people. The death penalty is abolished in most principalities, save for high treason and serious ecclesiastical offenses. Only sometimes, with the most terrible crimes, the court can lobby for an imperial decree to request the execution of the condemned.

The majority of the inhabitants of the Empire feel proud to belong to it, even if it is only for the tradition and advances that come with it. For years, they lived without fear of war or famine in a prosperous and tranquil way. Any alteration to their normal life is troublesome, which is why they see the present political situation with worry.

All the governors of the principalities openly support Elisabetta and consider her the legitimate heiress to the throne of Abel. Consequently, they will do what can to help her reconstruct the Empire and return it to its former glory, with the hope that someday there will be a place of privilege for them.

The High Senate

Since the dawn of the Empire, the figure of the Sacred Holy Emperor has been served and assisted by a High Senate for the most important and fundamental decisions. This reigning organization is formed by the princes of all the nations within the Sacred Holy Empire, who act as spokesmen for their lands. This is why they are also known as the Council of the Lords. Only two powers outside of the principalities also have a voice and a vote in the High Senate, the Archbishop of the Church and the marshal of Tol Rauko.

When a principality has a matter of extreme importance to deal with or wants to declare war on another one, the High Senate is invoked to solve it or to set the rules and regulations of the conflict. After much discussion the decisions are taken by way of voting. Although the power of the organization is merely symbolic, since the Emperor is not forced to listen to or to ratify anything that the High Senate advises, as generally its voice is taken into account. In fact, throughout history, the Emperor has ignored the suggestions of the High Senate on a few occasions (despite of which, when it happens there is very little the Council of the Lords can do about it).

In the case of nations that are not governed by a single prince, like the Illustrated Order of Imora or the Council of Arlan, their members choose one of them as representative, who then acts as a Senator. In spite of everything, given the limitations of transportation, the enormous expanse of territory and the difficulty of getting all the princes together at times as a result of their tight personal agendas, they had the ability to appoint a agent as a bearer of their will, called the Senatorial Bequeathal. This role is extremely important because, regardless of what the Bequeathed agreed to, his signature is equivalent to the prince.

The High Senate meets in the Heart of the Angel, an immense white construction located in the center of Archangel. At the present time, the number of High Senate members is reduced to only those principalities that have remained faithful to the Empire, although Gabriel and Manterra maintain two ambassadors whom aspire to be Senatorial Bequeathals. The Archbishop Magnus has not responded to the calls of the Empress, opposed to marshal Malakias Graft, of Tol Rauko.

Common Characters of The Sacred Holy Empire of Abel

Here are a series of the most common inhabitants of the Sacred Holy Empire of Abel. The following write-ups have been created without taking Creation Points into account.

Sailor

Category Freelance**; Level** 0
Initiative 55; **LP** 85; **AT** None; **Attack** 30; **Defense** 45; **Weapons** Dagger; **Damage** 35
AGI: 8 **DEX**: 7 **CON**: 6 **STR**: 7 **PER**: 7 **INT**: 5 **WIL**: 5 **POW**: 5
Abilities: Acrobatics 30, Swim 30, Jump 15, Climb 30, Notice 25, Search 15, Navigation 15, Feats of Strength 15, Resist Pain 5, Slight of Hand 15.
Resistance: PhR 25, DR 25, VR 25, MR 20, PsR 20.

Bourgeois

Category Freelance; **Level** 2
Initiative 60/40; **LP** 95; **AT** None; **Attack** 50; **Defense** 50; **Weapons** Long Sword; **Damage** 55
AGI: 6 **DEX**: 6 **CON**: 6 **STR**: 6 **PER**: 6 **INT**: 7 **WIL**: 7 **POW**: 7
Abilities: Ride 25, Swim 15, Style 20, Intimidate 15, Composure 30, Leadership 30, Persuasion 60, Notice 30, Search 10, Animals 10, Science 20, History 30, Memorize 30, Appraisal 40, Dance 20.
Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 40, PsR 40.

Imperial soldier

Category Warrior; **Level** 1
Initiative 55/25; **LP** 110; **AT** Studded Leather; **Attack** 65; **Defense** 65; **Weapons** Long Sword; **Damage** 55
AGI: 6 **DEX**: 7 **CON**: 7 **STR**: 7 **PER**: 5 **INT**: 5 **WIL**: 5 **POW**: 5
Abilities: Athleticism 5(15), Ride 30, Swim 5(15), Jump 0(10), Climb 5(15), Intimidate 20, Notice 20, Search 10, Composure 20, Feats of Strength 30, Resist Pain 20.
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 30, PsR 30.

Elite soldier

Category Warrior; **Level** 3
Initiative 65/35; **LP** 140; **AT** Breastplate; **Attack** 100; **Defense** 100; **Weapons** Long Sword; **Damage** 60
AGI: 6 **DEX**: 7 **CON**: 7 **STR**: 8 **PER**: 5 **INT**: 5 **WIL**: 5 **POW**: 5
Abilities: Athleticism 20 (30), Ride 40, Swim 5 (15), Jump 5 (15), Climb 5 (15), Intimidate 20, Notice 30, Search 20, Composure 20, Feats of Strength 55, Resist Pain 25.
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 40, PsR 40.

Imperial official

Category Paladin; **Level** 4
Initiative 70/30; **LP** 155; **AT** Partial Plate; **Attack** 110; **Defense** 110; **Weapons** Long Sword; **Damage** 55
AGI: 6 **DEX**: 7 **CON**: 7 **STR**: 8 **PER**: 7 **INT**: 7 **WIL**: 7 **POW**: 8
Abilities: Ride 50, Style 50, Intimidate 35, Leadership 140, Persuasion 35, Notice 45, Search 25, Composure 35, Resist Pain 70.
Resistance: PhR 50, DR 50, VR 50, MR 55, PsR 50.

Nobleman

Category Freelance; **Level** 2
Initiative 60/50; **LP** 95; **AT** None; **Attack** 70; **Defense** 70; **Weapons** Saber; **Damage** 50
AGI: 6 **DEX**: 6 **CON**: 6 **STR**: 6 **PER**: 6 **INT**: 7 **WIL**: 7 **POW**: 7
Abilities: Ride 30, Swim 15, Style 40, Intimidate 15, Leadership 50, Persuasion 40, Notice 30, Search 10, Animals 10, Science 20, History 50, Memorize 30, Appraisal 20, Dance 40.
Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 40, PsR 40.


North Sea
Maelstrom
Wall of Eternal Ice
Belgenmir
Hild Archipelago
Island of Tir
Gesnacht
The Pond
Hendell
Haufman
Warm Desert
Muspellheim
Peack of the World
Hildestheim
Mountain Range of Fallon
Forest of Eternal Night
Alberia
Forest of the Mirror
Mountains of Light
Forest of Forgetfulness
Forest of the Whispers
Forest of the Fog
Forest of Glenda
Yellow Valley
Valley of the Lake
Gray Forest
Forest of Souls
Belfort
Eamon Forest
Plateau of Argadas
Goldar
Sleepy Lake
Forest of Wulfgar
Cave of the Murmurs
Iadelith Gorge
Inner Valleys
Sea of Salt
Mudenheim Mountain Range
Komerlich Plains
Forad Forest
Galgados
Verdamming Ravine
Mountain Range of the Winds
Hécate
Plain of a Thousand Thunderclaps
Eron
Val du Genevrier
Great Lakes
Inanimate Forest
Swamp of Agamemnon
Dalaborn
Ilmora
Helenia
Gabriel
Caves of Wolfheim
Mountain Range of Zhoma
Plains of Eibron
Galenicos Mountains
Garden of the East
Hausser
Forest of Zulan
Farna
Deep Lake
Marshal Mountains
Forest of the Moon
Mountain Range of Tol Jaeren
Calm Lands
Spring Leap
Terra Umbra
Ree Field
Lake of the Crown
Mountain Range of Eras
Corvinus
Straits of Ribeau
Chaville
Swallows Island
Vasago
Coast of Grief
Eternal Prairie
Archangel
Abel
Crack of the Sword
Arlan
Great Plains
Karh
Forest of Lacan
Lands of the Storm
Forest of Avalbane
Coast of Yearnings
Tol Rauko
Inner
Coast of Alamadir
Llenas Swamp
Presta
Kirdan
Brudge
White Forest
Fields of Terminus
Quartz Crater
Passage at The End
Mountain Range of The Scar
Cozal Forest
Adlia
Vercelis Marsh
Sarlet Plains
West Plateau
Burnt Countryside
Green Lake
Togarini
Kanon
Palias Island
Eye of the Hurricane
White Plateau
Forest of Lira
Kaine
Land of Ashes
Forneo Archipelago
Schaefer Forest
Meadow of the Fallen
Forneo Archipelago
Al-Quayan Mountains
White Sea
Craters of the Streak
Crying Lake
Glockner Mountains
Holy Plains
Fuchs Plains
Rock of Azur
Remo
Bellafonte
Lucrecio
Karjah
Mazgo Forest
Metzger Forest
Senna Desert
Nasser Mountains
Du'Lucart
White Mountain Ranges
Quarry of Lavin
Albino
Pearl Coast
Merle Lagoons
Kushistan
Palm Jihama
Creek Mountains
Reitz Mountain Range
Samitai Mountains
Caves of Salia
Llanoverde
Lake of Canto del Gallo
Natara Desert
Veracruz Passage
Ilion
Forest of The Cross
Black Desert
Mountains of Elevation
Le Domaine
Serra Mountain Range
Eurasia Mountain Range
Argos
Albidion
Narses Island
Gray Mark
Elanda Mountain Range
Tarvos Island
Calistis Ocean
MAP KEY
Capital
Metropolis
City
Building
Fortress
Path
Road
0 500 1000 1500 Kilometers
0 500 1000 Miles


Ocean of the Children
Uruz Grave
Hild Archipelago
Wall of Eternal Ice
Island of Tir
Gesnacht
Molofart
Belgenmir
The Ponds
Hendell
Haufman
Muspellheim
Peack of the World
Warm Deserts
Karlsrude
Black Marsh
Barachesi Forest
Hildestheim
Dwânholf
Desert of Memories
Scar of the Marrer
Pelcan Coast
Gehena Forest
Pleasant Forest
Somer Plateau
Eastern Sea
Goldar
Forest of Wulfgar
Sleepy Lake
Cave of the Murmurs
Iadulii Gorge
Moth
Inner Valleys
Moor of Shadow
Torda
Sea of Salt
Forest of the Ropes
Seifenschwein Forest
Akasta Lake
Phaion
Komerlegh Plains
Forad Forest
Val du Genèvrier
Lucille Mountains
Great Lakes
Helenia
Deep Lake
Gabriel
Akquo Marsh
Plains of Roh
East Coast
Swamp of Damemnon
Forest of Zulan
Farna
Calm Lands
Spring Leap
Terra Umbra
L'Arc Forest
Matsu Forest
Ree Field
Mountain Range of Eras
Corvinus
Straits of Rheau
Chaville
Pitcher Peninsula
Markusias
Swallows Island
Vasago
Selene
Coast of Grief
Karasu Forest
Kaiyama
Lannet
Kumoyama
Tsukikage
Sealed Forest
Kusa Plains
Tori Forest
Sen Monogatari Mountain Range
Island of Yagarema
Yuanxu Mountain Range
Cracks of Len Peng
Zhu Plains
Fusang Plateau
Liang Peaks
Shivat
Qing Marshes
Hulijing Forest
Daoji Plains
Shan Lu
Tol Rauko
Inner Sea
Presta
Kirdan
Adlia
Zanidar
Jwahir Mountains
Rock of The Father
Khon Thami
Kashmir
Palias Island
Eye of the Hurricane
Land of Ashes
Forneo Archipelago
Chasm of Oba
Great Savanna
Etigia
Sharanya Mountain Range
Minkah Pass
Mesi Lake
Meadow of the Fallen
Mesthenet Desert
Al-Qiayan Mountains
Al Kairr
Dajra Mountain Range
Sherena
Glockner Mountains
Salazar Desert
Korma Lake
Lucrecio
Karjah
Great Dunes of Hatifah
Baho
Ashvins Valley
Du'Lucart
Senna Desert
Nasser Mountains
Sand sea
Vishvakarman Mountains
Thirghú
Kushistan
Palm of Jihamath
Salazar
Retiz Mountain Range
Furrows of Ibb
Desert of Destiny
Samutai Mountains
Caves of Salia
Llanoverde
Lake of Canto del Gallo
Natara Desert
Sea of Guren
Ghard Plains
Hil ad Bikash Mountain Range
Veracruz Passage
Ilion
Nanwe
Nanto Mountain Range
Serra Mountain Range
Eltrasia Mountain Range
Argos
Nanwe Jungle
Dahabu Mountains
Dun'u Gualai Abyss
Zafe Nobat Cliffs
Gray Mark
Eilvalda Mountain Range
Tarvos Island


HOLY SAINT EMPEROR
LORD OF WAR
High Lord
HIGH SENATE
Senator
SUPREME ARCHBISHOP
His Holiness
CARDINAL COUNCIL
Excelency
13º CARDINAL
Excelency
CARDINAL
His Excellency
PRINCE
ARCHDUKE
PHARAOH
VICEROY
GREAT SULTAN
Majesty, Highness
DUKE
VISCOUNT
SULTAN
His Excellency
ARBITER
Supreme Magister
IMPERIAL GENERAL
His Excellency
HIGH NOBILITY
BISHOP
Excelency
PRELATE
Kirche
COUNT
MARQUESS
My Lord, My Lady
eñora
BARON
SENESCHAL
My Lord, My Lady
COMANDER
MARSHAL
Excellency
CAPTAIN
Sir
LOW NOBILITY
DEACON
Father
PRIEST
FRIAR
Father
SEMINARIAN
COMENDATOR
MAYOR
Mister, Miss
KNIGHT
Mister, Miss
PLEBEIAN
BRIGADE
LIEUTENANT
CORPORAL
Sir
SOLDIER 1ª
IMPERIAL SOLDIER
NON PRIVILEGED CLASS
Supervise
Belongs to

ABEL

Capital: Archangel.
Population: 10,000,000 +
Main Ethnic Groups: Asher (41%), Aion (39%), Vildianos (7%), Sinner (4%), Ryuan (4%), Daevar (2%), Tayahar (1%), Norne (1%).
Government: Imperial autocracy.
Languages: Latin, ailish (minority), yamato (minority).
Religion: Christianity.
Technology: 5.
Denomym: Abelense.
Flag: A rampant lion on a white background.
Masculine Names: Aileron, Aurelius, Cassius, Dante, Dominic, Gaius, Janus, Marcus, Maximilian, Nero, Nox, Silas, Solaris, Vicent, Virgil.
Feminine Names: Alma, Angelica, Ardelis, Celia, Dawn, Drucilla, Emma, Gloria, Integra, Levenia, Maris, Minerva, Priscilla, Shanna, Shion, Tricia, Zia.
Last Names: Agius, Anderson, Attard, Borges, Brakys, Cassar, Durand, Faria, Galea, Grech, Laurens, Lynch, Major, Martius, Morison, Reid, Vicens.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Abel is the heart of the Sacred Holy Empire, and perhaps even the heart of the whole Old Continent. For seven centuries it has been considered the peak of human civilization in all aspects, and there are many reasons that support this proclamation.

The principality of Abel is made up of enormous green plains, leafy forests full of life and great rivers. In certain ways, it could be said that it is as rich and prosperous an area as the Empire has ever been; mirroring its own condition in progress. The region is delineated in the east and west by two great mountain ranges that act as a natural barrier with other principalities. The vegetation is Mediterranean, with a great variety of flora and fauna. Typically, there are rarely any wild beasts prowling through the area anymore, because of the soldiers and a considerable number of hunters who are in charge of watching over the security of the roads. The climate is usually warm, although with frequent rains throughout the entire year. Sometimes, there are strong storms that can last several days. All the roads that connect the great cities are completely paved and it is the only place in the world that can make such a claim, with the exception of Lucrecio.

Abel is exceptionally rich in livestock and agriculture, as well as possessing enormous mining resources in its mountain ranges. Include its modern manufacturing infrastructure and its important guild groups, and the idea that it is a self-sufficient principality and a convenient trading spot with any other nation in the world suddenly doesn't seem too strange. The principality does not have a powerful army per se, but the Empress completely controls the regiments of the most powerful of the Lords of War, and has a personal squad of bodyguards in her direct service, the Knights of the Heaven Order, which allows her to call upon forces unequaled.

Unlike the other principalities, Abel does not have a prince, but that is governed by the Empress Elisabetta Barbados herself, who is barely a young girl already wielding all the imperial powers. Although the important aristocrats and clergymen try to influence her, the young girl reigns without listening to any advice other than that of Tadeus Van Horsman and Kisidan, her Heaven Order mentor.

Currently Abel is in a disturbing situation with the principalities in secession, especially on its southern border with Togarini, the head of the Azur Alliance. They do not currently threaten the security of the Empire in any real way, but regaining control of these principalities is impossible for Abel at the moment. Only time will tell what the consequences will be.

Culture and Society

The society of Abel has become rich thanks to its cultural openness and the ethnic wealth that resides within its principality. The union of so many countries has formed a unique mixture, taking the best traits from each civilization and combining the enormous cultural prosperity that was inherited from the thinkers of the old Empire of Solomon. People live without excessive worry. They make an effort to leave the death of the Emperor behind them, and work towards a brilliant future with Elisabetta as their lady. Most of them are not religious fanatics like those of the Dominion, but religion has a certain importance in their lifestyles. Many usually go to church every week and make good donations. Even so, a sizable percentage of society does not have an emphasis on Christianity especially, and with the recent imperial edict on religion, a small percentage of the population have openly declared themselves atheists without suffering any negative consequences.

The social structure is separated into three classes: nobility, clergy and common folk. Nevertheless, unlike other regions, they are absolutely not a closed hierarchy. The high bourgeoisie have been acceding to noble titles for some time, by marriage or a pay off. In spite of that, there is still a distinct difference in the power of the high nobility. In some cases, the great families of Abel even accumulate more authority than the lords of certain principalities.

Abel does not have a very established feudal structure. It is very rare to see great independent castles, and most of the nobility meets in the most important cities or around the Imperial Court of Archangel. The principality is made up of several cities of great size and nearly a hundred towns.

Currently, the cities are ruled by some nobleman of great influence named by the Empire itself, although most times these titles are inherited in the way of succession. Only if some aristocrat proves himself to be poorly equipped for the position, does it lead to his negation. Also there is a mayor, chosen by the citizens of each community, who acts as the civil governor and nexus between the nobility and the common folk.

Abel's cities are rich in commerce and manufacturing, whereas the neighboring towns are usually farming and agricultural areas. Abel is characterized as being a simultaneous importer and exporter of various goods, be it to the New Continent or distant eastern lands. It also sees a great many visitors, who go to the region to shop, look for work or simply to visit its wonders and monuments.



Abelenses of the ethnic group Aion

Tao Zan

The Tao Zan is an official fighting competition that is celebrated every three years with the arrival of spring in the coliseum of Archangel. Within it, the world's best fighters meet to compare their skills and to acquire all the fame that comes with it. The rules of the tournament allow the use of any kind of armor or weapons, even fireguns, but killing the opponent under any circumstance is strictly prohibited. Although most of the participants of the Tao Zan are not gifted with special skills, during the last few years exceptional fighters have begun to participate more frequently, many of them masters in Ki abilities. Although any of them are careful not to use powers that are flashy enough to be considered "witchcraft", the spectators are exceptionally lenient towards the use these abilities. Flushed with excitement, they usually praise anything that is not a supernatural lightshow. Elisabetta herself plans on taking advantage of the competition to secretly analyze any possible recruits to her forces.

The Tao Zan is divided into two parts since it sometimes involves thousands of participants. First there are four preliminary rounds held behind closed doors to select the thirty-two fighters who will enter the actual competition. Depending on the number of fighters participating, these preliminary try-outs can go for days. After that, the thirty-two winners face-off before the public, who gather in the tens of thousands to attend this unique spectacle. On the first day a single round of fighting takes place that trims the number of participants to sixteen, whereas on the second day they compete until only two of them are left. Finally, on the third day the final duel is takes place, before which the Choir of Swallows, made up of the twelve young girls with the best voices in Abel, who intone an ancestral song in commemoration of the combat.

Traditionally, the emperors of the Sacred Holy Empire who are present at the tournament award a prize to the winner, who can request almost anything. The champion of the last two competitions has been Kisidan, high praetorian of the Empress and knight of the Seventh Heaven. It is rumored that Elisabetta has requested that he not participate in the next competition, to try for a more unpredictable, exciting outcome.

The Empire and the lions

The emblem of the Sacred Holy Empire is a rampant lion, which since the era of the Messiah has been considered a sacred animal. Nevertheless, the true symbolism of the animal comes from Arturia, an immense white lion that accompanied Zhorne Giovanni in the terrible battles that took place during the War of God. The animal, gifted with incredible abilities, fought by his side and sacrificed its life to save the future Emperor's, who inscribed the mark of Arturia on his armor.

Since then, throughout the width and length of the Empire the hunting of these animals has always been prohibited under very severe penalties, since killing them is considered an attack on the spirit of Abel. It is only acceptable to kill the beast in situations where the lives of innocent people are threatened or it is considered a menace. Naturally, as with most prohibitions, there are always nobles or rich bourgeoisies who wish to have a white lion skin at whatever cost, so some poachers are willing to secretly go hunting lions for the right price.

Regarding the Supernatural

The people of Abel show a certain tolerance when it comes to the supernatural, but this is mainly due to the fact that they are accustomed to seeing "some things" that are beyond the norm in the Empress' own agents. Although it is uncommon, more than one person has witnessed a knight of the Heaven Order scale a building in a single jump, demolish a stone wall with his bare hands or run dodging through a hail of arrows. In a majority of the cases, such acts are justified by admitting that these people are especially gifted by God, a blessing that allows them to better protect the innocents and the interests of the Empire itself. For that reason, it is sometimes understandable that a resident of Abel might consider some displays incredible, but not necessarily negative. Naturally, this is only limited to small actions of little importance, or when they do not cause a detriment on the people. Anyone that uses a supernatural ability on a grand scale, or one that had dark connotations, would immediately be labeled a wizard or a "demon".

On the other hand, magical abilities used in a visually flashy or dynamic way is something that people fear, more because of the consequences that they bring rather than what they really represent. And this is not unjustified; over the course of the last few centuries there have been multiple magical occurrences that have caused imbalance, pain and death to many people in Abel, therefore supporting the negative position of the Church towards witchcraft. It is possible that only a very small percentage of wizards and mystical entities are to blame for such occurrences, but it is sufficient to keep the people in fear of the supernatural, something who the majority of which continue labeling as "satanic". Generally, any citizen of Abel who sees anybody recite spells, trace magical runes in the air or any thing associated with a supernatural "lightshow", will not only make an open rejection, but may also submit a formal accusation to the Inquisition. Fortunately for many "wizards", it is usually very difficult to find people in Abel willing to take justice into their own hands. In fact, its been centuries since anybody has been executed without a trial first.

The History of Abel

It could be said that the history of Abel principality is possibly the same history as that of the Sacred Holy Empire, although to reach its true origins it is necessary to go back much further. For more than 2,500 years, the principality which is currently recognized as Abel was a barren area populated by dozens of nomadic tribes who fought each other. One of them, the one called the Lineage of Solomon, obtained predominance over the others thanks to its advanced steel-forged weapons and a strict military system, which made it stand out as the first human empire in recent memory. Once its power was undisputed, Solomon cultivated the arts and sciences learning from other races, like the Sylvain, and producing a considerable number of philosophers and thinkers. Surprisingly, in a mere decade Solomon experienced enormous progress that made them the leader of all the kingdoms and nations of the world, even of the nonhuman races. Later its inhabitants developed technological and magical wonders that had never been seen; they extirpated diseases, controlled the forces of nature and even managed to slow down the aging process until almost becoming immortal. It was Solomon who terra-formed the barren areas that surrounded their capital and turned them into the rich orchards that they are today. Nevertheless, all their knowledge did them no good, given that Solomon eventually collapsed, and everything they had achieved gone forever. During three centuries their descendants managed to maintain a certain control over those territories with great difficulty, until the arrival of the Messiah who definitively destroyed the established order. The new religion was established as the official creed and the area was renamed Abel, which would become the center of the Holy Kingdom governed by the Apostle Pietro Giovanni. The first city of Archangel was built atop the ruins of the old capital of Solomon, where it served as the capital of the kingdom and religious center of Christianity through two centuries.


Galgados
Mountain Range of the Winds
Forest of Souls
Reston
Eamon Forest
†The Strong Carrison
†Pernov
†Eron
Taranov
Plain of a Thousand Thunderclaps
Anduin River
Hemingen
†Hécate
Falsten
†Castle Deniesil
Rakvara
†Trivium
Inanimate Forest
†Eustace
Swamp of Agamemnon
Sillermay
†Valley of Adalia
Mountain Range of Zhoria
†Nikoleva
Dalaborn
Ilmora
†Calysta
Plains of Eibron
Galenicos Mountains
Garden of the East
Forest of Zulan
†Hausser
Shikar
Tzer
†Ogara
Sendel
†Conservatory of the Arts
Forest of the Moon
Mountain Range of Tol Jaegren
†Bryanta
Darel
Lake of the Crown
†Good Rest
Neria
†Tiberias
†Woods of Gwenlynn
Bethar
Ecanus
Balthus Mountains
Eternal Prairie
†Leazhar
†The Tower of Babel
Kalmar
†Archangel
Abel
†Port of Eien
†Londure
Zafir River
Coast of Grief
Sura
†Yirath
Arias
Lonel
Urim
The Great Plains
Tharsis
Lands of the Storm
†Eytan
Forest of Avalbane
†Port of Eburah
Coast of Yearnings
†Sepher
Hod
†Aubrey
†Seifer
Reisz
†Brudge
Mountain Range of the Scar
†Reindhold
†Aldon
Fields of Terminus
White Forest
Calmo River
Reine
Passage at the End
Quartz Crater
†The Well of Rejects
†The church of Saint Bernabe
Cozal Forest
West Plateau
Green Lake
Togarini
Burnt Countryside
Hausburz
Berke
†Bendeck
Kanon
MAP KEY
Capital
Metropolis
City
Building
Fortress
Path
Road
0 250 500 750 Kilomteres
0 250 500 Miles

The kingdom obtained formidable power until in the year 223 when the armies of Rah devastated the area, almost completely destroying all their cities and exterminating its inhabitants; Abel was probably punished the most severely by the followers of Judas.

After the end of the War of God, Zhorne Giovanni gathered hundreds of thousands of refugees and founded the Sacred Holy Empire of Abel in the year 233, taking advantage of the area's wealth to establish the base of the new Empire. Over seven centuries, governed by the Giovanni lineage and later by two generations of the Barbados family, Abel has maintained its role as the heart of the Empire, even after fracturing itself. It is currently ruled by Elisabetta Barbados, the young Empress, whose "absolute authority" is questioned by several of the principalities that have declared themselves independent after her father's death. Although most of the population of Abel supports her without regrets, it is also true that many voices think that the weight of the Imperial Crown is perhaps a bit too much for a young girl to handle.

Relevant Geographical Features

The principality of Abel is predominantly made up of enormous green prairies, although sprinkled with a few lakes and small forests from time to time.

Zafir River: It is the greatest and most influential river in all of Abel. It originates in the Balthus Mountains and crosses the heart of the Empire to empty into the Inner Sea. Almost every tributary converges near the city of Archangel, nourishing it with an abundance of water and fish. Up to Archangel its current is strong and fast, but to the east of the capital its flow becomes a bit slower, due to its wide breadth and shallower depths. This is why the Zafir is sailable from Archangel to its opening on the Coast of Yearnings. The river is the main source of commerce between the areas of the Inner Sea and the Coast of Commerce, for which it's important to see how fast sailboats and vessels of little tonnage and low draft cross it while transporting travelers and small merchandise.

The importance of the Zafir River as a commercial route also extends itself on the mainland since the Route of Lucer, probably the longest road in Gaïa, runs along its southern margin. It connects Archangel with the port of Eburah, crossing through the city of Yirath. It is currently one of the safest and journeyed routes in all the Empire. The traffic of carts, travelers and soldiers usually is heavy.

The Balthus Mountains: This extensive mountain range stretches along the western side of Abel like a natural barrier that defines the border with Arlan. It gets its name from the first Lord of War, Balthus Webner, who was able to pacify this area when it was problematic and unify it to the Empire. The mountains are very high and steep, although at its base they are rich in mineral deposits, which is why there are a considerable number of mining towns that extract metals for Abel. In the Balthus range there are several mountain passages that are used to travel to Arlan, but because of the winter snow, sometimes these ways become blocked until the arrival of Spring and it becomes necessary to search for alternate routes. The area is filled with transit stops, in which travelers who enter the region can rest.



A young Abelense

The Mountain range of Tol Jaegren: This steep mountain range borders the western area of Abel with Ilmora and part of Helenia. It's got an abundance mines containing precious stones and crystals, which is why many prospectors visit them dedicated to looking for deposits.

Tol Jaegren is a name of sylvain origin that means "sacred place", although the population of Abel currently ignores it (the majority think that it was definitely a personality in the past that was forgotten with the passage of time). Formerly, before the War of God, the Sylvain used these mountains to erect seven temples for the Beryls in their different incarnations, and an eighth for C´iel herself. Although more than six hundred years ago the temples of Mikael and Uriel (in Sylvain, Khitna Misariel and Aerevah Nul respectively) were completely devastated by the armies of Judas, the other six remain standing on the cusps of the highest peaks. All of them have been kept sealed by Tol Rauko for centuries, whom from time to time, still send some of their agents to make sure that everything remains in order. Due to the altitude and the enormous challenge that the climb presents, the area seems to be completely undisturbed and is quite difficult to find the entrance to the temples, unless you know the area and specifically travel to them. Also, all of the temples are conveniently protected, as much with the seal of Tol Rauko as by the supernatural safeguards that the high Sylvain priests left behind when they abandoned their churches.

Just in the past few years, two of the temples have been inhabited by enigmatic settlers of The Wake, although their objective and intentions are still unknown.

The Forest of the Moon: This ancient forest of pines and cypresses lies in the northeastern area of Abel, next to the city of Tiberias and the Mountain range of Tol Jaegren. It is known for being plagued with wolves and other wild animals, which is why it is considered a dangerous area for travelers. Fortunately, the predators tend not to leave their hunting areas and it is rare for them to attack people, unless they venture too far in to the heart of the forest. Centuries ago, the place was used as a rallying point for druids and other priestly orders. They are many people who still consider it a sacred place even today, and they could be right in part, because within its depths a powerful spirit of nature dwells that has taken care of the forest since the beginning of time.

The Forest of Avalbane: This place, which receives its name in honor of the first Empress, Lucia Avalbane, wife of Zhorne Giovanni, is the greatest expanse of forest in the whole principality of Abel and also one of the largest in Gaïa. Located south of the Tol Jaegren mountain range, the forest extends for miles and miles before encroaching into the northern border of Kanon. There are dozens of large clearings within it and one may find small populations built within some of them. The area enjoys ample vegetation and wildlife, which is why many nobles and aristocrats use it as a hunt reserve. It is a well-known rumor that some old buildings belonging to Solomon still exist there, but their exact location is unknown. In fact, the true is that there are some facilities distributed throughout the area with lost technology, although the entrances are well hidden and protected by archaic techno-golems; so concealed, that they have lain hidden for centuries.

The Eternal Prairie: The entire central area of Abel is made up of an immense green plain that extends further than the eye can see. It is a land full of life, with dozens of towns and small cities, lakes and sparsely wooded areas. Throughout the entire prairie there stand enormous pillars of metal and marble distributed several miles apart, an inheritance from Solomon's times of splendor. In the center of the prairie Archangel proudly rises from the horizon.

Illustrated by Salvador Espin

Lake of the Crown: This enormous lake of crystalline water is in the northern part of Abel. It has a very beautiful view that attracts a considerable number of visitors and tourists. In the very center there is a small island called "The Eye of Midnight", that lodged a powerful artificial node of magic constructed by the empire of Solomon in ancient times. Although it is not publicly known, the island was used by the Supreme Archbishop Eljared as one of her temporary residences, where she erected a strange mansion that is currently vacant. Although the mystical node no longer exists and with all the Lost Logias conveniently destroyed, the whole small barren island continues to be a site of extreme power for those that are gifted with supernatural abilities of any type.

Lands of the Storm: The resident of Abel speak of the large stretch of land located in the southern part of the Eternal Prairie with respect and mystery, the strange area which they call the Lands of the Storm. This enormous plain, broken by the occasional hill, is perpetually covered by a dense dark cloud layer that prevents anyone from seeing the sky. Although it seems that it is always on the verge of a powerful storm, not a single drop of rain has fallen for centuries, and the area lays withered and dry. Instead of water, powerful bolts whip the earth very consistently, illuminating the shadowy sky with their continuous bursts. Apparently, the discharges are drawn to the metal monoliths that are scattered throughout the zone, like in the Eternal Prairie.

Although it is an ideal path to Kanon and Togarini, the gloomy atmosphere makes many travelers and merchants avoid the Lands of the Storm, afraid that some of the stray bolts may hit them (something which has happened on more than one occasion in the past).

Although unknown to anyone, the instability is caused by the broken climactic control system of Solomon, which has been that way for more than a thousand years. The bolts that fall on the monoliths do nothing more than recharge the system, which why it could possibly continue to run forever.

Coast of Yearnings: The inner coast of Abel is an area rich in commerce and fishing. It receives its name for being the place where the first Emperor Zhorne marched with mankind's last armies towards the island of Tol Rauko. It is a calm and prosperous place, although within the last year several pirates have attacked a few coastal towns, something that has not happened for centuries. The intelligence agency of the Empire suspects that they are privateer captains contracted by the Azur Alliance, but up until now they have not been able to validate this. In order to prevent a repeat of these events, Elisabetta has ordered several armed contingents to spread out in the area, but somehow, some privateers manage to avoid regulated marine checks.

Coast of Grief: The Coast of Grief makes up the neighboring stretch of land with Helenia and is a dead and withered area where nothing, neither vegetable nor animal, can live for very long. During the War of God it was the stage of a bloody battle, in which almost 100,000 lives were lost on both sides. Currently the area is abandoned, and bandits and smugglers who flee from justice are its only visitors. The people of Abel think that it is a condemned land, and they are not mistaken. All that death, added to the monstrous mystical energies that were triggered, produced an enormous echo in reality, creating a tenebrous reflection in The Wake and weakening the barriers that separate both worlds. Even today, thousands of Wake Specters wander through the area. Dark and full of hatred, these beings feed on the feelings of fear and terror that the travelers generate so as to take part in reality in their own limited way.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Places of Interest

The most important places of Abel are possibly its settlements, since all long its principality there are hundreds of prosperous villages and small cities. All of them are well connected to each other thanks to an efficient network of highways and roads, the most important of which are even paved.

Abel is also protected by what has been known for centuries as "the Four Protective Angels", four enormous fortified cities that guard the corners of the Empire (although one of them, Ogara, is now in Dalaborn). There's a myth that ensures while at least one of them remains standing, Archangel will never be destroyed again.

Yirath

(Metropolis, Population 785,000+)

The first of the four "Guardian Angels of Abel" is Yirath, a large city located on both sides of the Zafir River. Built on one of the ruins of Solomon more than four centuries ago, the city enjoyed great prosperity thanks to the marine traffic and commerce with the interior. Consisting of baroque architecture and large buildings, many call it the City of Bridges, because of the large amount of them that connect its streets. In Yirath the enormous Doors of Zafir are found, immense constructions that allow the blockage of the marine transit along the river at will. Lately the large city has begun to lose the military characteristics with which it was founded to become more of a cultural place. Its citizens strive to compete with an erudite city like Hausser and Archangel, which why they have constructed two enormous universities and sponsor students who have higher intellectual abilities.

In Yirath there is a serious internal conflict between the two noble houses that dominate it, House Von Ghalagher and the Dukes of Caitbre (each one located on different parts of the Zafir river). Although in no way can the confrontation escalate, both families do everything they can to stifle the influence of the other and gain the favor of the Empress. The older son of the dukes, Brandon Caitbre (Wizard Lv. 6, ♂), is a powerful wizard and member of the Magus Order, and uses his supernatural abilities to secretly favor his family. On the other hand, the Von Ghalagher have many commercial contacts with the Black Sun who lends them support when necessary. What neither of the two families know is that both their youngest children, Connor Ghalagher and Erin Caitbre, are secretly in love and plan to escape together as soon as they can.

Eytan

(Town, Population 8,500+)

Eytan is the largest settlement located inside the Forest of Avalbane. It is famous for its artisan crafts and its perfect integration with nature. Part of the town is in a large clearing, but the other half protrudes through the edge of the forest, so some houses are constructed between the trees, and more than a few citizens take advantage of the large trunks as additional walls. When the sun rises in the mornings between the treetops filtering its light, it is a sight as wonderful as it is beautiful. Many say that it is a city for artists and dreamers, because it attracts a considerable number of noble and rich bourgeois adolescents who are going though a rebellious phase in their lives.

The lord of Eytan is an old nobleman, count Decaer Braum (Freelance Lv. 2, ♂), who passes most of his time composing poetry. The city sometimes draws in treasure seekers who dream of being the first to discover the ruins of Solomon in the forest, but rarely do they ever find anything of interest.



Illustrated by Raúl Rosell

Archangel

(Metropolis, Population 2.850.000+)

Archangel is the capital of the Sacred Holy Empire and without a doubt the biggest and most lavish city in the world. Officially, its origin is a precursor to the Empire itself, since it was raised on the ruins of Solomon barely a year after the Messiah's death. Two centuries later, it would nearly be destroyed again during the War of God, but would undergo reconstruction to become the huge metropolis that it is now. Archangel is probably the epitome of progress and modernization. Its streets have an artificial lighting system, as well as a running water complex and sewer system. Some structures and buildings of Archangel still originate from Solomon and other civilizations previous to the War of God, but most of them have been designed in the last seven centuries using a baroque architectonic style that gives them a glorious monumental appearance. The city is filled with great palaces and luxurious mansions, among which the three great fortresses stand out: the Castle of Averus, reserved for the Lord of War Tadeus Van Horsman, the Imperial Castle, home of the Empress Elisabetta, and the holy headquarters, The Vatican Cathedral once at the service of the Supreme Archbishop and which presently unoccupied. There are hundreds of important monuments, like the prestigious Museum of History and Art, the Chapel of the Resurrection, where the body of Abel was buried, or the Passage of the Eras, an immense hall full of statues of heroes from the past. Nevertheless, the monument that most represents the city and gives name to it is the gigantic white marble column crowned by an immense angel with extended wings, the city's guardian. The lady of Archangel is Elisabetta herself, who controls everything by means of a municipal system and civil governors who report to an imperial delegate as well, called the Praetor. The city is also fortunate to have The Knights of the Heaven Order as guards, which makes it one of the safest places to live.

Archangel has a considerable number of Samael members living in it, who hide their identity by means of subtlety and supernatural abilities. Some have even earned their places in certain social positions, although they are careful not to reveal their true natures.

Unknown to everyone except for a very secret sector of the Empire, under the city the most important architectural relics of Solomon can be found, which still include many Lost Logias.

Sepher

(Metropolis, Population 480,000+)

The city-fortress of Sepher is one of the four "Guardian Angels of Abel" and the most important for the security of the Empire at the moment. Located to the south, neighboring the border of Togarini, the city is the first line of defense against a possible attack from the Azur Alliance. The enormously large city is constructed in a circular design and has seven walls that make it almost unconquerable against any conventional attack. Even so, it enjoys a level of progression as great as any other city in Abel and, despite its militant appearance, it's still very beautiful. Within it are numerous monuments and recognizable buildings, among which the Blue Palace demands attention, a cathedral turned into a museum of natural history, and the Exodum, a large vault surrounded by columns, whose origins date back to the time of Solomon.

Sepher is an old and noble city in society, in which the aristocracy plays a fundamental role thanks to centuries upon centuries of military accomplishments. The citizens have become accustomed to living with a great many soldiers, and currently boast an excess of 25,000 troops in the area to ensure the principality's stability. The lord of the city is commander Archibald of the Pietro (Warrior Lv. 7, ♂), an eccentric and exalted man that sees conspiracies and danger everywhere.

Although an official war between the Empire and the Alliance has not been declared, some Sepher soldiers on the outskirts of the large city have already engaged in skirmishes with Togarini military patrols. Although there have been several losses on both sides, fortunately everyone has tried to minimize the importance of these confrontations to stem a war, but they keep repeating themselves with enough frequency to make both sides reconsider.

Tiberias

(Metropolis, Population 370,000+)

Located between the mountain range of Tol Jaegren and the Forest of the Moon, Tiberias is the "Guardian Angel" that protects Abel from any threat coming from the east. The large city was constructed by taking advantage of the haven that the mountains offer, giving it excellent natural protection. Although originally only a gigantic fortress, in the last three centuries the area enjoyed great popularity, which caused a city to rise up around its walls. After undergoing a time of regression during the years of Lascar Giovanni's mandate, Tiberias has forcefully reemerged as an important social nucleus once again, and continues to expand today.

Architecturally speaking, the large city is sublime, since there are several palaces crowned with sharpened crystalline towers. When the light reflects off of them, it gives the fascinating visual of the whole city scintillating. The predominant colors are blue and white, which has given it the nickname "The City of Clouds and Skies".

Tiberias is famous for being the place in which the Castle of the Serafin is located, the neurological center for the Heaven Order. Due to the great number of Heaven Knights who live and train here, it is easy to believe that this is considered one of the safest places in Gaïa. The leader of the city is none other than countess Erya of Gillean (Paladin Lv. 6, ♀), a young idealist and loyal follower of the Empress Elisabetta, who has earned the title of Knight of the Fifth Heaven.

Port of Eburah

(City, Population 48,000+)

Eburah is one of the most important commercial ports on the entire Inner Sea. Located at the mouth of the Zafir River, the large city began as a mere crossover point for boats but, with time, grew in power and influence. Many people agree that nowadays, even without the same luxuries, it can compete with Yirath commercially thanks to having a better location. A council of nobles govern the city, although due to their wealth, two high bourgeois have been admitted in their ranks. Eburah is a place frequented by many mercenaries, which is why it is easy to find hire swords and adventurers. Less than a year ago it underwent a lightning attack from three Pirate Kings, causing serious damage to the port before the attackers fled from the city.

Elisabetta Barbados, Sacred Holy Empress

The young Elisabetta Barbados (Paladin Lv. 7, ♀), only thirteen years of age, has not only become the youngest sovereign of the history of Abel, but also the first woman to ascend to the Sacred Holy Crown. There are many who think that she is a mere puppet in the hands of Tadeus Van Horsman and Kisidan, but they could not be more mistaken. The Empress is an independent, truly stubborn and very intelligent girl. She knows when to request advice and let herself be guided by her mentors on matters where she has no previous knowledge. Normally Elisabetta is happy and witty, since her rough childhood has forced her to look at life positively, although she also understands what her position is and the gravity of her responsibilities.

Even as young as she is, Elisabetta has always had a personal history riddled with problems and difficulties. Her mother died in childbirth, which is why Emperor Elias hated her, blaming her for the death of his loving wife. Alone and friendless, the girl tried to grow up happy, even when everything seemed to be against her. Her positive personality quickly gained her the affection of many people, including the Lord of War Tadeus Van Horsman himself.

On a trip in which Kisidan was not allowed to accompany her, shortly before the Breach of Heavens, Elisabetta was the target of a kidnapping attempt organized by Crows of Wissenschaft. Fortunately, she was immediately freed by Nemesis, whom Eljared had sent to frustrate the mysterious plans of Lucanor and keep the Imperial throne steady before she could start her masterplan. For several days the young lady was traveling alone with the silent Nemesis, and like the innocent girl that she was, fell in love with him. Since that encounter she behaved more independently, trying to discover what's happening in the imperial court. However, her efforts to stop what came next were all in vain. When the Fracture finally was over, Elisabetta was a clear witness to everything, understanding that forces and powers existed in the world she was not aware of.

After the death of her father and the consequent chaos she decided, regretfully, to assume total control of the Empire with the support of Tadeus Van Horsman and the Heaven Order. Even knowing full well that her appointment would cause an uproar, Elisabetta believed that it would be much worse if she let Abel crack even further than it already had. Since her arrival to the throne, the Empress began to promulgate revolutionary laws and edicts that forced the unconditional support of one part of society and the absolute rejection of the other.

For months, the Empress has been making secret trips through various places in Gaïa under a false identity. She goes by the name Anna Never and claims to be the daughter of rich merchants from Gabriel. Against the recommendations of Kisidan and Tadeus (and the annoyance it brings to both), the young girl insists on traveling alone with the objective to see how the world is with her own eyes and to decide on her own what is good and what is bad. During her travels she has put herself in infinite amounts of messes and problems, temporarily making strange travel companions (with people as unusual as Sylvia Ul Del Sylvanus or Donoban Van Horsman). As "Anna", she has even gotten involved in some matters against the Empire, when the actions of Abel were considered unjust and an abuse power. One of the things that has impressed her the most has been her trip to Remo. Although she had visited for just very a short time, what she saw really horrified her. Elisabetta understood the hatred of the Azur people towards the Empire and that there was no justification for the atrocities that were committed there. That is one of the reasons she objects to a war against Azur Alliance, since she thinks that the people may have already suffered too much in such a short time.

But of course, the identity of Anna is only one of her many disguises. Although she has become fond of her, she would have no problem taking on another name to keep her anonymity if necessary. Secretly, she hopes to find Nemesis again someday, now having the courage to confess to him how she feels. Her head tells her it is nothing more than a triviality of youth and knows that he is exceptionally dangerous, although neither of these reasons is enough to silence her young heart.

Despite her age, the Empress has proven to be an incredibly skilled fighter, and thanks to the training that she has received from Kisidan, she has already truly mastered the way of the sword. Her learning curve is so high that even her own teacher admits that she could be his equal given a few more years of training (something inconceivable for a mere "mortal").

Elisabetta has attracted the attention of C´iel and Gaira as none could have imagined. The unusual behavior of the little one has caused both to place a great interest in her, making sure that no power, not even they themselves, can influence her decisions. Curiously, the girl is without a doubt one of the few human beings with the highest Gnosis in millenniums, which is why her actions will undoubtedly change the course of events unpredictably in, be they for good or for evil.

Leazhar

(Village, Population 300+)

This small village is made up of a handful of stone buildings, low and stacked against each other, where barely a hundred families live. It would hold no importance if it were not the oldest town in the Empire. It was built almost 2,500 years ago, during the Era of Solomon and, although deteriorated, some of its buildings have remained standing up until the present. When its remnants were found many centuries ago, the historians traveled in droves to study the ruins, but were very disappointed upon discovering that there were no signs of ancient technology, engravings or great findings; it was simply a village built a long, long time ago. Its only interest is due to historical or architectural curiosity, and even this was never exhaustive since it only consisted of small houses with a single floor and some corrals. Currently very few tourists come to Leazhar, since it is a couple of miles from the nearest commercial route, and the scientists stopped making trips there in vain centuries ago. It matters very little to its citizens, since they have never had the slightest interest in stories of the past or legends that do not lead anywhere, dedicating their peaceful lives to farming and agriculture.

However, many of the houses have been acquired by Cristophe De Gaulle (Freelance Lv. 5, ♂ Venerable) in the last few years, a wealthy bourgeois of unknown background that, according to what people say, plans to revitalize the town and to turn it into a commercial hub for travelers. He has brought a team of well-trained mercenaries with him (many of which are gifted with supernatural abilities), and there is a rumor that he is carrying out excavations under people's homes. Worried about the news, the Empire has sent some supervisors, but they did not find any proof of the excavations. In spite of everything, Abel preferred to cover itself and, fearing that De Gaulle might find some Lost Logias, it has sent to there Anka Grimbergel (Technician Lv. 4, ♀), a member of the Heaven Order. Anka has only lived in the village incognito for a few months, posing as a simple farmer, but watching all the movements of Cristophe.

Kisidan, Knight of the Seventh Heaven

The enigmatic man known as Kisidan (Technician Lv. 14, ♂) is the high praetorian of the Empress and, by far, the most important and powerful of the Knights of the Seventh Heaven. His origins are somewhat unclear, but he is very, very old. Although originally he was no more than a mercenary from the Age of Chaos, for various reasons he obtained quasi divine abilities. Unfortunately, he also lost the woman whom he loved and his personality changed completely in the process. Saddened and dark, he wandered for decades until his incredible powers caught the interest of Imperium. The organization approached the warrior and offered him a position in its ranks. Without any other reason to live, the mercenary accepted their offer, receiving the name of Kisidan and the rank of Godkiller. Soon Imperium took care of honing his amazing skills, turning him into an agent of unparalleled talent. As the centuries passed, he acted as a dark executioner that murdered whoever stood between the interests of the organization. He was a free agent, somebody that took care of solving the arduous problems without needing to report back to Jürgand. He spilled so much blood that over time he could not remember how many people and beings he assassinated.

Nevertheless, just a few years ago, he was assigned placement into the Heaven Order as guardian of the Imperial family. Naturally, with his specialized skills it wasn't difficult for him to rise to such a position. However, instead of escorting the Emperor he was assigned the task of protecting the young Elisabetta, who at that time was only three years old. The young girl, who was always alone, quickly took to him faster than she had ever done with anyone before. She played around him, she climbed atop of him and asked him countless different questions of all varieties. She would go looking for the lonely man whenever she wanted to laugh, or needed somebody to cry on. Naturally, Kisidan was stoic. After all, that was the reason he was there.

Just another mission. Nothing out of the ordinary for him.

For years he was by her side, protecting her from any danger.

When the Breach of Heavens was triggered, Imperium predicted that Elisabetta would die at the hands of her own father and ordered Kisidan to let her die. By all means, the praetorian did not have any problem in following the order; after all, that would mean that he could finally be free of the tedious babysitting job that he hated. He watched in silence as Elias struck the girl, watched how he beat her small body with Elisabetta helpless to do anything but cry. In the moment at which the Emperor raised his sword to unleash the final blow, Kisidan unconsciously closed his eyes. When he opened them, the lord of the Sacred Holy Empire lay lifeless at his feet.

The knight did not understand what had happened; not until he saw the blood covered sword in his own hands. Then, and only then, did he know what was truly important to him. Kisidan hadn't noticed, but during all those years with Elisabetta, the little one had become his world. The girl's spark had awoken the humanity that he forgot he had after so many years of killing. He decided he would protect her from whomever or whatever, even if he had to face his own destiny.

Without wasting a moment of time, Kisidan tried to get in contact with the Imperium so as to justify his actions, but he did not receive a response through any of the access channels. For the first time in centuries, a cold terror gripped him. He was aware that, if they still wished to eliminate her, no force in creation could prevent it. For that reason, although on the outside he appears to maintain his unshakable composure, inside he is really worried, although he tries not to project his fears towards Elisabetta.

On the other hand, the Imperium is sufficiently satisfied with the result of the events. Although unexpected (something uncommon in the organization), Barnabas personally thinks that observing Elisabetta in the position of Empress is going to be really interesting. However, perhaps as some petty punishment for his insubordination, he prefers not to communicate the decision to Kisidan until some time has passed. Citing his own words: "He deserves it. At least, he is certainly more aware now".

Currently, Kisidan has the appearance of a man in his mid-thirties, of dark skin and martial presence. He is very serious, and he considers Elisabetta's protection his top priority. The Empire itself matters little to him; as long as his Empress is safe, as far as he is concerned the rest of the world can all go to hell. The repeat absences of the Elisabetta make him really nervous, but he has his back covered resorting to the security measures of Imperium; if he felt that the young girl was in serious danger, he could open a vortex in reality and appear anywhere in the world to protect her. Being more "human" again, he recently harbors certain affections towards his companion Lilith (like him, knight of the Seventh Heaven), although given his introvert nature, he has not said anything to her yet.



Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Port of Eien
(Ghost City, Population 200+)

Located in the middle of the Coast of Grief, the Port of Eien is an ancient city that has been nearly abandoned for centuries. Even though being much larger than Eburah, only a few hundred people manage to live within it. Glorious and monumental in its prime, Eien is now a gray and depressing place, with an infinite amount of empty houses and mansions that nobody wants to live in. The few people that remain there are sad and depressing, who survive because of the ludicrous prices they charge for the services of the port considering the few boats that pass through. They've tried repopulating the city on several occasions by taking advantage of the good state of many buildings, but one way or another, all the attempts have always monumentally failed because of strange deaths, massive disappearances and other misfortunes. Everything is due to the fact that the dark influence that extends through the Coast of Grief is especially strong in Eien. The city's reflection in The Wake is full of creatures and specters that act chaotically, and sometimes drag people who sleep in the city into their dark world. One of those entities, Urian Zemo, a Duk´zarist lord turned into a specter of The Wake that led the part of forces of Rah in the War of God, has become particularly powerful, and it would not be unusual for him to proclaim himself a Lord of Nightmares soon.

Bryanta
(City, Population 39,000+)

The region of Abel between the Balthus Mountains and the mountain range of Zhoria in Galgados is known as the Passage of the West. Less than four centuries ago, it was one of the most vulnerable entrance routes to the principality for a possible attack, since the "Guardian Angel" of Ogara was located too far away to be able to act quickly. For this reason the Castle of Bryanta was built, with the purpose of watching the principality and to constitute the first line of defense that, in retrospect, was never necessary. It was built based on the layout of Ogara but on a smaller scale, and therefore both maintain certain similarities.

The castle, a monumental piece of work, has a capacity of almost 10,000 people, although it is only occupied by a small dowry of no more than 1,000 soldiers at the moment. Most of its towers and sojourns remain empty and have accumulated dust for years. This is due to the fact that an enormous construction error was committed while digging its foundations; the humidity and porosity of the ground was not taken into account. Since the region is covered with small lakes and brooks that are born in Zhoria or Balthus, the water filters into the earth, softening it and making it too unstable to maintain the high towers of Bryanta. For that reason, the walls of the fortress are not as stable as they appear and, year after year, the soldiers find themselves forced to reinforce a wall or fill in a crack. Of course, this information is a very well-kept secret, more for a reasons of prestige than those of security.

Due to the area being an important commercial route, the traffic of travelers is heavy. Since the requests to restore the castle have always been denied, a mercantile city has been constructed around it, crowded with inns and shops in which all kinds of products are sold.

Good Rest
(Village, Population 100+)

Good Rest is the name for a set of inns that are in the vicinity of the Forest of the Moon. They are composed of just twenty buildings, built closely together, forming what could be called a "hotel town." It is in some idyllic woods, next to a small lake frequently used by the travelers. Since each one of the premises belongs to a different owner, the competition between them to hoard clients is enormous. When somebody approaches the area, he is typically assaulted by numerous "hooks" that try to recommend the inn for their employer, talking down the others.

One of them, the House of Bassi, is secretly part of the Wissenschaft Organization. Its main function is to investigate a breach in The Wake near the hotel that attracts the oneiric conscience of the people who sleep on the premises. Since they want to study the effects on people with singular abilities, the best thing to do is attract travelers who they consider special, offering them deals too good to refuse. At least, there are always one or two Crows watching the area, a mission that most of them consider more like a paid vacation offered to them by their organization than any real form of work.

The Tower of Babel
(Ruins, Population 30+)

The Tower of Babel is one of the greatest remains of Lost Logias that currently exists with any certainty. The agents of the Sacred Holy Empire, who have always feared the danger of what might be inside, have kept its existence in absolute secrecy.

Ever since it was discovered more than four centuries ago, the tower has been sealed, but just barely a year ago Emperor Elias sent a division of scientists and historians to uncover its secrets and to obtain any knowledge of interest inside of it. After the fracture of the Empire, Elisabetta kept the scientific team there, reinforcing the team's security by adding several concealed Knights of the Fifth Heaven.

Visually, the tower is a tall black metal cylinder of about 650 feet in height. It is embedded in the rocky ground of a hidden valley in the Balthus Mountains, as if more than just being constructed, it was hurled down from the skies to that very spot. The interior, completely made of metal, is a structure of stairs, platforms and strange apparatuses. All the walls are filled with mechanical statues (some think that they are articulated technological marionettes) that take the traditional form of the Grimm Reaper.

The true objectives or functions of the Tower are still unknown, but the imperial scientists have reached the conclusion that it is probably a weapon of incalculable power. Nevertheless, the head of the investigation, Doctor Dmitri Duhavel (Freelance Lv. 4, ♂) fears that, even with its frightful destructive capacity, the Tower of Babel is no more than a prototype of another still more powerful weapon; an artifact called Gravestone.

Other Settlements: *Bethar, Ecanus, Urim, Tharsis, Lonel, Hod, Neria, Darel, Sura.*

Adventures

At first sight, Abel appears to be a peaceful place, but within its cities there are many subplots that are normally in motion that escape the notice of the majority of the citizens, sometimes of a supernatural nature. The presence of the Samael organization in the area is notable and, though generally they do not have any other aspirations other than to survive without being bothered, others will do anything to extend their influence. Also, Abel contains old ruins of Solomon, in which there are still wonders and dangers that escape the imagination of man.

Hunters of Beasts: Although it's included in the army's duties to make sure all the roads of Abel are safe and secure, the Empire offers succulent compensation (between 1 and 5 GC, depending on the hide) for the hunting of wild animals that might be a danger for travelers. This dedicates a considerable number of trappers to it.

Unfortunately, an unscrupulous group of hunters who call themselves the Black Clan, have specialized in the capture of wolf cubs near the Forest of the Moon to torture them and attract adult members of the herd. This has motivated the beasts of the area into becoming unusually active and wild, which is why they frequently leave their normal hunting areas and attack humans. Consequently, the compensation for the hunts has risen considerably, much to the enjoyment of the Black Clan. However, the cruelty of these acts has roused the wrath of the guardian spirit of the Forest of the Moon, who has awakened two of its Ancestral Hunters, dangerous beasts that have been inactive for almost 200 years. One of them is assigned to teach a lesson to those who dare hang around the outskirts of the forest, whereas the other has been ordered to search out the members of the Black Clan and exterminate them.

The Temple of Forgetfulness: For centuries, strange disappearances have taken place in a passage of the Tol Jaegren mountain range and there have even been completely naked bodies found without life, apparently from the cold. It was generally thought that it was the work of thieves, but the truth is much more sinister. The passage is influenced by the existence of a temple of Edamiel (the Beryl Kyomu Seikuu for the Sylvain, the incarnation of emptiness and nothing), and from time to time some people traveling alone who cross the zone are dragged by its call. Naked and lost, many die before arriving at its gate, whereas those unfortunate enough to succeed are consumed within its interior transforming into Etrien Nosos, dangerous spirits that are vortices to nothing. Recently, a young girl who has been rejected by her lover has runaway from home accidentally using this pass and, in her desperation, has hear the call of nothing. Her father, a rich bourgeois who has a strange sixth sense, perceives that her daughter is in danger, but since the young woman is of legal age and has left the house voluntarily, the local guard is not going to lift a finger to find her. Thus, the man is prepared to hire out a group of mercenaries to look for her and bring her back. Luckily, the young girl is still alive in the interior of the temple, but she has less than a week left before she becomes another Etrien Nosos.

Common Characters of Abel

Here are a series of the most common inhabitants of the principality of Abel. The following write-ups have been created without taking Creation Points into account.

Nobleman of the Court

Class Freelance; **Level** 3
Initiative 65/55; **LP** 100; **AT** None; **Attack** 75; **Dodge** 80; **Weapons** Saber; **Damage** 50
AGI: 6 **DEX**: 6 **CON**: 6 **STR**: 6 **PER**: 6 **INT**: 7 **WIL**: 7 **POW**: 7
Abilities: Ride 45, Swim 15, Style 50, Intimidate 15, Leadership 60, Persuasion 65, Notice 30, Search 10, Animals 10, Science 10, History 40, Memorize 40, Appraisal 40, Dance 50.
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 45, PsR 45.

Guard of Abel

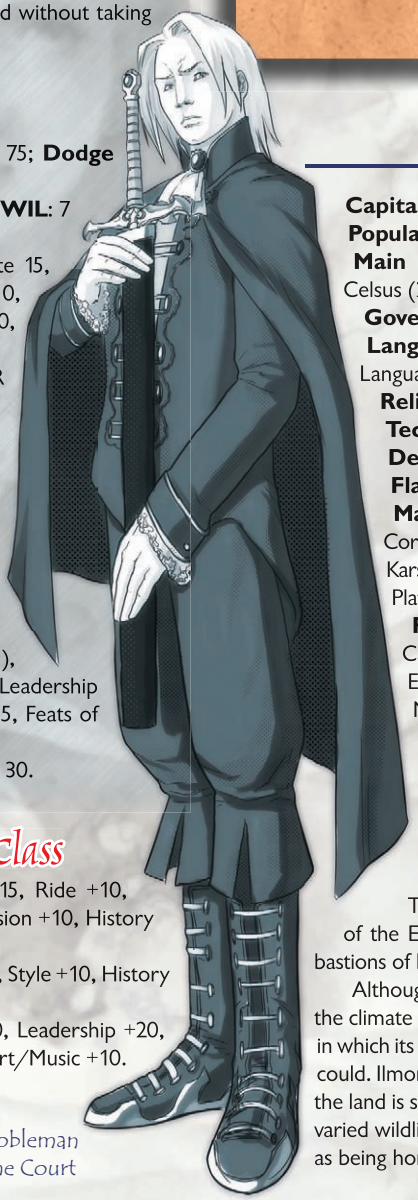
Class Warrior; **Level** 1
Initiative 55/25; **LP** 110; **AT** Studded Leather; **Attack** 80; **Dodge** 80; **Weapons** Long Sword; **Damage** 55
AGI: 6 **DEX**: 7 **CON**: 7 **STR**: 7 **PER**: 6 **INT**: 6 **WIL**: 5 **POW**: 5
Abilities: Athleticism 5 (15), Ride 30, Swim 5 (15), Jump 0 (10), Climb 0 (10), Style 15, Intimidate 5, Leadership 10, Notice 35, Search 25, Track 15, Composure 5, Feats of Strength 20, Resist Pain 5.
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 30, PsR 30.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Middle Class / Lower Class: Athleticism +15, Ride +10, Swim +10, Notice +15, Slight of Hand +10, Persuasion +10, History (local) +10.

Bourgeois: Ride +10, Swim +10, Persuasion +15, Style +10, History (local) +10, Appraisal +15, Dance +10.

Nobility /High Nobility: Ride +10, Style +10, Leadership +20, Persuasion +10, History (local) +10, Dance +10, Art/Music +10.



A Nobleman of the Court

Table 1: Abel

Value	Social class	Initial Equipment
1-10	Low-Class	The clothes on your back, a little food, a few possessions of little value or some weapon of little quality. 5 CC.
11-60	Middle-Class	Some stylish clothes, rations for something more than a week, complete traveling equipment or some kind of weapon and light armor. 1 GC.
61-90	Bourgeois	A mount, varied outfits of several clothes, rations of quality for more than one week, a complete trip's worth of equipment that can include arms and a light armor. 20 GC.
91-100	Nobility	Purebred or equivalent mount, a large amount of varied clothes of quality, excellent rations for more than a week, all kinds of traveling equipment, including a weapon and light or medium armor. 150 GC.
Priv.(2)	*High nobility*	*Has virtual access to almost anything that can be found in on the market; several mounts (including purebloods or warhorses), all kinds of quality clothes, access to varied equipment from any part of the world and any kind of weapon or armor (some of them can even be +5 masterwork). 1,000 GC.*

Illustrated by Salvador Espin

ILMORA

Capital: Hausser.
Population: 1,100,000+
Main Ethnic Groups: Aion (51%), Asher (45%), Celsus (2%), Zinner (1%)
Government: Republic (Imperial Principality)
Languages: Latin (Own dialect called "Cultured Language")
Religion: Christianity
Technology: 5
Denomym: Ilmorense
Flag: A white olive tree on a blue and gray bottom
Masculine Names: Alexander, Ambrose, Andreas, Coriander, Damian, Demetrius, Dorian, Hector, Karsten, Leander, Marlas, Morpheus, Nicodemus, Plato, Sirius, Thadeus, Tom, Zander, Zenon.
Feminine Names: Agnes, Alannis, Anemone, Calista, Cassandra, Cerelia, Danae, Delia, Erimentha, Iliana, Korene, Larissa, Maida, Melaney, Nerina, Nysa, Paris, Sophia, Tasha, Zoe.
Last Names: Anastasia, Baptiste, Chloe, Cornelius, Cynthia, Diodorus, Diotrephes, Dorcas, Eneas, Helen, Jasper, Lydia, Otis, Penelope, Polyxena, Sophronia, Teophilus, Timotheus.

The small principality of Ilmora is the cultural capital of the Empire, and without a doubt one of the greater bastions of knowledge and wisdom in its purest state.

Although the area that it occupies is not very large and the climate tends to be cool the entire year, it is a fertile land in which its inhabitants do not benefit from it as much ad they could. Ilmora has no large mountain ranges, but everything in the land is sprinkled with hills and smaller mountains. It has a varied wildlife selection and the rural areas are characterized as being home for numerous wild animals.

The main source of income for Ilmora is in its commercial art pieces, literature and essays, as much scientific as philosophical. Its cities are famous for their great schools of scribes, whose books are usually sold at exorbitant prices. It also receives important patronages and exterior donations, mainly from Abel and Gabriel.

From the beginning of its inception Ilmora has never had princes because the Emperors themselves decided to keep the governmental system of the region intact, which has always been very appropriate for their people. The nation finds itself ruled by The Enlightened Order, a council of twelve great scholars and thinkers, who are chosen amongst the people of greatest renown or prestige. Only those that know how to read and write have the right to vote, although generally that includes most of the population of Ilmora. The elected members of The Enlightened Order keep their positions for their whole life, except for death or express resignation.

Ilmora only has two important cities, which represent the true heart of the principality, while many less significant towns and villages extend along of the rest of the small land.

Ilmora is also characterized for being the only principality that refuses to raise its own army to defend its borders (although it does have guards in its cities), and are even reluctant to allow the Lord of War's troops to establish themselves within its borders. Even so; they're confident that Abel or Dalaborn will offer any military support they need if it comes to that.

Ilmora maintains very good relations with other principalities of the Empire, and its unconditional support in the political openings that the young girl Elisabetta is carrying out. Nevertheless, they also maintain close relationships with Gabriel, because the principality on the Coast of Commerce wishes to reap all the possible benefits from the cultural wealth of the Ilmorenses.

Culture and Society

The society of Ilmora values culture, art and philosophy above all, aspects that have become a fundamental element in the daily life of its inhabitants with the passing of years. The majority of its populace are people that are cultured and educated with high artistic values. The government promotes study and knowledge, creating free schools and incentives with scholarships to those that send their children there. Even the villages, that do not remotely have access to the same opportunities as the cities, have some type of professor imparting classes paid for by the principality's coffers. They accept religion as another aspect of a person, necessary for a well-rounded individual, but without ever participating in blind fanaticisms. Most Ilmorenses believe that all men comprise something larger than the individual and that that "something" may be probably God.

Ilmora is a nation very open to other cultures, although traditionally its people tend to look down on weapons and those who carry them, since they consider them an unnecessary anachronism at the doors of the new millennium. On the other hand, any "civilized" person will be quickly welcomed.

Although the social structure is similar to the other territories of the Empire, nobility is scarce in the principality and the bourgeoisie power doesn't go as far as it does in other lands.

Without a doubt, it is the nation with greatest amount of professors, scientists and artists of all of Gaïa. There are also a considerable percentage of students coming from all parts of the continent, whose wealthy parents send them to the universities of Ilmora to get a good education.

Regarding the Supernatural

The conception of the supernatural and the "inexplicable" is one of the few subjects that has the people of Ilmora divided. Normally, like most of the Empire, its inhabitants consider magic, psychic matrices or the abilities of Dominion pure rubbish, make-believe stories for children without any place in the rational world. On the other hand, increasing groups of thinkers, scholars and philosophers have begun to affirm that all these supernatural forces are real and comprise an important part of our world, being that they can be studied and catalogued like any other science. They have reached the conclusion that they are not "malignant" in and of themselves, but as what happens with all power, it is easily corrupted by those who possess it, so it is necessary to be cautious around them.

Consequently, it is possible that most people show an initial rejection towards the supernatural, but more due to their shock and surprise than to their fear. Nevertheless, if the consequences that they bear are not really negative ones, it is possible that they may easily find acceptance soon.

The History of Ilmora

What is known as Ilmora today are the remains of a nation that was formed by a set of great independent city-states in ancient times. After countless battles for power and massacres between the settlers, its culture began to bloom in a specific way and the principality reached a certain feeling of general unity. Shortly after, in the years of Solomon's splendor, the cities were annexed to the empire by force, although after the fall of its conquerors they quickly recovered their independence. It was then they made contact with several nonhuman ethnic groups, from whom they acquired great cultural advances that added to those they already had. With the arrival of the Messiah, they broke their links with other races and the cities focused mainly on study and philosophy.

During the era of the Holy Kingdoms the area became renown for its large libraries, a historical inheritance, and a great number of scholars settled in the land. Two centuries later, when the War of God exploded, the territories surrendered to the armies of Judas without resistance, in hopes that instead of destroying their cities, they would take them as a launching point to continue their offensive against the rest of the world. Although great battles were fought to liberate the Holy Kingdoms, the large cities that had no walls or protections saw no real conflict, so when the smoke cleared, Ilmora's two most important cities, Hausser and Eustace, remained relatively intact.

In the years of the postwar period a considerable number of refugees approached both large cities, but since neither of them had their own armies to protect themselves, they became highly vulnerable targets. The assaults came frequently and, ironically, both suffered much more damage during the postwar period than during the War of God itself. Hausser, which until then had been governed by scholars, ended up being controlled by various conquerors that usurped the power and fought amongst themselves to keep it. Fortunately for its citizens, Zhorne Giovanni arrived at the



Ilmorenses of ethnic group aion

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li


Goldar
Forest of Wulfgar
Cave of The Murmurs
Mürenheim Mountain Range
Sleepy Lake
Hermagor
†Tel´Haroth
†Port Leena
Plateau of Argadas
Inner Valleys
Dalaborn
†Komerfest
†Nürern
†Billkenfest
Komerlëigh Plains
†Pernov
Sea of Salt
†Eron
Taranov
Plain of a Thousand Thunderclaps
Forad Forest
Bretodeau River
†Trivium
†Lenci
Great Lakes
Heverville
Veenhuigen
Inanimate Forest
†Eustace
Swamp of Agamemmon
†La Roche
Ilmora
Helenia
Gabriel
†Calysta
Deep Lake
Galenicos Mountains
Garden of the East
Forest of Zulan
†Hausser
†Farna
†Cathedral of Saint Helena
Arklo
Mountain Range of Tol Jaegren
Lacan
Lands of the Calm
Spring Leap
Terra Umbra
†Conservatory of the Arts
Ree Field
†Fathia
†Tiberias
Neria
Island of Corvinus
†Corvinus
Straits of Ribeau
†Monastery of Salvation
Mountain Range of Eras
Forque River
Ile des Mouttes
†Nameless Island
Vasago
†Port of Eien
Coast of Grief
Sura
†Yirath
Yura
Arias
Tol Rauko
†Tol Rauko
Forest of Avalrane
†Port of Eburah
†Alba
†Adam
Coast of Yearnings
Presta
Kirdan
MAP KEY
Capital
Metropolis
City
Building
Fortress
Path
Road
0 250 500 750 Kilomterers
0 250 500 Miles

territories in the year 228 and restored order. After reinstating to power The Enlightened Order, by popular vote Ilmora joined the Sacred Holy Empire of Abel and became a principality. Originally the land was called Asphasia but, almost a century and a half later, in 374 changed its name in homage to the most important scientist, scholar and philosopher in history, Calandra Ilmora, founder of the first universities. Since then, the last few centuries have been calm and prosperous, attracting countless intellectuals and creating one of the most important enlightened traditions in the entire world.

Always separating itself from conflict, Ilmora did not experience the problems of rebellion like the other principalities did and remained faithful to the spirit of the Empire at all times. Currently, many members of The Enlightened Order have placed their expectations on the youthful promise that is Elisabetta, given that the girl demonstrates a great interest for knowledge and science that few sovereigns have shown previously.

Relevant Geographical Features

Ilmora is a very geographically diverse principality. While its southern areas are made up of ample green prairies, in the north everything is filled with small mountains, hills and wooded areas.

Forest of Zulan: This old forest of cypresses is the largest wooded area in Ilmora. Zulan, a great forest that hugs the eastern border of the principality, is well traveled by merchants coming from Helenia (mainly from Farna). The forest is peppered with small inns that compete to attract traveling customers, using any method at their disposal. Fortunately there are rarely any wild animals wandering around, except for the culasti, a strange variety of serpent whose bite is exceptionally deadly.

Galenics Mountains: The Galenics Mountains, which occupy most of the northern territory of Ilmora, is a rocky area plagued with wild animals and other dangers. Undoubtedly it stays dangerous mainly because it is filled with lions, which is prohibited game by Imperial edict. The place, considered wilderness by a large part of the population, it is not very traveled; so many bandits and robbers make their hideouts there.

Inanimate Forest: The Inanimate Forest, located in the northern part of Ilmora next to the Galenics Mountains, is an immense petrified forest in which there is no sign of life. The thousands of white stone trees that constitute its depth give a cold sensation of emptiness and melancholy that permeates anyone that crosses it. The place is uninhabited and receives very few visitors, because it is considered a site of bad omen. The truth is, when somebody spends a long time there, they begin to have strange dreams in which they hear faint voices in an incomprehensible language. This is all because buried deep in the subsoil lies the ancient dragon Ygoronath and other members of his lineage, forced into a deep hibernation because of the activation of Rah's machine, who are unconsciously communicating their subconscious minds with the visitors.

Swamp of Agamemnon: An impure and fetid swamp that receives its name in memory of the wise man Agamemnon, a powerful master summoner who tried to attract one of the old gods to the world that are known today as the False Idols. Unfortunately for him his ritual was an absolute failure and, instead of reaching at his goal, he devastated miles of fertile land, creating a vortex in reality. Years before, Tol Rauko declared the area an extreme health hazard and closed public access, placing garrisons on the outskirts. Sometimes, there are still mystical alien aberrations that sneak through the vortex, although the same mystical power that summons them also seems to bind them to the swamp. Black Sun has shown a certain interest in the area for some time now, because they think that the sanctuary of Agamemnon possibly still exists and contains certain interesting secrets. Although some groups of scientists have managed to slip by the security of Tol Rauko, all those that have entered have disappeared in unknown incidents. **The Garden of the East:** Long before paper was so widespread as it is today, Ilmora was already known for its great libraries. During the time in which books and manuscripts were still written on parchments, the need for early papers impelled the enlightened ones to create The Garden of the East. It is a small artificial forest, where seeds of various trees and plants were brought from distant eastern lands, and selected specifically because of the quality of their leaves. It has always been a very unique place, since the vegetation is very different from the indigenous type. After a while, the abundant use of new kind of papers ended the usefulness of the garden, and now it is only preserved as a historical reminder of the change of an era. In its interior there is a small "Writing Museum" and a school where they teach the techniques of making paper, as well as the different printing processes. The majority of copyists, printers and ink manufacturers of Hausser have learned at this school.

Places of Interest

Besides its two largest cities, Ilmora is filled with insignificant villages and towns too small to even show on maps. Some of these, mainly in the northern area, near the Galenics Mountains, are very poorly connected, and often miss out on significant events in the world.

The Trivium

(Building, Population 500+)

Not all the scholars enjoy staying in the cities. Some prefer places more secluded to carry out their studies, or simply need a calm atmosphere in which to abandon themselves to meditation. For that reason, almost two centuries ago The Enlightened Order created an institution dedicated to the pillars of knowledge, called the Trivium. They are three large facilities located in the Tymon Mountains, a few miles from Eustace. In the first of them, Liberio, the experts in rhetoric, dialect and grammar are collected. Iterio, the second, is dedicated to scholars of arithmetic, astronomy, music and geometry. Lastly, in Scionis, are those students of philosophy, logic and theology.

Sometimes the Trivium work under contract for princes, important nobles or the Empire itself, but they also handle smaller matters for people that take the time to visit them. If a traveler enters with the intention to join the Trivium, he must respond to three questions formulated by a council of wise men of the institution, which undoubtedly requires the applicant's full knowledge.

After some important wise men and thinkers mysteriously disappeared, the Empire placed a small number of Knights of the Heaven Order there as watchmen and guardians, ordered to protect the Trivium and those within it.

Conservatory of the Arts

(Building, Population 400+)

This imposing marble building, located several miles to the south of Hausser, houses the greatest school of sculpting arts in Gaïa. In their classrooms they impart lessons that include samples from the most classic forms of sculpture to the more advanced pictorial techniques, passing through all styles of music (from chamber to popular). Annually, a large open door exhibition is held, where the most talented students have the opportunity to sell their art pieces to the important visitors who go that day. Currently, several members of the teaching staff are secret members of the Samael organization that have introduced themselves into the conservatory for very different reasons. The most surprising thing is that one of them, a young Sylvain girl called Shirael Ul Del Travius (Illusionist Lv. 4, ♀ Sylvain) going by the name of lady Shirius Trevigne, has just been unexpectedly promoted to the position of director of the conservatory. The disconcerted Shirael, a lover of art that was not trying to call attention, finds herself in a serious predicament, because she fears that she will not be able to hide her true identity for too much longer and yet she does not want to waste this opportunity.

Hausser

(Metropolis, Population 282,000+)

The millenarian Hausser, the City of Towers, is one of the oldest Metropolises in all of Gaïa. Rich and prosperous, it boasts large marble buildings, an infinite amount of temples, museums and a staggering amount of artwork in its streets. Its nickname comes from almost a hundred immense towers that were built within it, in which the wisdom from eras past is compiled and the knowledge of the future is studied. Centuries ago, philosophers and the most privileged nobles raised these immense buildings to fill them with books, works of art and other objects of interest. Ironically, this became a kind of rivalry after a while, since he that had the tallest tower, was consequently considered the wisest individual of the city. Even today many of them continue growing, but after reaching heights of several hundred feet, sometimes it becomes very difficult to go on with the construction without risking serious devastation. Currently, more than half of them grant free access to the public like museums or libraries, although several others are privates and visits are not allowed. It is rumored that many contain relics and banned books, remnants of the armies of Rah or the old Empire of Solomon.

Hausser has three universities of notable size (one of the arts, another of the sciences and one of laws and politics), where prestigious teachers give lessons. There are also several dozens of book copying companies, among which the Epirion Company stands out. Black Sun has a strong presence in the city, because many of the private collectors work for the organization or have important missions regarding ancient works.

Another of the most emblematic buildings of the capital is the Palace of Music. This sumptuous structure of white metal and crystal, visible from across the entire metropolis, is one of Hausser's greatest accomplishments. It holds some of the most important social events of its citizens, such as the Spring Dance and the Art Fair of the Sacred Holy Empire. The performances are huge, choosing only the best companies and the best librettos, for the enjoyment of both the knowledgeable and the amateur alike. Despite the expensive ticket prices, few citizens can claim that they have never attended at least some of them.

The Enlightened Order's headquarters is located in Hausser, who also exert the role of governor and administrator there.

Calista

(Town, Population 3,800+)

Although at first sight the town of Calista seems like another one of the hundreds of small hamlets in Ilmora, in the last few years it has become a true commercial hub in which hundreds of merchants of Abel and Dalaborn gather daily. Because of this prosperity, many retailers are constructing new stores, which have caused the town to double in size in record time. The mayor is a young man named Basil Octavius (Wizard Lv. 3, ♂), an independent wizard who maintains a close relation with The Black Sun organization, giving them freedom to do as they wish in exchange for them supplying him minor magic items from time to time.



Sophia Ilmora, the last descendant of the great wise Calandra

Eustace

(City, Population 91,000+)

Eustace, located in the northern part of the principality, near the border of Dalaborn, is the second most important city in Ilmora and the only one that deserves the title of a great metropolis along with Hausser. Many consider it a smaller version of the capital, but without its immense towers. Although it also possesses enormous libraries, its greatest attraction is The Passage of the Wise Men, a one mile road filled with the statues of the greatest thinkers and philosophers in history. It is said that the city is blessed with a special destiny, and that those that visit it can find their lost inspiration.

The present lord of the city is the great philosopher Nikkos Spyridion (Freelance Lv. 4, ♂), a hardened misogynist that feels a great resentment towards the Empress, which is why he is trying to form an alliance with the Coast of Commerce.

Adventures

In spite of the manifest tranquility of the principality, the ancestral Ilmora hides many adventures. Without saying too much, Hausser and Eustace are true swarms of intrigues, conspiracies and complots; from wise men and their outlandish experiments to supernatural forces hidden from the human eye. Also, the Wissenschaft organization has a solid presence in the principality, since the agents of Lucanor have a special interest in the progress carried out there for years and have already kidnapped more then one scientist.

The Awakening: Caimus Legna (Ranger Lv. 6, ♂) is a well-known mercenary that has been assaulted by strange dreams of a stone forest his whole life. Upset by that notion, he crossed half the world until finding the Inanimate Forest, where he unconsciously synchronized with the subconscious dream mind of the dragon Ygoronath. Compelled by impulse and losing part of his sanity, Caimus became obsessed with awakening the ancient entity, without the slightest concern for the consequences entailed. To achieve his goal, he has to gather a considerable number of supernatural artifacts in the heart of the woods, which is why he has initiated a personal crusade in pursuit of such an objective. Although Caimus is unaware of it, he is actually a Nephilim Ebudan, whose Sue´ Aman is none other than to awaken Ygoronath. Up until now, he has managed to awaken one of the "Younglings", a smaller dragon called Zarachzafir, who has formed a Pact with him deciding to help the small human in returning his father to the world.

It is possible that the characters are part of the group contracted by Caimus to obtain one or several of the artifacts, and that little by little they become aware of the monstrous consequences that their boss' plan is going to bring with it. On the other hand, it could be that they themselves are the target of Caimus' interests (be it directly or through other mercenaries), because they possess one of the mystical artifacts that he needs.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

The Shadow of the Palace: Between the lights of the Palace of Music there is a strange shadow. Sometimes, a mysterious character that people call the Umbra makes an appearance, being reflected in mirrors or moving between the darkness of the surroundings. Some say that he is simply a man, an exceptional tenor called Phaetor Tummler, who suffered a serious accident and was completely disfigured. Others, the more imaginative, believe that it is a dark force that, in some way, is attracted by the performances of the best actors. In spite of the legend, many think that the Umbra is beneficial and it protects the Palace that from the shadows. It is said that he usually remains hidden, although on occasions he cannot avoid intervening, be it to bring a play closer to him or to observe a singer close-up.

Several weeks ago a series of horrible murders began to happen in the Palace, targeting numerous artists. Naturally, rumors started popping up again that the theater is bewitched and that the Umbra is the culprit. Afraid of losing the young debutante Melissa Langrey, his most promising star, one of the musical directors wants to hire a group of bodyguards to make sure that all goes well.

In reality, the assassin is a psychotic Duk´zarist called Asklepios (Shadow Lv. 6, ♂ Duk´zarist), contracted out by a bourgeois who acted in the Palace some time ago and was ridiculed in public for his lack of talent. The man does not know the true nature of Asklepios, but it hardly concerns him as long as he remains brutally effective. At the same time, the true Umbra will try to kidnap Melissa Langrey to protect her, even if he has to temporarily drag her in to The Wake of the Palace, which is populated by a multitude of curious (yet harmless) entities.

Madness and genius: A rich philosopher of Hausser who has spent years trying to break into the world of alchemy is trying to develop a homunculus, an artificial human being, without using magic. His dream is to create life as the legendary wise men of Solomon did long ago, for which he needs a series of writings prohibited by the Church. After studying its whereabouts thoroughly, he believes that he has located them in the enormous library-tower of a nobleman of the city, Stephan Xenos. For that reason, he wants to contract the services of mercenaries that can apprehend the writings and hand them over to him.

To make things more complicated, said writings have also piqued the interest of some Wissenschaft agents, who also wish to steal them for their own. However, what no one knows is that Stephan Xenos himself is an artificial homunculus that has remained active in the area since the destruction of Solomon, adopting various identities. He is a master in the art of alchemy, needless to say he will not willingly disclose his secret to anyone.

Common Characters of Ilmora

Here are a series of the most common inhabitants of Ilmora. The following write-ups have been created without taking Creation Points into account.

Great ilmorense scholar

Class Freelance; **Level** 3
Initiative 60; **LP** 85; **AT** None; **Attack** 5; **Dodge** 0; **Weapons** Unarmed **Combat**; Damage 10
AGI: 5 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 5 **STR:** 5 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 8 **WIL:** 8 **POW:** 6
Abilities: Ride 10, Swim 15, Style 30, Persuasion 60, Notice 25, Search 35, Animals 30, Science 100, Herbal Lore 40, History 90, Medicine 90, Memorize 100, Occult 50.
Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 45, PsR 50.

Ilmorense artist

Class Freelance; **Level** 2
Initiative 60; **LP** 80; **AT** None; **Attack** 10; **Dodge** 0; **Weapons** Unarmed **Combat**; Damage 10
AGI: 5 **DEX:** 8 **CON:** 5 **STR:** 5 **PER:** 8 **INT:** 6 **VOL:** 6 **POW:** 7
Abilities: Swim 15, Style 75, Persuasion 40, Notice 40, Search 30, Art 120, Dance 40, Music 100, Slight of Hand 70.
Resistance: PhR 30, DR 30, VR 30, MR 35, PsR 35.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Middle-Class / Low-Class: Leadership +10, Persuasion +10, Science +10, Herbal Lore +10, History +10, Medicine +10, Memorize +10, Art +10.

Nobility / High nobility: Leadership +10, Persuasion +10, Science +10, History +10, Dance +10, Style +10, Memorize +10, Art / Music +10.

Table 2: Ilmora

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-10	Lower -Class	The clothes on your back, some food and a few possessions without value, among which a diary can be included as a treasure. 5 CC.
11-85	Middle-Class	Some stylish clothes, rations for something more than a week, simple travel equipment and some books. 1 GC.
86-100	Nobility	A mount, several styles of various clothes (among which tunics are generally included), quality rations, complete travel equipment and an ample collection of books. 75 GC.
Priv.	*High nobility*	*Purebred (or equivalent mount), several styles of quality clothes and access to various traveling equipment, including rare books, clocks, glasses or simple machinery. 600 CG.*

HELENIA

Capital: Farna.
Population: 2,100,000+
Main Ethnic Groups: Asher (94%), Sinner (3%), Aion (2%)
Government: Monarchy (Imperial Principality)
Languages: Latin
Religion: Christianity
Technology: 2
Denomym: Helenio
Flag: The effigy of Saint Helena on a field of corn
Masculine Names: Ambrus, Antal, Bence, Demeter, Edvard, Gergely, Gazsi, Henrik, Janos, Konrad, Miksa, Samuel, Szilard, Tibor, Vencel, Vilhelm.
Feminine Names: Agnes, Annuska, Csilla, Edina, Gabriella, Gizella, Ildi, Kamilla, Mara, Panni, Rahel, Sarika, Szilvia, Terezia, Valeria.
Last Names: Abduvaliyev, Bakics, Demko, Guran, Hamori, Hara, Imanci, Kajetan, Kasnar, Maloros, Ordina, Telek, Vasary, Veligan, Wessely, Zavadsky, Zsoldos.

Helenia is a peaceful principality of farmers and agriculturists that has been a haven of peace for centuries. Located east of Abel, Goldar and Gabriel are its neighbors, two of the countries that have claimed their independence from the Sacred Holy Empire.

Most of the principality is made up of vast prairies, mountains of various sizes and one or two forests. Although its bordered by the Inner Sea, its coast is nearly impassable due to the steep mountain ranges and immense cliffs. The climate is warm and pleasant, with lovely sunny days and sufficient rainfall to assure rich vegetation. There are very few wild animals, but strangely enough, many kinds of livestock.

Located between the two greatest economic powers of the world, Abel and Gabriel, and being neighbors to the cultural cradle that is Ilmora, no politician quite understands why Helenia has not prospered commercially in these last few centuries. Its main source of income comes from the export of cereals, cotton and livestock to the neighboring principalities, especially to the Coast of Commerce, that buys more than half of Helenia's annual production. Another one

of its more successful businesses is the breading of horses, since its purebloods are recognized as the best in the world, comparable only to those of Baho. Because of their steep coasts, their marine exports and all commerce by sea is almost nonexistent.

Similar to imperial customs, the nation is governed by a prince, who has absolute control of the government, administration and laws. He meets annually with the union representatives and nobles to discuss the future of the region and impose new laws or modify existing ones. The current prince is Dorjan Kartarbak, a good-natured old man that is beloved in his country. For many foreign governors, Dorjan has always been a pleasant gentleman that likes to mediate conflicts to avoid unnecessary bloodshed.

Helenia possesses a sparse population that finds itself spread throughout many villages. It does not have any important cities, except for its fair capital, the city of Farna. The complete lack of a professional army and the inexistence of fortresses or military bastions make of the principality a militarily weak nation, incapable of protecting itself without the support of the Empire and the Lord of War Tadeus Van Horsman.

Helenia is currently experiencing a moment of crisis. The fragmentation of the Empire, along with its geographical situation, has jeopardized the peace in the principality that its citizens have enjoyed for so long. In the months past, its northern border has undergone a series of lightning invasions by a clan from Goldar that has devastated farms and towns. In addition, due to the enormous economic pressure that Gabriel exerts over its towns, everyone in Helenia generally feels uncomfortable. The people also worry that their prince Dorjan, being elderly, does not have a clear successor.

Culture and Society

If the inhabitants of Helenia are characterized for anything, it is for their good nature and calm demeanors. They are simple people who live peacefully, without worrying too much about anything. They like nature and the rural landscapes, which makes their farms the most important part of their lifestyles. For many sociologists, the true reason why Helenia is not an important mercantile center is precisely because its people think that way. Although generally they are not drawn to crowds, they make an exception with the great fairs, without a doubt their most important festivities. There they can compete with one another and are entertained, only to disperse again until the following year.

The nobility and the high bourgeoisie in Helenia are almost nonexistent and there are hardly any rich landowners exerting any kind of control on their properties. In the principality there's no feudal structure or social inequalities other than those of mere titles. On the other hand, the Church holds enough sway, since the local parish priests are probably the most respected and influential people of their respective communities.

Helenia receives many visitors traveling through its lands, but few tend to settle down. Even so, the hospitality of the Helenios is legendary, and it is said that all doors to the principality are always open for those that need a place to spend the night.

It is also important to mention that exist a large number of solitary nomads who wander freely from one side to the other. These people work some farm needing manual labor temporarily, to only leave again after a while.

The Ilona

The Ilona are undoubtedly the greatest pride of Helenia, legendary imperial purebred mounts, envied and desired by any rider in the world. Fast, strong and gifted with an exceptional intelligence, its fame as the best steeds on the continent is well known.

It is said that the Ilona choose their owners and not vice versa. Although sometimes during its training a trainer may climb on its rump, and once the horse finds the person who it considers deserving, it will not allow any other rider to ever mount it again. In some ways, the animals develop a strange bond with their owners that even allow them to heed their call wherever they may be.

Very few of these magnificent horses exist, and still fewer people are able to train them properly. There are no more than three ranches in the entire principality in which the Ilona can be found. Normally, only a dozen are put on sale every year at the great fair of Farna, and their prices usually reach astronomical numbers.

Every emperor of the Sacred Holy Empire has always had an Ilona mount. Elisabetta herself has several of them, but her favorite is a magnificent mare called Ylliandriana (although she calls her Driny).

Illustrated by Salvador Espin



A caravan crossing the forests of Helenia

Regarding the Supernatural

In many aspects, the people's concept of the unexplainable in Helenia is very similar to the ones of the Abel's, but unlike them, they tend to see the supernatural as something a little "darker and horrific". That is probably due to being little accustomed to confronting magic, psychic abilities and other similar powers. For the Helenios, even to be witness of some of the inhuman feats to which the Knights of the Heaven Order are capable of would be horrifying. Also, the strong influence of the Church has done nothing but reinforce such beliefs, although not quite to the point of zealotry.

If the people of the principality were witness to anything supernatural, they would probably just run for their lives.

The legend of Helena

Helena is the first person who was sanctified by the Church after the War of God. Not only for her actions, it was said that she had powers and abilities that could not be explained as magic, and that were definitely divine gifts. For that reason, in the year 336, a century after the formation of the principality that takes her name, the third Holy Council decided to beatify her.

For many occultists, Helena was the first and most powerful synchronization with the Beryl Khitna Misariel on her new aspect as Mikael (some even speculate that she could have reached the avatar state, although it seems very unlikely). Empowered with incredible gifts, she guided mankind in its time of need until her presence was no longer required.

Nobody knows what happened to her after the unification of the principality on the part of Zhorne, but the most popular belief is that she left in search of some other place where she was needed. According to some myths and legends, she remains alive and will return to man at a time of great need.

The History of Helenia

There are not many chronicles or stories that speak of the region of Helenia. The only thing known for certain is that its western areas belonged to the empire of Solomon, but it is uncertain as to who settled the rest of the principality prior to the War of God. If by chance there were cities or cultures there, they were destroyed by the armies of Judas down to their foundations.

The activation of Rah's machine completely destroyed everything up to the Ages Mountains, sinking enormous masses of land and tens of thousands of people into the Inner Sea. In fact, many of the neighboring islands of the Inner Sea formerly comprised part of the coast of Helenia. After that brutal destruction and while hundreds of thousands of survivors began their pilgrimage to the west in search of refuge in Abel, a tenuous light of hope arose for many of the sick and wounded that were incapable of moving. It was Helena, a mysterious young woman with silver-plated hair who organized the survivors, created towns throughout the entire principality and protected the helpless from all types of danger. For many, she was a messenger of God destined to save mankind in its moment of need.

When Zhorne Giovanni arrived in Helenia in the year 228 ready to establish order, he was pleasantly surprised that the principality was already completely rebuilt. The first Emperor wasted no time in meeting with Helena to offer her the security and shelter of Abel, to which she acceded with pleasure. Nevertheless, she rejected any title of nobility and left shortly after, but not before making sure everything was in good hands. The people, by massive popular vote, decided to call the principality "Helenia" in her memory.

From that moment on, little by little the nation began to develop the behaviors and characteristics that it possesses today, constructing farms and villages all across its borders. The first prince of Helenia was Phavell Penbroke, a man of Zhorne's confidence who served his function as administrator very well. However, after his death without any progeny, the great landowners asked the Emperor to choose somebody from the region to serve as governor. Thus, the Kartarbak family rose to power, where they have remained until now.

In general, Helenia has always avoided any type of armed conflict, and has also never had much pull within imperial politics. In the seventh century, and later in the eighth, the principality of Gabriel asked for permission from the Empire to declare war on Helenia. On both occasions, they argued their situation accusing the neighboring government of committing serious shipment scams. The princes of Helenia, simply, publicly asked forgiveness of Gabriel and paid great sums of money in compensation.

Ironically, both accusations were false.

The present situation of the Empire has posed no problem for Helenia, whose inhabitants unanimously decided to stay in Abel (in spite of the unfruitful attempts by Gabriel to absorb it). However, the initiation of the attacks on its Northern border is causing unexpected and unavoidable damages. Prince Dorjan has made an open request for the support of the Lord of War Tadeus Van Horsman. Tadeus is more concerned about reinforcing the frontiers with the Azur Alliance though, and cannot provide more than a few thousand men to Helenia. In search of a solution to the urgent problem, Abel has begun to hire out several mercenary groups with the imperial coffers, with the objective to protect the villages from the incursions of the Goldar clans.

Relevant Geographical Features

Perhaps the greatest oddity of Helenia is its coast; an immense mountain range causes its coasts to drop off, forming enormous abysses and cliffs. The rest of the principality is made up of prairies and small forests.

Ages Mountain Range: The monstrous Ages Mountain Range is a large mountainous mass that extends along the entire southern coast of Helenia. High and steep, it drops off in the south on a cliff that directly borders the waters of the Inner Sea. The sailors who travel through the area call this high stone wall The Great Wall, because of how massive it appears from the sea. It is thought that the interior of the mountains must contain large veins of some kind of supernatural metal, pure enough to resist the first shock wave of Rah's machine. The cliffs of The Great Wall have dozens of caves and underground grottos, some of which house many supernatural creatures in hibernation.

The Spring Leap: This is the name of a great waterfall several miles in width, located on the northern slope of the Ages Mountain Range. Its behavior is especially unusual, since it does not exist throughout the entire year. Due to the nature of the mountains, the rivers that are born within them are accumulated in a lake located at a high altitude called the Frozen Well. When the thaw arrives with the spring, the lake enlarges until it overflows, creating a wide river that falls from atop the cliffs to form the falls known as the Spring Leap. The distance it falls is really impressive, since it's almost 2,000 feet.

For unfathomable reasons, during the short month that the Spring Leap remains active, the place confers great power to summoners, who enjoy considerable bonuses when executing their invocations of calling, controlling and binding elementals. Of course, those of the water variety are the most benefited.

The Ree Field: There are very few that know the peculiarity of this green field; it's the only place in the principality where the Ilona steeds trot freely and to their heart's content. The herd of the field is exceptionally intelligent and does not allow itself to be cornered under any circumstance, although some hunters have tried to get a few of them in the past.

Deep Lake: This imposing lake is located near the converging borders of Goldar and Gabriel. Its size allows it to hold a vital amount of freshwater fishes, which is why there are several families of fishermen who live off their daily catches. In spite of its apparent normality, Deep Lake hides more than one secret. A large community of water nymphs hid themselves in the depths centuries ago so as to be able to survive the lack of magic. After spending centuries dormant, some of them have begun to wake up and socialize with humans in the last five decades. The Lady of the lake, a powerful water elemental named Lorelei, still slumbers without anybody disturbing her, although there is the possibility that she will not remain in hibernation for much longer.

The Lands of Calm: The name of the great plains that compose almost the entire center of the principality is well deserved one for the peace and quiet that always reigns in them. All over these lands are hundreds of tiny towns, so small that they do not appear on the maps, and an endless number of farms and large family estates.



A peaceful morning in The Lands of Calm

Places of Interest

Except for the capital of Farna, the peaceful and calm Helenia lacks many relevant cities or places.

Farna

(City, Population 38,000+)

The capital of Helenia is also its most important city. Built in the middle of the Lands of Calm, Farna is a colorful place, filled with pleasant and simple buildings of wood and stone that extend further than the eye can see. The surrounding area of the large city is saturated with vast cultivated fields and grasses for the livestock, as if the entire place was an immense farm. It is also the greatest point of commerce of the principality, since it possesses important craftwork-manufacturing guilds.

Farna was born around the great camp that Helena raised in the days after the war. The young girl helped establish hospitals, improvised schools and all kinds of essential buildings. The place received the name Farna, which means "hope". After she left, Zhorne created a considerable garrison under the supervision of Phavell Penbroke, who invested much effort into making the community prosper.

Every year, thousands and thousands of people gather at the annual fair, a very important event where, in addition to having all kinds of spectacles, people compete in a multitude of contests, from cake baking competitions to horse racing. The numerous foreign visitors spend a lot of money on the festivities, making of it a very profitable celebration for the people of Helenia.

The mayor of the city is Crystek Baltik (Ranger Lv. 3, ♂), who resides next to the prince Dorjan Kartarbak (Freelance Lv. 4, ♂) in the mansion of Nusa, the largest building of the principality.

Farna houses a strong presence Samael members, something that none of its citizens realize.

Cathedral of Saint Helena

(Fortress, Population 200+)

Constructed in the year 336 in commemoration of the sanctification of the patron of the principality, this cathedral-fortress is currently the headquarters of the knights of Saint Helena. It is an order of men dedicated to the conservation of peace and harmony throughout the entire principality, willing to face anything that threatens it. The knights maintain a close relationship with the Church although they really do not belong to it, in the same way that they are not officially members of Helenia's army either. People admire them, and they often receive important donations from visitors wishing to see the monastery.

The current leader is Lorant Dikun (Warrior Lv. 8, ♂), whose ability and passion have become legendary in less than a decade. His greatest accomplishment until now has been to place fifth in the last Tao Zan, although Kisidan defeated him with relative ease.

Lenci

(Village, Population 900+)

Lenci is the largest village in the northern part of the principality. Completely normal in appearance, an important military presence has been made patent in the last few months with the arrival of an imperial captain and a small detachment of soldiers. Its objective is none other than to organize the diverse mercenary groups that are hired to protect the borders from the Goldar invasions. For this reason, many companies head to Lenci to submit themselves to various competence tests and get a job with the Empire. The arrival of so many strange characters has significantly increased the activity in town, and now disputes and constant fights constantly erupt. Needless to say the people of Lenci are not very happy with the incidents, despite the fact that the contents of their local coffers have quintupled in just a few months.

Illustrated by Raúl Rosell

Monastery of Salvation
(Building, Population 250+)

This great stone monastery, very near the Eras Mountains, was built by order of Zhorne Giovanni himself in the year 236 when, after speaking with Helena and seeing that she had already done most of the work, offered her the resources of the Empire to assist her reconstructing the region. Since then, the monastery has functioned as a sanatorium, where the sick go to recuperate free of cost. It does not refuse anybody, which is why even tuberculosis victims, asthmatics and other gravely sick are admitted. Prince Dorjan has yielded the management and maintenance of the sanatorium to the knights of Saint Helena in exchange for the promise that it will continue functioning with the same intention that it has up until now, a concession that must be renewed every fifty years.

Apparently, some of the possessions that Helena left behind when she disappeared are kept in the monastery. Tol Rauko has long considered them artifacts with supernatural powers that fall under their jurisdiction, but the knights of Saint Helena completely refuse to hand over their relics.

Fathia
(Village, Population 800+)

To the southwest of Saint Helena the village of Fathia is found, a place better known as the Rainbow Valley due to the miles and miles of flowered fields that surround it. Climbing any hill and looking downwards, the never-ending green prairies become a smooth multicolored wave sprinkled through dozens of wooden cabins. Having in consideration the hundreds of different species of flowers that grow here, this area is one of the largest nature reserves of the Empire. The small village of Fathia has been established around this beautiful place, whose citizens dedicate themselves to the cultivation and sale of flowers or other businesses derived from them. The dry and prepared branches of this region are highly valued as decorative elements, and the perfumes and honey produced here is of the highest quality.

Other Settlements: *Lacan, Arklo.*

Adventures

Normally, Helenia is a calm and peaceful place. Undoubtedly, the main adventure hook for the characters is to work as mercenaries of the Empire in the protection of the northern border. The continuous attacks of the Skuling Clan have forced the Lord of War to offer succulent amounts of gold to protect the villages, or to attack the barbarian camps directly stationed on the edges of Helenia.

A Water Heart: A few months ago, the infantile and blissful water nymph Kari awoke from her slumber in Deep Lake. Initially lacking the courage to leave, she spent some time observing the fishermen of the area until she fell in love with Ervin, a pleasant young man with a charming smile. Thanks to her knowledge of illusionary magic, Kari adopted a human appearance and began to visit him often, until the boy felt just as she did. Afraid to reveal her true nature to him, but at the same time incapable of living a lie, Kari decided to steal a powerful artifact from the bottom of the lake pertaining to the lethargic Lorelei: The Heart of the Sea. With it, she dreams that perhaps one day she will have the opportunity to become human.

Unfortunately, an old Naga called Jezabe has discovered what has happened, while magically scying on the lake from her cave in The Great Wall of the coast. Eager to obtain the prized artifact, she has used a group of Inner Sea pirates, who she has controlled, to kidnap Ervin and force the young nymph to give her The Heart. Kari knows perfectly well that the old Naga will never let them live after giving her the artifact, which is why she will desperately try to find some of the famous mercenaries that visit the principality to ask for their help.

To complicate things, an old and much more powerful nymph than Kari, who directly serves the Lady of the Lake, has discovered what is happening and wishes to recover Lorelei's gem. Thus, she has gathered some Kelpies (watery bloodhounds), to whom she has given the appearance of great white mastiffs, to stop her companion and to return what was stolen at any price.

False Idols: In the last few weeks, a large part of the rural population of the principality is excited and exalted. Rumors are all over the place that a descendant of the mythical Helena has returned to the region and that she is traveling about performing miracles, healing the sick and making the harvests spring up. Rendor Oakenfield is a family man who does not believe in miracles and fears that this "Helena" is only some kind of demon or heretical witch, but his small daughter Sophie, whom he loves more than anything, became quadriplegic because of a rock climbing accident and deep inside he wants to believe in the slightest chance that those miracles could be real. Rendor will contact the characters to ask them to locate the woman who calls herself "Helena", the healer that claims to be the descendent of the Saint, and confirm that the rumors are true. He does not have much money, but he will sell whatever he has to acquire their services.

After much travel through the principality, since Helena is always on the move, the characters will find a woman of middle age wearing white clothes, accompanied by an entire entourage of almost fifty faithful followers. If they follow or observe her, it's not hard to realize that she is nothing more than an imposter that lacks any type of real power or supernatural ability. That Helena does not have bad intentions; she is simply misguided and truly believes in everything she preaches. She has even forgotten her real name. However, strange phenomenons sometimes do happen around her, although not directly caused by the "saint". Obviously, somebody is creating a legendary healer hiding himself behind the identity of the woman. Who can it be? He shouldn't be very far, but out of the followers who accompany the "healer", nobody seems more conspicuous than the others.

Evidently, the rumors of miraculous cures have reached the ears of the ecclesiastical authorities, who are skeptical of the miracles and have sent an inquisitor to analyze whether the new Helena is or not a saint.

Inner Enemy: At some moment in which the characters are near the coast of Helenia, they will discover the remains of a shipwreck, similar in appearance to a boat belonging to the Azur Alliance. If they investigate it, they will discover a detail that attracts their attention. All the bodies have a tattoo with three swords forming a triangle around a stone colored navy blue.

Once inside the principality, near Lenci, where the Empire is recruiting a great number of mercenaries to reinforce its borders, the characters will notice something really peculiar: some warriors wear the same tattoo as the victims of the shipwreck. Is it mere chance or is it that the Azur Alliance is trying to infiltrate its troops into the Empire as the moment for war beckons?

Generic archetypes of Helenia

Here is a write-up for a knight of the Order of Saint Helena. This has been created without taking Creation Points into account.

High Knight of Santa Helena
Class Warrior; **Level** 5
Initiative 80/25; **LP** 170; **AT** Partial Plate; **Attack** 115; **Dodge** 115; **Weapons** Bastard Sword; **Damage** 80/90
AGI: 5 **DEX**: 6 **CON**: 5 **STR**: 5 **PER**: 7 **INT**: 8 **WIL**: 8 **POW**: 6
Abilities: Ride 45, Swim 10, Style 60, Leadership 60, Persuasion 35, Notice 25, Search 10, Feats of Strength 45.
Special: Knight Module
Resistance: PhR 55, DR 55, VR 55, MR 55, PsR 55.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Middle-class / Lower-Class: Athleticism +10, Ride +20, Climb +10, Swim +10, Notice +10, Animals +10, Herbal Lore +10.

Nomad: Athleticism +10, Ride +20, Climb +10, Animals +10, Herbal Lore +20, Track +10.

Nobility: Athleticism +10, Ride +20, Climb +10, Swim +10, Notice +10, Animals +10, Leadership +10.

Table 3: Helenia

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-15	Lower-Class	The clothes on your back, a little food, a few possessions of little value or an instrument for tilling. 2 CC.
16-60	Middle-Class	A pair of stylish clothes, food for a week, a knapsack with various equipment, several instruments for tilling or a sheepdog. 50 SC.
61-80	Nomad	The clothes that you have on, waterproof cape, a mount, a little bit of food, several instruments for tilling, a field knife. 25 SC.
81-100	Nobility	Several styles of clothes, good food for more than a week, a trunk full of various equipment, a small flock or a cart drawn by a horse. 60 GC.

DALABORN

Capital: Eron.

Population: 6,200,000+

Main Ethnic Groups: Asher (73%), Aion (12%), Norne (7%), Celsus (4%), Zinner (3%).

Government: Monarchy (Imperial Principality).

Languages: Latin.

Religion: Christianity.

Technology: 3.

Denomym: Dalense.

Flag: A red flag with two white swords crossed over a fortress.

Masculine Names: Alexei, Andrei, Arkaidiy, Dima, Gavriil, Ion, Ivan, Kazimir, Morslav, Mischa, Pyotr, Sergei, Vasiliy, Yul, Yuri, Zasha.

Feminine Names: Agnessa, Alisa, Anastasiya, Ekaterina, Ivanna, Kira, Marfa, Natasha, Tanya, Uliana, Valeriya, Yeva, Yevdokiya, Zinaida, Zoya.

Last Names: Aparina, Baikov, Baranova, Belotserkovsky, Czartoryksa, Demine, Galiyeva, Gergiev, Ivakina, Katzev, Kursinska, Lutrova, Milyukov, Ortoff, Privalova, Shanin, Tretyak, Zarakova.

Dalaborn receives the nickname of the Sword of the Empire, and many consider it a military state because of the large percentage of soldiers who are part of its population as well as the numerous guards who march through its streets.

The principality covers a vast and diverse territory. In its western part are located the Mountain Range of the Winds, that close off its border with Alberia and Galgados, while in the east there are great plains with sparse forests. The flora is Mediterranean, but with many native species that are unique to the principality. The climate tends to be cold and in the west it is common to have large snowfalls during the winter.

Dalaborn is not a very rich principality and its inhabitants have become accustomed to simple living, taking only what they need. Nevertheless, although their livestock farming, agriculture and industry are not very prosperous, the nation receives great contributions from Abel to finance its armed forces and to make sure that the people living there do not suffer any need. It does not have great goods factories or guild groups either, so the only notable thing about them are their forges and weapons factories, since they take advantage of their greatest natural resource: the iron and steel mines of its mountain ranges.

Although a prince has governed Dalaborn since it was established as a nation, the Lord of War that watches over the heart of the Empire holds the true power there, because not only does he control practically all the armed forces of the principality, but he also has ample judicial prerogatives. Traditionally all the princes of the Vale dynasty, governors of Dalaborn, are also great generals at the service of a Lord of War (often some of them have also obtained that title in the past). The principality also has an enormous number of fortresses pertaining to Tadeus Van Horsman's armies, over which nobody else, not even prince Vale, has power.

The area is full of small cities constructed inside military bastions, called city-fortresses, and in the entire land there is only one great metropolis, its capital Eron.

The principality possesses a powerful army supported by the private troops of many feudal lords. The soldiers of Dalaborn not only receive exceptional training, but they are exceptionally equipped for any contingency, which makes them one of the most effective armed forces in the world. Additionally, located in the principality are also thousands of soldiers of Tadeus Van Horsman, which reinforces the military power of the area even more.

Dalaborn currently breathes a belic atmosphere and its people see possible war fronts everywhere. After several invasions by tribes of Goldar on its eastern borders, prince Vale has reinforced the defenses by placing a great number of armed divisions in the area, soldiers anxious to receive the orders to take the neighboring principality for the Empire once again. They also keep a close watch on the Coast of Commerce and its recent attempts to incite a rebellion against Abel in Helenia. Nevertheless, its greatest enemy is without a doubt Togarini, who they see as the most serious threat against the stability of the Sacred Holy Empire.

Everyone fears that war is on the horizon.

Culture and Society

Dalaborn is a principality that has become accustomed to a difficult life from the beginning. Its inhabitants are not given to luxuries or pompous ostentations, preferring practical and permanent things. Their famous city-fortresses, immense bastions constructed in metal and stone that rise through the entire territory, are a perfect example.

The great majority of its population is made up of farmers and ranchers, but followed very closely by the soldiers. From an early age, young men learn the use of weapons and receive special military training. The male population is forced to serve a year in the army of the principality when turning twenty and, if they wish it, women can also enlist with the same rights and duties as men.

Religion holds an importance for the common people but, as busy as they normally are, they are not given to remarkable conduct in the name of Church. It is one of the few principalities that hinders the freedom of the Inquisition in favor of Tol Rauko, with whom its governors maintain many ties with.

While the bourgeoisie are fairly inexistent in Dalaborn, the military nobility plays a predominant role in society and normally the army ranks are comparable to the noble titles. The principality has a deeply rooted feudal structure, and each one of its regions or city-strength is governed by a nobleman who shows his absolute control within his region. Each one has a small personal army that receives his taxes and, within certain imperial prerogatives, dictates his own law.

The honor duels

The tradition of Dalaborn's nobility grants them the vindication of lost honor through personal combat. In order to keep one of these duels from ending in further revenge plots, a series of limitations must apply to their celebration. First, the offended must explain the offense in a public place and name the one responsible, as well as demand revenge in the form of a duel. The weapons may be cavalry lances or any hand-to-hand weapon that can be acquired. The duels usually stop after being knocked down, although the more serious offenses can end in death. The combats always take place in the aptly named Hills of Honor, on the outskirts of the most important cities. Naturally, nobody is forced to accept a duel, but anyone that refuses to do it will be considered a coward. If the offended is an old man, a boy, a disabled person or a lady, they may name a champion to fight for their honor. This right also applies to the offender.

In time of war, the honor duels are considered illegal and any non-authorized duel is punished with exile.

Regarding the Supernatural

The great majority of the Dalaborn people are prepared for the supernatural in some ways, but that does not mean that they do not fear it or that they openly accept the mystical powers. Centuries ago they were forced to fight for their lives with the infinite beasts that populated their lands hunting men, which is why today many still hold standing grudges over those events. Therefore, people generally believe that the forces of the occult only cause destruction, death and pain to man. The only unexplainable thing which they show a tolerance towards is unusual combat ability, like the Ki Dominions, because on more than one time they have seen them executed by agents of the Empire or the Lord of War. Nevertheless, people do not necessarily see them as divine gifts, but as skills developed through hard work and training.

Even so, whomever makes a grand display of supernatural abilities will possibly be considered a wizard or a demon, and will very likely end up in the hands of Tol Rauko or, with any luck, in the custody of one of the agents of the Lord of War.

The History of Dalaborn

Before of the formation of the Sacred Holy Empire, the entire area of Dalaborn was an amalgam of proud rider clans who lived free and independent. From time to time, the factions fought amongst each other or they found themselves forced to defend against an endless plague of supernatural beasts that teemed through the valleys, but with the arrival of the Murohan, a great Jayan tribe that wanted to settle their lands, it wasn't long before people rallied together against a powerful common enemy. Accustomed to the constant fighting and war, the appearance of the Messiah and later the formation of the Holy Kingdoms unified the territory as a powerful nation equipped with an impressive army. When Judas initiated its offensive, Dalaborn's soldiers were the only army among all mankind's forces that were able to temporarily stop the enemy's advance. Sadly, in spite of their martial mastery and their exceptional training, since they lacked the same supernatural abilities they feared, their soldiers would eventually be overwhelmed. Nevertheless, it was precisely in Dalaborn where Zhorne Giovanni, destined to become the first Emperor, would reunite his broken armies and reroute the offensive that would finally end the War of God.

Governed by the Lord of War Sergei Vale, Dalaborn joined the forces of Abel in 227, and was one of the main supporters in the consolidation of the Sacred Holy Empire years later. In that chaotic time, with thousands of beasts and monstrous creatures destroying everything everywhere, a chain of city-fortresses was built to guarantee the security of the population and to have a line of defense against a possible attack from the north. Fifty years of absolute martial law and the continuous spilling of blood were necessary for a lasting peace, a period during which the nobility stood out because of its military nature.

After two centuries of relative tranquility, in 516 Dalaborn faced one of its greatest catastrophes in history. A long drought ruined most of the harvests, which gave rise to a famine and a strong discontent among the people. The nobles continued levying taxes, in spite of the country folk not being able to pay them in any way. In many cases, physical punishments were put into practice and even some executions. That ended in a revolt so massive that it could not be quelled. In just a few days, several fortresses were either conquered or destroyed, and soon the rebels prepared themselves to charge against the capital. Everything coincided with the second rise of Lannet and Shivat, which is why the Empire, as much as the Lord of War, paid little attention to these events. Prince Arkandy Vale, who was on the shores of Shivat, heard the news of the revolt and was forced to return to his lands as quickly as possible. Also, given the proud nature of the nobles of Dalaborn, he refused to request aid from the Emperor or the Lord of War. Although the peasant army exceeded 100,000 men and the prince's army was barely 30,000 soldiers, the rebellion was squashed. However, Arkandy was impressed by the incredible passion of the rebels and interrogated the leaders of the rebellion, discovering the extreme circumstances that had made them revolt. Without a moment to lose, he acted accordingly and ordered the execution of ten powerful nobles that had brought suffering to the people. Since then, the military nobility consolidated as the supreme rulers of the principality under strict supervision of the Lords of War.

Dalaborn armies supported the rise of Elias Barbados and his later appointment as Sacred Holy Emperor. Having been the Lord of War of their lands, the Dalaborenses felt a certain affinity towards him, aside from the fact that his wife Iliya was a native of the principality. Therefore, during the insurrection caused by the actions of Eljared, Dalaborn not only remained faithful to the Empire, but also supported it militarily.



Dalenses of the ethnic group Asher

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li


Mountain Range of Fallon
Alberia
Forest of Eternal Night
Forest of the Mirror
Mountains of Light
†Sylvania
†Grafthon
Annan
Shea River
Forest of the Whispers
Forest of Forgetfulness
Meyer River
†Faolan
Keith
†Desmont
†Hannelone
Galgados
Forest of the Fog
Forest of Glenda
Sulis River
†The rock circle
Nairn
Gretma
Gray Forest
Valley of the Lake
Forest of Souls
†Belfort
†Herne
†Icarus
Mountain Range of the Winds
Reston
Eamon Forest
†Strong Garrison
†Ospren Valley
Plain of a Thousand Thunderclaps
Antiuin River
Hemingen
†Hécate
Falsten
†Castle Deniesil
Rakvara
†Valley of Adalia
Mountain Range of Zhoria
Sillermay
Dalaborn
†Nikoleva
Plains of Eibron
Shkar
Tzer
†Ogara
Sendel
†Bryanta
Darel
Forest of the Moon
Lake of the Crown
Abel
†Good Rest
Bethar
Balthus Mountains
Ecanus
†Woods of G
Eternal Prairie
†Archangel
†Leazhar
Mountain Range of Tol Jaegren
†Tiberias
Neria
Ree Field
†Monastery of Salvation
Lacan
†Conservatory of the Arts
Carden of the East
†Hausser
Forest of Zulan
Galenicos Mountains
Inanimate Forest
†Eustace
Swamp of Agamemnon
Ilmora
†Calysta
†Trivium
†Eron
Taranov
†Pernov
Plateau of Argadas
†Port Leena
†Falanda
Schild
†Gaïtende Castle
Haufman
†Hildestheim
†Castle of Midnight
†Annar
MAP KEY
Capital
Metropolis
City
Building
Fortress
Path
Road
0 250 500 750 Kilometers
0 250 500 Miles

Nowadays prince Edgar Vale governs the principality, although the one who wields true power over the region is the Lord of War Tadeus Van Horsman. Dalaborn, that keeps its strong military skills sharp, has become a key element to the Empire's safety and stability. Its inhabitants, just as those of Abel, support the Empress; although many of them secretly fear that a little girl will not able to keep the peace. Vale, disciple and unconditional follower of the Lord of War, aspires to be deserving of his teacher's title someday and has sworn to protect Elisabetta with his life if necessary.

Relevant Geographical Features

Dalaborn is a region with great geographical diversity, in which massive mountains as well as great green prairies are gathered. Unfortunately, its northern coast is full of mountain ranges, which prevents the construction of important ports or a stable commerce by sea.

The Mountain Range of the Winds (Eastern area): The legendary Mountain Range of the Winds is, without a doubt, one of the greatest and steepest mountain masses in the entire Old Continent. It extends miles throughout the principalities of Dalaborn and Galgados as a near insurmountable natural barrier. Although perhaps its eastern area is the most accessible, the mountains are still extremely high and steep, which makes it very difficult for them to be settled. Even so, since they contain enormous quantities of iron and black steel, many villages and mines have been built into the side of some mountains, where they extract the valuable metals.

People tell hundreds of shocking stories about the Mountain Range of the Winds and the dark dwellers that lived there in the past. Unfortunately, the reality behind some of these tales is more frightening than the legend. In ancient times, during the Age of Chaos, a large-scale war engulfed the area. Cities, perhaps even entire civilizations, were buried under rubble beside an endless number of monstrous aberrations. Many of these entities were sealed, but not destroyed, in the depths of the mountains; until the agents of Rah freed some of them during the War of God.

Even today, the entrails of the mountain range hide relics of past eras, lost cities with supernatural protections and horrific nameless entities that wait, slumbering, to be set loose in the world once more. Who knows if the excavations in a particular mine will yield dire consequences for mankind too horrible to imagine...

Plains of Eibron: The enormous flatlands of Dalaborn, split in two by Anluin River, are called the plains of Eibron. Except for some small forests, the region is practically level. It is here where the famous city-fortresses of the principality are scattered. In the past, during the days the Empire was founded, terrible battles against beasts and monsters were held, which many villages of the area still remember.

The Anluin River: The Anluin is the only large river that crosses the principality. Its tributaries spring from the eastern part of the Mountain Range of the Winds and flows into the North Sea through the Plateau of Argadas. Because of the coastal mountains, the Anluin has become an important transit route for commercial boats and small military ships.

Mountain Range of Zhoria (Eastern area): Although not so vast and steep as the Mountain Range of the Winds, Zhoria is a mountain mass that extends several miles into the territory of Dalaborn. The great majority of its peaks are so high that they are covered with snow year round. Centuries ago, the area was used as a colony by Solomon during its golden age, and its summits preserve the well hidden resting place of the Lost Logias ruins.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Plateau of Argadas: Located throughout the northern coast, the Plateau of Argadas is a gigantic plateau elevated about 1,300 feet above sea level that partially blocks the entrance to the principality. The raised area is very fertile, filled with fruit trees of all types, as well as a variety of wildlife. The only dangerous animal in the region is an enormous class of lizard called mesargadon that predominantly feeds on fruit, but with a territorial and violent temperament, might attack just about anything. The plateau is bisected by a wide and steep throat, through which the Anluin courses.

The Plain of a Thousand Thunderclaps: This immense plain is sited a few miles to the west of Eron, and is the location of the final battle between the rebels and the armies of prince Arkandy Vale. According to the chroniclers, its name comes from the heavy cavalry that charged the land and pounded it under the helmets of the animals as if the skies had unloaded a thousand thunderclaps on the battlefield. Several monasteries are built on it in memory of the fallen, and many knights visit the place in commemoration of those tragedies. There is a rumor going around amongst the country folk that on some moonless nights, the phantoms of ten executed nobles ride through the plain, looking for revenge on the descendants of those that caused their downfall.



An Imperial Soldier

Places of Interest

Dalaborn has a great collection of city-fortresses and a considerable number of small towns distributed all across its large plains.

Nikoleva

(Town, Population 1,300+)

Located on a slope of the Zhoria Mountains, in the dukedom of Dimah, Nikoleva is a community renown for the quality of its weapons and the master armorers who live there. The town, constructed in the mountains, is usually covered in snow throughout the year and in winter it is very difficult to travel there.

The most renown weapon forges in the whole Empire are located in Nikoleva, because in the last few years they have begun to combine their efforts in making modern arquebuses and matchlock pistols. Their production is still small, especially compared with the crafts of more conventional weapons, but the proximity of the Yellow Valley of Galgados and the sulfur that it contains is keeping its research and development advancing steadily.

Nikoleva is governed by the old baron Kiryl Stefan (Warrior Lv. 5, ♂), veteran war hero who fought beside Elias Barbados and whose only intention is to maintain peace and tranquility in the area. But the duke of Dimah, true lord of the area, has other plans for the master armorers, whom he wants to use to equip his personal army. A group of hooded bandits are the cause of many disturbances as of late and baron Kiryl, nearing his fifties, has to patrol the outskirts of the town with only a handful of men. Of course, the Duke plans to kill the veteran knight using the bandits as an alibi.

Ogara

(Metropolis, Population 232,000+)

The last of the four "Guardian Angels of Abel" is the city-fortress of Ogara, generally known as the Scarlet Fort or the Iron Angel. It receives this unusual nickname for being constructed with garnet metals and vermilions, which in conjunction with its tall gothic constructions, gives it a certain majestic look as well as sinister.

Ogara is possibly the most unbreachable fortification in the Empire and, many believe, the entire world. An old war bastion of Solomon, never has it fallen before any enemy forces. It is the only city in Dalaborn that survived the armies of Rah and also the place from which the counterattack of Zhorne was launched. Its colossal metallic walls over 25 feet high, forged with the principles of Soloman's technomagic, are practically impassable by any means, even supernatural ones.

Currently the city is the main bastion of Tadeus Van Horsman's armies, and almost half of its citizens are troops in his service that pass the day practicing their combat exercises. A long tradition of military nobles make up the leading class in a place where the bourgeoisie has little or no power. The present leader of Ogara is the right hand man of Tadeus, the young general Yuri Olson (Weaponsmaster Lv 6. ♂), an impetuous man but with an unsurpassable talented on the battlefield.

The Scarlet Fort is known to have an intricate and modern sewer system, comparable only to the one in Archangel. This is because it is also an inheritance from the times of Solomon and, in the entrails of the city, remains of the Lost Logias can be found. That's why the agents of the Empress are undergoing secret investigations there, trying to analyze the true power of the remnants.

Pernov

(City, Population 24,000+)

The city-fortress Pernov is the most eastern fortification in the entire principality, which serves as the last line of defense against Goldar's borders. Constructed on an elevated plain and protected behind its great walls, it is a vital stronghold characterized by its frozen climate and the constant snowfalls that whip it all year long.

In the last few months , Pernov has encountered a series of surprise invasions from the Skuling Clan of Goldar, which have not only robbed them of several weapon shipments, but have also devastated the small village of Svat, just a few miles south of Pernov. The death toll has weakened the spirits of many nobles who assure that the "savages", as they call them, used strange trained beasts in their attacks. In order to secure the border, prince Edgar Vale has transferred an armed division to Pernov, but there are some who see this act more as a possible offensive against Goldar than a simple defense measure.

The present marshal of the city is Duchess Illylaya Knobel (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 5, ♀), an intolerant woman who wishes to avoid a war at whatever cost, but who is not willing to witness the massacre of her people either. Illylaya is accustomed to dealing with the supernatural, since she has crossed paths with several mystical entities throughout her life. Currently, she secretly has a romantic relationship with archmage Elliot Golead (Wizard Lv. 8, ♂), who in spite of his hatred for politics, tries to help his loved one in any way he can. Publically, Elliot is but a rich eccentric who lives in the wealthiest part of the city. The Magus Order and the Order of Yehudah have tried to get him to join their ranks for a while now, but for now, the powerful spellcaster has not shown the slightest interest in any of them.

Eron

(Metropolis, Population 493,000+)

Eron is the immense capital of Dalaborn, an impressive city that extends several miles through the Eastern plains of the principality. It began as a small town built at the banks of the Anluin River, but it grew rapidly until becoming a prosperous expansive city. Acknowledging the favorable climate and the growing importance there, in the year 463 prince Sergei Vale transferred the capital to Eron, investing great sums of money to transform it into formidable the metropolis that it is today. Constructed in eight independent sections with walls that reach several levels high, the city is a masterpiece of military engineering that can close off any one of its eight districts to prohibit all types of attacks on the others, and thus imprison the attacker in a mousetrap. Filled with forges, the hundreds of smoke columns that leave the chimneys of the factories can be seen miles away, giving Eron the appearance of a smokey grey mountain encased in metal.

Each one of the city's sections has an enormous castle, governed by a high member of the nobility who administrates and organizes the neighboring districts. Of these two are notable, the formidable Castle of Nowe and the fortress of the Sword King. The first is the home of Tadeus Van Horsman, who divides his time staying here with the one that he pass in Archangel, whereas the second is the official residence of prince Edgar Vale (Paladin Lv. 6, ♂), who is also the city's ruler.

Remarkably, Eron is also one of the few great metropolises that have allowed the Templars of Tol Rauko to construct a conclave inside their walls, who use it as a base of operations in the principality. The members of Samael are uncomfortable with it, but strangely, the Templars pay very little attention to them, practically ignoring them. Why, nobody knows for certain.

Garrison Stronghold

(Fortress, Population 5,000+)

The Garrison Stronghold is the place where the Empire train the Unicorn Wolves, the elite heavy cavalry of Dalaborn, called thus by the metal horn on the heads of their armored mounts. The training here is rigorous and only the best riders and soldiers have the chance to enter. Not one of the Unicorns has been accepted by recommendation; all of them have achieved it on their own merit. People say that the knights' armor repels arrows as if they were mosquitos, and their swords cross the enemy rows like a scythe that harvests the wheat.

Tadeus Van Horsman

Tadeus Van Horsman (Weaponsmaster Lv 7. ♂) has been the most powerful and important Lord of War of this generation. An old bearded imperial referee in the service of Elias, he backed him during the coup d'etat against Lascar Giovanni and later obtained the title that belonged to his lord. During those years, he was admired for his intelligence, political shrewdness and ingenious covert maneuvers, which allowed to maintain absolute control of his dominions without causing unnecessary bloodshed. A loving family man, he had two adopted children: Exodus Van Horsman, who he raised from boy, and Donoban, who was almost an adult when he lent him his family name.

From the arrival of Eljared to her ascension as Supreme Archbishop, Tadeus was always against her due to the dark influence that she had on his old friend. When the Emperor ordered him to attack the territories of the South, Tadeus refused to obey the order and his station was temporarily replaced by Exodus, remaining locked up until the Breach of Heavens. When everything finished, Tadeus quickly recovered the control of his armies and unconditionally supported Elisabetta as the heir of the imperial throne, being the first in recognizing her as Empress.

Despite his old age, Tadeus represents a key piece in the stability of the Empire today, since its military power is the greatest in Gaïa. As personal advisor of Elisabetta, he has an enormous influence on her, and is worried about her refusal to attack Azur, although even he no longer wants to see any more bloodshed. What troubles him most at the moment is the destiny of his children, since both disappeared during the Breach of Heavens and he has no idea where they could be.

The Stronghold is located near the intersection of Alberia and Galgados, very isolated from any population. Wandering around in the neighboring areas is prohibited without the proper authorization, and lost people have the risk of being accused of espionage and being taken prisoner in the castle's cells to await a predictable verdict. The security is extremely tight, and it is rumored that the fort has even had knights of the Heaven Order as guardians. Actually; the Empire is using it for the research and development of several experimental weapons based on the Lost Logias.

Castle Deniesil

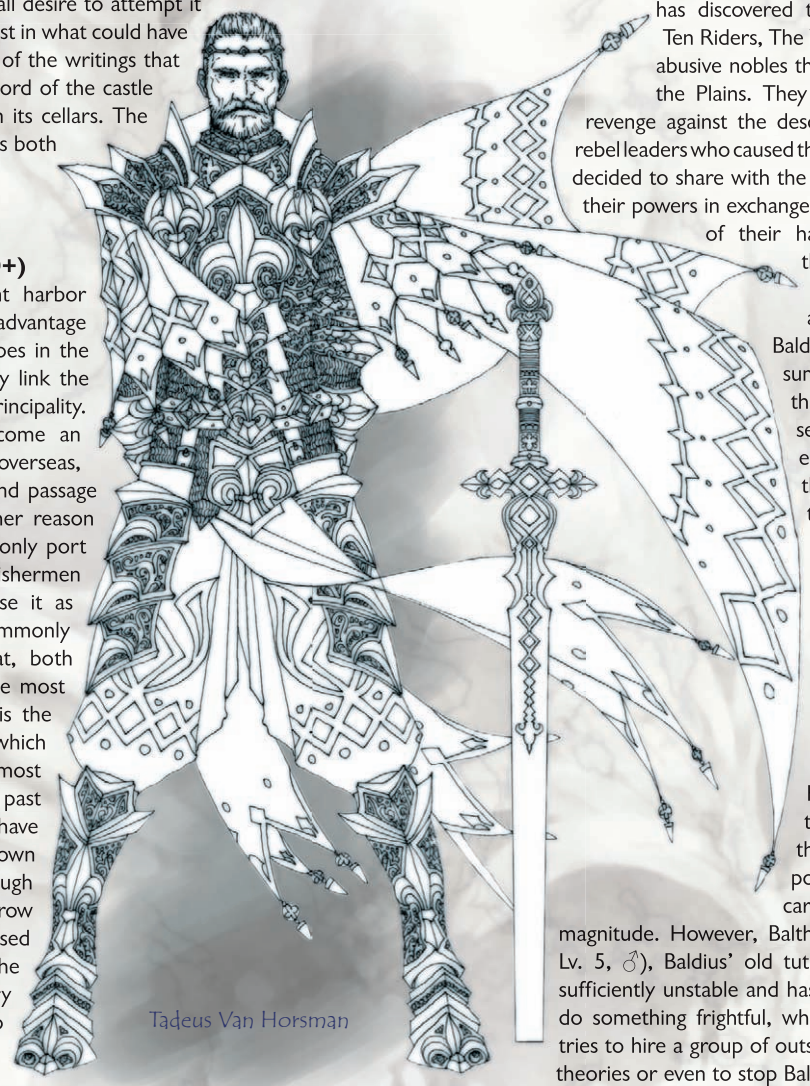
(Fortress, no known inhabitants)

Located on the outskirt of the Mountain Range of Winds, Castle Deniesil is an ancestral fortress that was left vacant in year 972. A strange plague descended on it and all its inhabitants died in a matter of days. After the tragedy, several scientists went to verify the effects of the plague, only to finish infected themselves and then die a few days later. Afraid of spreading the plague, prince Vale quarantined the castle. Since then, Deniesil has remained guarded by a small group of Tol Rauko that keeps monitoring the fortress from a few miles. The Templars have tried to infiltrate inside on one occasion, but that cost them so many lives that they lost all desire to attempt it again. Black Sun has a strong interest in what could have caused this plague, because some of the writings that were recovered indicate that the lord of the castle found something while working in its cellars. The nature of what it might be intrigues both organizations.

Port Leena

(City, Population 36,000+)

Leena is the most important harbor city in Dalaborn, because it takes advantage of the opening that the Anluin does in the Plateau of Argadas to comfortably link the coast with the interior of the principality. For that reason, Leena has become an important commercial nexus overseas, having developed a rich market and passage of transit for the retailers. Another reason of its relevance is that, being the only port near The Barren Icy Lands, most fishermen and retailers of those regions use it as front door to the Empire. They commonly export sealskins and whale meat, both which are considered to be of the most exquisite quality. Possibly, Leena is the only city of the principality in which the bourgeoisie has true power, almost comparable to the nobility. In the past few years some wealthy merchants have worked in the city who settled down artillery companies which, although to a smaller rate than in Kanon, grow quickly. After the conflicts that caused the fragmentation of the Empire, the port is visited by many mercenary groups looking for a patron to serve and sailors of the north lands resting between trips.



Tadeus Van Horsman

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Other Settlements: *Sendel, Sillermay, Rakvara, Taranov, Tzer, Shkar.*

Adventures

Being a habitual scene of conflict, Dalaborn is rooted with stories that can surround the characters in very diverse ways. The struggle between the wealthy noble has numerous hidden conflicts, in which the hiring of free agents is preferable to the use of their own soldiers to avoid possible incriminations. On the other hand, the increasing tension in the east because of the Skuling Clan attacks, gives rise to assaults, surprise invasions and other very intense situations. And of course, don't forget the sleeping nightmares that rest in the entrails of the earth either, since some of them may awaken anytime...

The Rise of the Fallen Ones: Baldius Okad, a powerful necromancer (Wizard Lv. 7, ♂) as crazy as he is brilliant, was contracted by Alystaire Fardelys to produce an event of great magnitude that would cause certain chaos in the heart of Dalaborn. Nevertheless, while he conceived his plans, his already deranged mind sank into the deepest madness and began to dream about a dead world. Exasperated, he fixed his attention onto the countless corpses that rest in The Plain of a Thousand Thunderclaps, at an attempt to raise an undead army to his service. Baldius' powers are unable of raising and controlling that many undead at the moment, but halfway through his investigation, he has discovered the existence of the Ten Riders, The Wake Specters of the abusive nobles that were executed on the Plains. They continue crying out revenge against the descendants of the nine rebel leaders who caused their downfall, and have decided to share with the necromancer part of their powers in exchange for spilling the blood of their hated enemies. With the sacrifice of one of the descendants, an innocent woman, Baldius has been able to summon two Riders into the world, who now search for the other eight. If he completes their revenge, all the Riders will be summoned forth, allowing Baldius to complete his profane ritual and to raise his army of undead against the capital.

The Magus Order has a niggling suspicion of what he's plotting, but they don't think that the necromancer is powerful enough to carry out an act of such magnitude. However, Balthasar Ender (Wizard Lv. 5, ♂), Baldius' old tutor, thinks that he is sufficiently unstable and has enough talent as to do something frightful, which is why the mage tries to hire a group of outside agents to test his theories or even to stop Baldius directly.

The characters could be members of the organization hired by Ender to stop to Baldius, or maybe, without their knowledge, descendants of the rebel leaders who the Ten Riders seek.

Robbed Merchandise: Only a few days ago one of the imperial caravans that carry economic aid to Dalaborn was assaulted and its shipment disappeared. Everything seems to point to some of the clans of Goldar, since strange tracks of the beasts that the Skulling Clan uses in their attacks was found around the zone. Imperial commander Kirill, in charge of the security of the shipment, has no doubts about who's responsible and wants to send a company to exterminate the savages.

Nevertheless, the veteran captain Al Knobel, cousin to Duchess Illylaya, has a different opinion; the clans always have been more interested in arms and merchandise than in money, and the fact that they have entered this far into Dalaborn without being seen is uncharacteristic of them. Of course, Kirill does not want to speak of trivial matters, which is why Knobel will try to hire a group of mercenaries so they can unofficially investigate other possibilities.

In actuality, after those events a group of bandits and assassins who call themselves The Sickle appear. The leader, who lived in Goldar some time ago, acquired one of the beasts of the Skuling Clan, and he's using it to frame the Skuling Clan for their crimes. Anyone can guess that this was not their final attack; they will do it again very soon.

Common Characters of Dalaborn

Here is a write-up that shows the common inhabitants of Dalaborn, whose archetypes stand out among others of the Empire. The following statistics have been created without taking Creation Points into account.

Dalense nobleman

Class Warrior; **Level** 2
Initiative 60/40; **LP** 125; **AT** Complete Leather; **Attack** 80; **Dodge** 90; **Weapons** Long Sword; **Damage** 45
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 6 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 6 **WIL:** 6 **POW:** 7
Abilities: Ride 35, Swim 15 (5), Style 35, Intimidate 15, Leadership 40, Persuasion 35, Notice 25, Search 15, History 15, Appraisal 15, Feats of Strength 25, Dance 15.
Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 40, PsR 40.

Dalense horseman

Class Weaponsmaster; **Level** 3
Initiative 65/20; **LP** 220; **AT** Partial Plate; **Attack** 110; **Dodge** 105/125; **Weapons** Long Sword/Average Shield; **Damage** 60/30
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 8 **STR:** 8 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 15, Ride 80, Swim -5, Jump 20, Climb 15, Intimidate 10, Leadership 20, Notice 35, Search 15, Composure 20, Feats of Strength 45, Resist Pain 20.
Resistance: PhR 50, DR 50, VR 50, MR 40, PsR 40.

Dalense guard

Class Warrior; **Level** 1
Initiative 55/25; **LP** 110; **AT** Studded Leather; **Attack** 80; **Dodge** 80; **Weapons** Long Sword; **Damage** 45
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 7 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 6 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 5, Ride 35, Swim 5 (15), Jump 0 (10), Climb 0 (10), Style 15, Intimidate 5, Leadership 10, Notice 35, Search 25, Track 15, Composure 5, Feats of Strength 20, Resist Pain 5.
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 30, PsR 30.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Middle-Class /Lower-Class: Athleticism +10, Ride +10, Intimidate +10, Notice +10, Composure +10, Feats of Strength +10, History (local) +10, Forging +10.

Nobility High nobility: Athleticism +10, Ride +10, Intimidate +10, Leadership +20, Notice +10, Composure +10, History (local) +10.

Table 4: Dalaborn

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-15	Low-Class	The clothes on your back, a little food, some possessions without value or a weapon of bad quality. 5 CC.
16-80	Middle-Class	Simple clothes and an overcoat, rations for something more than one week, equipment for a complete trip or set of weapons. 75 SC.
81-100	Nobility	A mount, a pair of simple clothes, quality rations, full field equipment in addition to some weapons and average armor (partial plate or scale at the most). 75 GC.
Priv.	*High Nobility*	*A military horse, several simple clothes and of clothes of quality and access to varied equipment, any class of weapons (one of them can even be of quality +5) and armors of any class. 600 GC.*

ALBERIA

Capital: Belfort.
Population: 2,900,000+
Main Ethnic Groups: Celsus (93%), Asher (3%), Zinner (2%), Aion (1%).
Government: Monarchy (Imperial Principality).
Languages: Ailish, Latin.
Religion: Lillium, Christianity.
Technology: 2.
Denomym: Albero.
Flag: An oak tree with two red deer to the sides on a green background.
Masculine Names: Angus, Banagher, Blaine, Boyd, Brynn, Callahan, Calum, Back water, Edan, Fearghus, Gallagher, Kael, Keiran, Monahan, Neil, Sheridan, Zephan.
Feminine Names: Aileen, Mastiff, Bridget, Carlin, Corentine, Edana, Fenella, Kara, Keira, Meghan, Myrna, Phiala, Reagan, Skyla, Tare, Trista, Vevina.
Last Names: Abercrombie, Abernethy, Adair, Athol, Ballard, Barr, Campbell, Conway, Cormac, Dougall, Flaherty, Kavanagh, McFadden, McNamara, Owen, Sullivan.

Alberia is a word from one of the old ailish dialects that means "the kingdom of eternal rains", undoubtedly an appropriate name for one of the oldest nations in the history of the mankind.

The territories that Alberia includes are presently located in the northern part of the Empire, in the well-known zone called the North Peninsula. Almost the entire zone is filled with leafy forests and green mountainsides nourished by constant rains and the great rivers that cross them. Only in its northern strip are there mountain masses, mostly frosted due to the height. The climate throughout the principality tends to be cold and humid all year, and in the rainy season (that normally occurs before summer) there are even great thunderstorms. The principality not only enjoys a great variety of native vegetation, but also it has many lone species of animals that live solely in their forests.

The kingdom of eternal rains maintains a fragile economy based on internal commerce, since their towns tend to trade among themselves, ignoring the other principalities. Many speculate that it must be because its border with Galgados is practically blocked by mountains and Dalaborn has no need for its products, but the truth is that the inhabitants of Alberia simply do not show much interest in opening themselves to new markets. Only on rare occasions do they deal with its neighbors or Kanon, to whom they sometimes sell wood shipments.

The government of the Alberia has certain practices that make it different from other regions of the Empire. It maintains a complex political system in which the prince democratically leads a parliament of twenty rulers elected by the people. Anyone, without any regard to social class, can be chosen, which has created a considerable tension between the nobility and the common people in town, because the aristocracy feels they're not getting what their status deserve.

Although there are hundreds of towns and villages of varying sizes, the large cities are very few, and there is no metropolis located in the entire principality, not even its capital. Their armies are small, but almost all of Alberia is well trained for war. In a threatening situation, the village militias would prove to be as deadly as those of any professional army.

The relationship of the principality with the Sacred Holy Empire is quite outlandish. They do not feel united with it culturally, but the sense of honor of its inhabitants has tied them to Abel by the commitments that the Empire made repeatedly in the past. At the moment Alberia tries to distance from any conflict, mainly because their governors understand the other nations wish to secede from the Empire after the terrible events that occurred during the rule of Eljared. However, even though they are not inclined to support an attack against outside principalities, if the integrity of the Empire were threatened Alberia would not hesitate to rise up in arms no matter who its enemy was.

The current prince of the principality is Aidem Roy, who has just succeeded his father Arthur.

Culture and Society

People of Alberia may seem strange to the other lands of the Empire. Their citizens are separated from the society of Abel, and they have been governing themselves for centuries by their own traditions and customs, inherited by their ancestors. Usually they are conservative by nature, feeling very apprehensive towards altering their activities or making a change in their lifestyle. Like any culture, each town or community has its own rituals and customs, but together they maintain a strong sense of group solidarity. People value honor and keeping their word over everything, and quite often the children inherit the oaths of the parents as part of their legacy. By tradition, there are no reasons to break a promise; those who fail are despised by others.

The majority of the Alberos speak different dialects derived from ailish, the ancestral language of their nation. Many people do not know Latin, and only in Belfort and other some small cities the language of the Empire is commonly used.

The nobility has great power over the area, and small fiefdoms exist throughout the principality. Often, it is because the inhabitants of a village have made an oath of vassalage with their lord and are forced to follow to him by tradition during the rest of their lives. Without rich commerce, the bourgeoisie in the territory are practically nonexistent. On the few occasions in which they trade, wood is the main export for the mainland, while fishing is for the coasts.

Although the official religion of the principality is Christianity, only the big cities actually follow its beliefs. Many towns and villages have their own religious values, based on the spirits and powers of their old myths and legends. Even the rural priests, frequent in the villages, mix the old traditions with Christianity. In Alberia there are also holy men called the Lillium, who are the clerics of the old beliefs and myths. Although they appear less often recently, their voices still have an enormous impact even in the most remote villages, where people believe in them with true devotion.

Unaccustomed to having visitors, the people distrust foreigners, especially if they come from principalities that have broken away from the Empire. Considering their oaths with Abel, the Alberos believe the separatists are individuals that have betrayed their word and, consequently, don't deserve respect.

Someone who deserves notable mention within the culture of Alberia are the bards and poets who travel from one end of the kingdom of eternal rains to the other spinning myths and legends. Unlike other countries, where they are considered no more than mere troubadours to entertain the populace, the bards in Alberia are revered as wise ones, whose visitations are always welcome in the villages. The most respected of them have an enormous influence on people, because the townsfolk treat their advice like the wisdom handed down from the old ones.

The greatest internal problem in Alberia's society has been approaching for decades, with the creation of Alberia's parliament on the part of old prince Arthur. The parliament is the official organization of an older tradition called the Rock Circle, according to which the governor could call on the voices of the town and the nobility to help him make decisions. Now, the town enjoys true democracy in choosing its spokesmen, much to the dislike of the nobility, because to them, it's stealing the power that they've always had.

Regarding the Supernatural

The people of Alberia feed their imaginations on the hundreds of stories, myths and legends that inhabit the forests, which reinforces the belief in supernatural almost every day. Additionally, many of their own practices and traditions have elements of arcane rites as their basis, like drawing symbols indoors to banish the dark spirits or making an offering to the forests. Consequently, people do not regard the supernatural powers as something malignant, but instead prefer to judge them by how they're used. If a wizard used his abilities in a beneficial way, he would not have a bad reputation with his people; it is more probable instead that he would be admired for his powers. In spite of everything, there were too many bad experiences about supernatural spirits and beasts in the past, so is normal for the people to feel an initial rejection before the unknown, because it usually brings more suffering than good.

The Inquisition has a booming presence in the principality (mainly in the cities) but, unlike in other nations, it does not usually act openly; their agents are used to covert operations. If necessary, the Inquisitors will dispatch their targets in secret.



Two Albero explorers

Illustrated by Luis NCT

The Tuan Dalyr

The Tuan Dalyr, an Ailish word that means "those that stayed behind", constitute one of the more deeply-rooted legends between the Alberos. Although for many inhabitants in the cities they seem like an unfounded myth, the Tuan Dalyr really exist. They are the descendants of those men and women who served the beast spirits long ago, having mated with them and evolved into something other than mere humans.

The Tuan Dalyr have the skills and capabilities of animals, and they can alter their bodies slightly to take beastly forms. Many lycanthropy myths originate from them and the close relationship between their powers and the phases of the moon. It is impossible to physically differentiate a Tuan Dalyr from a normal person, although it's said that when they get angry, they cannot keep their eyes from adopting a feral aspect. Contrary to what people think, they cannot infect others with their condition by means of bites or scratches.

The great majority of the Tuan Dalyr were exterminated by the soldiers of Zhorne in The Great Battle of the Forest of the Whispers, and the few survivors had to flee and disperse. Some took refuge in the east, in the frozen steppes of Goldar and Haufman, although most found shelter in the density of the northern forests. There they were hidden for centuries, knowing full well that they were incapable of exacting revenge for themselves; in that time, most of them developed a deep hatred towards mankind.

On several occasions, bands of Tuan Dalyr have attacked small villages, sometimes even wiping out its citizens altogether. This has only reinforced their sinister mythology, and the fear that many people feel towards them. Tuan Dalyr are not complete savages as many believe, but they do not make settlements nor do they spend too much time in one place.

In the year 450, when the presence of the Tuan Dalyr had become very active, a large division of the Inquisition and ecclesiastical soldiers initiated an offensive against them to stop such "demonic beasts". Although its success was marginal, because their quarry knew the forests so well, the beastmen decreased their activities, spacing their attacks.

History of Alberia

Thousands of years ago, the southern forests of Alberia lodged small traveling clans who decided to make that region their home. These people had taken extreme caution not to approach the forests of the north too closely, because soon discovered that they lived with ancient entities alongside other major powers.

The true is that the northern zone was the core of the Sylvain nations, who ignored the small human tribes that they considered unimportant and of no threat to them. That way, over centuries the traveling clans lived in harmony with the elven lords and learned to fear the consequences of their wrath.

Centuries later, the War of God was a heart wrenching crisis for the natives; when people saw the floating fortresses of the Duk´zarist in action, they thought that it was the end of the world. Luckily, the Sylvain managed to halt the advance of their ancestral enemies and the damage to the country was minimized, although their forces were routed and scattered after the activation of Rah's machine.

Without the control of the Sylvain, many malevolent entities of the forests thought that the moment had finally arrived for taking control of the lands, which is why they attacked humanity ravaging everything in their path. For the first time in centuries, the clans were united under the rulership of the Roy family to face the singular threat hanging over them. Although they gained numerous victories, throughout the years humans were forced to retreat towards the forests, deep into the territories that until then they had not dared to tread. When the situation became dire, Zhorne and the armies of the Empire burst in into Alberia, slaying all the supernatural beasts and saving his people from a fate worse than death. Even today, that debt contracted with the first Emperor weighs heavily on the Alberos, who never forget their loyalty to the Empire.

With the support of Abel, the clans were able to secure total control of Alberia, beginning to spread through the country. Some families returned to the old forests from which they had been expelled, while many others remained in the new regions that they had colonized. In this way, in year 265 Alberia would be unified to the Empire like a principality controlled by the Roy family.

The following centuries were benign for the progress of the nation, during which many cities and towns were constructed. However, at the same time there was sufficient friction and problems; first with the Church dogmas, and later between several native nobles that began to fight to increase their land. Fortunately, the rulers of the Roy dynasty always effectively managed to avoid all troubles with intelligent maneuvering or blunt determination.

One of the more unusual events that one can recall occurred in year 899, when a contingent of imperial soldiers that exceeded half a million men mobilized in the principality with no apparent reason. Many nobles were scandalized by similar demonstrations of power, but the armies remained just a month before they marched on, leaving a contingent of Tol Rauko behind that remains in the northern zone of Alberia today.

But the true revolution for the kingdom of eternal rains would occur in just fifty years ago, when greatest of all the lords of Alberia, Arthur Roy, made an official of parliament granting the town the power to choose its own representatives. In response, several nobles rebelled against the prince, although this was subject to all the dissidents by force of arms. Arthur remains alive, but he has abdicated his title to his only son, Aidem, a young idealist who follows his father's dream to construct a better nation for all.

Relevant Geographical Features

Most of Alberia is composed of small scattered woodlan, dozens of rivers, lakes and green meadows. Generally, the sky is always cloudy, which gives all its green places a dark and gray aspect. Many of the forests have not yet been explored or colonized, making people unaware of what lies in its interior, thus generating many myths and legends. Here are some of their more notable forests, but of course not an exhaustive list.

The Forest of the Whispers: The Forest of the Whispers was the place where the great battle between the spirits and the clans of Alberia was triggered. Several thousands of combatants on both sides were killed in this dense vegetation and, as on other great battlefields, the bloodshed left a strong imprint in The Wake. The name of the forest comes from the strange sounds that the wind makes across the leaves, sometimes confused with words.

Old Lillium tradition assures that, whoever tries to cross the forest, something rarely attempted, must carry leaves of mistletoe in their lapel in respect for those who died. That way, the spirits of the fallen ones rest peacefully and safeguard the travelers. But a dark and shadowy part of the forest also exists. The visitors must be extremely careful not to spill blood or to give off any bloody smell inside the forest, because otherwise, the voracious phantoms that still believe they're at war could wake up to consume their meat.

Once every 27 years, the Lillium perform a ritual in the heart of the forest to commemorate the fallen ones and to make sure that their spirits rest peacefully. Really, this rite serves to calm The Wake Specters and prevents them from trying to enter the real world.

The Forest of the Fog: This shady place, located in the western part of the principality, has always generated many legends because of the mist that arises from it. This dense fog never disappears, even when it rains or it is torridly hot, so many think that is caused by ancient spirits who inhabit the interior. Nobody can be certain of whether or not this is truly the home of such beings.

The Forest of Glenda: Also known as the Old Forest, this immense forest of oaks is in the center of Alberia. Within the Lillium tradition, Glenda is the heart of their church and the place where the priest meet annually to celebrate the changing of the seasons. It is full of wolves, great bears and other wild animals, but they rarely attack man except to protect themselves. Glenda is also a powerful supernatural wellspring where magic and mystical energies regenerate at a much greater rate than normal. In the heart of the forest is a clearing in the oak grove, a place strongly tied The Wake. The membrane that separates both worlds is so fragile that, even those who cannot see the supernatural can glimpse the souls that inhabit the forest. In a small lake in the center is also a portal to The Wake that only opens on the night of the new moon or the days of a strong thunderstorm.

Illustrated by Raúl Rosell

The Forest of the Mirror: According to the legend that surrounds this shadowy red wood, the Forest of the Mirror is alive and the sins of its visitors give it nourishment. Those who enter this place will be assaulted by images from their past; memories that they would like to forget. At the same time, the forest can also awaken the treasured moments they've lost. Visitors are sometimes forced to face reflections of themselves, mirrored clones with their abilities and powers. In very rare instances it is possible that, if one of these duplicates assassinated the original person and it was powerful enough, their existential force may allow them to manifest and to leave the forest like a phantasmal double. This strange distortion of reality is caused by a breach in the balance of The Wake and Gaïa, creating the memories and images of the people escaping them. In the heart of the forest, halfway between both worlds, is some sort of slumbering force, known as The Seventh Sleeper, who causes the disruption.

The Gray Forest: This quiet forest of willows and yews is located near Belfort, separating several communities. People do not like to cross it, much less stray from the roads, to avoid the predators and dangers attributed to the deep woods. For years, there have been mysterious disappearances in the zone. The true is that The Gray Forest is home to an enormous nest of Lagor (See the Creature Compendium on page 298 of the Core Book), which hunt both the animals of the area as well as a few unsuspecting human prey, imprisoning them with their psychic abilities.

The Forest of Souls: The Forest of Souls is, without a doubt, one of the most sacred places in all Alberia. According to legend, when the first human settlers established relation with the great spirits, in the center of this forest a pact was forged that would tie the humanity to higher forces eternally. Be it certain or not, the truth is that the lifespan of the trees in this place is completely unnatural. Most of them grow quickly and are completely developed in only a few years but, similarly, they wither and die in a few decades. If we studied the myth, we could consider that all the trees are tied to the lifespan of one person in particular, growing and developing like a reflection of the person's existence.

Naturally, destroying or damaging any tree is prohibited by the tradition, and for many clans that follow the belief of the Lillium, the killing of one tree is the same as committing a murder. The place is not an official sanctuary of the principality, but according to ancient customs all the villages are forced to send a soldier each generation to safeguard the forest.

The Forest of Caitleen: This is a tiny forest of white trees in the northeastern zone of Alberia. In ancient times, it was a Sylvain forest consecrated to the Beryl Rafael, similar in many aspects to the famous White Forest of Kanon. Inside dwells a powerful nature spirit that guards the woods to make sure that nobody damages it. Sometimes, some trees are cut and sold to the neighboring principality to construct Sy´luen, but while their number is limited and it does not threaten the forest, Rafael's guardian does not find it necessary to interfere.

The Forest of Eternal Night: This dense forest of black trees allows no light to penetrate it. Located in the unexplored northern zone of the principality, the few that know or have heard rumors about it avoid it, assuring that it is a well of the darkness and evil that connects to the depths of hell. The Sylvain even avoided it centuries back, thinking that the forest formed when a drop of Zemial's blood was spilled on the land.

But beyond the myths, The Forest of Eternal Night is a really frightening place. Pervaded by darkness, the surrounding area is home to shades, sinister spirits and other shadowy entities. Its center is truly nightmarish; the current of the streams carries blood instead of water, heartwrenching screams are heard everywhere and, when you look into the darkness, it stares back at you. Perhaps, in another sense, the forest is a living entity that resonates pure evil.



One of the guardians of The Forest of Souls



A Master Hunter of Herne

Eamon Forest: This enormous forest of birches, apple trees and yews marks the southern border of the principality, separating it from the enormous expanse of Dalaborn. Eamon is a place frequently traveled, full of forest pathways and small towns. It is also a wonderful hunting preserve, where many young rangers train to perfect their skills. They say that the wild apples that they grow here are the most flavorful in all of Gaïa, and that they even have some healing properties.

The Forest of Forgetfulness: Located in the Eastern region of Alberia, near Grafthon, this huge forest is peaceful and full of beautiful landscapes. With many tiny lakes, plenty of flowers and a refreshing aroma, it is the epitome of untamed beauty. It is said that many people visit it to forget their problems (hence the name), like bards and poets lost in it in search of inspiration.

The Mountains of Light: One of the few elevations that can be found in the principality, the Mountains of the Light is a mountain range that completely surrounds the immense lake where the Shea river born from. Throughout the mountains some small fortifications of Tol Rauko are placed, where several High Templars and their followers dwell. In the past there were the Three Great Steps, majestic tunnels magically excavated through stone, but they collapsed centuries ago and were rendered unusable. Even so, countless grottos and passages between the mountains remain that allow passage to the lake. If somebody gets lost in the forest and seeks refuge in the caves, it is possible to traverse the mountains without being noticed by the Templars. Sylvania, the city of legend, is located in the middle of the great lake.

The Shea River: The Shea is the largest river in Alberia, originating from an extraordinary waterfall in the Mountains of Light and crossing the principality until emptying into the North Sea. Because of the incredible force of its current it is very difficult to cross, if not impossible, and at the moment all attempts to build a bridge have been completely unfruitful. Sometimes, it is necessary to span several miles to cross it.

The Mountain Range of Fallon: In the north, near the coast, the sullen Mountain Range of Fallon rises; a frozen mountain with unflattering forests. Given the inhospitable place it is placed, the area practically goes unexplored and unpopulated. The few that have ventured near the region have found nothing other than more forests covered with snow, wild animals never seen before and, in the worse cases, death.

Places of Interest

With traditional inclinations for citizens to live in small rural populations, Alberia does not have great cities. Most of the towns are so tiny that they do not even appear on maps, like most of the feudal castles.

Belfort

(City, Population 104,000+)

Belfort was built a few years after the War of the Spirits ended. Originally, it was only meant to be an enormous castle where the court resided and the armies of the principality could train, but many families quickly built their homes around the fortress, founding the great city that it has become today.

Although perhaps it is not as rich as the port of Grafthon, Belfort is undeniably the biggest city in the entire principality. The small gray stone houses extend like an anthill over miles and miles of land. The majority of streets are not paved and, because of rain, it's often difficult to travel along the common routes. There are many mansions and no monuments, except for a few churches and towers. The most striking building is unarguably The Cathedral of Saint Iain, a spectacular castle funded by the Church in memory of the priest who managed to separate the Lillium from the great cities. In the basement of the cathedral lays a secret command center of the Inquisition, where many prisoners are interrogated.

The center of Belfort is surrounded by the hills of a great mountain, in whose summit the Castle of Connely is raised, the home of prince Aidem Roy (Paladin Lv. 6, ♂) and of his knights, The Order of the Crucible.

Desmont

(Village, Unpopulated)

Only years ago, the isolated village of Desmont began to prosper when the rich and eccentric merchant Dylan Ferris decided to construct an immense mansion a few miles away in which he invested exorbitant amounts of money. Practically the whole town worked for Ferris in one way or another, and thanks to the enormous revenue, people did not ask too many questions.

Ferris was a high Black Sun member that worked directly for the Delacroix family who was in charge the development of new necromantic weapons using an incomplete copy of The Book of the Dead. The Ferris Mansion was an immense research laboratory like a labyrinth, where several scientists and Black Sun alchemists experimented with unusual creatures and methods to control them. In addition to undead animals, zombies, executioners and other extravagances, its most important project was to create a new category of undead beast, using a few captive Tuan Dalyr as its basis. Unfortunately, something went wrong and the creatures released themselves, completely slaying all the scientists, and later, the citizens of Desmont. It was a true massacre of which there were no survivors.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Using its highest ranked agents, The Black Sun was able to destroy to most of escaped beasts with great difficulty and, thanks to their political influence, the organization blamed the destruction of Desmont unjustly on the Tuan Dalyr. Now the village is deserted, and the mansion, completely quarantined thanks to the containment systems, has been left behind, even though it still swarms with countless experiments.

Sylvania

(Ghost Metropolis, Population unknown)

The great Sylvania, the city that marked the end of fairy tales, is located in the center of the lake in the Mountains of Light. Their history and description are detailed in the chapter: *Tales of Gaïa*.

Grafthon

(City, Population 87,000+)

The port of Grafthon is the predominant mercantile center of the principality thanks to the marine commerce. It does not really matter to Alberia too much, but many boats that cross the North Sea use the port like an obligatory scale. This gray place, constructed on massive stone, has sobriety only comparable with the hard work that their citizens put into their daily work. Because of the strong fog that usually surrounds the coast, numerous lighthouses have been constructed around Grafthon to which people call "the lights of the fairies".

There is a considerable tension in the city between those that follow Christianity, now the majority, and those that maintain the old traditions of the Lillium. Sometimes they have gotten into heated disputes (or some other night beating), but at the moment, it has not been necessary to mourn the loss of lives. Luckily, the imperial edict of Elisabetta on the religion has smoothed this situation.

They say that Grafthon has the greatest number of bards in the entire principality. The Competition of The Voice is an unusual championship held once every three years, in which the best bards in Grafthon tell tales, recite poetry and sing ballads to be named "The Bard of Alberia", undeniably one of the more prestigious titles that anyone in the kingdom of eternal rains can have.

Duke Allen Konagar (Weaponsmaster Lv. 4, ♂) is the lord of the city and the second most powerful nobleman in all Alberia. He maintains a well-known rivalry with Aidem Roy. Allen is married to the sister of the prince, Meriel Roy (Summoner Lv. 6, ♀), who is secretly a Lillium high priestess. Inexplicably, due to a failed summoning attempt Meriel suffers from a split personality; sometimes she is the pleasant young woman she has always been, and other times she behaves in a cruel and bloodthirsty way. Her husband, who love her more than anything in the world, knows nothing of what is happening to her, because when she is with him Meriel is always good natured and charming.

The rock circle

(Building, Unpopulated)

It is a circle of stone and stellar metal monoliths located on a hill a few miles north of Belfort. In the antiquity, it was used by the clan leaders to meet with the Lillium and to make the most appropriate decisions. It was here, when the War of the Spirits began, where the lords chose to the Roy family to rule them. Either traditionally or symbolically, the circle is presently being used so that the parliament and the prince discuss subjects of greater relevance.

Illustrated by Raúl Rosell



The Remains of The Great City of Sylvania

Herne

(Village, Population 500+)

For many, Herne is a village in decline ever since a few decades ago, since its population was almost double what it is today. Even so, people living here have a deserved reputation as the best hunters, trappers, scouts and guides across Alberia. Their talents are very valued by the foreigners, who often hire the services of the community rangers to visit the less well-known and inhospitable places of the kingdom of eternal rains.

Faolan

(Village, Population 300+)

Although at first sight Faolan is no more than another tiny lost village in the forests of Alberia, it is the first and only colony of Tuan Dalyr that exists at the moment. Thirty years ago, its inhabitants decided to settle and, tired of so much death, tried to see if it were possible for them to live like normal humans. Since then they have been hiding their identities, avoiding relations with other towns and people. The inhabitants of Faolan are sullen and they do not appreciate visitors, but if it is possible they always try to maintain a certain level of normality. If they are discovered, they usually kill whoever knows their secret to protect their village.

The leader of the community is Kellan the Wolf (Ranger Lv 6. ♂), the main spokesperson to the idea that it is possible to coexist with man. The problem is that Raghnall (Shadow Lv 5. ♂), his only son, is disgusted by that ideal and wishes that they return to being wild nomads like other tribes Tuan Dalyr. Somehow, he plans to bring about something that forces his to return to their origins, doing away with as many humans as they can.

Other Settlements: *Annan, Keith, Reston, Gretma, Nairn.*

Adventures

The ancient forests of Alberia hide many dangers and stories forgotten with the passage of time. A place so full of stories and legends as the kingdom of eternal rains offers countless possibilities for your game. It is possible that, while the characters are visiting a small village, a group of Tuan Dalyr mounts a bloodthirsty surprise attack, or perhaps in their travels they stumble into an unknown forest , which is much more than it initially seems to be.

The Man Without A Past: A depressed and tired man called Délano (Initially a Warlock Lv. 5 ♂) desperately seeks help. In spite of being relatively young (he looks about thirty), he seems elderly because of his grey hairs and enormous dark circles under his eyes. Apparently, Délano suffers from a strange amnesia and nothing can bring his memories back. This has become an obsession for him; it robs him of sleep and little by little his physical and mental health is eroding. He has heard rumors of a place, The Forest of the Mirror, that allows anyone to remember everything that has been forgotten. Weak and scared, he does not feel capable of making the trip alone, and much less to somewhere that tells so many dark tales. Although Délano is not aware of why, he has great amounts of money and some low powered magic items, and is willing to pay what it takes to anyone who escorts him to the strange place.

The truth is that he is not a real person, but a reflection created years ago by the forest itself. As the group goes deeper and deeper in, Délano will begin recovering his memories along with his healthy appearance. But, simultaneously, he will begin to understand that he is just a phantom of the true Délano which he murdered, which between the tears and laughter will end up driving him violently insane.

False Suspicions: In the last few months someone has been committing a series of macabre murders in the villages, farms and cabins near Faolan. All of the killings seem similarly executed by wild animals of enormous size. Most of inhabitants of the region think that a band of Tuan Dalyr have reappeared, and the characters can be hired as mercenaries to end the problem.

All the clues seem to lead towards Faolan, where the characters will find tracks that seem to indicate that somebody there is capable of animal transformation. Nevertheless, the Tuan Dalyr of the town have nothing to do with the murders, but rather quite the opposite; they're trying to stop them to keep the people from discovering their identity. Actually, several Asagiri, spirits of the hunt (See the Creature Compendium on page 309 of the Core Book), have possessed a large number of maidens on others towns. The reason that so many of them have appeared simultaneously is that the dark side of princess Meriel Roy is releasing spirits for the sheer joy of it.

The Reopening of the Ferris Mansion: Some months after the tragic events occurred in Desmont, Nuala Ferris, sister of the deceased Dylan and, like him, a Black Sun member, has received the order to reopen the laboratory of the mansion. Nuala (Wizard Lv. 6 ♀) does not know what exactly could have caused the incident, but imagines that the enormous complex could still be very dangerous, and does not wish to risk destroying the lab or its equipment. Her plan is simple: she will hire or persuade to some people, ignorant to the situation, so that they enter the mansion unknowingly wearing a supernatural transmitter that allows her to observe what happens. If all goes well, she will follow them inside shortly after with a smaller special command group of Black Sun members, leaving them oblivious to the fact that they are spearheading the exploration.

The supernatural containment systems of the mansion act very particularly; they allow entrance freely, but they do not let any its occupants leave unless the nodes can be deactivated. Therefore, dozens and dozens of zombies and undead experiments wander through various sections of the house, each one of them more dangerous than the last. Of course, the fact that the previous owner and builder was a twisted man and a puzzle lover, will not help the characters efforts.

Common Characters of Alberia

Here are a series of samples of the most common characters in Alberia. The following statistics have been created without taking Creation Points into account.

Alberia Guard

Class Ranger; **Level** 1
Initiative 60/40; **LP** 95; **AT** None; **Attack** 90; **Dodge** 80; **Weapons** Long Sword; **Damage** 55
AGI: 8 **DEX**: 7 **CON**: 6 **STR**: 6 **PER**: 8 **INT**: 6 **WP**: 6 **POW**: 6
Abilities: Altheticism 20, Ride 40, Swim 15, Jump 10, Climb 15, Style 10, Trap Lore 15, Intimidate 10, Leadership 10, Notice 60, Search 40, Track 60, Animals 50, Herbal Lore 20, Medicine 10.
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 35, PsR 30.

Professional Guide

Class Ranger; **Level** 3
Initiative 70/65/40; **LP** 125; **AT** None; **Attack** 100; **Dodge** 100; **Weapons** Short Bow/Short Sword; **Damage** 45 Arrow (Thrust)/45 Short Sword (Cut).
AGI: 8 **DEX**: 7 **CON**: 7 **STR**: 5 **PER**: 8 **INT**: 7 **WIL**: 5 **POW**: 5
Abilities: Athleticism 20, Swim 15, Jump 15, Climb 20, Hide 40, Stealth 50, Trap Lore 60, Poisons 15, Notice 60, Search 60, Track 60, Animals 30, Herbal Lore 30, Medicine 15, Slight of Hand 20.
Special: Hunt Module
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 40, PsR 40.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Lillium bard

Class Freelance ; **Level** 3

Initiative 65; **LP** 85; **AT** None; **Attack** 40; **Dodge** 40; **Weapons** Dagger; **Damage** 40

AGI: 5 **DEX**: 8 **CON**: 5 **STR**: 5 **PER**: 7 **INT**: 7 **WIL**: 7 **POW**: 7

Abilities: Acrobatics 10, Ride 10, Swim 10, Jump 10, Climb 10, Style 60, Persuasion 75, Lock Picking 20, Disguise 30, Hide 20, Theft 15, Stealth 10, Notice 25, Search 15, History 35, Occult 15, Dance 40, Music 130, Slight of Hand 60.

Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 45, PsR 45.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Middle-Class/Lower-Class: Athleticism +10, Climb +10, Notice +10, Track +10, Animals +10, Herbal Lore +10, Stealth +10, Trap Lore +10.

Nobility: Athleticism +10, Climb +10, Notice +10, Music +15, Leadership +15, Persuasion +10, History (local) +10.

Table 5: Alberia

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-10	Low-Class	Some clothes, a simple coat and an old or spent weapon. 3 CC.
11-80	Middle-Class	A set of simple clothes, rations for something more than one week, a full knapsack of various equipment. 80 SC.
81-100	Nobility	Several sets of clothes, quality rations for more than one week, a mount, equipment for a complete trip, a good weapon or a musical instrument of quality. 60 GC.

GALGADOS

Capital: Hecate.

Population: 4,200,000+

Main Ethnic Groups: Asher (89%), Aion (7%), Celsus (3%), to Zínner (1%).

Government: Monarchy (Imperial Principality).

Languages: Latin (with multitude of dialects).

Religion: Christianity.

Technology: 3.

Denomym: Galense.

Flag: White, red and white Tricolor with a hawk in center.

Masculine Names: Andras, Arwel, Braith, Cadell, Cecil, Cedric, Creighton, Dylan, Evan, Grigor, Iago, Morgan, Myrddin, Owain, Rheinallt, Steffan, Trevor, Wallace, Yale.

Feminine Names: Anwen, Ariane, Brynn, Crystin, Dilys, Elain, Gwen, Heledd, Lynn, Megan, Meinir, Morwenna, Rhian, Rhowenn, Seren, Tegan, Wendy.

Last Names: Adams, Austin, Belth, Drink, Bound, Corner, Clement, Devonald, Francis, Hughes, Kendrick, Landeg, Mendus, Nash, Rees, Treharne, Trevor, Boyle, Wynne, Yorath.

The principality of Galgados, also called the Country of Valleys, is a valuable member of the Sacred Holy Empire. The vast area that the principality is composed of finds itself isolated from the rest of the continent by two great practically impenetrable mountain chains, the Mountain Range of the Winds and the one of Zhoria. The only passage between both formations is the Passage of Hecate, which is also the capital of the principality. In its interior, Galgados is filled with dozens of fruitful valleys, separated from each other by plateaus and mountains of little elevation. Whereas the vegetation in the mountainous zone is scarce, that is to say practically nonexistent, the valleys enjoy a full fertile ground of rich meadows and green forests. Unfortunately, the climate is quite adverse for its people, since the strong winds that come from the Torn Coast whip the territory due to its steep geography.

Galgados is a self-sufficient principality, whose valleys, rich in agriculture and breeding, produce enough food to live without worry. Nevertheless, given its great difficulties to export materials from the interior, commerce is poor and it is almost limited to small amounts of iron and steel extracted from the mountains mines. All these minerals usually are purchased by Dalaborn, which uses them to forge weapons.

Because of its complex geographic structure, the territory does not have the need for large armies. Each valley is limited to a few guards for its own security, being that the only great concentration of soldiers in the principality guards the Passage of Hecate. Even so, if a combined army was necessary, the viceroy (a title that is equivalent to the one of prince) could call to arms the soldiers of the valleys, which undoubtedly represent a considerable force.

The governmental system follows the guidelines common to Abel. The viceroy is in the peak of power and periodically meets with the mayors and delegates of the inner valleys.

Despite the apparent calm that reigns, the political situation is presently quite tense after the death of Victor Daorland, the previous viceroy. The problem is that his three children, the young Marina and the twins Karlson and Frederic, dispute the control of Galgados savagely. The situation is arduous since it was never exactly settled which of the two brothers was the successor, and Marina, the eldest daughter, now says that she has the same right to the crown that the Empress Elisabetta had when she claimed the imperial throne.

The Windriders

Without a doubt one of the most showy, and at the same time outlandish, elements of the Galgados culture are the windriders, great devices that allow the people of the valleys to take to the skies using the airflows as if they were sailing on enormous oceans.

In fact, the windriders do not properly fly, but are sent down from high places, lifting themselves by strong winds and gliding down from one place to another. Those that use them are called Riders of the Wind and people see them with admiration. There is not a single boy of the valleys who has not occasionally dreamed of streaking through the sky like them when he grows up, so children are always practicing with their comets, the more popular toy of Galgados. The most expert riders are even able to dominate the airflows and remain aloft in the skies for several hours, thus crossing enormous distances. For many, to let themselves be taken up by the bursts next to the flight of birds is an act of extreme freedom.

These devices are true works of art in the science of aerodynamics, constructed using light metals and resistant silks, treated with various compounds to give them firmness. Most of the people of valleys don't know the origin of these apparatuses or from where the idea of its creation arose. The masterful craftsmen who make them just know that their parents and their grandparents built the same thing that they do since they arrived in the valleys. Some old legend that speaks of "The Windknights" tells how centuries back, even before of the birth of Abel, the old settlers of the valleys taught the first inhabitants of Galgados how to create them.

The windriders have many uses, from taking parcels to the post office and messages from one place to the other, to commerce on a small scale. In this way, many isolated valleys by mountains can all theoretically communicate with the outside.

Culture and Society

You could say that the society of Galgados, apart from the common traditions of the Empire, is quite varied, since each one of valleys typically has its own customs and uses. These are people who live in a serene and quiet manner, accepting life with a smile and always trying to see the positive side of the things... even when things seem to go wrong. Accustomed to the rural environment, the social structure of Galgados doesn't see significant differences from the bourgeoisie, the clergy and the common folk. Even the wealthiest businessmen of the region are only people privileged by money, and do not consider themselves that much different from common citizens. The nobility also tends to be of low lineage, and usually live in the villages and small cities as overseers and mayors. Only the most important of the aristocracy has its own independent castles, although never located too far from the people that they govern.

The religion is considered something whose goal is to bring out the best person inside of everyone, which is why Christianity is seen in a brighter light. The Church does not have a very structured hierarchy of power in the region, and in every valley there are only a few local parish priests who are generally important members of the community in which they live.

Although there are several cities scattered throughout the valleys, the most common are the smaller towns and villages. In fact, there is only one large metropolis in Galgados, its capital Hecate.

Because of its extreme geography, Galgados sees very few visitors, so its people are not accustomed to dealing with foreigners. Even so, they tend to be very hospitable, and are always interested in listening stories from the outside, which they feel very disconnected from.

For nearly a year, the various supporters of the three heirs to the position of viceroy have caused a certain tension in town. Things are still far from confrontational, but the uneasiness continues to rise.

Regarding the Supernatural

Unlike other principalities, which think that things like magic or the supernatural are the stuff of fairy tales, many people in Galgados know that the old myths are real. The cause is the great ruins that citizens find in the old valleys from time to time, or the unexplainable things that some of them witness when they least expect it. Given such developments, the wisemen usually say that the supernatural are "ancient powers" and that the best thing to do is to leave them be.

The people of valley distrust anyone who displays supernatural abilities of any kind, whether magic, psychic or Ki, but they will not automatically regard it as "demonic". In contrast, they will consider what the use is and the consequences, beneficial or harmful, that such powers bring. Anyway, if they realize that someone is a source of problems, they will ask that person or people to leave as soon as they can and get as far away as far as possible.



One of the Adventurers of Galgados

The History of Galgados

Long ago, even before the establishment of the Holy Kingdoms or the coming of the Messiah, all the land that Galgados now covers comprised the western Sylvain nations, the same ones that fought against the Primeval Gods during the Age of Chaos and confined them inside of the Mountain Range of the Winds. Unfortunately, the natural protection of the area did them little good against the floating fortresses of the Duk´zarist when the War of God erupted. After being virtually wiped out and having their cities destroyed, the valleys were repopulated by human refugees who sought the safety and security that the mountains afforded them. Some had lived in the region centuries ago welcomed by the Sylvain, whereas others crossed The Passage of Hecate from the great plains of the continent. These settlers founded hundreds of villages, some of which quickly grew into large communities. Each valley, separated from the others, lived and developed independently for a long period of time, fending off the attacks of thieves and plunderers.

The armies of Abel initiated first contact with the territory in the year 229, leaving a contingent of soldiers in the Passage of Hecate, but preferring not to travel too far into the valleys. It would not be until more than seventy years later, in the year 301, when they finally burst in into Galgados with the intent of annexing it to Abel. By that time some valleys had already formed into small kingdoms, which did not appreciate being forced into a union with an unknown power. However, despite the friction and initial problems, the union of the principality went peacefully after discovering the great advantages that would accrue to them. The greatest and most powerful of the monarchs received the title of viceroy (equivalent to the prince of Galgados), whereas the rest adopted the aristocratic titles of dukes or counts with extensive control over their own territories. Many valleys took years to learn of the existence of the Empire (it is possible that some towns even today, are ignorant of the existence of Abel).

During the following centuries, Galgados peacefully prospered by taking advantage of the benefits that the Empire granted them in legal, economic and security issues. The viceroy moved the capital to the city of Hecate, from where he controlled the various valleys using the fast postal service the Riders of Winds provided to him. The only major incident occurred in the year 678, when the peaceful valley of Adalia took up arms and launched a surprise attack against the neighboring communities. Led by Duke Heinz Herzerg, the assailants, who acted like madmen possessed, advanced for one week devastating everything in their path, without the slightest sign of fatigue or mercy. They were finally defeated by a coalition of the viceroy's armies and the Lord of War (along with a few Templars of Tol Rauko, which became interested in the events for no apparent reason), although not before they destroyed several villages. Since then, things have returned to the normal peace, and those events are reduced to a fleeting nightmare that nobody wishes to remember.

Illustrated by Salvador Espin

The three succesors

The internal conflict between the three heirs for the control of Galgados is definitely turning into a headache for everyone. Since none is willing to compromise, the situation has become really thorny.

Marina Daorland (Freelance Lv. 6, ♀), the eldest of the three, is an attractive woman of twenty-five who firmly believes that she is entitled to the crown despite being woman. She studied at the Great University of Lucrecio, where she proved to possess great talent, especially for historical facts and the occult. Upon returning to Galgados, she became interested in the ruins scattered around the principality, and initiated several archaeological expeditions that caused her serious problems with Tol Rauko. After the death of her father, there were many who were shocked to hear her declare her intention to be the successor, although a large portion of people, who have a special affection towards her energetic personality and her attention to the citizens, supported her. Even without mastering the mystical arts herself, Marina believes that magic and mysticism are not evil, but phenomena that can lead man to a brighter future. Her objective is to take control of as many mystical devices and as much magical knowledge as possible, hopefully acquiring enough economic and political power to persuade the Empress that she is the right choice for the succession of Galgados.

The twins, Frederic and Karlson, are as identical physically as they are different behaviorally. Both have just turned 22 years old and their blond hair and blue eyes give them the appearance of fairy tale princes. Karlson Daorland (Ranger Lv. 5, ♂) is cheerful, young and daring, always taking news with a smile on his lips. Yet he is as stubborn as a mule and believes that his sister is too immature to be a good ruler. Although he shares a very special bond with his twin brother and he thinks that his heart is good, he feels the sinister emotions hidden within Frederic and does not wish to see Him in power. His biggest hobby is to fly skies as a Rider of Winds, in which he is a true expert. Karlson receives the support of a few nobles that consider him their friend and the support of many people of valleys, where he spends many hours traveling from one side to the other.

By contrast, Frederic (Dark Paladin Lv. 5, ♂) is cruel and manipulative. He desires rulership for the simple pleasure of making others obey him and has the support of many powerful nobles, who have either been bribed or threatened. Concerned that this is not enough, Frederic has secretly met with Matthew Gaul, lord of Azur, and has vowed to support the Alliance if he can take succession of Galgados. Still waiting to take control of the principality without using force openly, Fredrick is planning to assassinate his sister Marine and frame his brother Karlson for the murder (whom he does not wish to see dead). Gaul has provided a significant number of supernatural agents and assassins to carry out his plan.

Marina suspected her brother is up to something due to a mysterious tip of mysterious origin, which is why she has strengthened her security by hiring bodyguards with supernatural abilities. Unknown to her, a mysterious third party has already thwarted an assassination attempt before it even began. In truth Marina's "guardian angels" are a small squad of Wissenschaft Crows looking out for the safety of the young heir. Important members of the organization believe that it is a part in Lucanor's master plan to stifle the power of the Alliance and to delay any short-term offensives. In fact it is nothing more than an unusual whim of the Prince of Lucrecio (quite rare), because some time ago he met Marina and found her amusing. He intends to keep her alive in the future, just to see if she is able to accomplish everything that she has set out to do.

Galgados has completely ignored the events that have lead to the fragmentation of the Empire, having sided with Abel at all time. However, the vieroy's death has forced the prince into a dangerous political situation for the succession of the crown, which appears to have no easy solution. At the moment, it remains an internal matter of which of the three potential heirs will finally be occupying their father's seat at the throne, but a few voices have requested the intervention the Empress to solve the crisis. Although so far it hangs undecided, with waning hope, everyone waits for a resolution without being forced to make this decision.

Relevant Geographical Features

Galgados is a land full of rugged mountains and broad valleys crowded together. Many geographers have spent years trying to draw accurate maps of the canyons and the passages, although there are still some discrepancies in their correlation and exact locations. Visitors say that the principality is a labyrinth, where it is very easy to get lost among the hidden pass and tunnels. Its coastline, which connects with the upper area of the Torn Coast, is virtually unworkable, so it has no major ports.

The Mountain Range of Zhoria (western Zone): The Mountain Range of Zhoria serves as a natural border in the southern part of Galgados, separating it from Arlan and Abel. Also knowns as the Mountain Range of the Eternal Snow, its peaks are often covered by ice all year round. There is an old legend that says when the winds are very strong, Zhoria blows snow into the valleys, creating a beautiful spectacle called the "Tears of the Mountain."

The Mountain Range of the Winds (western Zone): The Mountain range of the Winds is placed in the north of Galgados. Extending further and higher than its eastern section, the strip is completely impassable even for the most experienced climbers. It is full of mineral resources, especially iron, which is often extracted to trade with Dalaborn.

The Mountain Range of Winds is also one of the places with the largest number of relics and ruins in all of Gaïa. In several of the mountain peaks Erai Lahan have been raised (which means "stone seal" in the Sylvain tongue). They are massive marble and crystal constructions that enhance and protect the supernatural seals in the depths of rocks, keeping Primeval Gods dormant within them. To awaken any of these entities it is necessary to destroy first the Erai Lahan and then go into the Earth and destroy the seal itself. Tol Rauko has protected the great majority of these constructions, but there are also powerful mystical defenses within the earth.

The Yellow Valley: This place, a small valley of only a few square miles, is named for the large amount of sulfur emanating from several vents throughout the area. It cannot support animal life and it is impossible to remain in the place for an extended period of time, at the risk of being poisoned. The valley has remained empty for centuries holding no relevance for people, but after the discovery of gunpowder, it has begun to attract some merchants interested in bulk powder supplies. The truth is that in the depths of the valley lies a creature of enormous power, a fire elemental lord named Flammergger, who is anchored to some rocks that imprison him inside the earth. The core of its chains is a rock crystal that could fetch a crazy market price, but removing or destroying it would inevitably free the elemental.

The Gorge of Damnnation: An apparently vulgar slope of area located between the valley of Luzt and Bremah, has become a very popular place since the appearance of large veins of gold that attract hundreds of treasure hunters. As the terrain is rugged with very steep slopes (some impassable), the accidents here are tragically common. At the less explored end of the gorge we can find the Throat of the Devil, a crevasse half a mile wide and of immeasurable depth. One false step near that dangerous gorge amounts to a fatal fall. There are also some rumors about enormous birds that fly out to the gorge at night and attack anyone foolish enough to stay out after sunset, but whether it is truth or just ancient legend, has never been proved.

The Caves of Wolfheim: This is an area near the valley of Bern, riddled with small caves. The place is rich in wildlife and plant resources, but very difficult to enter, so it is relatively untouched. The inner caves are an intricate maze nearly impossible to memorize. The dominant lifeform are the wolves; specifically, one class of highly intelligent wolf of supernatural origin, the My´hal, which is able to communicate with each other using some kind of mental link. The wolves do not fear the humans and know that they should never allow entrance to their home, because they understand what man could destroy their lifestyle. From time to time, a wolf cub gets adventurous in the caves and gets lost in the mountains, coming into contact with humans. The lucky ones end up as pets due to their high intelligence, but they always keep their instinctual urge to return home.

Valley of the Lake: This whole valley, near the Mountain Range of the Winds, is entirely flooded, forming an immense tranquil lake. The place is full of clean crystalline water, and is a very beautiful landscape that often attracts visitors. Sometimes, the Riders of the Wind fly over it, enjoying the exceptional view, considered one of most beautiful in all the Empire. Built on the mountainside down to the calm waters of the lake there is small but luxurious mansion, which traditionally acts as a summer residence and a place of retirement for the viceroys of Galgados. It is also common to hold receptions here for some of the most important authorities of the Sacred Holy Empire when they come to visit down in the Valleys.

Places of Interest

Galgados is the principality with the greatest amount of relics and ruins of Sylvain origin worldwide. It is not uncommon for each of its valleys to have at least a few remnants of past times, whether a simple ruin or something much greater.



Hecate, The City on The Ruins

Hecate

(Metropolis, Population 153,000+)

Hecate, located in the passage formed by the Mountain Range of the Winds and The Zhoria Mountains, is the largest and the most important of all the cities in the principality. It became the capital in the year 501, when the viceroy moved there from Ospren. Because it is built on such an unusual site, Hecate has a very peculiar form. The city itself is very narrow but stretches over several miles, taking advantage of both walls of the gorge to build many houses. Architecturally recharged, it is divided into two main areas; the Passage of Stone Houses and the Hanging Houses.

The first is the part of town lodged into the earth between the two walls of the gorge, where the nobles and people with greater financial wealth reside. This is the area of excellent taverns, shops and other relevant places. Luxurious and ostentatious, the homes are extremely high (up to four or five floors), since they always try to make the most of their space.

In contrast, the poor men and the miners live in the Hanging Houses, large buildings of stone and wood, built along the walls of the gorge. Its structure, full of complex steps and bridges, sometimes becomes a labyrinth. In some places, the Hanging Houses directly connect to the mining zones.

Hecate is very busy, as anyone who wants to enter or leave Galgados is forced to pass through it. Although their main source of income is the metal extracted from the hundreds of mines that were built on both sides of the gorge, in recent years has experienced an economic boom, and many merchants have moved in to sell their products to travelers that visit there. By its nature, it is an impenetrable fortress that completely prevents any attack attempted on the principality, as in each one of its entrances, an enormous metal door blocks the passage.

The present lady of the city is Marina Daorland, although one of her two brothers, Karlson, also lives there. Marina resides in the tower of Tarth Lömen, a great Sylvain construction that presides over the entire city. Made with white marble, decorated with dove-shaped gargoyles and capped with a large dome with a beautiful statue of a woman who raises the arms to heaven, the place holds a curious resemblance to The Tower of the Winds.

According to the stories told, Hecate was built on the ancient ruins of a city that sank centuries ago. The strange remains discovered by miners while they excavated paths through the bowels of stone have confirmed this fact.

Illustrated by Raúl Rosell

The Accesses

From the moment that the first mines in Hecate were excavated, there were several entrances to the peripheral area of the inner ruins called The Accesses. In view of the great benefits derived from its exploration, the viceroys of Hecate preferred to keep their existence secret. When the information became public a trade association of explorers, calling themselves The Seekers, was created, people who devoted themselves to exploring the ruins (which they called The Citadel) searching for the legendary treasures of past eras. As compensation, they could keep half of what they found. However, after strange disappearances, the existence of the Citadel could not be hidden from Tol Rauko, which sealed all the entrances and forced the monarch to enact severe laws against continued exploration.

Although nowadays The Seekers do not officially exist, the organization continues to act covertly. Many work on commission, either for wealthy nobles, Black Sun or Marina Daorland herself. Therefore, it's not surprising that the characters could be hired to explore such strange ruins.

Illustrated by Raúl Rosell

The Citadel

(Ghost Metropolis, Population Uknown)

The Citadel is the enormous tower that lays dozens and dozens of miles below the bowels of the earth in The Passage of Hecate. Over the course of centuries the true name or origin of the city was lost, but the vast majority of occultists who have visited it believe it is one of the greatest sunken cities of the Sylvain in the war against the Primeval Gods. In fact, the place is an ancestral Ebudan metropolis that soared the skies thousands of years ago, until the race was expelled from it.

The Citadel, shattered and lodged deep within the Earth, has fractured into several parts, making it impossible to access all of them from a single access. However, the buildings are kept in inexplicably good condition, so visitors may walk through its dark streets as if it were a gigantic labyrinth long forgotten. As if this were not enough, the place is dangerous as well. Formerly, it housed one of the greatest nodes of magic of its time, which became frighteningly twisted, inevitably corrupting its inhabitants. These beings, ancient Ebudan or older beings, perished ages ago, creating a legion of aberrant entities anchored to the gloomy city.

Siebenvolken

(Rural Community, Population 6,000+)

Siebenvolken is a thriving community comprised of seven neighboring valleys. Prosperous and self-sufficient, it is a true haven of peace and harmony. Although subject to the viceroy, in the communities the power is not hold by the nobility, but by a council composed of seven representatives, one from each valley, who must all be at least 60 years old. This odd tradition has two strange justifications; to ensure that its leaders have considerable life experiences and, since they don't have much left in the world, to keep them from getting too greedy. For generations this system has been so effective that nobody's judgment has ever been called into question. When a natural disaster strikes or the harvest is lost, the seven leaders usually order a series of appropriate well suited measures to mitigate the effects of the calamity.

Although they are not militaristic, bandits prefer to avoid Siebenvolken. This is because, for some unknown reason, the locals have a strange and unexplainable talent for fighting, and even young children, simply playing with wooden sticks, would be able to give several well-trained normal guards a beating.



Cornes, one of the quiet villages of Siebenvolken

The Ospren Valley

(City, Population 22,000+)

Once the capital of the principality, Ospren is an important city located in the central valley of Galgados, a majestic place with beautiful buildings of stone and wood, which could be considered the core of commerce with the mainland. Almost all imports or exports pass thought this city. It's said that a considerable number of strange people from other countries use to meet here. This is because Black Sun uses Ospren as a base of operations for its own Seekers and agents.

The current lord of the city is Duke Kelton Smilhaussen (Freelance Lv. 2 ♂), a nice man loved by the villagers for his pleasant demeanor. Kelton openly lends his unconditional support to Frederic Daorland as viceroy, but that's only because secretly Daorland has kidnapped his only daughter and threatens to kill her if he does not aid his ambition for power.

Hannelone

(Village, Population 300+)

Seemingly a simple village of isolated valleys, Hannelone is probably the largest remaining Sylvain community in all of Gaïa. Endowed with great magical skills and a mastery of illusion specifically, its people have lived there for centuries as simple and peaceful valley dwellers, without anyone suspecting that not a single one of them is human. Although it is unusual, sometimes they visit the other villages to keep up appearances, but are always very reserved. They have managed to conceal their identity from Samael and even from the Templars of Tol Rauko, who have made visits to Hannelone in the past without suspecting anything unusual. The community leader is an ancient Sylvain queen named Marionneh Ul Del Liannes (Ilusionist Lv. 8 ♀ Sylvain), a peaceful woman who only wants to live in harmony with others. The only problem that the people of Hannelone have is that some of the younger residents, more impulsive than their elders, want to leave the valley to explore the outside world. That is not to say that some of them have escaped from time to time, causing a considerable worry to their parents. And the fact that Kaithel Ul Del Liannes (Ranger Lv. 3 ♀ Sylvain), the energetic daughter of Marionneh, is one of them, only foretells of more trouble for the people of Hannelone.

Icarus

(Fortress, Population 6,000+)

In a place with a supernatural legacy as high as Galgados, it is only natural that Tol Rauko keeps a strong presence. Icarus is the base of operations for the Templars in the principality, the place from where they control and regularly monitor the safety of the ruins and the artifacts in these lands. This stronghold, equipped with powerful supernatural security, is built in a small central valley, which Tol Rauko paid for an exorbitant amount to the viceroy of Galgados centuries ago. The current lord of the fortress and the one responsible for the principality is Milton Droth (Weaponsmaster Lv. 7 ♂), an elderly man who takes his work very much to heart, knowing the devastating impact of failure.

The Tower of Winds

(Building, Population 100+)

The Tower of Winds is a colossal white marble building just over a mile tall that crowns the Valley of Loid. It's an ancient construction of Sylain origin that managed to remain miraculously intact. Currently the site has become the unofficial headquarters of the Riders of the Wind, who go there to compete, tell tales and to learn to how to soar the skies at the hands of the experts. It's run by a small group of riders, many of them elderly, who are dedicated to training the young ones who travel there. The Tower has a number of places from which you can launch and, due to the strong winds that flow through The Valley of Loid, vast distances can be covered. It is said that from the highest terrace, known as The Door to the Sky, a truly skilled rider can cross all of Galgados in his Windrider.

The Tower of the Winds was formerly a temple of Uriel (the Beryl Aerevah Nul to the Sylvain), The Spirit of Freedom, and the site still inspires many young idealists today.

The Valley of Adalia

(Ghost City, Unpopulated)

Formerly a thriving and populous valley, following the military uprising that took place three centuries earlier, the city and its surroundings have been completely empty. The buildings, decrepit from years of disuse, are crumbling down, which gives the place a truly ghostly appearance. While decades ago a large group of nomads tried to repopulate the city, the Templars of Tol Rauko soon imposed their law there, prohibiting entrance to the valley. Since then very few have dared to venture there, and mysteriously, most have committed suicide or become dangerous psychopathic murderers.

Other Settlements: *Falsten, Hemingen, Rievem, Sölliken, Renroth, Benken.*

Adventures

As one of the principalities with greatest supernatural influence, there are hundreds of possible adventures in which the characters can participate; from seeking lost relics in the valleys, to preventing psychopaths from freeing dormant entities from The Wake that should never be awoken. Furthermore, the unique political situation of Galgados leads to many situations of intense intrigue, in which plots and political power plays will definitely be on the agenda.

The Wind Tournament: Every two years a big tournament is held in which the Riders of the Wind compete to see which one of them rules the skies. Competitors are launched from the highest point on The Tower of the Wind and must cross the Valley and Gorge of Helmos to reach their goal located in the village of Narsh. This competition raises unanimous interest among the people of Galgados, and many travel great distances to witness it at least once in their lives. Gambling is also a common reason to go and perhaps win incredible sums of money.

However, in this year's tournament there has been an unusual development to the surprise of everyone. Frederic Daorland has formally proposed that the three siblings competing for the position of viceroy will contend in the tournament with both of the losers graciously giving up the crown. Naturally, each sibling can choose a representative to compete in his or her name, although Frederic chooses to fly himself. Whether his siblings accept the challenge or not is still unknown but, if they do, safety precautions are definitely going to be necessary for avoiding traps or mishaps. It's not every day that people gamble the crown in a match...

Egg Rain on Hecate: Everyday life in Hecate usually is peaceful and quiet. However, in recent weeks people are very excited; a band of hooligans enjoys climbing the surrounding mountains and, dressed as chickens, fly over the capital in windriders while they bombard its citizens with eggs. The authorities are so busy with all the internal conflicts for the succession of the crown that they have no time to be running around chasing chicken impersonators. They have offered a succulent reward to put a stop to their foolery (without causing any serious injury to them, if possible, because they're just troublemakers).

But the reality is that they are not merely juveniles with too much free time and a bizarre idea of fun, but a plan designed by Frederic Daorland to create unrest and to demoralize the people of Hécate (the majority of which are faithful to Marina), and thus demonstrate his sister's inability to govern. In addition to the chicken gangs, he has also recruited other groups of delinquents involved in petty theft, breaking windows and poisoning pigs and sheep. Once Frederic has proven the incompetence of his sister, he intends to appear in Hecate and "put an end to crime", gaining points and votes in his favor.

Common Characters of Galgados

Here are the statistics of a professional Rider of the Wind. This write-up has been composed without taking Creation Points into account.

Professional Rider of the Wind

Class Ranger; **Level** 2
Initiative 65; **LP** 90; **AT** Padded; **Attack** 60; **Dodge** 65; **Weapons** Dagger; **Damage** 35
AGI: 8 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 5 **STR:** 6 **PER:** 8 **INT:** 6 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 6
Abilities: Acrobatics 20, Ride 20, Swim 25, Jump 10, Climb 15, Style 10, Trap Lore 20, Poisons 15, Notice 40, Search 40, Track 50, Animals 30, Herbal Lore 20, Medicine 15, Slight of Hand 20, Piloting 110.
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 40, PsR 35.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Middle-Class /Low-Class/Nobility: Acrobatics +5, Athleticism +15, Climb +10, Notice +10, Track +10, Animals +10, Herbal Lore +10, Stealth +10.

Table 6: Galgados

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-10	Low-Class	The clothes that you have on your back, a little food, some possessions without value or a weapon of poor quality. 3 CC.
11-80	Middle-Class	A simple set of clothes, rations for something more than one week, complete trip equipment, scaling and survival tools or some other weapon. 50 SC.
81-100	Nobility	Some animal companion, three or four simple sets of clothes, rations for more than one week, trip equipment, scaling and survival tools in which several weapons are included. Even possibly a windrider. 75 CG.

ARLAN

Capital: Karh.
Population: 3.100.000+
Ethnic Groups: Asher (69%), Aion (22%), Vildianos (5%) and Zínner (3%).
Government: Plutocracy (Imperial Principality).
Languages: Latin.
Religion: Christianity.
Technology: 4.
Denomym: Arlon.
Flag: A bell ornamented on a blue bottom sky.
Nombres masculinos: Adrian, Alfred, Arden, Bentley, Blaze, Bradley, Branson, Clark, Dunstan, Edgar, Godwin, Graham, Hudson, Keaton, Norton, Scott, Tucker, Vince, Wolf, Zachary.
Nombres femeninos: Aura, Blossom, Celeste, Coral, Edith, Ellen, Faith, Ivy, Jera, Mildred, Nicole, Scarlet, Vienne, Willow, Wren.
Apellidos: Auvrey, Bellecote, Dunham, Dunmore, Elison, Everlee, Frick, Falken, Galdwinn, Harford, Heridan, Jareth, Laith, Markham, Ormand, Remington, Stanfield, Turner, Tannor, Wilburn.

Arlan, nation made up mainly of merchants and bourgeoises, is an important commercial principality that brings significant benefits to the Empire.

The region, with a pleasant climate all year long, has large green areas, small hills, lush forests and numerous vineyards (the making of delicious wines is one of its most traditional characteristic). Its northern section is slightly more inhospitable, with several smaller uninhabited mountains and marshes.

A rich and prosperous nation, Arlan thrives on the important commercial centers which are its cities and the goods that they produce and transport all over the world. The principality is especially well known for having a wide and prosperous maritime trade, no doubt its main source of income. In fact, its ports are considered the most important in the entire Torn Coast, and thousands of exotic products from the New Continent pass through there every day towards the borders of Gaïa.

Traditionally it is a nation without a prince and instead, the seven richest men and women govern Arlan. Known as The Council, they control the trade and administration of all the cities and ports. The people of the region are very comfortable with their mandate, because it usually benefits the principality.

There are many rich, advanced metropolises throughout Arlan, among which the proudest is its capital, Karh. There are also many farming villages that specialize in supplying basic commodities to the larger cities.

With exception of a well-armed navy, Arlan lacks a robust army. In fact, it is because The Council has always depended on the tight support of the Lords of War and the absolute safety that they provided; the rulers of the principality have traditionally thought that funding a professional army was a waste of money. On the contrary, concerned about the protection of the trade in its cities, they have invested exorbitant amounts of money in having some of the best guards worldwide, resulting in the high security that flows through its streets.

Currently, Arlan is the true jewel of the Empire for the large profits it rakes in for them. The principality and its leaders are striving to extend their control over the maritime trade to increase their own wealth. Now more than ever, The Council supports the Sacred Holy Empire, working to strengthen it and return it to its former glory.

Arlan aspires to become the core of commerce of Abel, but above all, it also wants to keep the enormous power conferred by the presence of the imperial armies in their principality. Their leaders are concerned about the formation of the Azur Alliance and fearfully realize how Remo, its traditional enemy, reinforces and prepares a large armed contingent near the southern border. They know that, if it weren't for the Lord of War Tadeus Van Horsman, they would already be under attack.

Culture and Society

The people of Arlan are characterized by a keen commercial instinct that leads them to engage in risky businesses. Most run good and prosperous companies that make possible, even in the worst cases, to lead a decent life. Typically, they greatly stress the significance money, since it is what allows them to live a luxurious and worry-free lifestyle. Thanks to its proximity to Abel, its inhabitants enjoy a high cultural level and schools are common in their cities. Furthermore, because of its trade with other principalities, Arlan have a grand cultural range and travelers from everywhere tour around its main ports.

While the nobility holds some power, the middle class is truly dominant, as they are the ones who ship and manage almost all the goods in the country. Some years ago The Council ended the feudal structure, paying the few remaining aristocracy high sums for their lands.

Due to the recent commercial boom, the principality has little unemployment, because of the ease in finding a job in this period of expansion. However, unlike in Gabriel, the economic imbalance has not split society into two castes, and the people do not consider the disadvantaged "social garbage".

In recent years, there has been a huge migration of people to the cities from the rural towns, as they seek the easy wealth of which the travelers talk about. If this continues, it may end up being a long-term problem because of the lack of manpower in the farms.

Regarding the Supernatural

For the people of Arlan, the concept of the supernatural is practically identical to the people of Abel; they have some tolerance for the seemingly impossible, as long as it does not exceed common sense. Nevertheless, unfamiliar with the inexplicable, most people think that magic and other supernatural skills are no more than fairy tales without a grain of truth.

The Church, which holds little power in the region, has only a small presence in the principality, and the influence of the Inquisition is greatly reduced.


†Sylvania
†Grafthon
Annan
Shea River
Forest of the Whispers
Forest of Forgetfulness
Sölliken
Meyer River
†Faolan
Keith
†Desmont
†Hannelone
Yellow Valley
Forest of the Fog
Forest of Glenda
Swift River
Nairn
†Rock circle
Gray Forest
Gretma
Rievem
Valley of the Lake
†Tower of the Winds
†Icarus
Forest of the Souls
†Belfort
†Herne
Benken
Valley River
Galgados
Mountain Range of the Winds
Reston
Eamon Forest
†Strong Garrison
Gorge of Damnation
†Ospren Valley
Hemingen
†Hécate
†Castle Deniesil
Falsten
Amlum River
†Siebenvolken
†Valley of Adalia
Dalaborn
†Nikoleva
Black Rock River
Caves of Wolfheim
Mountain Range of Zhoria
Plains of Eibron
Shkar
Renroth
Tzer
†Ogara
Sendel
Marshal Mountains
Forest of the Moon
†Bryanta
Darel
Lake of the Crown
†Good Rest
†Bronwen Lighthouse
†Woods of Gwenlynn
Bethar
Ecanus
Balthus Mountains
Eternal Prairie
†Leazhar
Crack of the Sword
Ennis
†Tower of Babel
†Archangel
Kalmar
†Bhrame
†Londure
Arlan
Abel
Zafir River
Renvyl
†Dylaen
Lonel
Urim
Great Plains
Tharsis
†Karh
Forest of Lacan
Lands of the Storm
†Eytan
Navan
Avalbane Forest
Gwynn River
†Sepher
Hod
Coast of Alamadir
Lhenas Marsh
†Aubrey
†Seifer
†Iborr
†Reindhold
†Aldon
Fields of Terminus
†Iron Finger
Reine
†Well of Rejects
Passage at The End
Quartz Crater
MAP KEY
Capital
Metropolis
City
Building
Fortress
Path
Road
0 250 500 750 Kilomteres
0 250 500 Miles

The Council

The Council of Arlan, the supreme rulers of the principality, is composed of the seven richest and most influential people of the country. Their current members are:

Duke Albert Minster *(Warrior Kv 5, ♂)*: Duke Albert Minster is the current leader of The Council and its representative in the High Senate. This elderly man is characterized by his sharp acumen. It's taken generations to make the Minster family the richest and most influential in all of Arlan, although with some lucky trades, Albert has managed to increase his fortune and personal power even more. He is an old friend of Tadeus Van Horsman, and between the two there are many secret alliances. He is aware of the intrigues of Black Sun and tries to snuff out its influence in the principality, which has make him many enemies and unexpected allies.

Lady Andrea Rotermaiyer *(Freelance Lv 5, ♀)*: Known as the old wolf of Arlan, Andrea is a fierce businesswoman who has increased her family's power since she took over. With Albert Minster as her main rival for the position of council leader, she is willing to do whatever it takes to accumulate power for her grandchildren. Along with important legal business, she controls the underworld of Arlan and trades in slaves brought from the New Continent, which she sells to Kushistan.

Richad Von Burman *(Freelance Lv 3, ♂)*: Richad Von Burman is a chubby merchant who most notably controls the biggest shipping fleet in the world. He specializes in the trade of spices and other exotic goods. He has an instinct for good business, but is blind with the dream of transforming Arlan into a richer principality than Gabriel. Its only apparent weakness is beautiful women, which has caused him to lose his head more than once.

Richard Gibson *(Freelance Lv 6, ♂)*: A cold and calculating man known for his unusual extravagance. People often think that Richard is completely insane, but from time to time he surprises everyone with a brilliant idea that nobody expected. An outlandish businessman who made his own fortune with random strokes of luck and talent, his arrival at the council shocked everyone, but his talent leaves no doubt that he deserves the position.

Michael Haig *(Wizard Lv 5, ♂)*: A nice and good-natured looking old man, who hides more than anyone is aware of. He is the highest Black Sun representative in the principality, and coordinates all the operations directly under the orders of the Steiner family. So far, he has refused to experiment with undead entities, trying to focus the organization's operations towards something less dark.

Countess Shaila Fernova *(Ranger Lv 4, ♀)*: At only seventeen years old, Shaila is youngest of the member of The Council. Her incredible family fortune, inherited after the death of her parents, has elevated her to a position of power that she is not certain she wants. She likes to travel a lot and, although she's unaware of it, Shaila has established a great personal friendship with the Empress, who she met under the identity of Ana Never during one her voyages by sea.

Baron Paul Hurley *(Paladin Lv 4, ♂)*: Young and idealistic, baron Paul Hurley is the representative of one of the largest commercial firms in Arlan. Of impulsive behavior and high ideals, Paul is not a talented businessman because of his good heart. Sometimes he has waste large amounts of his personal fortune to help to the most underprivileged and has founded many orphanages and asylums. If he continues spending money this way, he may soon be forced to retire his position on The Council.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

The History of Arlan

Originally, the area that comprises Arlan today used to be part of Abel, but became an independent principality in the year 284, when Zhorne granted the control of the zone to Duke Ernest Bruningham to focus on rebuilding and restocking. The Duke's work was excellent, so he and his descendants were granted the title of princes of Arlan. Unfortunately, the rule of the Bruningham family only lasted three generations, since in year 327 the last member of the lineage died without any heirs. As a temporary measure and pending the appointment of a new sovereign, the first council of nobles was formed; whose work on the region was so successful the Emperor decided to leave the control to them indefinitely. Henceforth, The Council became the official rulers of the principality.

Arlan took on a special significance during the occupation of the New Continent, since Abel built numerous ports along the coastline to better bridge the two continental masses. It's then when its people would benefit from the infrastructure to consolidate the principality into a major commercial center, always behind Remo, the leading power on the west coast at the time.

However, when Remo saw its trading position on the New Continent jeopardized, it used various political tricks to thrice declare war on Arlan for the sole purpose of undermining the economic power of its rival. Following imperial law, the Lord of War supervised all conflicts and, despite Remo always emerging victorious, it could not curb the flourishing trade in Arlan. Several decades later, the Emperor himself denied a fourth declaration of war, giving the principality the impulse it needed to become the commercial leader of the west coast.



Arlan supported the Empire in its darker days and continues to do so with the full force of its economic power. The Council only seeks the highest stability for Abel, and believes that Elisabetta can be a magnificent Empress if given the chance.

Relevant Geographical Features

Arlan is a principality that doesn't stand out for its varied geography. Its eastern area shares many common elements with the Prairies of Abel, which is why its land is fertile and suitable for cultivation. The reefs of the Torn Coast surround its coastline, but in many places there are large openings that allow easy transit of vessels of all size.

Lhenas Marsh: This infected morass of putrid water is located south of the principality near the border of Remo. The marsh swarms with infectious mosquitos capable of transmitting fatal diseases and is full of quicksand, so visitors tend to avoid it. An old legend says that some malevolent force lies beneath the debris. Centuries ago, a powerful sorcerer who had attained immortality sealed herself in the depths of the earth. She raised a small citadel around her to keep anyone from wakening her up. Lhenas, which was her name, only wishes to be left in peace to slumber eternally.

Forest of Lacan: The green expanse of Lacan is undoubtedly the largest forest in the principality. Dense and lush, the wood has a wide variety of fauna, but with very few wild animals. The lumberjacks of Arlan often take from it, but never excessively. Scattered within the forest the Rotermaiyer family has many secret warehouses in which they stash stolen goods and contraband. These places are much safer than the sewers of the cities, since the guard has no jurisdiction over this area. They even use them to harbor slaves, for those times when a land hideout is needed.

The Great Plains: The vast grasslands of central Arlan are called The Great Plains, because they are large tracts of lush vegetation. The area is filled with farms and agricultural towns too small to appear on maps, and some insignificant woods scattered throughout the place. Along the main commercial routes guardposts are laid, whose major function is to ensure that criminals do not attempt to raid the shipments.

Marshal Mountains: Located near the coast, the Marshal Mountains are a group of small rocky elevations. Formally old hunting grounds for the nobility, these mountains are still inhabited by some wild animals, although attacks on humans are becoming less common.

The Crack of the Sword: An enormous fissure that originates in the highest part of cliffs of The Torn Coast and extends over several miles into the principality. The crack, which connects directly to the sea, is filled with salt water and can be journeyed with low-draft boats. Its strange shape, completely straight with smooth walls, has made more than one occultist theorize the possibility that the huge fissure was caused by some supernatural force of immense power. In recent years, Tol Rauko has shown interest in the area, which also has attracted the attention of Black Sun, who yearns for whatever it was that caused the crack to still be there.

Coast of Alamadir: Easily found to the south of Karh and near the border of Remo, the Coast of Alamadir is a place dreaded by all the sailors who have the misfortune of navigating its waterways in the last weeks of summer. Due to the peculiar geographical location of this enclave, the confluence of the currents creates a very threatening navigational area. Storms in the coast are unusually violent and only the most experienced captains dare to come near when the waters are choppy. Sometimes, several vessels shipwreck into the gulf, and many sailors have lost their lives on the coral reef below. As if this were not enough, the reef is populated by a strange species called Coral Sandpaper, silver-plated fish roughly five feet in length. These highly dangerous carnivores are normally solitary hunters, but if they locate very large prey, they make a characteristic clicking noise with their jaws to attract others of its kind looking for help to take it down. The sailors call that sound "the jaws of the sea" and most of them are afraid of it.

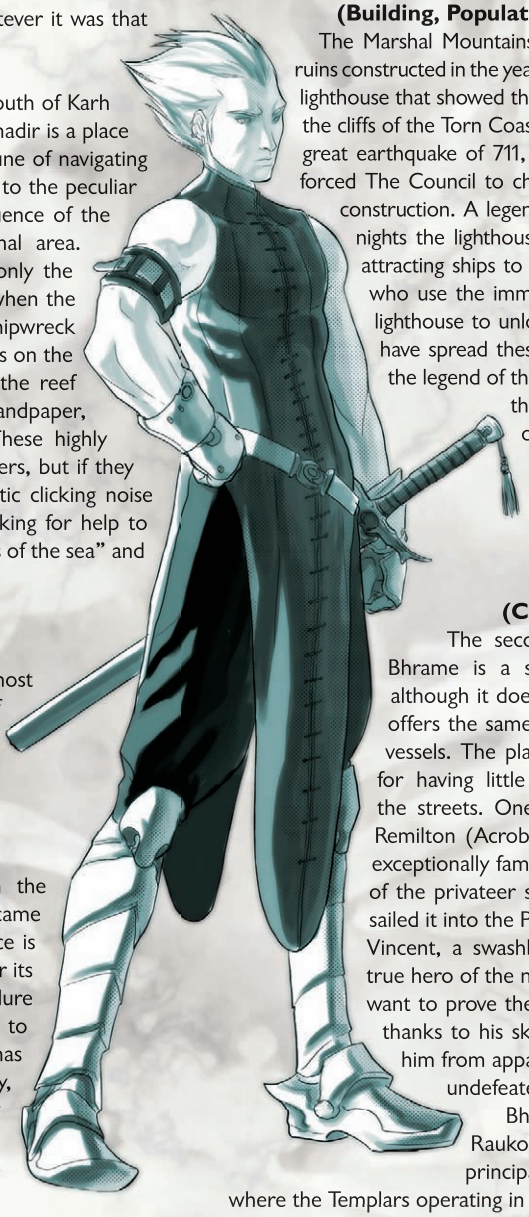
Places of Interest

The large commercial ports hold the most interesting sites of the principality, because of their various shopping sites and the tourists who visit them.

Londure

(City, Population 32,000+)

Londure is the first human city built in the principality, long before the ports of Arlan became the commercial centers that are today. The place is styled in baroque architecture and well known for its intricate and maze-like alleys. Even citizens of Londure lose their way occasionally, so it is not hard to imagine how the foreigners must feel. Londure has a great relevance for the trade in the principality, since is a must for shipping goods to Abel. Many merchants of Archangel, unable to travel to Karh because of time constraints, make their purchases and orders directly from here.



A Captain of the Guard

Iborr

(Fortress, Population 5,000+)

Iborr is a great fortress, recently restored, located on the principality's southern border at the intersection of Togarini and Remo. This place, abandoned centuries ago at the end of the last war with the south, has been updated and modernized in record time thanks to the funds invested by The Council. For now, Iborr is Arlan's first and only line of defense against a possible attack from the Azur Alliance. Presently, it's home to ten thousand soldiers of The Lord of War Tadeus Van Horsman, who's had no problem mobilizing men to secure the borders. He expects to send a new division into the area soon, in preparation for new renovations to the fortress.

The Lord of Iborr is the gigantic Fritz Baldwin (Weaponsmaster Lv. 5, ♂), a tremendous man almost eight feet tall, who inspires a sense of awe whenever anyone sees him in his heavy armor wielding his gigantic two-handed axe. Baldwin participated in the attack on Remo a year ago and was brutal, so his position at the fortress clearly has a deterrent effect.

The Bronwen Lighthouse

(Building, Population approximately 100+)

The Marshal Mountains are the location of ancient imperial ruins constructed in the year 332. These are the remains of the first lighthouse that showed the way to the sailors navigating through the cliffs of the Torn Coast. The lighthouse was destroyed in the great earthquake of 711, and the ease with which it collapsed forced The Council to choose another location for any future construction. A legend among mariners says that on some nights the lighthouse can be seen illuminating the coast, attracting ships to their doom. Actually, local smugglers, who use the immense underground caves beneath the lighthouse to unload their goods using low-draft boats, have spread these rumors. The sailors who believe in the legend of the lighthouse are simply misinterpreting their signals. Sometimes, the smugglers deal with the particularly curious ones in an atrociously violent manner, just to spread the gossip about any possible ghosts in the area.

Bhrame

(City, Population 127,000+)

The second most important port of Arlan, Bhrame is a smaller version of the capital, and although it doesn't have Karh's diversity or scenery, offers the same services to the merchants and their vessels. The place enjoys a sterling clean reputation for having little crime and almost no problems in the streets. One of the guards of Bhrame, Vincent Remilton (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 6, ♂), has become exceptionally famous after dealing with the entire crew of the privateer ship The Punishment of the Sea, and sailed it into the Pirate King Bloch Demoneyes' galleon. Vincent, a swashbuckling womanizer, is considered a true hero of the nation, and often attracts fighters who want to prove they're worthy of facing him. However, thanks to his skill and devilish luck, which has saved him from apparent death more than once, he is still undefeated.

Bhrame is also the city in which Tol Rauko has its base of operations in the principality; a large mansion in the outskirts where the Templars operating in the territory meet.

Illustrated by Salvador Espin

Karh

(Metropolis, Population 770,000+)

Karh, the capital of the principality, is the largest port on the entire west coast of the Old Continent and the largest of Arlan cities. Built into the Gulf of Bitterwind, the metropolis is unusually designed being that it's separated into two distinct parts. The first and largest of them, called The Old City, is built along the coastal area, while the second, its core, is built on a huge block radius of several miles in the center of the Gulf called The Heart. Uniting the two sections there is a monumental bridge of metal and stone decorated with hundreds of statues, undoubtedly the most well known construction in the city.

Occupying nearly one-fifth of the Old City is the district of Seven Unions, the main attraction for tourists and the place where all the trade goods that aren't from overseas gather. Each one of the areas is named by the type of business that has settled in it throughout the years and belongs to one of the unions: the Potters, Gunsmiths, Constructors, Booksellers, Goldsmiths, Tailors and Cooks.

In The Heart they deal with overseas products in the Great Market Square, presided over by The Council's towering headquarters.

The thousands of ships visiting Karh use the entire length of the gulf wall like a wharf, where they receive excellent service and unparalleled access to major department stores in town. The city is also noted for its guards, possibly some of the best in the world, who are responsible for keeping everything safe. Only a truly foolish person would dare to challenge them, because they have been known to defeat groups of mercenaries without a single scratch.

The Council, who administers the municipalities and imposes the customs tolls and costs, directly controls Karh.

The Guild Contest

Once a year, after the festivities of the harvest, a large fair is held in the capital where merchants and craftsmen from neighboring principalities gather attracted by the allure of quick profits. This fair is the event in which The Council decides the outcome of many disputes by celebrating The Guild Contest. Wealthy bourgeois and noblemen of high rank exert their patronage on the most prominent craftsmen, who exhibit their best works or inventions for the public to decide the winners. The award brings great prestige, and the patrons of the victors gain enormous political pull with The Council and the unions.

The contest is free and, in theory, anyone can apply. In practice, if a craftsman does not belong to one of the city's guilds, competing becomes harder, either because during the selection of candidates he is asked to leave or because his work is directly ignored. It goes without saying that more than one family will do whatever it takes to reach that position of privilege, including accidents, sabotages and even committing kidnappings and murders.

The winners of the last three years have been artisans of the Rotermaiyer family, although there are many who argue that there could have been some "irregularities".

This year's competition promises to be wild.

Illustrated by Luis NCT



The immense trading port of Karh

Dylaen
(City, Population 17,000+)

Along the northeast coast of Karh is Dylaen, a small city whose main activity is the building of boats. Their shipyards have a fair reputation thanks to the success of their workers and artisans, as well as the raw materials they use. Although their ships cannot compete with the extraordinary quality of Kanon's or Arabal's, the people of Dylaen follow the commercial spirit of Arlan, and have achieved huge profits due to their competitive pricing. Anyone looking to buy a boat for a reasonable price will go visit Dylean's shipyards.

A leafy forest surrounds the locality that the people use to get all the wood needed to fill their orders. In anticipation for the future, the leaders of the shipyards have devoted much of their staff to planting new trees, knowing that their children will one day depend on them.

The lord of the city is mayor Harold Weis (Freelance Lv. 2, ♂), a businessman who has plans to expand the power of Dylaen by bribing senior imperials, with intention of them granting him the important task of extending the Navy of Abel for a possible war.

Woods of Gwenlynn
(Village, Population 100+)

Located near the top of the principality, these woods are in a small valley under the protection of the ancient nature spirits and the few settlers who reside there. A small group of Rafael's followers live in the valley, which is considered a sacred site, to protect it under the guise of simple town of hunters and foresters. Its leader, the wisest and oldest of them, takes the title of Gaius.

The area is rich in natural resources, such as all kinds of healing herbs (some really strange) and diverse wildlife (mainly herbivores, although not without some unusual predators). In spring it is quite common to receive visits from herbalists, who often contact the local rangers responsible for making sure the woods are not disturbed too much. The presence of poachers is rare, but many of those that enter without guide "disappear" inside the woods and are never seen again. Because the families of The Council receive an annual shipment of precious herbs and spices from the guardians of the valley, the requests for mass exploitation by other traders is ignored, leaving the site to the people traditionally considered the legitimate owners.

Tol Rauko is aware of the rumors but has not disclosed anything on the matter, so it prefers to use its resources in other more interesting arenas.

Other Settlements: *Kalmar, Ennis, Renvyl, Navan.*

Adventures

As the major trading principality that it is, the characters can easily be hired to ensure the transport of a particular shipment, or to guarantee the security of a trade deal. Moreover, considering the large number of products that are brought to the New Continent, they might be unknowingly guarding some dangerous supernatural artifact.

The Young Slave: While the characters are traveling near the Forest of Lacan, a little girl will approach them with desperate expression, dressed in tattered simple clothes. The young girl, a real beauty with dark skin, comes from Itzi, where she was captured by a group of slave traders and brought to Arlan on behalf of the Rotermayer family to be sold at Estigia. Although she does not speak or comprehend any Latin, she will try to explain to them that she needs their help to rescue her friends, who are locked up in a warehouse deep in the forest. She does not have anything with which to pay to them, but as desperate as she is, she will offer herself as compensation. Her captors have become aware of her escape and have sent a group chasing after her. Even so, worried that the news might reach the guard, they plan to burn the warehouse as soon as is possible to avoid being incriminated, even if they must do it with the prisoners inside.

However, there is an additional complication. The young girl who has requested aid, whose real name is Gaika Mzilaki (Freelance Lv. 1, ♀), is the princess of an Itzi tribe that was going to been sacrificed to a demonic spirit called The Old Rotting Kuazkelmonde. Due to the psychic branding that the demon gave her from the moment she was born, the young girl gives off a certain supernatural aura which makes the creature able to sense her from everywhere. Currently, Kuazkelmonde is crossing the ocean through The Wake to get her coveted prey.



Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

The Deaths of the Full Moon: The mayor of Londure, Sorah Baxter (Freelance Lv. 1, ♂), has a serious problem. His beloved wife Eleonore has been possessed by the spirit of an Asagiri (See Creature Compendium page 309 in the Core Book) and, believing she has an incurable case of lycanthropy, he locks her up in the basement of his mansion each full moon night with some poor wretches to satisfy her predatory instinct. The mayor has hired a mercenary group called The Singers to get victims for Eleonore, who often find their targets among the drunkards and paupers who roam the streets at night. To avoid suspicion, the mercenaries have recently been appointed into city guards who patrol the area where the mysterious disappearances occur. Eleonore is not aware of her state and Sorah is becoming increasingly mad from the atrocities that he's forced to commit to support his wife.

The latest victim, a sixteen-year-old boy, is the son of an old bourgeois who refuses to give up on him. The rich man, full of rage, wants to find the young boy at any cost or, if it's already too late for that, to be sure that the culprits pay for their actions. That desire will make him hire a group of investigators, because the guard does not seem to be doing anything about it.

Another interesting possibility would be that The Singers have kidnapped some acquaintance of the characters, or even one of the characters themselves.

Dangerous Wine: Some of the highest quality products of Arlan are its wines, and among the reds, some of the best ones are from the cellars of the Gudmunson family, whose production and distribution is currently in the hands of Simon Gudmunson and his fiancée Christina, both residents of Karh. For years, much of their harvest was sold to a capricious landlord in Togarini who became fond of Gudmunson's wine but, due to the recent clashes with the Azur Alliance, the shipping has become more complicated. Nevertheless Simon, a resourceful man, is not willing to give up his best client and diverts his shipments through other neutral principalities.

In recent months Paul Wedger (Assassin Lv. 4, ♂), a wine producer of questionable character and Simon's neighbor, has fallen in love with Christina. He has tried to get her several times unsuccessfully, since she is only interested in her future husband.

Nevertheless, Paul does not give up on his goal. The true is that he's actually a spy working for Les Jaegers, and has recently learned of the exports of Gudmunson in Togarini. Knowing it, Paul has managed to hide secret information in the wine shipment along with clues that could lead authorities to Simon. However, as he does not want to simply reveal the data, he has chosen to first threaten Christina by denouncing her fiancée if she does not abandon him. The young girl is not willing to yield to Paul's blackmailing scheme, but she does not want to tell Simon either, because she fears that he would confront the blackmailer and be denounced just the same.

Thus, Christina could contact the characters for help. It does not matter to her how they do it, provided they avoid resorting to violence, because she detests it. The girl only hopes to be able to continue with her quiet life, marry her fiancée, and continue the wine business. She won't even be able to pay to them in gold, because she has no income aside from Simon's, and doesn't wish to mention it to him; but she could compensate them with several extra boxes of wine that can be sold at a high price. Of course, even she doesn't truly understand how dangerous Paul is.

Common Characters of Arlan

Here are series of the most notable inhabitants of Arlan. The following statistics have been created without taking Creation Points into consideration.

Arlarense bourgeois

Class Freelance; **Level** 3
Initiative 65/45; **LP** 95; **AT** None; **Attack** 60; **Dodge** 60; **Weapons** Long Sword; **Damage** 55
AGI: 6 **DEX**: 6 **CON**: 6 **STR**: 6 **PER**: 6 **INT**: 7 **WIL**: 7 **POW**: 7
Abilities: Ride 20, Swim 15, Style 20, Intimidate 15, Composure 20, Leadership 40, Persuasion 80, Notice 30, Search 10, Animals 40, Science 20, History 20, Memorize 40, Appraisal 100, Dance 10.
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 45, PsR 45.

Arlarense retailer

Class Freelance; **Level** 1
Initiative 55/50; **LP** 85; **AT** None; **Attack** 20; **Dodge** 20; **Weapons** Short Sword; **Damage** 45
AGI: 6 **DEX**: 6 **CON**: 6 **STR**: 6 **PER**: 6 **INT**: 7 **WIL**: 6 **POW**: 6
Abilities: Ride 10, Swim 10, Intimidate 10, Persuasion 75, Notice 40, Search 10, Science 10, Herbal Lore 40, Memorize 70, Appraisal 95
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 35, PsR 35.

Guardia de Arlan

Class Acrobatic **Warrior**; Level 3
Initiative 85/65; **LP** 135; **AT** Hard Leather; **Attack** 115; **Dodge** 120; **Weapons** Long Sword; **Damage** 55
AGI: 8 **DEX**: 7 **CON**: 7 **STR**: 7 **PER**: 6 **INT**: 7 **WIL**: 7 **POW**: 7
Abilities: Acrobatics 50, Athleticism 50, Ride 40, Swim 60, Jump 55, Climb 20, Style 40, Leadership 10, Persuasion 15, Stealth 20, Notice 30, Search 15, Composure 10, Slight of Hand 45.
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 40, PsR 40.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Middle-Class /Low-Class: Ride +5, Swim +10, Persuasion +20, History (Local) +10, Appraisal +20, Navigation +15.
Bourgeois /High bourgeoisie: Ride +10, Swim +10, Persuasion +20, Style +5, History (local) +10, Appraisal +20, Navigation +5.

Table 7: Arlan

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-5	Low-Class	Low class clothes, food for a few days, a few possessions of little value or some weapon of little quality. 3 CC.
6-70	Middle-Class	A change of clothes, rations for a little over one week, equipment for a complete trip, any other weapon or product of the New Continent. 75 SC.
71-100	Bourgeois	A mount or barge, several changes of clothes of various quality, quality rations for a little over a week, quite complete equipment that can include some weapon, light armor and products of the New Continent. 50 GC.
Priv.	*High Bourgeoisie*	*A sailboat of two or three frames, some mounts (including thoroughbreds), all kinds of quality clothes, access to varied equipment in any part of the world and any class of weapon or armor. 500 GC.*

Kanon

Capital: Brudge.
Population: 3.100.000+
Ethnic Groups: Asher (82%), Aion (10%), Vildianos (6%), and Daevar (1%).
Government: Monarchy (Imperial Principality).
Languages: Latin.
Religion: Christianity.
Technology: 3.
Denomym: Kaniano.
Flag: Blue and white with a boat in the center.
Masculine Names: Alesky, Aron, Borys, Celestyn, Dawid, Ferdynand, Gustaw, Ignacy, Iwan, Janek, Kornel, Ludwik, Marek, Miloslaw, Tymon, Witold, Zygfryd.
Feminine Names: Ania, Edyta, Ewa, Hania, Kaja, Fight, Malwina, Melania, Wave, Patrycja, Seweryna, Sylwia, Urszula, Waleria, Wiola, Zoja.
Last Names: Adamski, Aviza, Bielenda, Ceran, Czekaj, Derda, Dubilas, Faron, Harasym, Jaktorowo, Kalak, Nowak, Parzysz, Polek, Rawa, Tokarski, Wyrostek, Zachemski.

Kanon is the principality located further south of all those that have remained in the Sacred Holy Empire, a warm land prone to precipitation, fertile growing and rich vegetation. The nation has few geographical features, but is known for its immense deserts, vast plains and dense forests.

Kanon has a strong economy thanks to its famous shipyards, which have been producing great galleons and countless smaller vessels for over a hundred years. Their boats, whose reputation extends throughout the continent, are widely are recognized as the best in the world. They also get large revenues from the export of fish and the fees charged to vessels of other nations for the use of their escort boats. The country is poor in mineral resources, so it is forced to import metals from elsewhere, but fill this gap through the large quantities of quality timber extracted from their forests.


†Archangel
Abel
Zafir River
Sura
†Yirath
Tharsis
†Eytan
Forest of Avalbane
†Port of Eburah
Coast of Yearnings
†Port of Eien
Coast of Grief
†Nameless Island
Yura
Arias
Presta
Kirdan
Hod
Mountain Range of the Scar
Reisz
†Brudge
†Aldon
White Forest
Calmo River
Passage at The End
†Morín
†Church of Saint Bernabe
Adlia
Cozal Forest
†Alanis
Green Lake
†Ferrant
Palias Island
Burnt Countryside
Berke
†Bendeck
†Castle of Odessa
Kanon
†Kassia
Land of Ashes
Khora
Teriel
†Waldermar
†Americh
Schaefer Forest
Meadow of the Fallen
Crystal Lake
†Raverna
Korin
†Malakai
Lenard
†Hirsch
Holy Plains
Ciavolo
†Holzburg
Fuchs Plains
River Turin
Enna
Bellafonte
†The Great University
Lucrecio
†Elisio
Metzger Forest
†Du'Lucart
†Krause
White Mountain Ranges
MAP KEY
Capital
Metropolis
City
Building
Fortress
Path
Road
0 250 500 750 Kilometers
0 250 500 Miles

Kanon's government still functions much like the traditional Sacred Holy Empire; a prince, who serves as supreme monarch, advised by a council of senior nobles, governs the entire land. Milek Vanderveer Janssen is the current ruler, a middle-aged man known for his pensive behavior. He's spent years trying to acquire greater personal power, which has caused some friction with the aristocracy.

There are not many large cities and, except for a few great ports, the entire mainland consists of dispersed farms and small landholdings devoted to agriculture or logging, which supplies the needs of the population centers.

The principality has a well-trained army, but it pales in comparison with its navy. Combining their galleons with those under the command of the Lord of War on their shores, Kanon comprises almost a seventy percent of the naval fleet in the Sacred Holy Empire.

The current fragmentation of Abel has slightly affected the stability of the territory, as some important nobles thought that, following the death of Elias Barbados, it was the most appropriate moment to secede from the Empire. The situation could have easily escalated to a major civil war if not for the quick action of the imperial armies in the principality, which in combination with the forces of the prince soon calmed the spirits of the insurgents without bloodshed. Today people continue on normally with their lives, but many feel the tension of war on the borders with Togarini and Bellafonte, where their powerful navy would do them little good. Many strategists believe that, in the event of war (something which everyone anticipates), the logical move of the Azur Alliance would be attacking Kanon first. Of course, people do not feel very comfortable with that idea.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Sy´luen, the Lords of the Waters

Of all the wonderful types of boats built in the shipyards of Kanon, nothing can compare to the Sy´luen, the Lords of the Waters. These are extraordinary ships that combine the most advanced principles of aerodynamics with some mystical elements. They can be of almost any size or class, but the white wood that is used in its construction and the intricate symbolism that marks their hull always identify them. A Lord of the Waters is not only much faster than other boats of its class, but allows incredible handling and resistance the sea. To date, none of them has sunk by natural causes.

The Lords of the Waters are inspired in the ancestral ships of the Duk´zarist. Their original designers, unable to properly craft the Ghestal wood, used wood from the sacred elven forests to make the first Sy´luen, obtaining some surprising results.

Only a limited number of master artisans know the complicated techniques to design the Sy´luen, and all them are considered indispensible to the principality. The Sacred Holy Empire typically assigns a group of Knights of the Heaven Order to them as bodyguards, to make sure that their secrets do not fall into the wrong hands.

Usually, all the Sy´luen built are for imperial use, but sometimes they are created on commission for astronomical amounts of money. In these cases, it is necessary to obtain an authorization or the express permission of the prince, which is extremely rare.



Culture and Society

Most of the citizens in Kanon are farmers and ranchers living in small rural villages or large independent farms. Not very accustomed to bustling city life, people normally spend their days following the traditions that their parents and grandparents practiced before them. Their society stresses family values and the relatives commonly know and help each other, even if they live a hundred miles away. It is widely believed that education is a waste of time, and parents usually prefer to teach their children themselves, passing down what they consider really important.

It's very common for children to inherit their parent's businesses. Consequently, jobs are usually predetermined and it's difficult for a teenager to leave the "inheritance" that his parents have left to him. The only service held in high esteem among all families is enlisting in the imperial navy, which is an easy escape route for anyone that does not wish to follow in the footsteps of their ancestors.

Kanon has a strong feudal structure and almost every family owes servitude to one high noble house. The rigid traditions completely prohibit the marriage between nobility and commoners, at the risk of losing their titles.

The people who live on the coast usually behave in a more metropolitan way, but they still keep their traditional values as much as the ones living in the rural areas.

Regarding the Supernatural

The people of Kanon are quite closed-minded towards the unexplainable. Since the dawn of the Empire its citizens have always regarded the supernatural as a dark force to be feared, as it only brings pain, perversion and death. The strong influence of the Church in the principality has also spawned the belief that any unexplainable skill is demonic, and that it must be eliminated at its source to avoid greater evil.

Paradoxically, the master builders use limited supernatural formulas in the construction of the Sy´luen, although the Church, unable to attack a tradition so deeply rooted and important to the fleet of the Empire, declared centuries ago that such practices originate from the blessings of the saints and angels.

If the people of Kanon witness unexplainable events, they will not hesitate to accuse any practitioner of witchcraft, immediately reporting them to The Inquisition. Occasionally, they have gone as far as to hold public lynching when the use of supernatural powers were violent or had criminal goals.

The History of Kanon

Before of the founding of the Empire, the lands of Kanon were a wild area where diverse ethnic groups coexisted. During the Age of Chaos the Sylvain nations tried to unify the country, but the presence of hundreds of dragons and elementals made it virtually impossible. The few men who dwelled there learned to coexist with large supernatural forces, surviving in any way possible. In the years following the Messiah, the negligible human presence in the area was the reason that none of the Holy Kingdoms were interested in annexing these lands, and even less interest when they understood what kind forces they would face there.

The proximity of the territory to The Inner Sea caused that the activation of Rah's machine provoked terrible consequences for the supernatural creatures who lived there, destroying them or, at the very least, making them dormant for centuries. This lead to a rapid expansion of the human families residing in the area, soon reinforced by the refugees of the war.

Kanon became a principality of the Empire in 235; a year after Abel's forces stormed the area. Unfortunately, their prince Jareck Stanislaw was assassinated by a group of mages, who tried to seize power during their uprising. Determined to set an example, Zhorne commissioned to pacify the territory to one of his old companions of the War of God, Kaz Vanderveer Janssen, who exterminated all supernatural entities and became the new prince of Kanon. During the

following years there were several clans that, accustomed to the use of magic, did not accepted the prohibitions imposed on the supernatural powers. Still, a strong presence of the Church and the valuable support of Abel in Kanon's development and security, made almost all people leave such arts.

During the fifth century, the coastal cities began to experience a great boom, and given the quality of their boats the Emperor decided to invest money and effort into completely renewing the imperial armada. This meant that thousands of teenagers joined the navy, therefore initiating the formation of its extraordinary naval force.

In the year 652 and later in 701 Kanon went to war with Lucrecio, although both conflicts, which Kanon emerged victorious from, were decided with very few casualties according to imperial policy and under the strict arbitration of the Lords of War.

The lack of unity in the Sacred Holy Empire and the death of the Emperor produced a state of momentary confusion in the principality. Some nobles demanded that Prince Milek claimed independence from Abel, but he preferred to support the Empress. However, a few noble families still maintain strong ties with Togarini and back the Azur Alliance, which feeds the tension in Kanon even further.

Relevant Geographical Features

Kanon is a flat land, devoid of almost mountains or slopes. The only thing that it's really known for is its high meadows and forests scattered all across the principality.

The Burnt Countryside: The region currently known as the Burnt Countryside was until recently a lush green forest. Despite its small size, the soil was especially rich and the trees grew tall and strong, which made it a great source of quality wood. Unfortunately, less ago than five years ago most of the trees became ill and their leaves fell off, while their trunks rotted. Herbalists and botanists from all over the Empire came trying to save the forest, but to no avail. Finally, to prevent the disease from spreading to the Cozal Forest, the army was forced to burn it all down. Since then, the zone is known as the Burnt Countryside and is little more than barren and black piece of land, punctuated by a few charred remnants of trees still left standing. Fortunately, the drastic action was effective and managed to halt the disease, thus preventing the spread to other forests.

Even so, both Samael and the Magus Order are greatly concerned, since the strong supernatural atmosphere that filled the woods shortly before it rotted was a clear indication that the disease was magical, although of unknown origin. Both organizations have initiated independent investigations, fearing that what happened in the area could spread and cause more problems. Whatever it is, there's a possibility that what produced it is somewhere in the forest.

The White Forest: This small forest of albino trees, called qualdem, is an old stronghold of the few Sylvain settlers who lived in the region in the past. It's a sacred place devoted to the Beryl Rafael, and everything that grows within it is imbued with a strong luminous essence. The wood extracted from these ancient trees is used to construct the Sy´luen, and the number of them that get chopped down every year is limited. The place is considered an imperial treasure and is protected by a small detachment of Knights of The Heaven Order.

Green Lake: This strange spot is one of the most representative places of Kanon, a mandatory visit for anyone who wants to enjoy a beautiful landscape. In this large lake grows an unusual type of tree that can grow in the deep water. Their cups protrude several feet above the surface, reflecting on the water and giving them a beautiful greenish hue.

Meadow of the Fallen: It is the territory that extends from the southeast coast of the principality to the Inner Sea, beyond the Land of Ashes. It is a region of plains covered with white flowers and smooth hills. On the coast there are some small fishing villages, dedicated to shellfish boating. Despite the appearance of calm and tranquility in the zone, some major battles were fought here in the past, when in 652 and later in 701 Kanon went to war with Lucrecio. Although there were many deaths and other warlike scenes, it cast a strange reflection in The Wake, where the white flowers are tinged with the color of blood. People who wisit The Wake here and smell the crimsom flowers fell a strange sleepiness and, if they do not awaken soon, will fall into an eternal hibernation. The "key" to accessing The Wake in the Meadow of the Fallen is to spill blood on the flowers, although this doesn't always work.

The Cozal Forest: Located in central Kanon, Cozal is the principality's largest forest, renowned for its beech and spruce trees. Hundreds of trees are felled every day to provide valuable wood for the sawmills. Because of its great size, it has always been impossible to wipe out the dangerous wild animals that live inside of it, although they have learned not to approach the outskirts too much and just attack lone travelers. In the depths of the woods there are large flood zones very difficult to pass. Few have gone so far, and therefore nobody can confirm what can be in the core of the forest.

The Land of Ashes: In the southeastern section of the principality lies its most inhospitable region, a barren and rocky area that extends for several miles. The whole place is filled with smoke, and the temperature is extremely high, at times exceeding 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Some geologists have theorized that everything is due to the existence of underground lava flows, which cause the heat and a continuous leakage of gas. However, the secret behind the smoke is quite different. In the deeps of the earth more than a hundred dragons slumber, made dormant for 700 years by the power that Rah unleashed. Only one of



The depths of The Cozal Forest

Illustrated by Raúl Rosell

the creatures is awake, ensuring that their dreams do not influence the world of man; Manah, the immortal Dark Wrym of Gaira that is bound to the Shajad Erebus, Lord of Dreams and the Supernatural. Thanks to her powers, she takes the form of a beautiful woman with golden eyes and ash colored hair, but she can also transforms into a raven when she wants to avoid someone. Generally, Manah wanders erratically in the Land of Ashes avoiding being seen by humans, except when she's deathly bored and desires conversation. Naturally, she never reveals her true nature to anybody. Why she has remained there for centuries, simply observing, is something that nobody knows for certain.

Places of Interest

Except for the ports and shipyards, Kanon has no large towns or cities. By contrast, there are hundreds of tiny rural villages, large estates and some scattered farms.

Aldon

(Rural Community, Population 5,000+)

The community of Aldon is a group of tiny villages and farms that extends in the northwest of the principality. Except for a few stone buildings, the houses are unsophisticated simple wooden cottages. Although each population is slightly separated from the others (never more than a few hours away), all maintain a strong sense of unity that goes back several centuries. Accustomed to working side by side during the hard times, Aldon's families owe large debts among themselves that their children have inherited for generations. The barons Taid and Olesia (Freelance Lv. 2, ♂ and Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 3, ♀), rule over the community and are appreciated by the members of their congregation.

Bendek

(City, Population 238,000+)

Because of its great size, generally foreigners tend to think that Bendek is the capital of Kanon. Originally it was a huge military fortress built during the establishment of the Empire, around which the war refugees raised their homes. The core of the city is composed of the oldest and poorest neighborhoods, while the outskirts belong to bourgeois or noble families. The majority of the buildings are made of stone, although there are hundreds of parks and trees scattered everywhere. Bendek is the main commericial center of the principality by proximity to Americh, reflecting a relentless flow of goods and money from the products entering and leaving the City of Free Trade.

Bendeck is also particularly famous for the Cathedral of the Dragon, an enormous shrine where the skull of one of these great beasts is displayed. The remains have been the subject of contraversy for years, as both Tol Rauko and an important sector of the Church considered its exhibition unacceptable, but finally both organizations agreed to conserve it by order of the Emperor.

The baron of Bendek is Brede Kazaria (Freelance Lv. 3, ♂), a man who maintains a close business relationship with the council of merchants in Americh.

The church of Saint Bernabe

(Building, Population 100+)

Located at short distance from the coast in the southern part of the principality is the church of Saint Bernabe. The building was constructed two centuries ago in commemoration of the birthplace of the father Bernabe, a man who devoted his entire life to helping underprivileged children. The church, a large structure surrounded by green meadows, currently serves as an orphanage. There are nearly a hundred children growing up happily together with their tutors like a real family. Saint Bernabe is lead by two young sisters and the father Alexias, an affectionate good-natured middle-aged priest everyone loves.

The Castle of Odessa

(Fortress, Population 3,000+)

Until a few months ago, The Fortress of Odessa was occupied by the barons of Rasia, a couple of powerful nobles who were investigated in the past by the Inquisition as potential practitioners of witchcraft. The barons belonged to a group of aristocrats who wanted Kanon and the Empire to separate, and they even sent assassins to attack prince Mileck hopping that, during the confusion brought by his death, it would be easy to take control of the principality through a treaty with the Azur Alliance. After being discovered and their plans foiled, the couple fled and their current whereabouts are unknown.

The castle in itself is a huge well-preserved bastion with half dozen large towers and two enormous parade grounds. After the departure of the barons, the fortress has been occupied by troops of the Lord of War, who intends to use it as an important bulkwark of defense. So far, the investigators have discovered that Odessa hides hundreds of intricate passageways and secret chambers, some of which contain artifacts and obscure ancient texts.

Alexias, the Exterminator Angel

Father Alexias (Shadow Lv. 11, ♂ Ancient Blood) is actually one of the most powerful and influential High Inquisitors of the Church, feared for his assassination talent and his unimaginable skills and powers. Wearing his dark black raincoat and wielding his twin Lawgivers, Umbra and Thanathos, he has brought death to so many immortal entities that he has earned the nickname of "The Exterminator Angel".

Sometimes his job requires him to take an extended leave of Saint Bernabe, but he always returns to the orphanage to care for the children, which are his guiding light. The Thirteenth Cardinal only uses Alexias for special missions, and the mere mention of its name causes terror among the organizations like Samael, Magus or Yehudah. Naturally, nobody in Saint Bernabe knows his secret; so his enemies do not know either where The Exterminator Angel pass his free time.

Dark, cruel and ruthless with the supernatural, while simultaneously warm and affectionate with the children, only a few months ago Alexias encountered one of the greatest moral dilemmas he's ever had to face. After executing a couple of Daimah, he heard weeping and discovered the daughter of his two victims, only five years old, crying in terror. When he saw the frightened cat-girl looking at him with glassy eyes, he felt his resolve waver and was unable to kill her. Without understanding why, he took her along back to Saint Bernabe, where he affectionately cared for her as if he were her father. Alexias fears the day he cannot hide the presence of the girl from his companions, but he is unable to execute her.

For the first time in his life, The Exterminator is truly conflicted.

Kassia

(Fortress, Population 8,000+)

A fortress built by the Vanderveer family in year 653 after the first war with Lucrecio, this bastion has proven vital to the Empire now that Kanon borders the Azur Alliance. It is a building of three towers and high walls, located on a small plateau, which gives it a huge strategic value. The site, which until a few years ago housed only a few hundred soldiers, has been rapidly reinforced with troops from Kanon and the Lord of War.

Kassia is under the orders of commander Lidia Piryk (Warrior Lv. 5, ♀), one of the few women who have managed to attain such rank in the imperial army. Although her main job is to monitor the actions of the Alliance, she cannot help but feel uncomfortable being so near to Lucrecio and its prince.

Brudge

(City, 79,000+ inhabitants)

Kanon's capital is sometimes overshadowed by other cities of greater renown such as Bendek, but it is still the most important metropolis in the principality. It was built in the fourth century using a small fishing village as a base, but when their citizens started manufacturing the first boats, the Empire invested large amounts of money in building the largest shipyards of the Inner Sea. With so much gold in circulation, the city was prosperous and the prince made it the capital to properly oversee the creation of the new imperial armada.

Brudge is an enormous fortress of stone, wood and metal, magnificently designed by the architects of Abel. The city combines beautiful ornaments with the military expediency of any city-fortress in Dalaborn. The buildings tend to be quite somber, but also have many monuments and great mansions. Its port is spectacular, and often has several hundred of galleons in their docks. The city also has one of the most famous navy museums, where the imperial army keep all kinds of artifacts of war, from simple swords to whole vessels, used in all the important conflicts of the Empire during the last seven centuries.

Rich in manufacturing (especially handcrafted wood pieces), Brudge has many lines of business, although of course the shipyards are the most important of all. More than half of the population here are sailors working in the shipyards of part of the navy. There are also many nobles living in the city, typically high officials retired from the active duty.

The city has no walls by land, but it relies on a sophisticated maritime defense system called "God's Thumb", which ensures the protection of the navy while it is moored. This complex mechanism extends from the shore enabling it to lift enormous metal blades from the seabed. The control panel is in the "Thumb Tower", an incredibly secure building. Nobody knows for sure who built such a device or how, but many believe that, rather than building it, the Lord of War discovered "God's Thumb" purely by chance.

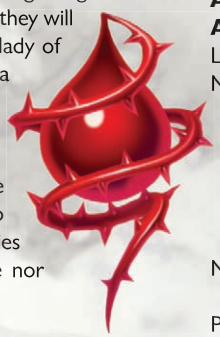
The city is ruled by prince Milek Vanderveer Janssen (Warrior Lv. 5, ♂), known for his serious nature and his loyalty to the Empire.

Other Settlements: *Berke, Reisz, Terhel.*

Adventures

Although the great plains of Kanon are generally quiet, there are all types of situations that the characters may have to face in a place where the warlike tension is so high. In addition, Kanon, a principality known for its mercenary fleets, is full of captains looking for new talents for their escort vessels.

The Elder Woman: If the characters are traveling along the enormous meadows of Kanon and seek shelter, they will find the small, quiet farm of Roza Telki, a nice old lady of a somewhat fussy but good-natured attitude. Roza offers them shelter free of cost, as long as they help with some simple tasks as payment. Unfortunately, the old lady is not even remotely what she appears to be. She is the last descendant of a dark bloodline who murders people and devours their flesh to increase their lifespans. She is almost two centuries old and has become a ghoul queen, neither alive nor dead, but able to look as a human being.



Roza will attempt to drug to them using a powerful sleeping powder at dinner and, if successful, she will throw them unarmed into the tangled network of tunnels that cross under her farm, where her children play, so that they eat their bodies leaving just the hearts for her. Her "children" are a group of ghouls who have memorized the labyrinths under the caves.

The Order of the Barons: The barons of Rasia, Gerick and Gizella (Wizard Mentalist Lv. 5, ♂ and Illusionist Lv. 6, ♀ respectively), who were forced to escape from Castle of Odessa accused of high treason, are presently under the protection of the Azur Alliance in Bellafonte. Both powerful wizards who share a taste for bizarre supernatural experiments, they still hide within Odessa some artifacts that they were forced to left behind in their hasty retreat. To avoid giving awkward explanations to the noblility of Bellafonte, the barons have decided to hire other people to recover their belongings, no matter how expensive this may be.

If the characters know any Black Sun members the couple could try to approach them through their dealings with the organization or, if they have a good reputation, the barons could even try to contact them directly.

The barons will give the characters instructions on how to infiltrate Odessa using some of the secret passages of the castle, and how to reach the hidden chambers where the Salaeth Darh, "The Star of Change", is located. Of course, they need to avoid being found by the castle garrison. If the characters do what the barons tell to them down to the letter, trying to escape through the secret exit will inadvertently release the terrible experiments of the barons, magically altered humans and animals. These creatures will block their escape route, forcing the characters to fight them while trying to flee from Odessa.

Common Characters of Kanon

Here are a series of samples depicting the most common characters of Kanon. The following statistics have been created without taking Creation Points into account.

Master Shipbuilder

Class Freelance; **Level** 6
Initiative 80/60; **LP** 100; **AT** None; **Attack** 50; **Dodge** 45; **Weapons** Long Sword; **Damage** 55
AGI: 5 **DEX**: 8 **CON**: 5 **STR**: 6 **PER**: 7 **INT**: 7 **WIL**: 6 **POW**: 7
Abilities: Swim 100, Style 35, Persuasion 25, Notice 35, Search 30, Science 105, History 25, Navigation 15, Occult 105, Feats of Strength 50, Art 150, Forging (Boats) 210, Slight of Hand 20.
Resistance: PhR 55, DR 55, VR 55, MR 60, PsR 60.

Freight Captain

Class Freelance; **Level** 2
Initiative 70/60; **LP** 95; **AT** None; **Attack** 90; **Dodge** 95; **Weapons** Saber; **Damage** 50
AGI: 8 **DEX**: 8 **CON**: 6 **STR**: 6 **PER**: 5 **INT**: 7 **WIL**: 6 **POW**: 7
Abilities: Acrobatics 15, Swim 40, Climb 20, Style 35, Intimidate 15, Leadership 45, Persuasion 25, Notice 35, Search 10, Memorize 20, Navigation 85.
Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 40, PsR 40.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Middle-Class /Low-Class: Athleticism +10, Ride +10, Swim +15, Notice +10, Animals +10, Herbal Lore +10, Navigation +15.
Nobility: Athleticism +10, Ride +10, Leadership +10, Notice +10, Persuasion +10, History (local) +10, Navigation +20.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Table 8: Kanon

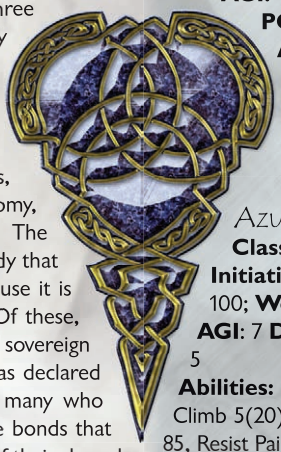
Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-10	Low-Class	Low class clothes, rations for one or two days, a few possessions of little value, or a low quality weapon. 3 CC.
11-85	Middle-Class	A couple of changes of clothes, rations for a little over a week, travel equipment or some other weapon. 75 SC.
86-100	Nobility	A small sailboat, one or two mounts, a large variety of clothing, excellent rations for over a week, all sorts of traveling equipment, may include weapons and medium armor. 60 GC.

THE AZUR ALLIANCE

The Azur Alliance is currently the largest opposition block to the Sacred Holy Empire of Abel. It consists of three former economic and military powerhouses, which chose to declare independence after the death of the previous Emperor. However, unlike the other separatist countries, whose main objective was to distance themselves from Abel, the Alliance tries to take control of the Empire and destroy what remains of it.

The lands that belong to the Alliance are located in the southern area of The Old Continent. They have a moderate climate and similar vegetation, with great forests, green plains and numerous mountains.

During the last seven centuries the history of these three principalities has been similar to The Empire's, as they originated from it. The only caveat was that, since they always were under the influence of The Lord of War of the South, they have always had certain unity and good relations between them.



Now, completely separated from Abel and its laws, every member of the Alliance retains its political autonomy, but forming a common front of opposition towards The Empire. To decide its actions on a whole, they have a body that emulates The High Senate, called the Triumvirate, because it is composed of the three greatest lords in each nation. Of these, Matthew Gaul, a former Lord of War and the supreme sovereign of Togarini, is popularly regarded as their leader. He has declared himself heir of the true spirit of Abel, and there are many who believe that he deserves his own empire. Currently, the bonds that unite the three former principalities are strong because of their shared antagonism against Abel, but since they are only a few months together, they have not yet encountered any internal problems or disputes yet.

The Alliance's armies act independently, but to attain greater results on the whole, their actions are coordinated by the Azur Arbiters, former high generals of the Lord of War. Uniting the considerable legions collected from each principality to form an elite force under Matthew Gaul, the Azur Alliance has the second greatest army in the world and, unlike Abel's, can be together on a single front.

The Alliance's legal system has hardly changed in comparison to the traditional structure of the Empire, except that now they have annulled all the prerogatives and edicts of Abel, granting control to the governors of each principality. In military affairs, the courts of the Triumvirate have the ultimate word.

The Azur Alliance's relationships vary with each principality. Whereas it wishes to violently conquer some territories to increase its economic power, such as Kashmir and Baho, Azur has also tried to form alliances with potential allies. Gabriel and Phaion grant them a limited commercial assistance, since they want to distract the attention of the Empire towards the south, but without giving the Alliance complete support. In the case of Lucrecio, to which the Alliance has extended several invitations to join them, they have not received a favorable or unfavorable reply. Finally, trying to gain the approval of the Church, the Triumvirate has fully recognized the appointment of Supreme Archbishop Magnus, and gives preferential treatment to The Inquisition against Tol Rauko.

Most of the inhabitants of the Alliance believe that The Empire has fallen into complete depravity and that, since the end of the Giovanni dynasty, the throne has lacked a legitimate Emperor. The terrible acts Elias committed under the influence of Eljared were so disastrous that people still consider his daughter a mere puppet of Tadeus Van Horsman and The Heaven Order, thinking that she can only bring a new Age of Chaos. And the fact that Elisabetta has not been the one commencing the offensive, in spite that her forces are superior, is merely another demonstration of her weakness and inability to be Sacred Holy Empress. There are many who want to return to the old days of prosperity and believe that for The Empire to be reborn, it is necessary to destroy first all the evil that is hidden in its core. To begin a new age, they have declared the start of a new calendar and now mint its own currency, replacing the stamp of Abel.

Common Characters of the Azur Alliance

Here is a series of samples depicting the most common characters of The Alliance. The following statistics have been created without taking Creation Points into account.

Azur Soldier

Class Warror; **Level** 1
Initiative 55/25; **LP** 110; **AT** Hardened Leather; **Attack** 60; **Dodge** 70; **Weapons** Broadword; **Damage** 60
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 7 **PER:** 5 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 25 (30), Ride 25, Swim 5 (15), Jump 5 (10), Climb 10 (15), Notice 20, Search 10, Composure 10, Feats of Strength 50, Resist Pain 20.
Special: Soldier Module
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 30, PsR 30.

Azur Professional Soldier

Class Warror; **Level** 3
Initiative 65/40; **LP** 140; **AT** Byrnie; **Attack** 100; **Dodge** 100; **Weapons** Broadword; **Damage** 65
AGI: 7 **DEX**: 6 **CON**: 7 **STR**: 8 **PER**: 5 **INT**: 5 **WIL**: 5 **POW**: 5
Abilities: Athleticism 15(30), Ride 40, Swim 0(15), Jump 0(15), Climb 5(20), Notice 35, Search 20, Composure 10, Feats of Strength 85, Resist Pain 25.
Special: Soldier Module
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 40, PsR 40.

Azur Official

Class Paladin; **Level** 4
Initiative 70/25; **LP** 155; **AT** Partial Plate; **Attack** 110; **Dodge** 110; **Weapons** Broadword; **Damage** 60
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 8 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 6 **WIL:** 7 **POW:** 8
Abilities: Ride 65, Style 40, Intimidate 45, Leadership 130, Persuasion 35, Notice 50, Search 20, Composure 55, Resist Pain 60.
Special: Knight Module
Resistance: PhR 50, DR 50, VR 50, MR 55, PsR 50.

The Azur Arbiters

Few people radiate an aura of respect, reverence and fear as the Azur Arbiters do. They are the supreme generals of the Alliance, the lords who command and coordinate the joint operations of their armies. Presently there are ten of them, although it is well known that the Triumvirate seriously considers appointing three more soon.

Renard Osborn, the Lord of War controlling the south territories, created the Arbiters corps just over three centuries ago. They were his generals, whose title came from their ability to arbitrate wars and declare a winner on one side or another. Now, with the foundation of the Alliance, most of them have remained faithful to their direct superior, embracing their role as organizers, strategists and field marshals. Since his promotion as Lord of War, Matthew Gaul only appointed Arbiters who hold personal philosophies similar to his own.

The true identity of an Arbiter is unknown, since when the title is bestowed the previous lifestyle and name of the chosen one is completely detached. Moreover, his face is hidden behind a metal helmet or mask, never to be seen again in public. These helmets, which are commonly accompanied by supernatural armor, are devices that can alter the voice of its wearer and shield them against any magic or skill used to identify or detect them.

Most Arbiters are gifted with special supernatural powers, and they have no problem using them to archive the Alliance goals. At the moment, only six of the ten operate within the borders of their principality, while the function of the remaining three of the four is unknown. The tenth is organizing the conquest of the principality Kashmir.

Generally, Matthew Gaul is always accompanied by two well-known Arbiters, Kariagne (Technician Lv. 10, ♂) and Aizen (Assassin Lv. 10, ♂ D´Anjayni), who are known as "The Hands of Gaul".

TOGARINI

Capital: Kaine.
Population: 7,200,000+
Ethnic Groups: Daevar (76%), Vildianos (14%), Asher (6%), Aion (3%).
Government: Dictatorship.
Languages: Latin.
Religion: Christianity.
Technology: 5.
Denomym: Togarense.
Flag: A black flag divided horizontally into two sections by a red line with a star at the bottom.
Masculine Names: Alaric, Arnold, Berg, Bert, Braun, Carl, Diedrick, Durin, Emil, Franz, Gunther, Heinrich, Herman, Kaiser, Koen, Luther, Roland, Seifer, Werner.
Feminine Names: Adalia, Allison, Analise, Annika, Bertha, Clove, Crescentia, Edda, Emera, Griselda, Ida, Liesel, Mariel, Marlene, Milla, Rae, Walda, Wilhelmina.
Last Names: Aachen, Adler, Barth, Berg, Eichel, Esisenberg, Fassbinder, Fiedler, Gloeckner, Hertz, Hirsch, Kalb, Mauser, Nacht, Reinhard, Roth, Sankt, Schneider, Strauss, Weiss.

Togarini, founder of the Azur Alliance is one of the most culturally and militarily advanced nations throughout Gaïa. For many it is a clear reflection of the former glory and splendor of Abel, because long ago it was the most important principality of the Empire. Ironically, now it is has become its greatest threat.

With fertile land and abundant crops and forests, Togarini is a true oasis of pleasant weather. Most of the territory consists of high plains and meadows, while the west is a great mass of mountains and plateaus high above sea level. The great technology and prosperity of the nation allows many paved roadways, which connect the main cities and improve the trade routes considerably. The entire region is full of booming towns and large cities, most notably its capital, Kaine, a city-fortress built atop a vast plateau.

Since it has magnificent manufacturing guilds, great advancements in infrastructure and a rich agriculture, Togarini enjoys great economic prosperity. Additionally, wines and beverages that are made in their vineyards are renown throughout Gaïa as the best ones. However, the nation's real wealth comes from its gold mines, which are scattered along the fringe of several large plateaus.

With the fall of Elias Barbados, the Lord of War Matthew Gaul militarily deposed prince Jestin Thule, proclaiming himself Supreme Archon, a title of supremacy that defied imperial tradition. Since then he has exercised absolute control over Togarini, which he declared an independent nation instead of a principality. Gaul still uses the former administrative system of the ousted prince, but keeping only the nobles and high clergymen who swore loyalty to him in power. He also surrounds himself with his most trusted officers, who have been granted new titles and the lands of those who opposed him.

Militarily, Gaul has united his own soldiers with the old army of the principality, which was already considerably large, thus forming one of the most powerful forces in the world. Additionally, he invests huge sums of money in the research and development of new weapons, equipping his legions with the best equipment that money can buy. Adding the work of the mysterious but infallible Arbiters to this, and it is not surprising that no principality in the world can face the forces of Togarini.

As unofficial leader of the Azur Alliance, Togarini currently maintains a close relationship with Remo and Bellafonte, while the tension with the Empire keeps growing.

Culture and Society

Most people in Togarini have a cultural level similar to Abel's, but without the advantages that the ethnic diversity found in the heart of the Empire provides. The citizens, who until just over a year lived without concerns, have begun to feel the tension that their new social state brings. Although they definitely realize the tremendous progress they're going to obtain, there are many who fear that they will also sacrifice something very important in the process; a part of their freedom. Even so, people encourage the idea that they are superior to other lands and that together they will found a new Empire, much stronger than Abel has ever been.

Every man in Togarini must serve one year in the army; unless disabled or they can pay a considerable tribute of five hundred gold crowns, something that only the most wealthy bourgeois or nobles can afford. The social states are quite set. Ever since anyone can remember, the nobility (mostly daevar), have shown absolute superiority over the other social strata, including the clergy, and they exert total control over the principality. Consequently, the feudal structure is deeply rooted. Only the high bourgeoisie have managed to match power with the low nobility thanks to their high economic potential, although they have never been allowed to buy noble titles. So far, marriage between members of different classes is absolute prohibited; they are not only considered inappropriate, but such unions have no formal validity and are immediately cancelled.

Large cities are very common in Togarini, which often are led by some high-ranking noble, who organizes and manages its resources as a lord. Several aristocrats were dismissed when Matthew Gaul took power, and replaced with nobles closer to him. Additionally, to ensure stability in what he considers a time of crisis, the Supreme Archon has founded a private military corps, called Les Jaeger, serving as secret police. Its function is to investigate and remedy any problems or threats that may endanger the safety of Togarini. The Arbiter Aizen, one of the most faithful agents of the Archon, controls the organization.



Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Togarenses of the ethnic group Daevar

Merchants and traders visit the nation, but its residents do not have much appreciation for foreigners. Currently, any individual unrelated to the Alliance or their potential allies (such as those from Gabriel or Phaion) is monitored with suspicion. It is even possible that visitors can temporarily be detained by Les Jaeger to make sure that they are not imperial spies.

Regarding the Supernatural

Togarenses strongly reject the supernatural, as they believe that such practices are considered witchcraft and satanism. They openly confront or question anyone who appears to possess some sort of unexplainable ability and is not recognized by the Church as a "miracle." Faced with such situation, they do not hesitate to go to the Inquisition or the authorities and charge any suspects.

Paradoxically, the current policy of the nation treats supernatural powers very differently. If Les Jaeger suspects that there is someone in Togarini with "special skills", they will offer them a position in its ranks. If he accepts, he receives a limited license to use his powers, which will be considered "divine gifts". Still, Les Jaeger cautions not to use them too openly, even if they know that the organization will cover for their actions as much as possible. In the event that someone refuses to join them, he is immediately turned over to The Inquisition, where a much more unpleasant fate awaits him.

The History of Togarini

Togarini is the legendary "Demon of War", undoubtedly a deserved name for a land that has experienced more conflicts than mankind can remember. Historically, the territories of the principality were violently subjugated by Solomon, until the ancient empire declined. Without restraint, the entire region was plunged into anarchy, and war and death plagued the land for a thousand years. Humans, Jayan and Daimah bloodily fought each others and against all kind of creatures, with no clear predominant side. The situation even worsened when a flying fortress of the Duk'zarist appeared in the region, and the Sylvain decided to involve themsleves in the fray to keep their old rivals from getting too close to their lands. That way, Togarini would not unite under one flag until the late appearance of the Order of Yehudah, an organization of powerful immmortal wizards. But even then, it was not a peaceful time. Yehudah, who firmly believed that mages were superior beings entitled to govern, not only engaged in numerous conflicts with neighboring nations, but its leaders disputed their own power in continuous civil wars.

With the arrival of the Messiah, the Order of Yehudah magecracy was destroyed and Togarini became part of the Eleven Holy Kingdoms. Unfortunately, they barely experienced a little over two centuries of peace before the War of God was unleashed with particular intensity in the area. These lands were the stage of the bloodiest battles, and also where Zhorne and some members of the Conclave crossed paths.

After the war, Togarini became a place of chaos again, where survivors of all races slaughtered each other motivated by racial hatreds that had been reawakened. In response, Zhorne entered the territory with with a huge army in the year 230, expelling or destroying any nonhuman organizations and quelling the riots. After leaving the region in apparent tranquility under the control of one of his generals, he advanced northward. But as if it were the land cursed fate, things did not remain in order for long. A group of wizards calling themselves "The Descendants of Yehudah" violently attacked, igniting a war that lasted almost for two years. With open fronts everywhere, Zhorne finally returned to kill the mage kings and all their followers. Thus Togarini became a principality by proclamation of The Empire, experiencing great prosperity due to its proximity to Abel and the abundant natural resources available.

During the following centuries the nation advanced by leaps and bounds, although internal conflicts of the high nobility were quite common. Three times the ruling family changed after some disputes arbitrated by the Empire. Fortunately, under the control of the Thule dynasty, the last 150 years were quite tranquil, which allowed Togarini to continue growing into the incredible power it is today. With the fall of house Giovanni and the Elias' ascension to the imperial throne, the young and ambitious Matthew Gaul became The Lord of War in the south, and made Kaine, the capital of the principality, his residence. After remaining passive to the insurrection of Eljared, and ignoring the order to attack Bellafonte, he took advantage of the Emperor's death and the period of chaos that followed to attain absolute supremacy over Togarini and turn it into his own nation. After refusing to recognize Elisabetta as his Empress, Gaul made a quick military and political decision to eliminate Prince Thule and all his descendants. Then the Supreme Archon proclaimed the beginning of his new era, and established the Azur Alliance as enemies of Abel and all it represents today.

As many fear, the shadow of war once again rises up in these lands, and today nobody can tell if everything is finally resolved without bloodshed, or whether the flames and smoke will soon fill the horizon once more.


Arlan
Abel
Kanon
Togarini
Remo
Bellafonte
White Sea
Holy Plains
Great Plains
Forest of Lacan
Lands of the Storm
Forest of Avalbane
Lhenas Marsh
Fields of Terminus
Passage at The End
Quartz Crater
West Plateau
Mountain Range of the Scar
Burnt Countryside
Cozal Forest
White Forest
Vercelis Marsh
Scarlet Plains
White Plateau
Forest of Lira
Craters of the Streak
Crystal Lake
Rock of Azur
Mazgo Forest
Merle Lagoons
White Mountain Ranges
Quarry of Lavin
Metzger Forest
Pearl Coast
Londure
Dylaen
Renvyl
Lonel
Urim
Tharsis
Eytan
Sura
Yirath
Zafir River
Port of Eburah
Karh
Navan
Gwynn River
Sepher
Hod
Aubrey
Iborr
Seifer
Reisz
Brudge
Reindhold
Aldon
Calmo River
Reine
Well of Rejects
Iron Finger
Hausburz
Monastery of the Holy Light
Castle of Odessa
Berke
Bendeck
Itzelhaya
Adami River
Schank
Kaine
Waldermar
Bastel
Americh
Caliardo
Wilkend
Raverna
Caoria
Allegro River
Ciavolo
Holzbu
Enna
Terravecchia
Uzure
Elisio
Ascani
Albino
Harma
Dei Filio River
Cedonia
Xur River
Musevera
Bellio River
Port Misrech
Shingle Port
Widcann River
Lighthouse of Lucerna
MAP KEY
Capital
Metropolis
City
Building
Fortress
Path
Road
0 250 500 750 Kilometeres
0 250 500 Miles

Relevant Geographical Features

Togarini is well known because its land is separated into two distinct sections. In its western part there are wide plains and some forests, whereas in the east lay mountain masses and high plateaus.

The Mountain Range of the Scar: Located on the easternmost edge of Togarini, just where it borders Kanon, the Mountains of The Scar are located. It is an inhospitable place; so high, steep and rugged that is completely inhabitable. Generally, the peaks of the mountains are frozen almost the entire year round, and combined with snowstorms and altitude, the temperatures of the area reach record lows. In it the tributaries of the River Eloir, which crosses Kanon, are born.

Unknown to all but a small sector of Tol Rauko, at the peak of the mountains, almost completely covered with snow, there is one of great floating fortresses of the Duk´zarist. Destroyed by the Sylvain after a bloody confrontation ages ago, the fortress was abandoned by its citizens, although not before activating a large number of supernatural defenses to prevent invaders from looting its secrets. Although the massive damage that it incurred no longer allows it to fly, nobody knows what remains hidden inside of the dark city. Tol Rauko tries to keep it absolutely secret, because they suspect that if Gaul knew of its existence, he would not stop at nothing to enter it in search of any type of warlike power preserved within.

The Scarlet Plains: The western area of the principality is a great plain of rich vegetation. It is said that its name comes from the vast amount of blood that has been spilled over it in the past, but the truth is that when the sun is on the verge of setting, the entire field takes on a beautiful reddish hue, which undoubtedly is the true origin of its nickname. Despite the legend, now the plains look gorgeous and full of life, peppered with large towns and some other villages. Many of the pathways that cross it are even paved.

The Passage at The End: The Passage at The End is the largest opening that crosses the Mountain Range of the Scar, connecting Togarini with Kanon. It gets its name from being the path that the armies of Rah followed when falling back towards the mainland after their defeat in Terminus. Formerly used as a trade route, it is now a vital passage for the armies of the principality.

The Quartz Crater: This strange place situated in the central part of the western plateau has fed the imagination of Togarini's people for centuries. It is, as its name suggests, almost a mile of crater completely crystallized whose surface resembles an immense polished diamond. All along the area's perimeter sharpened edges protrude, similar to tall crystal columns that give it an unnatural and ghostly appearance. The crater has become a kind of dark myth among the people of the nation, and even the Church has officially declared it a cursed place. Legend tells that this is where Keith Khaiel Sith, the most powerful member of the Conclave, met his end, and that the surroundings are merely a reflection of the consequences his power unleashed. True or not, it produces a strong discomfort in those that visit it, experiencing dizziness, restlessness and an intense cold.

Because of the extraordinary mystical power that it generates, the Order of Yehudah has conducted several experiments in the crater, but these have always ended in heart wrenching failures. The only thing they managed to discover is that the crater exponentially increases the potential to summon entities but, simultaneously, the consequences of failure as well. Their last test took the lives of four of their most powerful members, whose mangled bodies were scattered throughout the entire crater and their spirits completely consumed. What actually happened is still a mystery.

Inexplicably, the area has no reflection in The Wake or, at least, none that can be confirmed by any supernatural means. Even The Lord of Nightmares has been completely unable to reach it.

West Plateau: Also called "The Plains of Emment", the West Plateau is the high area that occupies most of Togarini. It is a huge elevation that extends to the occidental part of the kingdom, where numerous important cities are built. The area, though it does not have the same fertility of the western meadows, has rich vegetation and some forests. However, the fundamental importance of the Plateau is due to the huge deposits of gold it contains, since they are the major economic resource for the kingdom. Consequently, there are dozens of large quarries and mines devoted to the extraction the precious mineral.

If we heed the legend and study some of the great geographers, we discover that The Plateau is not natural. The secret history says that the entire section of land was destroyed during the confrontation between The Conclave and the combined forces of Zhorne and Taumiel Sylvanus.

Fields of Terminus: This it is the name given to the land where the biggest battle in the history was fought. If the legend is carefully studied, almost twenty million lives were lost over three days at the conflict that would mark the beginning of the end of the War of God. Over a decade later, some people began to erect tombstones or stick swords into the graves in memory of the fallen, which became a kind of ritual or tradition for the people of Abel and Togarini. That way, slowly but inexorably, Terminus eventually became the world's largest cemetery. At dusk, with the reddish light of the sun tinting hundred of thousands of tombstones and swords, the spectacle on the horizon is simply overwhelming.

As the largest battlefield of the last millennium, its reflection in The Wake is chaotic, dark and turbulent. It's said that the infinite memories and spirits of the fallen still fight a continuous battle that never ends. Fortunately, all this has little impact on the material world, as the membrane separating Gaïa from The Wake is very strong due to "The Five Thrones", a series of mystical obelisks that are placed in each of the corners in the Fields of Terminus forming a great pentagram. Who or what placed them is unknown.

Places of Interest

Togarini has huge cities and large towns, but after to having lived through so many battles throughout its history, also preserves many unique places of the past ages.

Aubrey

(City, Population 26,000+)

Aubrey, located in the North, near the border of Arlan, is the oldest city in Togarini. Its origins go back to the age of splendor of Solomon, during which time served as an outpost of the fallen empire. The place was a great military stronghold, until it fell in one night as inexplicably as the rest of their civilization. Several nomadic tribes took advantage of the few buildings that were left standing and rebuilt them, and since then the site have undergone numerous internal power struggles.

Currently, the central district of Aubrey still has some roots with the style of Solomon, although the rest of the city is built with a dark gothic design that dim its streets, giving them a slightly sinister ambience. The place has a good iron and steel industry and the reputation of its luxuriously worked armors is well-know everywhere. Until recently, its main source of income was its trade with the northern cities, but after closing the borders with Abel, the economy has slowed considerably.

Although it is not the first line of defense neither a place of great strategic value, Gaul has moved countless troops into the area and even visits it personally. Much to everyone's surprise, the Supreme Archon has brought martial law into the city and at the same time he is investing great sums of money for improve the local infrastructure. Few understand why Aubrey has become a place of such importance for The Lord of War; as a former military fortress of Solomon, the bowels of the city still hide a part of that lost technology from the past. For the Archon, who desperately wants to possess the power of the Lost Logias, Aubrey is the true masterpiece that can destabilize the balance of power in his favor.

Wilkend

(City, 8,000+ inhabitants)

This city has experienced all sorts of problems in recent years, which have been solved solely through the fierce determination of its people. From famine to pests, through several supernatural conflicts which caused the destruction of a whole district (which the Church rationalized saying that everything had been caused by an explosion of an underground deposit of powder), Wilkend has been able to overcome all the bumps towards its progress.

They call this place "The City of Weapons", as its main task is to produce weapons for the armies of the principality. Considering the present situation of Togarini, it is no wonder their inhabitants are now more occupied than ever.

Its people are known for their marksmanship, and the city has one of the best regiments of archers in Togarini. Every year, coinciding with the summer festivals, archery competitions are organized with attractive prizes in cash. Recently, its governor was openly executed for opposing the Supreme Archon Matthew Gaul, and in his place Baron Alosyus was promoted (Paladin Lv. 4, ♂), one of the former generals of The Lord of War. Apparently Alosyus is a good natured charismatic man, who has earned the trust of the people in just a few weeks, but inside hides a cruel and merciless heart that enjoys letting others suffer.



Kaine

Kaine

(Metropolis, Population 980,000+)

There is a widespread rumor that Kaine is the second most important city in the entire old Empire, the only one that tries to compete with Archangel in beauty and grandeur. It is the capital of the principality, whose origins date back to the era in which the Order of Yehudah unified the region for the first time. After being demolished and rebuilt countless times, with the creation of the Sacred Holy Empire Kaine reached the magnificence it has today.

The city is built on a large plateau that grants it an exceptional natural defense against any attackers. Large stone walls separate the oldest and richest part of the city, where the wealthiest nobility and bourgeois reside. Gothic castles and monumental cathedrals are raised there, and the streets are full of magnificent monuments and even a university. The greatest of all the buildings is the Fortress of Alarice, the current residence of the Supreme Archon after the "disappearance" of prince Jestin Thule. The outer zone is not as luxurious, but the buildings are equally impressive, and are all characterized by the great stone arches that join them together.

Kaine enjoys many modernities, most of adapted from the particular style of Archangel. The city has a system of lighting, a sewage system and potable water reservoirs. The place is so huge that it even has public transports to travel from one point to the other, the wagon lines; huge horse-drawn carriages that move through the metal tracks laid throughout the city.

In Kaine all kinds of organizations and occult powers converge. Black Sun has a strong commercial presence with regard to selling supernatural artifacts, whereas the Magus Order and the Order of Yehudah keep fighting from the shadows. However, the most powerful of them is Samael, because not only this is the city where the largest number of its members reside, but its leaders, the mysterious Fallen Angels, congregate here to take crucial decisions. Thanks to its agents and the influence they have on the most influential nobles, Samael can subtly control almost anything that occurs within the limits of Kaine. The appearance of Les Jaeger as a supernatural force in the gaming table only complicates the power struggle within the city.

The lord of the city is The Supreme Archon Matthew Gaul, but since he spends so little time there, the Arbiter Raimi (Wizard Lv. 9, ♂) is the one who governs in the absence of his lord. Additionally, each neighborhood is organized and run by noble families, who almost always have a lot of competition between them.

Reindhold

(Metropolis, Population 123,000+)

Reindhold is a relatively young city, but in less than one hundred years of history it has grown from a small village to a major economic center. It began as a simple miner town located near a wide gorge in the West Plateau, but after discovering a huge vein of gold in its surroundings, it grew at an enormous speed in less than a decade.

Illustrated by Raúl Rosell

Supreme Archon Matthew Gaul



Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

With only 21 years old, Matthew Gaul was the youngest Lord of War in history, a position which he acquired solely due to his talent and unrivaled ambition. He destroyed everything in his way using any method at his disposal, no matter who or what it was.

Born into poverty and receiving constant beatings as a boy, Gaul had an early obsession with power and overcoming his fears. For nine years he traveled everywhere, learning about the world and developing his incredible innate talent. After he turned 14, he entered the army, and rose rapidly to become the personal assistant to the Imperial Arbiter Gainum, whom he assassinated at the first opportunity to steal his identity. Ironically, beneath the mask, his performance was much more efficient than that of the true Arbiter. When the former Lord of War in the south passed away, his name was already so well known that the Emperor had no doubt that he was the right man for the position. Since nobody ever knew the true identity the former Arbiter, Gaul could reveal his true self, but not before terminating anyone who knew him in his former life, including his family.

His work as Lord of War was impressive, although due to his ambition, he began to subtly extend his personal power in the principalities that he supervised, years before the arrival of Eljared. He remained inactive during the imperial attacks to the south, and took advantage of the Breach of Heavens to initiate his plans, proclaiming himself Supreme Archon of Togarini and founding the Azur Alliance.

Currently, Matthew Gaul (Warlock Lv 12, ♂, Ancient Blood) is 32 years old. As is common in the people of Togarini, he has dark skin and white hair. His personal presence is impressive, and he always dresses in very dark and clean colors, drawing attention to himself wherever he goes.

Gaul not only has overwhelming skills in battle, but also possesses proficient magical abilities. Upon discovering that he had The Gift, the Arbiter developed his powers from a Duk´zarist sorceress which he freed from the Inquisition. Gaul seduced the woman, making her reveal all of her secrets to him, only to dispose of her when she had nothing left to teach. Soon, he sought out new instructors with whom to perfect his art. After becoming the Lord of War he also discovered the power of the Lost Logias, and that the blood of Solomon ran through his veins. Although he is unaware of it, he is the last descendant of the ancient emperor Andromalius, and is such lineage which grants him his unstoppable powers.

Cold and scheming, Gaul is one of the most fearsome people in Gaïa. He possesses a sinister charm which makes him truly fascinating. Those who surround him profess a true admiration for Gaul, and gravitate towards him like moths to a flame. It is evident to the whole world that his objective is to become Emperor. However, more important than the title itself, Gaul is a man who seeks power. He craves it over all things, an absolute power which could allow him to never fear anything or anybody ever again. Gaul does not see his ambition as something evil; he simply believes that he is the most appropriate person to guide the world and that the destiny has put it within his grasp. Although he is careful and cautious by nature, from time to time he loves to take risks; to face his fears and overcome them is what makes him feel truly alive.

At the moment, Gaul seriously considers the unification of the southern principalities the best course of action, but Lucrecio makes that impossible. Although their armies are superior and it would not cost him much to submit to the neighboring principality, the former Lord of War is not stupid and knows that it's not wise to take Lucanor lightly. In a way, he would even prefer to face Abel; at least against the Empire he's aware of what he's up against. He doesn't feel very predisposed to accept the last of the Giovanni lineage into the Alliance either (of course, in the event that he accepts the invitation of The Triumvirate). Although it would definitely reinforce the support of the citizens enormously and would win one of the best allies, he fears that voices calling out for the return of the old imperial dynasty will be a major setback to his long-term plans.

The city is built on the slopes of the plateau and supported by a large wall of stone. Because of the continuous uneven floor levels, there are many stairs and imbalanced streets, which sometimes make it difficult to travel across the city. Reinhold does not have decorated boulevards or beautiful monuments, but it has a great variety of modern architecture thanks to the new generation of architects who were contracted to build it. The gold veins are located a little over half a mile from the city, and it is prohibited to anyone without a permit from approaching them. The city has also many gambling houses, where the miners can go spend their pay and have fun with the beautiful girls who work there.

Reindhold is still expanding, and the promise of war seems to have no effect on the visitors drawn into it looking for a way to quickly increase their fortunes. Anyone seeking work will have no problem finding a job. However, the considerable tax increase has affected the spirits of the people, making the workers a bit uncomfortable.

The city is mired in power struggle between two influential men, Duke Deiter (Freelance Lv. 4, ♂), the official governor of the region, and Baron Clovis (Ranger Lv. 3, ♂), who owns most of the gold mines. Deiter controls the army of the city, but it must yield to the economic superiority of the Baron, which causes great tension between two men who mutually hate each other.

The city hosts a strong Samael presence and its Archon Athalux Geilth (Shadow Lv. 8, ♂ Duk´zarist), a powerful Duk´zarist of few words and cold demeanor, lives in the house of Baron Clovis, who saved his life over ten years ago. Athalux is the real force that prevents Duke Deiter from monopolizing all the power in Reindhold and assassinating the Baron. He has a secret relationship with Evely, Clovis' daughter, although she is engaged to a nobleman of the capital. On more than one occasion, both lovers have planned to run away together, but none wants to shirk their duties or betray the Baron.

Waldemar

(Metropolis, Population 212,000+)

Waldemar is a great city that thrives on its trade with the south. Located on a great plain, it draws attention because high buildings infest its core, while in its surroundings there are countless farms that supply it with all the essential products that the city needs.

Duke Varick Mauser (Freelance Lv. 3, ♂) is its ruler, advised by a large number of important nobles. Apparently, Varick is a firm supporter of the Supreme Archon, but he secretly feels great animosity towards him and everything that Gaul represents. The Duke leads a small rebellion that plans to contact Tadeus Van Horsman to gain the support of the Empire. He prefers to proceed with caution for now, because he knows perfectly well that one false step would mean his execution and the deaths of everyone that assist him. Rosamund Turner (Assassin Lv. 6, ♀) is the Les Jaeger commander of the city, and questions Varick loyalty to the Alliance, but without the smallest shred of evidence, she would never dare to openly oppose the Duke.

The metropolis has three major military strongholds, where the Lord of War's soldiers and the principality armed forces train constantly. Both groups are unified now, so the three academies are serving under a common purpose.

Waldemar is renowned for its distinguished fighting instructors, as well as the advanced military tactics taught there. For years, many mercenaries have been coming to the city looking for training and a patron which to serve. People are accustomed to minor disputes on the streets and, even sometimes, actual armed conflict. However, to most citizens it doesn't matter at all, since they believe that it's the price that they must pay for prosperity.

The Well of Rejects

(Building, Unpopulated)

The Well of Rejects is a contradictory and obscure monument built in the center of the Fields of Terminus. It is a huge fissure in the land used in the long past to dump all the corpses and remains of the non-human creatures that perished in the legendary battle. Thus, uneven ethnic groups such as the Sylvain and the Duk´zarist, or giants and wyrms, ended up buried together in the depths of Gaïa. Years later, the first marshal of Tol Rauko ordered the construction of a monumental underground labyrinth that served as a tomb, a silent reminder that not only man spilled their blood that day. Although the mausoleum took almost a century to complete, the Church was opposed to the project considering it offensive towards all those that died. After many setbacks and problems with the bishops, the structure was sealed and abandoned.

From the outside, the Well of Rejects appears to be a circular coliseum, but from the inside there are enormous spiral staircases that are carved from the bowels of the earth. Each floor is a complex and intricate system of corridors, filled with thousand of niches and makeshift graves. The entire place has mechanisms and protective devices so that nobody desecrates the bodies, so that if worse comes to worst, they don't pose a threat to man. Tol Rauko reserved the lower areas for the most important and the most dangerous creatures, so those protections are naturally much stronger.

Seifer

(Fortress, Population 15,000+)

Seifer, whose name means "Sword of God", is a huge fortress located in the northern area, near the border of Abel. Its site is, at least, a bit unusual, as it rose inside of an extinct volcano over 1,000 years ago. The base is deep ground, but the stronghold is so large that it protrudes high above the crater. To access the inside it's necessary to go through one of two long underground passages, each of which has three huge metal doors. The center of the fortress is an ancient D´Anjayni construction, which was used to make such an unusual stronghold.

Before the formation of the Azur Alliance, Seifer belonged to the Lord of War, and the place not only has a unique natural protection, but also a countless number of soldiers inside of it. Because of its proximity to Sepher and the border of the Empire, it has become the main stronghold of the Azur Alliance. Consequently, both Bellafonte and Remo sent numerous regiments to reinforce the ranks of the fortress. On several occasions, Seifer patrols have had some confrontations with the imperial troops of Sepher.

The Arbiter Balthassar (Warrior Summoner Lv. 10, ♂) directs and coordinates the fortress, but also performs many underground mystical experiments to create an army of supernatural soldiers to serve the Alliance.

The Monastery of the Holy Light

(Building, Population 200+)

Under the apparent facade of a common monastery, the abbey located on the ridge of the Mountain Range of the Scar is the headquarters of the Order of Yehudah. More than half of the residents they are students and apprentices of various levels, while the others are teachers or researchers of the Order.

After murdering and replacing the true monks over fifty years ago, Yehudah remodeled many of the rooms in the monastery in convenience to their own needs. Using supernatural methods, they have built huge underground structures several levels deep, where they carry out their more dangerous rituals and contain the hundreds of creatures that they have attracted the world to serve to them. They monastery is also used as meeting place for the Azathoth, who utilize the chambers in the lower levels.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Publicly, the head of the monastery is Abbot Nevin Roxis (Illusionist Lv. 4, ♂), but when the members of Azathoth are not present, the facilities are directed by the Master Margulis (Summoner Lv. 7, ♂), who wishes to become one of the lords of the Order.

OTHER SETTLEMENTS: *Schank, Hausburz, Reine.*

Adventures

The apparent calm in Togarini is merely a prelude to the great events that are undoubtedly about to happen. The current search for weapons and supernatural agents by their leaders, along with the militant history of the principality, are certainly great ideas to play out. Of course, we should neither forget the complex intrigues of power of the nobility, and the huge presence of mystical organizations in the area like Samael, the Order of Yehudah or Black Sun.

The Stolen Book: A few days ago, the Black Sun bookstore that deals with supernatural devices in Reindhold has undergone an assault. Despite its high level of protection and the security equipment that protects its facilities, an unknown number of assailants have infiltrated into a sealed chamber and stolen a rare artifact that was discovered by a group of Seekers just a week ago.

The one responsible for the store, Albert Schulz, fearing the consequences of his failure, has not informed his superiors of the situation yet. Frightened, he plans to find a solution by himself, so he's looking to hire any competent adventurers to bail him out. If the characters attempt to make a purchase in the store by chance, or Albert simply has some way of detecting their supernatural skills, he will not hesitate in trying to obtain their aid. The problem is that Albert is also expecting a researcher from the organization to come and analyze the true capabilities of the artifact in less than two weeks.

The culprit is Sirius Derenme (Summoner Lv. 5, ♂), a member of the Order of Yehudah who is acting on his own volition without informing his superiors. To cover his trail he has left all kind of evidence pointing to the Duk´zarist Akalaxis, the little brother of the Samael Archon in the city.

The War of the Wine: The counts of LeClair and barons of Daserot have been rival noble families for generations. Their enmity has not reached the point of bloodshed, but several confrontations in other "arenas" have occurred. One of the more fierce fronts is in wine production, but in recent years the harvests of Daserot have totally outstripped the ones of LeClair. Nevertheless, the Count has been able to maintain the reputation of his wine production mixing it with wine from Arlan (interestingly, bought to the Gudmunson family, of the Dangerous Wine adventure).

However, it is becoming increasingly problematic to the LeClair to continue their charade, because since the threat of war, trade with the Empire has become very complicated. The pride and the position of the Count prevents him from recognizing that his harvest mixes with a foreign wine, but without it everyone would realize the poor quality of their vineyards. Feeling like he's running out of time and that he cannot continue hiding the situation, the Count is determined to win the war of the wine by hook or by crook. LeClair has drawn up a convoluted plan; he wants to hire a group of mercenaries to burn his own harvest, paying them in jewelry bearing the registered trademark of the Daserot family. The evil man plans to appear with a large troop of soldiers when the fields are beyond saving, arresting the characters while accusing them of working for the barons.

Common Characters of Togarini

Here are a series of samples of the most common characters in Togarini. The following statistics have been created without taking Creation Points into account.

Agent of Les Jaeger

Class Assassin; **Level** 3
Initiative 85/80; **LP** 100; **AT** None; **Attack** 120; **Dodge** 110; **Weapons** Short Sword; **Damage** 45
AGI: 8 **DEX**: 7 **CON**: 6 **STR**: 6 **PER**: 8 **INT**: 5 **WIL**: 7 **POW**: 5
Abilities: Acrobatics 20, Athleticism 20, Ride 20, Swim 20, Jump 10, Climb 15, Intimidate 55, Persuasion 20, Hide 60, Stealth 60, Poisons 35, Trap Lore 35, Notice 60, Search 60, Memorize 5, Composure 55, Resist Pain 25.
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 40, PsR 45.

Togarense nobleman

Class Freelance; **Level** 3
Initiative 65/60; **LP** 100; **AT** None; **Attack** 85; **Dodge** 70; **Weapons** Short Sword; **Damage** 45
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 6 **STR:** 6 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 7 **WIL:** 7 **POW:** 7
Abilities: Ride 45, Swim 20, Style 50, Intimidate 25, Leadership 60, Persuasion 70, Notice 30, Search 15, History 40, Memorize 35, Appraisal 40, Dance 50.
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 45, PsR 45.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Middle-Class/ Low-Class: Athleticism +10, Ride +10, Climb +10, Notice +10, Slight of Hand +10, Composure +10, Persuasion +10, History (local) +10.

Bourgeois: Ride +10, Persuasion +10, Style +10, Composure +10, History (local) +10, Appraisal +20, Dance +10.

Nobility/High Nobility: Ride +10, Style +10, Composure +10, Leadership +10, Intimidate +10, Persuasion +10, History (local) +10, Dance +10.

Table 9: Togarini

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-10	Low-Class	Low-Class clothes, some food, a weapon or few objects without value. 3 CC.
11-60	Middle-Class	A couple of changes of clothes, food for a week, a weapon, a light armor and a backpack with several items. 1 GC.
61-90	Bourgeois	Several changes of clothes, food and good wine for more than a week, a horse, a weapon and a small jewel or gold ornament. 15 GC.
91-100	Nobility	Several changes of quality clothes, good food and a couple of bottles of reserve, a pair of weapons, light or medium armor, a horse and some jewel or a gold ornament. 120 GC.
Priv.	*High nobility*	*Luxurious clothing for all the occasions, several horses including a purebred or a warhorse, exquisite food in abundance, several weapons (some might even be +5), armor of any type, a jewel collection and gold ornaments, a great wine with dozens of bottles of reserve wine. 900 GC.*

REMO

Capital: Albino.
Population: 3,100,000+
Ethnic Groups: Vildianos (71%), Asher (22%), Daevar (4%), Aion (2%).
Government: Monarchy.
Languages: Latin.
Religion: Christianity.
Technology: 3.
Denomym: Remano.
Flag: A dark green flag with a dark and glossy gothic R.
Masculine Names: Alessandro, Antonio, Carlo, Daniele, Davide, Edoardo, Enrico, Ettore, Francesco, Giacomo, Lorenzo, Mario, Paolo, Stefano, Valentino.
Feminine Names: Agate, Alessia, Andrea, Carmela, Chiara, Diana, Giovanna, Lucia, Michele, Rosalia, Sara, Simona, Stefanía, Teresa.
Last Names: Abbazia, Bellanti, Bianco, Corizzi, D´Agostino, Di Amato, Di Benedetto, Di Blasi, Di Gaetano, Di Luca, Dinolfo, Florio, Geraci, Martian, Parrino, Pelligrino, Ridulfo, Scacciaferro, Vitale.

The colossal economic power that once rivaled Gabriel and Phaion long ago is currently mired in the most painful of situations. Located south of the current border of the Empire and bordering the White Sea, the nation of Remo is no more than a shadow of what it formerly was.

The whole territory is full of hills and high plateaus, giving it very irregular geography. It also has many forests and marshes. The climate tends to be cold with continuous precipitation throughout the year. In summer, the coast commonly suffers great hurricanes that sometimes severely affect the coastal cities.

Remo was renowned for its large and luxurious cities, filled with extravagant monuments and treasures shipped from the New Continent. Unfortunately, nowadays it even lacks those, as the Empire destroyed many of their cities during the chaotic mandate of Eljared. Currently, Remo has no trade or guild infrastructure, nor a clear source of income. Poverty is spreading everywhere, and people desperately look for something to put in their mouths.

The reasons for the depressing state of the principality are the decay and corruption of its leaders over the past the two centuries, who made exorbitant taxes, foolish and eccentric laws, and gradually lost everything that they had earned in the past. Currently, the only thing left of any value is a large and well-trained army, which combined with passion and the advanced military techniques of the Azur Arbiters, has become one of the most formidable armies in all of Gaïa. It is called The Six Legions because of its military structure, which is divided up into six distinct groups.

Remo has traditionally been governed by a council of powerful nobles, led by their prince. Now, Fabian Hess, son of the executed Prince Maximillian, has monopolized the power with the support of Matthew Gaul appointing himself Supreme Monarch. Among the chaos that followed the withdrawal of the imperial armies from the principality, he made sure to take total control of the nation, placing the surviving nobility under his command.

At present, Remo has become an important component of Azur, although its dependence on the Alliance is absolute. Togarini provides the funds to rebuild its cities and the little food that allows its people to survive. Without this support, the principality would sink further into distress. Surrounded by death, the people are in a state of depression that comes very close to despair, and their hatred towards the Empire, and more specifically to Arlan, is the only thing that drives them forward. Unable to believe in a better future, their armies wait on the borders; prepared for a war that they need more than anyone.

Culture and Society

The proud society of Remo was formerly composed of important aristocrats, great bourgeois lords and rich trading merchants, but has degenerated to the point of absolute misery that it is today. Most of the people are impoverished, looking for any work with which to put some food on their table. The destruction of many houses has created a great number of homeless nomads, who roam from one place to another without any purpose in life.

In Remo, you can find everywhere the sad stares of people who do not have much hope for the future and only work for their daily survival. Since the only employment that is easily found and or well paid is being soldier, there are thousands who are joining the Six Legions, either by necessity or by the hatred felt towards Arlan. Ordinary citizens have a low education level and the majority can neither read nor write. The schools are all private ones, something that only a very small percentage can afford.

The merchants and bourgeois have virtually disappeared, since there are few people that can afford the luxury of buying things outside of the bare necessities. The only people that still have some power are the feudal lords, who try to rebuild their small countries with the aid from the Azur Alliance.

Now more than ever, the Church is gaining importance for the society of Remo, since it alleviates the people's souls by giving them the hope of something more than pain and desperation is waiting for them when they leave the material world.

Regarding the Supernatural

The people of Remo are repulsed by the supernatural. They hate any mystical powers and what they represent, because to most they equate to only death and misery. Society, which has been fed stories and legends of cursed artifacts from overseas and the dark ruins inside their principality, has always associated the inexplicable with evil and malignant forces. Consequently, if someone is suspected of being a wizard or has supernatural powers of any kind, people will bring him before the pertinent authorities as soon as possible.

The Inquisition is immensely powerful in Remo, and many courts and agents hover around all the major population centers. If they receive notice or they suspect the actions of supernatural forces nearby, it's only a matter of hours before some member of the order appears to prosecute the case.

The History of Remo

Remo, a territory that was formerly one of the eleven Holy Kingdoms, joined the Empire in the year 242 after a series of disputes with the non-human refugees from the war, who had claimed their rights to these lands. From its origins as a principality, it showed its huge availability to the maritime commerce with the New Continent on territories such as Itzi or Arabal, which at that time were not yet joined with Abel.

After observing the interest and fascination that the nobility of the Empire showed towards the eccentricities that the new world provided, Remo was determined to monopolize that beneficial market. In less than two decades it became the largest importer of products from the New Continent that were later distributed to the mainland. Those were years of flourishing economic and cultural splendor, until the mismanagement and the corruption of the governors dragged the principality to a slow but noticeable decline, to the benefit of its competitors in the north.

The poor social and economic situation led the nobility of Remo to use Arlan as a scapegoat, blaming the neighboring principality of being the cause of the painful picture of the nation through evil politic manipulations. This lead to a growing animosity towards the people in the north, which ended up being cause of three wars supervised by the imperial Arbiters. Despite winning the three confrontations, Remo could not do anything to improve its situation. Angry, the lords of the

principality tried to declare a fourth war of greater proportions, but the permission was denied. That dragged the principality into a time of disaster and poverty, turning it into a sad reflection of its former glory.

After ignoring the events that led to the fall of the Giovanni lineage and with Elias' ascent to the throne, the things seemed to be on the verge of improving. The new Emperor recognized the plight of the Remanos, so he initiated a series of economic aids aimed at strengthening the domestic market under the supervision of Prince Maximillian Hess, a just ruler who seemed to be able to change the things for better. However, as Eljared came to power, everything was terribly disrupted, because the Emperor withdrew his support to the principality at the most critical moment. Angry, Prince Maximillian publicly declared that the Supreme Archbishop was nothing more than a witch that had Elias under her spell. Eljared's reply was unexpected; it came in the form of an imperial attack that almost totally wiped out the entire nation. Cities and fields of crops were destroyed in a quick and unstoppable blow, pushing Remo into the deepest despair it had ever suffered.

The young Fabian Hess, who was only 17 years old, inherited the title of prince from his father, but little more. His town starved and there was nothing he could do to save it. That was when the Lord of War Matthew Gaul offered his support to him in exchange for joining the Azur Alliance, which Hess agreed to very willingly. Now, while the borders of Remo are itching for a potential war with the Empire, its people struggle to survive while they initiate the long rehabilitation of their lands.

Relevant Geographical Features

The vast majority of the landscape in Remo is an immense plateau over 600 feet above sea level. Despite the height, it is a fertile land with plenty of vegetation in the forests and the lakes. In its northern parts, near the border of Arlan, lies a large marshy area quite difficult to cross.

The White Plateau: The name of this plateau that stretches lengthwise through the whole principality comes from the myth that, for over 2,000 years, the land was submerged under the White Sea and was brought to the surface by the lost technology of Solomon. The basis of this legend is found in the shells and marine fossils that were recovered throughout the entire principality. True or not, all we know for certain is that in the past, many non-human inhabitants lived in those lands, since it has many different kinds of ruins.

Mazgo Forest: The Mazgo is a large forest of birch and oak trees located in southern Remo. It is famous for containing many rare plants and, at times, herbalists and doctors of other nations travel there in search of ingredients for their healing ointments. A large number of refugees have moved into Mazgo and, since it was not affected by the imperial attack, they can survive by hunting and feeding themselves on the indigenous plants. Their greatest problem is the fierce beasts of the forest, which have discovered new preys to add to their daily menu.

Craters of the Streak: This high white plateau has deep craters and cracks in its eastern part that stretch for miles and miles out, forming maze-like passages. Inside the openings, where there are no animals or plants, is a dead zone. The stagnant water in the craters, red and deadly poisonous, has a macabre appearance, reason why people thinks that it is cursed. However, its coloration and toxicity are due to the large veins of iron in the crater bed. There are also many caves, some of which lead to a small D´Anjayni city practically destroyed.

Pearl Coast: The long coast that stretches under the Albino Cape is famous for being an area full of white sandy beads in the past. Unfortunately, after over a century they are completely gone. Today sailors avoid it, since their boats cannot approach the coast and the summer storms are vicious, uprooting trees and demolishing homes. When the tempests are in their peak, sometimes vortex The Wake appears, big enough that can swallow ships whole.

Vercelis Marsh: The Vercelis is a large marsh of thick vegetation located in northeast Remo. It has a variety of indigenous wildlife, some of which were brought centuries ago from the tropical lands of Itzi in a failed commerical project intended to use Vercelis as a place for breeding rare animals and to sell them later as curiosities and mascots to the nobility. Many died after being unable to acclimatize to the new ecosystem, while others were able to quickly adapt. Unfortunately, the balance of the marsh was seriously disrupted, making it a dangerous place because of the huge number of crocodiles and other reptilian predators. Some of them have grown to disproportionate dimensions (sometimes even ten times their original size), and attack anyone who approaches them. The mystery behind this unusual growth is that, under the marsh, the ancient dragoon Arukanah slumbers, and its dreams unconsciously influencing the reptiles, granting them incredible powers.

Forest of Lira: Just a little over a year, Lira was the largest forest of the principality until the armies of the Empire burnt it down by order of Eljared. Inside thousands of animals and nearly five hundred people who lived in the village of Remien meet their ends. Now, after so many living things were burned, what was once a beautiful site in The Wake has become a place of pain and flames. The reflection of the forest still is burning, and spectral figures of darkness and fire travel from one place to another trying to ignite whatever they can touch. Apparently, lighing a fire inside Lira causes the membrane that separates both worlds to weaken. Although it is not enough for something physical to enter or leave The Wake, is possible that people who dream around large bonfire at night may be swallowed up by hell of eternal flames.

Places of Interest

Although all its major cities were either burned or destroyed, their remains are a hotbed of conflicts and problems. Remo also preserves an impressive amount of ruins from the past, most of which belong to non-human civilizations.

Bastel

(Ruins, Unpopulated)

Regarding size, Bastel is the site of the largest nonhuman ruins of Remo. These are the remains of what must have been a great city in the past, of which now only a few walls and columns are left standing scattered along several miles. Among the debris are the vestiges of temples that seem to be built to honor the Beryls and the Shajads, as well as other entities of unknown origin. Although it is unlikely that anything of value remains within them, Tol Rauko has sealed several areas off and occasionally observes Bastel to ensure that everything remains undisturbed.

However, even the Templars are unaware that Bastel is actually a large prison for supernatural creatures, which were imprisoned for different crimes for the rest of their existences. Their cells, where they've been sealed for more than a millennium, are embedded deep in the earth. The wardens of this unique prison are gigantic black serpents that move through the depths of the earth, which comes to the surface cyclically to feed every several years.

Albino

(Metropolis, Population 368,000+)

The city that was the second most remarkable city in Remo has become the new capital, since it was not targeted by the imperial attacks. The metropolis is located precisely in the cape that bares its name, in an ideal location for trade and the marine shipping. Although it hasn't had a good economy or a solid market for years, the influx of money Togarini is investing in Remo has been focused on strengthening the city, which has made its resurgence in less than a year. Forges for weapons, shipyards to rebuild its former navy and other foundations are being established.

Albino is designed in a traditional way; the central districts are the richest, belonging to the bourgeois and high nobility, whereas the suburbs are inhabited by people with low finances. The city has huge churches, luxurious boulevards and beautiful monuments, but because of the bad situation in recent years, all they are neglected, dirty and poorly maintained. The odd details of the New Continent make it stand out, like the Itzi styled buildings or the high aqueducts of Dafne. The best preserved area is its huge port and its warehouses, since it was the first thing to be rebuilt.

The city is currently over-populated, far beyond what it can sustain. The reason is that hundreds of thousands of refugees have immigrated there, after hearing of its expansion thanks to the Alliance. Consequently, there are districts in which disease breaks out, and since food is still scarce, famine also follows. Many people have chosen to join the Six Legions because it is a reliable way to get food and money to their families. It gives Albino a true military appearance, since the number of soldiers in the streets exceeds almost any other city.

The leader of Albino is Duke Donato Encino (Freelance Lv. 4, ♂), who has been forced to surrender his castle to Prince Hess so that he can turn it into the official residence of the supreme governor. Donato is very busy with the reconstruction, because the burden of managing the large flow from Togarini rests solely on him. Fearful of the Azur Arbiters and their supervision, he runs it very efficiently for now, although he plans to divert a portion of the funds to his personal coffers at the first opportunity. The young Prince Fabian Hess (Dark Paladin Lv. 5, ♂), pass little time in the city, since he travels from one side to another making as much of an effort as he can to reconstruct his nation and turn his already powerful army into an unstoppable military machine.

Caliardo

(Ruined Metropolis, Population 18,000+)

Caliardo was the proud capital of Remo, where more than half a million people lived before the imperial armies completely devastated it leaving no stone unturned. Even in decline, it was a beautiful city full of monuments and trophies brought from all corners of the New Continent. Now it is no more than a pile of ruins, in which thousands of people try to survive the best they can.

Many citizens of the former capital gather together in an attempt to make the ruins a livable area, taking advantage of the few buildings left standing and whatever they can recover from the remains. Some neighborhoods in the suburbs are becoming very populated again, having arranged themselves in large camps. By contrast, there are areas of the city that have become very dangerous places, specially in the inner districts. There are rumors that wizards and monstrous creatures have gathered on the old neighborhoods, near where the greatest concentration of monoliths and buildings from Itzi was located. But the true danger comes from a strange disease called "The Gray Plague", which produces a violent dementia in people. The infected victims attack the uninfected in a rage of homicidal fury. And if that weren't enough, some of them develop monstrous mutations, becoming even more inhuman. The source of the infection is unknown, because so far no one has ever heard of such a plague. Fortunately, the disease only seems to spread in certain neighborhoods, and the infected rarely leave those areas.

In the vicinity of Caliardo some bandits and gamblers has gathered hoping to improve their luck by sacking the ruins of the wealthiest areas. Similarly, many nobles and merchants who want to recover some of their most valuable possessions have hired mercenaries to enter the city with similar purposes. And if this were not enough, it is also well know that some Inquisitors are currently monitoring the area. Prince Hess has been intending to issue out one of the Six Legions to eliminate the root problem for some time now, but at the same time he can't send his troops into a city that he considers lost, nor does he want to risk to a possible infection of the plague.

The Dark Lantern

The Dark Lantern is a strange bazaar at the end of an alley in Albino. It is quite a sight, since it is a small mansion of oriental design that stands out from all the other buildings of the city. However, the common people never seem to pay attention to it, and walk right past it without realizing it's there. Only the most desperate individuals or those who are driven by extreme emotions, such as love or vengeance, are able to find it. Similarly, it also seems to be visible to those with high Gnosis, who are attracted to it by pure chance. It is possible that the bazaar exists at a place between The Wake and the real world... or it may simply be no more than an accumulation of unusual coincidences.

One way or another, The Dark Lantern is far from a simple bazaar. Mere objects are not bought there but, according to its owner, it is a "store of desires". The person running the place is Nozomi Kurayami (Summoner? Wizard? Lv 10? , ♀? Human?), an enigmatic beautiful woman of oriental origin. All those that enter The Dark Lantern can ask for what they desire and, after listening to their story, Nozomi gives them a mysterious object that will somehow help them to achieve their dream. In return she requests something from them of equal value, something as seemingly trivial as the ring they're wearing, or as great as everything they have in the world. From time to time the payment seems stupid or meaningless; "The dream that you will have within three nights" or "half of your remaining life". Whether these compensations have real or fictional worth, nobody can say for sure.

It is unknown whether Nozomi is a malevolent force or not. While it is true that people of a dark nature usually meet an unfortunate fate after visiting her (because they are usually consumed by their own desires), the consequences of any wish never seem to be completely positive. On rare occasions, if she is especially fond of some clients (polite people that are really in need of help), she will assist them in a much less shady manner.

An attractive man named Noctune also works at The Dark Lantern, who apparently acts as a receptionist to Nozomi (and cleans the store when necessary). Noctune is actually a Lord of Darkness (See the Compendium of Creatures of the Core book) under a human guise. His relation to the owner of the store, to which he calls "My lady", is completely unknown.

Some people claim to have found The Dark Lantern in other cities throughout history, but it's impossible to say whether Nozomi has simply moved her store or if it actually exists in several places at once.



Illustrated by Raul Rosell

The Iron Finger

Uzure

(City, Population 9,000+)

Uzure is a flashy city. It was originally built over three centuries ago as a project to create a great recreational center. The intention was to transport objects, monuments and even whole buildings from the New Continent to create a city of entertainment that would attract the nobility of the Empire. Unfortunately, the products of fashion and culture from beyond of the ocean were quickly forgotten, and Uzure's purpose disappeared along with them. Still, many immigrants who came from Itzi and Elcia settled there permanently, making it their home.

Perhaps the most striking feature of Uzure is its architectural variety, being that it blends elements of various lands. The city is self-sufficient thanks to the agricultural fields of the surrounding areas and the modest income that it obtains producing artisanal crafts. Now, with the shadow of the war on the horizon and the market with the Empire closed, it's beginning to suffer serious economic problems. This, in addition to the many looters and plunderers that raids the camps and night, is making the food supply dwindle dangerously low.

Although officially governed by Baroness Elia Di La Roca (Freelance Lv. 2, ♀), the real control of the city is given to the caciques of the various districts. Currently, its leader is Nuro Harazdi (Wizard Lv. 6, ♂), a haughty man respected by the community, who secretly practices the shamanic traditions of his ancestors. Considering the city's problems, he plans to use his magical skills to replenish food. Fortunately, many of the monuments from Itzi are supernatural artifacts that, after finding the right components, will allow for a ritual that increases the fertility of the surrounding lands.

The city has a large presence of Samael and Black Sun members, but the latter, rather than dealing with artifacts, is dedicated to organizing the actions of The Seekers operating in the principality.

The Iron Finger

(Fortress, Population 33,000+)

Abandoned and unused for years, the dark fortress of The Iron Finger has acquired great importance in view of the potenital war with Abel. It is a large cylindrical building located on the edge of the largest cracks in the gorge. Its name comes not only from its unusual circular shape, but from the fact that it is composed entirely of dark metal.

The origins of the fortress are non-human and its true architects are unknown. Some occultists have speculated the hypothesis that perhaps it was of elven origins, constructed from iron to repel the Duk´zarist, but no known Sylvain nation lived in the south or used such fortresses. Anyway, the entire stronghold certainly has strong supernatural protections, but very few know this secret.

Today the fortress is a key strategic location for Remo, and also an important training ground for the Six Legions. Thanks to its positioning and the crack that completely covers its north side, it is virtually impossible to take, which is why it has become the current frontier with Arlan.

Although very isolated from any other town or village, many merchants and traders have been attracted to it because of the numerous soldiers there with money to spend. Thus, some have built many local shops around the vicinity, which serve as entertainment for the soldiers in their limited free time.

The Arbiter Arkeid (Warrior Summoner Lv. 9, ♀ Sylvain) is the lady of the fortress, who organizes and trains the generals and commanders of the Six Legions. Arkeid, who is actually a Sylvain raised among humans, is reluctant to the war and the unnecessary death, but obeys all the orders that she receives with mechanical precision.

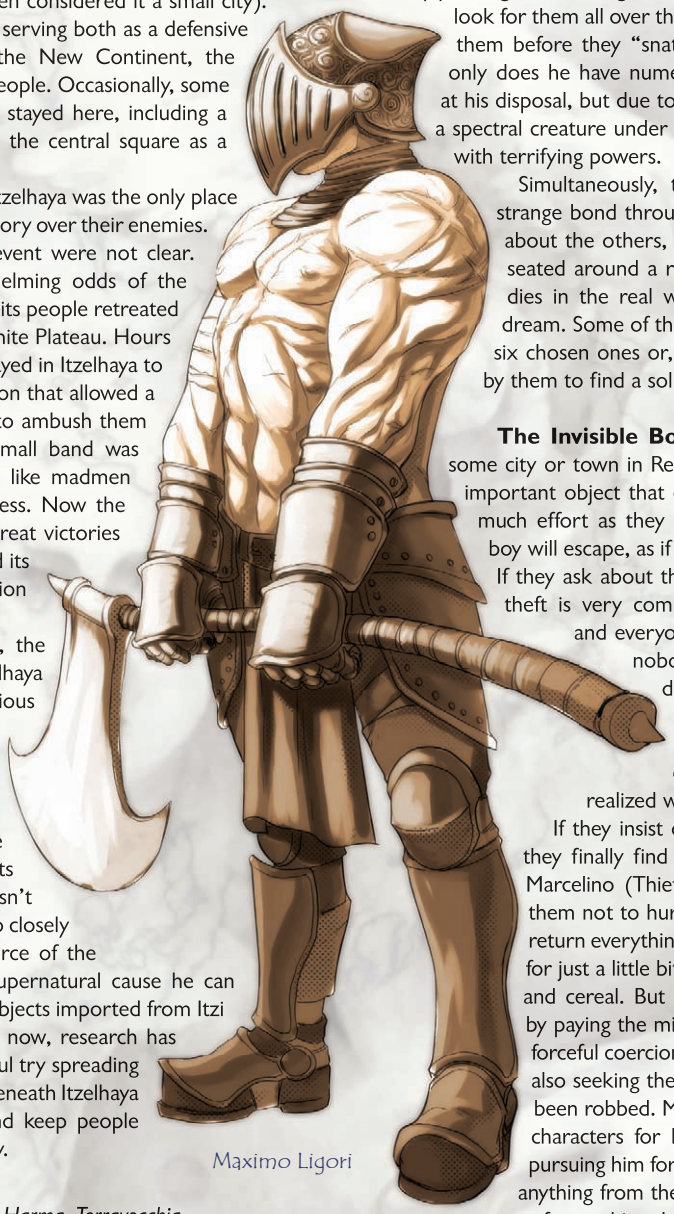
Itzelhaya
(Ruins, Unpopulated)

Today all that remains of Itzelhaya is ruins; a few buildings and pieces of the city wall. Before the war with the Empire, Itzelhaya was a well-fortified town (some people even considered it a small city). Constructed with the dual function of serving both as a defensive stronghold and a trade port with the New Continent, the population soon rose to over 5,000 people. Occasionally, some of the exotic goods arriving in Remo stayed here, including a large stone statue that was placed in the central square as a symbol of splendor.

During the attack of the Empire, Itzelhaya was the only place in which Remo's troops had a slight victory over their enemies. However, the circumstances of this event were not clear. Apparently, after noting the overwhelming odds of the Empire, the town was abandoned and its people retreated to a defensive position beyond the White Plateau. Hours later, one of the imperial regiments stayed in Itzelhaya to rest and reorganize its forces, a situation that allowed a small division of soldiers from Remo to ambush them in the night. Against all odds, the small band was able to defeat the imperials, fighting like madmen and destroying the town in the process. Now the battle is remembered as one of the great victories of Remo, and Fabian Hess has ordered its reconstruction as a symbol of inspiration to his soldiers.

However, after only a few days, the two groups of workers sent to Itzelhaya have disappeared under mysterious circumstances. Prince Fabian, too busy to waste time with something so small, has ordered his generals to deal with the investigation.

The truth is that the disappearance of the workers was organized by agents of Matthew Gaul himself, who doesn't want anyone approaching the town too closely until he determines whether the source of the soldier's victory was due to some supernatural cause he can take advantage of, from some of the objects imported from Itzi or the ruins beneath the homes. For now, research has been inconclusive, so the agents of Gaul try spreading rumors of something evil slumbering beneath Itzelhaya in the attempt to buy more time and keep people from approaching the ruins too closely.



Maximo Ligori

Illustrated by Salvador Espin

Other Settlements: *Caoria, Harma, Terravecchia.*

Adventures

Despite the painful condition in which the principality is in now, the fact that Remo is littered with the ruins and artifacts of nonhuman cultures can be an ideal hook for many action games. It is also possible that the characters can take advantage of the need to recruit remarkable agents at this desperate time, either as mercenaries of some Valiardo nobleman or commissioners like the Black Sun Seekers.

The Silver Ring and the Lost Dreams: Baron Andrei Bercello de Albino (Freelance Lv. 3, ♂) was a man who had everything... fame, fortune, a beautiful wife and several mistresses. And yet he still wasn't happy. He was hollow, and felt that his whole life was no more than a void that nothing could fill. One night, wandering in utter despair on the brink of insanity, the Baron discovered The Dark Lantern, where he obtained a simple silver ring that gave meaning to his existence. This device has allowed him to join his emotions, ideas and dreams with those of six individuals who are completely unaware of his existence. Thus, Andrei begins to experience new sensations, passions and desires that make him feel whole. But in his obsession, he has begun to think that those feelings are really his own and that the six are simply taking what belongs to him. So, the Baron has decided to look for them all over the city with the intention of killing them before they "snatch" his dreams from him. Not only does he have numerous mercenaries and assassins at his disposal, but due to the ring he has also summoned a spectral creature under his control, a shadow of himself with terrifying powers.

Simultaneously, the six people have formed a strange bond through ring. Every night they dream about the others, always staged in a closed room, seated around a round table. When one of them dies in the real world, his chair is empty in the dream. Some of the characters could be one of the six chosen ones or, conversely, they could be hired by them to find a solution to the dream enigma.

The Invisible Boy: While the characters are in some city or town in Remo, a boy will pickpocket some important object that one of them own. Even with as much effort as they put towards capturing him, the boy will escape, as if he had disappeared into thin air. If they ask about the area, they will find that petty theft is very common among the villagers here; and everyone agrees the thief is a boy, but nobody seems to be able to provide a description of him. Furthermore, the characters will discover that they lack some other important objects that they hadn't even realized were missing.

If they insist on looking for the culprit, when they finally find him, the boy, who calls himself Marcelino (Thief Lv. 1, ♂ D´Anjayni), will beg them not to hurt him. Moreover, he is willing to return everything he stole from them in exchange for just a little bit of food or money to buy bread and cereal. But while closing the deal (whether by paying the minimum amount he ask for or by forceful coercion), some strange men will appear also seeking the boy, arguing that they have also been robbed. Marcelino, frightened, will beg the characters for help, because the strangers are pursuing him for days even if he really didn't steal anything from them. If the characters prevent the men from taking the boy into custody, the strangers will offer them a large sum of money to "disappear". If they don't accept, the men will attack the characters, doing a clear demonstration of having some strange supernatural abilities.

Marcelino is actually a D´Anjayni, although he is unaware of it. When he was born his mother used their racial ability the Face of the Spider to give him a false identity because she feared for his safety. The little boy does not even know it. His pursuers are agents of the Order of Yehudah, who want him as a bartering chip with Samael (after extensively experimenting on his body, of course). If the characters manage to defeat the agents of Order, the local head of the organization will stop at nothing to get the boy and terminate the "annoyances" that are bold enough to defy him. At the same time, Samael members try to assist the child, but who knows if the Inquisition or Tol Rauko might also discover his existence.

A New Beginning: Captain Costanzo Dulio (Freelance Lv. 2, ♂) is an old sailor regular of harbor taverns where he can frequently be found drunk, surrounded by curious children, telling stories of how he survived thousands of dangers on his many travels. He presumes to know all the trade routes, ocean currents and coastlines from the Torn Coast to the Sea of The Dragon like the palm of his hand. Unfortunately, he also tells of how he lost his boat and crew many years ago, in a confrontation against a gigantic sea monster. Today, he barely survives on spare change or the meals people offer him in exchange for his stories; but with the economic situation in Remo, generosity is not uncommon.

If the characters are looking for a boat in the principality, which is exceptionally difficult to find at the moment, the old captain will approach them and will tell them of his grand scheme or "Project of the Future", as he calls it. Tired of the hardships of a country on the verge of war, he has managed to gather a handful of sailors in his same situation and sail away from Remo. He has the plan, he has the crew... but he lacks the most important thing: the ship. Fortunately, he also knows how to get one. He recently heard rumors about a boat graveyard, in a small rocky bay not very far away. Abandoned there lie the remains of ships that survived the recent battle between Remo and the Empire. Costanzo intends to get there to build a ship using all those parts and pieces, at least sufficiently repaired for crossing the White Sea. The problem is that there is problematic military group in the vicinity, and they are sailors, not soldiers. Therefore, the group needs warriors willing to take care of any problem until their crew can repair and sail a boat (which will take them two or three days). Costanzo does not have money, but to show his gratitude he is willing to take them to ANY port in the world.

Unfortunately, the sailors aren't the only ones in the area, but also some dangerous sea creatures, attracted to the rotting meat, and some very recent Wake specters, originating from the battle ending months ago.

This adventure is a good opportunity for characters that need to hire the services of a captain and his crew.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Low-Class/ Middle-Class: Athleticism +10, Swim +10, Jump +10, Intimidate +10, Notice +10, Hide +10, Theft +10, Stealth +10.

Bourgeois /Nobility: Ride +10, Swim +10, Persuasion +10, Notice +10, Composure +10, Intimidate +10, History (local) +10, Appraisal +10.

Table 10: Remo

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-20	Low-Class	The clothes that you wear (and not in very good condition) and some left over food. 1 CC.
21-80	Middle-Class	The clothes that you wear, some food, some possessions without value or a weapon of poor quality. 20 SC.
81-90	Bourgeois	A couple of changes of clothes, rations for a little over a week, complete travel equipment, some weapon or a mount. 5 CG.
91-100	Nobility	A mount, several changes of clothes, various rations of quality for more than a week, quite complete travel equipment that can include a weapon or light armor. 30 GC.

BELLAFONTE

Capital: Ascani.
Population: 5,200,000+
Ethnic Groups: Vildianos (80%), Daevar (11%), Asher (7%), Aion (1%).
Government: Monarchy.
Languages: Latin.
Religion: Christianity.
Technology: 3.
Denomym: Belliano.
Flag: Seven swords chained together to form a circle.
Masculine Names: Agostino, Ángelo, Benito, Cirocco, Darío, Domani, Donato, Fabrizio, Gaetano, Giancar it, Gustavo, Lazzaro, Maurizio, Nicola, Paolo, Umberto.
Feminine Names: Alda, Andrea, Benita, Camila, Cinzia, Emanuele, Gia, Luca, Luciana, Melita, Mystic, Natalia, Ornella, Paola, Dew, Sarafina, Valeria, Viviana.
Last Names: Abatti, Accidio, Barberi, Bezzo, Cacicia, Choisio, Messina, Nicoletti, Ozello, Preatoni, Sacane, Tarsitano, Teresi, Head, Ubertino, Zafrano.

Bellafonte is a powerful nation, and as member of the Azur Alliance is openly against the Sacred Holy Empire. It maintains strong ties with the Church and a close relationship with Argos and The Dominion, so it is an important link between Azur and the Episcopal States. Of warm but humid climate, it has great prairies and low hills, a few scattered groves and many tiny lakes.

The nation enjoys economic prosperity for different reasons, from an advanced manufacturing guild to its great natural resources. To that one should add a profitable commercial trading with Lucrecio and, by sea routes, also with The Dominion.

The supreme authority in Bellafonte is the Archduke, who acts as the supreme ruler, backed by the Church and the nobility. For centuries, this job has fallen on shoulders of the Stratto family, which is considered a sacred lineage (some of them even obtained the title of Supreme Archbishop or were sanctified). The present governor is Juliano Stratto, the oldest of five brothers and two sisters. He is known as a kind and compassionate man, but resolved when the situation demands it. He is a close friend of Dorjan Kartarbak, Prince of Helenia, and is married to his only daughter, Melissa.

There are very few towns in Bellafonte and almost all its people live in large cities scattered along the principality. There are monasteries and churches everywhere, and it's common to see one or two abbeys on the horizon while traveling through the countryside. The nation has a powerful professional army mainly composed of templars, which relate to both the Church and the nobility.

The law, though absolute, is slight regarding misdemeanors, which has encouraged many outlaws to stay busy in Bellafonte. The only offenses that are punished in an exceptionally cruel way are the religious ones, leaving to their trials and executions to members of the Inquisition.

Today Bellafonte has reached its true peak of glory, and its union with the Alliance has done nothing but reinforce its place as one of the greatest powers of the world. Although the nation has not been affected by the fracture of the Empire, there is great tension toward Abel, since they consider their violent actions towards the other principalities unforgivable. People understand the need to establish a new order, and although they do not wish to see Gaul as Emperor, they are eager to engage in hostilities against Abel as soon as is possible. For now, they have begun placing large garrisons along its border with Kanon, preparing for the war when the Triumvirate thinks that they are prepared.

The military organizations of Bellafonte

Although there are more than a dozen military organizations in Bellafonte, five stand out among the others for their preparation and martial power. Although they have always acted independently, with the formation of the Azur Alliance all them are coordinated under the Arbiter Alastor (Dark Paladin Lv. 9, ♂), who has managed to gain the respect and admiration of all in just a few months. The various organizations tend to compete among themselves in war games, in an attempt to prove whom the best one is. This keeps them trained and organized enough to work as an army before any oncoming battle.

Templars of the Source: They are the force in the direct service of the Archduke, which are generally considered the true army of the principality. As the largest military organization in the nation, it also enjoys greater funding and equipment. Although the Templars are a religious order, its members are loyal to Bellafonte first, and are moved by the same principles of equality and justice that the Heaven Order knights embody. Juliano Stratto, who leads them into combat whenever it is necessary, is the only lord of the Source.

Brothers of the Alliance: The Brothers of the Alliance is the newest military order, formed following the unification of several smaller groups under Alastor. The Arbiter himself directs them personally and is turning it into a powerful force that rivals even the Templars of the Source.

The Sacred Order: Despite being an independent military group, the Sacred Order is controlled by The Church of Bellafonte, which provides them all the funds needed. Their members are true religious fanatics, and are willing to sacrifice their lives for their ideals without hesitation. The Sacred Order has strong ties with the Inquisition and sometimes it offers their support to them.

Templars of the Heart of Christ: The Templars of the Heart of Christ is a monastic order of soldiers. Their members are generally monks or priests who have dedicated their lives to war and are experts in both unarmed martial arts and with various exotic weapons. They don little to no armor because they wish to go into battle unrestricted. When they receive a wound, they put a tattoo over it, which for them is equivalent to a medal. The Heart of Christ is a small organization, but their great skills and feats have become legendary.

The Order of the Cross: The Order of the Cross is composed of the troops of many noble and feudal lords. Generally, the first-born of the greatest aristocratic houses join it with the objective of creating an important bond between the families. The only downside is that competition among nobles creates internal strife. The organization is famous for having one of the best heavy cavalries in the entire Old Continent.

Culture and Society

Bellafonte society has always been based on the lofty principles of morality, firmness and honesty that sustained the pillars of the Empire in the past. For them, these concepts are the foundation that gives meaning to their lives, just as religion sustains their souls. In fact, it largely opposes Abel because, for the Bellianos, the Empress and her followers have diverted from the most fundamental moral principles.

The nobility of the nation has a strong code of chivalry, but is closely related to the Church. It is customary for aristocrats to bequeath their titles and possessions to the first-born son, and for some of the other siblings to enter into an ecclesiastical career.

People in Bellafonte mainly live in its cities, where hundreds of thousands of people coexist in harmony. Each district is governed by a family of nobles that controls the area as if it were their own private kingdom. There are generally no problems with this system, but sometimes clashes between aristocratic rivals occur that alter monotony of every day life. The towns have ranchers and farmers, whose only function is to provide food to the larger cities.

Regarding the Supernatural

People in Bellafonte are extremely prejudiced towards any possible demonstration of supernatural skills or powers. Following the foundation of their religious beliefs, they initially strike out at any type of malignant unexplainable occurrence. The most common response is a formal accusation before the Inquisition, which will work without hesitation to eliminate any possible act of witchcraft or Satanism at its source.

Only interventions officially recognized by the Church as "divine gifts" are tolerated, even despite the fact that people will not feel comfortable with anything of that nature.

The History of Bellafonte

From its origins as a human nation, Bellafonte has always been characterized by stability and order. Alongside the territories that now include Lucrecio, The Dominion and parts of Remo, it was the largest and most prosperous of the Eleven Holy Kingdoms until the armies of Rah destroyed it. After the momentary chaos that followed the end of the war, the first Emperor brought order to the territory in the year 230, only months after Togarini.

The rulership of the principality fell into the hands of the Stratto family, descendants of the Apostle Julian of Zed, who had organized the resistance during the War of God. Of course, the people put high expectations on them and they wasted no time in proving their worth, because just a year later, coinciding with its assault on Togarini, the Order of Yehudah tried to take control of Bellafonte using an army of magical beasts. The bloody battles continued for two years, although thanks to the determination of its people and the full support of the newly established Church, Bellafonte contained the offensive within its borders until the Emperor returned to end the threat.

Since then, the principality has experienced a slow but progressive growth, greatly influenced by the proximity of The Dominion and the city of Albidion. In just over three centuries, Bellafonte has witnessed no major occurrences outside of a few conflicts between the nobility of the principality. It would be during these years that the great templar organizations would begin forming, the trade with other nations grew and hundreds of monasteries and churches were constructed.

In the year 580 Bellafonte took part of the attack to Kushistan, which was the source of enmity between the two countries and drew Bellafonte and Argos closer politically. Centuries later the principality radically revolted against the depravity of Sacred Holy Emperor Lascar Giovanni, supporting the coup d'etat of Elias Barbados, but were not altogether pleased with the coronation of the Lord of War. From that moment on, the relationship between Bellafonte and the Empire would be slightly tense.



Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

A high Knight of The Order of the Cross

In the year 969, Archduke Juliano Stratto came to power and quickly earned his popularity with his pleasant and magnanimous spirit. He maintained good relations with Elias, until the appointment of Eljared as Supreme Archbishop, when he openly raised his voice in protest against the Emperor's decision. When the destruction of Remo was ordered, all military organizations in Bellafonte rose in arms. There were several minor battles against the imperial troops, but fortunately for the principality, the Lord of War Matthew Gaul disobeyed the orders to join the assault. After the sudden death of the Emperor, Julian refused to accept Abel's authority from then on, and would meet shortly thereafter at the Rock of Azur with Matthew Gaul and Fabian Hess to form the Azur Alliance.

Relevant Geographical Features

Bellafonte is a largely uniform principality, made up of large prairies and low hills. It also has numerous small lakes, which are said to have given name to the land.

The Holy Plains: The central plains of the territory receive the name of The Holy Plains from the large number of churches on them. Travelers may take refuge inside, enjoying shelter in return for a small donation, reason why there are scarcely any inns or lodgings for travelers there. It is a vast plain covered with green meadows that stretch into the horizon. In the absence of any natural barrier, when the wind blows hard it carries the ringing of the nearby church bells, and travelers often hear this noise even when there is no tower in sight. In these cases, many believers and wanderers feel overwhelmed, because it almost seems like the sound comes from heaven itself.

The Rock of Azur: Indeed, this large stone of indigo has become one of the most famous places in the world today, being the spot where the Azur Alliance was forged. To hundreds of thousands of people it is a symbol of freedom and independence, whereas to others it is no more than a site where an insurrection began, dragging Gaïa into a horrible war. The signatures of the three Alliance leaders are engraved into the stone under the agreed terms. Lately, The Rock is receives many tourists, so members of various military organizations alternate in protecting it from possible vandals or from supporters of the Sacred Holy Empire.

According to legend, this was the place where Rah personally slew Nathaniel, the last of the twelve original Apostles. Some occultists claim that there is a very serious possibility that the soul of the Apostle still exists trapped within the immense crystal.

What is the Indigo Stone?

The Indigo Stone is a rare indigo blue crystalline mineral that has strange mystical qualities. Not only does it emit a slight luminescence when near a visible magic source, but it also has the ability to absorb the spiritual energy of its surroundings. Sometimes it can even channel the souls of the dead, housing them for long periods of time and preventing them from being reclaimed by the flow of souls.

Crystal Lake: The beauty of this area is simply overwhelming. The Crystal Lake is a huge pond formed by the union of three great cascades of clear blue water. Moreover, the entire surface of the lake is full of great crystal columns, some of which function as the water jets. People think that it was the beauty of this spot that inspired the name of the principality, which means "beautiful fountain". It is said that the waters have medicinal properties and in one corner of the lake there is a small but luxurious natural spa that wealthy individuals frequent.

The reflection of the lake in The Wake is a true paradise full of positive emotions, in which a great number of various light elementals coexist. Dark creatures feel weak in the vicinity of the lake and avoid it whenever possible.

White Mountain Ranges: Marking the border of The Holy Plains, to the south of the principality are the White Mountain Ranges, a small line of elevations that, although form a single mountain range, are grouped into four clusters separated by large rocks and wide valleys. Even if their surroundings start smooth, there are the occasional peaks and steep sections. These summits, just over a mile high, are sufficiently high to become one of the few places where snow can be seen in Bellafonte during the winter months. The combination of clear rocks, marble quarries and ice in the region make the name "White Mountain Ranges" really appropriate.

As the highest mountains in the principality (almost the only ones, if the Bellio River's source didn't count), have a flora and fauna more characteristic of northern regions. Fox, deer and rare species of birds make of these mountains a very attractive place for hunters.

Quarry of Lavin: From far away a great bright spot shining in the southwest area of the White Mountain Ranges is visible, as if someone had taken a great bite from the mountains. This is the Quarry of Lavin, renown for the high quality white marble that is extracted from it. Almost all the materials used in the construction of Elisio originate here, being one of most valuable marble deposits in the Old Continent.

The quarry is divided in four main sectors, which belong to four different rival mayors. Over the years, all kinds of workers and offices related to stone construction have been implemented there: artisans, sculptors, architects, employers and merchants. Other shops and services settled down around them to give the workers all kind of services that they could need. Thus, what centuries ago were but a few log cabins, now form an independent set of small populations.

Merle Lagoons: To the south of Ascani and The Holy Plains there is a long but gentle hollow in the land, known as the Merle Lagoons, full of large lakes. They are deposits of clean, calm water, since the depression in which they are located keeps them safe from the wind that blows off the Holy Plains. The lagoons are shallow and its bottoms are porous, which causes the water to filter and evaporate easily. As a result, the flow rate varies throughout the year and Merle become a good natural meter of precipitations for the principality; when the lakes are a little shallow, the people prepare for a year of drought, whereas if the rains are abundant, the lagoons increase in water level (sometimes joining up with others).

The region is full of fishermen, but not yet an established urban settlement itself; instead, there are folks living in small cabins and scattered farms around the borders of the lakes. South of there is a larger village, barely a hundred homes, that serves as rallying point for the diffused population of the county, and is home to the noble family who governs the area.

Bellio River: The Bellio is the longest and deepest river in Bellafonte, almost crossing the entire nation before it empties out into the Calistis Ocean. Bellio's current is extremely strong, which prevents most small boats from sailing it. Therefore, people have built four bridges of stone and metal at various points along its length that allow easy transfer from one side to the other. On several occasions there have been major floods, and many people in the vicinity have experienced its consequences, including the capital itself. In anticipation of these incidents, the former Archduke built a large dam, which has managed to alleviate the effects of the flooding so far.

Places of Interest

Except for some of the great churches and monasteries located on The Holy Plains, the most important spots in Bellafonte are its three greatest cities, Raverna, Ascani and Elisio, which make up more than half of Bellafonte's population.

Raverna

(Metropolis, Population 285,000+)

Raverna is a huge metropolis with old buildings bursting with history. It is a city of contradictions, as secure as it is beautiful, since it is filled with both flower gardens and military fortresses. The city was built around the Castle of Mita, which was used at the dawn of the Empire to contain the attack of the Order of Yehudah.

Its proximity to Americh makes it a vital point for the exchange of all kinds of unusual merchandise, thus the bourgeoisie has more power here than in anywhere else in Bellafonte. Sometimes, messages from Americh arrive announcing the need for an adventuring party or some mercenary company. The group objective is never specified, so it is necessary to travel to the city of free commerce to discover what it could be.

The lord of Raverna is Duke Nevio de la Vita (Weaponsmaster Lv. 5, ♂), who acts as the right hand of the Archduke Stratto and personally commands the Templars of the Source. Nevio feels heartwrenching hatred towards the Empire, because his only son was in the city of Caliardo in Remo when it was destroyed, apparently killed in the assault.

Being the city closest to the border of the Empire, Raverna has become a fundamental point of strategy for the forces of the Alliance. The troops assigned to it grow daily, preparing for a possible attack on Kanon. The Azur Arbiter Alastor supervises the preparation of the soldiers and organizes the various military organizations.

The Lighthouse of Lucerna

(Fortress, Population 4,000+)

The Lighthouse of Lucerna is a symbol of the seas of this region and a monument to all proud Bellianos. Despite what its name suggests, it is a great military fortress, one of the major strategic strongholds of Bellafonte and, by extension, of the entire Azur Alliance. The base of the Lighthouse is a black basalt tower over 130 feet high, full of marble and inlaid metal. It's crowned with a large glass dome, inside of which a bonfire constantly burns fed with oil. Its light can be directed by a complex system of mirrors, gears and pulleys. The rest of the fortress stands around the tower, a mass of gray stone adorned with hundreds of crosses. The entire complex is situated atop a steep cliff, and the vision of the lighthouse from the sea is impressive when cut against the night's sky, like a perpetual vigilant watchman.

Reefs and cliffs form Lucerna's coastline, with the exception of a small beach where almost half of the fleet of the country remains anchored. Since the fortress has innovative gunpowder cannons, it is almost unbreachable by sea.

Lucerna is currently controlled by the Knights of The Order of the Cross, led by general Di Solte (Warrior Lv. 4, ♂).

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Elisio

(Metropolis, Population 342,000+)

Elisio, The City of Heavens, is one of the oldest human metropolises preserved from the age of the Holy Kingdoms. Until the War of God erupted, it was the third capital of the kingdoms, well known for its architectural wonders and its great fortresses. After suffering severe damage in the battle, Elisio was rebuilt in all its glory in the fourth century.

The City of Heavens lives up to its name and is undoubtedly one of the most picturesque cities in Gaïa. Its beautiful gothic architecture is striking accentuated by the white marble that covers the great majority of the buildings, and even those that are not, are painted to appear that way. The law of the city has led to various regulations on the matter, and all the houses built here are forced to follow these guidelines. Therefore, Elisio seems like an immense monument complimenting the skyline.



Khaine D'elacreu

Illustrated by Salvador Espin

The city is divided in five primary districts: North, South, East, West and The Heart. The first four are run by the Dukes of Abalsamo (North), the Barons of Scaldaferro (South), the Barons of Merello (East) and the Grimaldi House (West), who all maintain a healthy rivalry between themselves. The Heart, the central area of the city, is a place that welcomes huge cathedrals, palaces and the Holy Castle of the Dawn, home to the real ruler of Elisio, Duke Mateo de Mezzo (Paladin Lv. 4, ♂), who has a very close relationship with Archduke Stratto.

Elisio encompasses a large number of military organizations, which compete annually in a few high-profile war games. Samael also has a strong presence in the city, especially the Sylvain and other light-based entities, although the Inquisition has something more than a hunch to their existence there and soon intends to launch a massive hunt.

The recent history of the city was scenario of a heartbreaking conflict. Till a few month ago, Elisio was home to a small detachment of forty Knights of the Heaven Order, who resided in the fortress-mansion of Lucio. Following the creation of the Alliance, Archduke Juliano Stratto ordered the knights to leave Lucio and return to Abel, or renounce their vows and join the Alliance. After their refusal to accept any of these options, the Archduke was forced to give them the ultimatum that, if in three days they did not abandon the mansion, he would slay them all. To deter them more than 5,000 Templars of the Source surrounded the fortress in anticipation of the inevitable stubbornness of the Heaven Order. But to everyone's surprise, the Knights decided to hold their posts; not a single one of them ran away. On the third day, Julian ordered the assault and, amazingly, barely forty young knights managed to stop the advance of the Templars for more than seven hours. The last of them, a young girl called Aylia Sear who was already mortally wounded, died standing propped up by the hilt of her sword in the archway of fortress. That made a deep impression on all the people of the city and, in response to the incredible courage, the Archduke declared himself the loser of the battle and ordered his troops to retreat without entering the small fortress. Nobody has dared to pass those doors since.

Cedonia

(City, Population 16,000+)

The port city of Cedonia is the second largest wharf in Bellafonte. Despite not being as large as Ripia Port, it has a similar capacity in its moorings and boat traffic, but much more specialized. This is due to its proximity to the quarries of the White Mountain Ranges, where the white marble of Lavin and other materials are extracted. Thus, Cedonia has become an industrial city, focusing mainly on the construction business. It's interesting to note that parts of buildings erected there can later be transported by sea to other places in the world.

Structured very functionally, with wide streets for transporting goods and dozens of workshops for artisans and sculptors, the large city is noted for an almost total lack of monuments, gardens or any other urban decor. Generally, one could say that it does not offer anything aesthetically pleasing or too interesting. Even the houses are not built of white marble, as in Elisio, since all the marble from the quarries goes directly to trade.

Aside from its business relationship with the quarries, the only notable feature of Cedonia are the shipyards where they build the so-called "cedonio merchants", the exclusive cargo ships of this port. These ships follow the same design as the city; functionality over flair. They're slow with poor handling, but tremendously stable, and they have plenty of space for cargo on deck or in the holds. Therefore, the cedonio merchants are the perfect boats for transporting large marble blocks and any other heavy freight; sometimes, even entire buildings.

Ascani

(Metropolis, Population 478,000+)

Ascani is by far the largest and most important city in Bellafonte. It is built on the Bellio River, in the eastern part of the kingdom, which has sometimes caused problems due to the strong floods. That is the reason of why a large part of the buildings are built on elevated stone platforms, supported by large columns reinforced with metal. Thus, the city districts receive the name "stone platforms", depending on where

they were raised. This produces great drops, and a complex system of stairs and ramps are necessary to move from a zone to another.

Archduke Juliano Stratto (Warrior Lv. 6, ♂), supreme lord of Bellafonte, lives in the city, although the official governor is his younger brother and second heir to the throne, Massio Stratto (Warrior Lv. 3, ♂). He has never gotten along with Juliano, who he believes does not have sufficient cruelty for the position. Massio has secretly been planning to assassinate Juliano for a while now, and tries to enlist the support of Gaul assuring that he will back him as future Emperor. In addition to Massio, each platform is controlled by a high-ranking noble family, of which there is great antagonism.

Although the city tends to uphold high moral principles, ironically Ascani has a high crime rate. Several criminal groups, including a thief's guild, street gangs and many delinquents from different backgrounds, control the underworld of the metropolis. The two major crime lords are Vittorio Cesi (Freelance Lv. 5, ♂), who controls smuggling, the protection rackets and the clandestine opium smoking rooms, and the legendary Humberto "Noface" Prino (Thief Lv. 7, ♂ D´Anjayni), lord of the thief's guild. For several months now, the city is mired in a power struggle in the shadows against a criminal society called "The Black Scorpions", that serve the trade lord Salot "Iron Fist" of Americh. The leader of the Scorpions is the master assassin Wyman Cross (Assassin Lv. 6, ♂), who is determined to seize power from the underground at any cost, even if he must murder Humberto, Vittorio and everyone in their organizations.

The Inquisition has enormous influence in the city, in which they've got two large inquisitorial courts.

Ripia Port

(City, Population 46,000+)

Ripia Port is the main port in Bellafonte, a great city of high houses and narrow streets that is always full of busy travelers and merchants walking back and forth. Almost all the ships that visit the country, both transport and trade ones, moor here.

Practically any time of the year Ripia Port gets at least a third more inhabitants there than people whom actually live in it; traders, merchants, navigators and simple adventurers feed the diversity of the city. Sadly, so many traveling tourists passing through cause security complications for the local guard. Although there are usually no significant crimes or misdemeanors, Ripia Port is one of the cities in the world where is far easier to be victim of some small robbery or swindle. The three large avenues and the ports are always crowded with gambling dens and other games of luck, vendors and bards offering entertainment. The authorities usually turn a blind eye to the con artists, since taking a walk through its busy musical, colorful streets is one of greater city attractions.

Since the flow of Ripia boats outgrew the wharfs a long time ago, their citizens built a small extended dock at the west end of the city, near the border of the Bellio River. It is mainly used as a materials collection point, although numerous warehouses, mostly controlled by Black Sun merchants, rent their services at high prices.

The lord of Ripia Port is the eccentric Gido Masimo (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 6, ♂), who is known for being one the best Eden players in all of Gaïa. He is the city's team captain, and is determined to carry Ripia Port to the world championships, if possible.

Other Settlements: *Enna, Ciavolo, Musevera.*

Adventures

Although Bellafonte is not known for its supernatural mysteries, it is a principality full of numerous possibilities for adventure. Not only are their large cities plagued by tension, but their roads are full of assailants and bandits.

The Merchant of Faith: Dunaz and Culer (Freelance Lv. 2, ♂, and Thief Lv. 1, ♂, respectively) are two traditional traveling con artists, living off the tricks and schemes they commit wherever they go. A few weeks ago they arrived to Bellafonte and saw great opportunity on the Holy Plains. They are determined to cross this region visiting each chapel, church and monastery, trying to convince the altar boys and gullible priests that, being a respecting congregation, they should posses an authentic sacred relic. It is then that they show their incredible merchandise; a cart overflowing with all kinds of sacred relics, including treasures such as a fragment from the true cross, the accusing finger of Iscariot or the skull of Judiel. Of course, all completely fake.

If the characters have some affiliation with the Church or the military organizations of Bellafonte, they can be the victims of the swindlers, or be hired to find and detain them and bring them before the ecclesiastical justice. Otherwise, they could confront Dunaz and Culer, who ask them for help after being discovered.

The Flood: Days ago, the Inquisition captured Cicada in the city of Ascani, a D´Anjayni woman who hides her nature thanks to her racial abilities. Instead of immediately executing her, they chose to lock her up in the dungeon below the Inquisitorial Courts with the intention that, under torture, she could reveal the locations of other "demons" like her. After some fruitless days, her interrogator, the Inquisidor Dino Macrio (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 5, ♂), has requested the aid of a High Inquisitor with psychic abilities who is already on his way to the city.

Nevertheless Cicada's brother, who is none other than Humberto "Noface" Prino (who is actually a D´Anjayni named Hadural), is desperate to free her. In order to achieve this, he has conceived a vindictive plan that will plunge the entire metropolis into chaos, taking advantage of the confusion to enter the underground tunnels of the Inquisition. After obtaining several barrels of gunpowder at an exorbitant price in Americh, he tries to use his thief's guild to blow the Bellio River dam and flood the city. He has chosen his best men for the job while he waits in the undergrounds tunnerls of the ecclesiastical court for the flood. Of course, nobody except him knows the whole plan, because the members of the guild think he's taking advantage of the confusion to do a big hit.

Furthermore, Humberto plans to leave false evidence at the scene of the explosion that implies imperial involvement, hoping that it prompts the war and that mankind will pay for the inflicted horrors unjustly done to his sister.

The characters have many ways to participate in this story. There is the possibility of discovering Humberto's plans and trying to keep him from achieving his goal, maybe defeating him ans his thieves or helping him to rescue his sister without the need to flood the city. It is also possible that they are hired to place the explosives or, maybe, they are simply in the middle of the chaos when the flood arrives.

Common Characters of Bellafonte

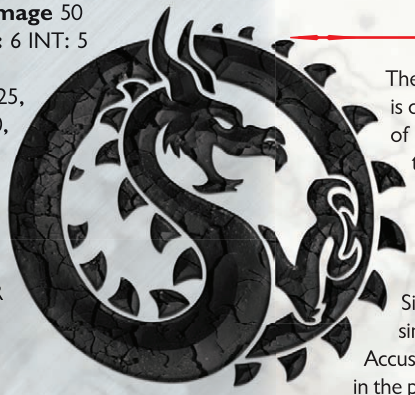
Here a series of samples are shown of the knightly organizations in Bellafonte. The following statistics have been created without taking Creation Points into account.

Templar of the Source/the Sacred Order

Class Weaponsmaster; **Level** 2
Initiative 65/15; **LP** 135; **AT** Partial Plate; **Attack** 105; **Dodge** 100; **Weapons** Bastard Sword; **Damage** 90
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 8 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 8 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 6
Abilities: Ride 25, Style 15, Intimidate 10, Leadership 50, Notice 25, Search 15, Composure 40, Feats of Strength 40, Resist Pain 20.
Special: Area Attack Style Module
Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 35, PsR 35.

Templar of the Heart of Christ

Class Tao; **Level** 3
Initiative 70; **LP** 115; **AT** None; **Attack** 90/70; **Dodge** 1 0 5 ;
Weapons Martial Arts (Unarmed); **Damage** 50
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 8 **CON:** 6 **STR:** 8 **PER:** 6 INT: 5
WIL: 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Acrobatics 25, Athleticism 25, Swim 25, Jump 30, Climb 25, Style 20, Intimidate 20, Notice 25, Search 15, Composure 10, Feats of Strength 40, Resist Pain 35.
Special: Martial Arts (Muay Thai, Sambo, Tae Kwon Do).
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 40, PsR 40.



The Order of the Cross

Class Weaponsmaster; **Level** 2
Initiative 65/10; **LP** 135; **AT** Breastplate; **Attack** 75; **Dodge** 75;
Weapons Cavalry Lance/Long Sword; **Damage** 140/60
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 8 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 8 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 6 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 6
Abilities: Ride 120, Style 15, Leadership 15, Notice 25, Search 15, Composure 20, Feats of Strength 60, Resist Pain 20.
Special: Soldier Module
Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 40, PsR 35.

The Brothers of the Alliance

Class Warrior; **Level** 2
Initiative 60/20; **LP** 125; **AT** Breastplate; **Attack** 80; **Dodge** 80;
Weapons Broad Sword; **Damage** 65
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 8 **PER:** 5 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Ride 40, Style 10, Intimidate 20, Leadership 20, Notice 30, Search 20, Composure 20, Feats of Strength 60, Resist Pain 10.
Special: Soldier Module
Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 35, PsR 35

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Middle-Class/ Low-Class: Athleticism +10, Ride +15, Swim +5, Notice +10, Composure +10, Feats of Strength +10, History (local) +10, Occult (religion) +10.

Nobility /High nobility: Athleticism +10, Ride +15, Leadership +20, Notice +5, Composure +10, History (local) +10, Occult (religion) +10.

Table 11: Bellafonte

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-20	Low-Class	Some clothes, food for a couple of days and a backpack with several personal objects. 4 CC.
21-80	Middle-Class	A couple of changes of clothes, a weapon, food for a week and equipment for a short trip. 80 SC.
81-100	Nobility	Several changes of clothes (including elegant ones of good quality), rations for more than a week, a horse, a couple of weapons, light or medium armor, an item of great personal value (like a gold jeweled crucifix or something related, a shield). 100 GC.
Priv.	*Alta nobleza*	*Great variety of changes of clothes of high quality and fashion, several horses, a couple of weapons, armor of any type, exquisite food in abundance, a small collection of personal items of great value (jewels, banners, coats of arms). 800 GC.*

The Barren Icylands

The entire area in the northeast section of the Old Continent is called The Barren Icy Lands. These are regions that, because of their geographic location, are known for their sub-zero temperatures and steady snowfalls. There are currently three independent principalities established, which are isolated from the Empire and ignore all their mandates.

The history of The Barren Icy Lands is linked to the caste of Holst and the ancestral Kingdom of Haufmarsormen. Since ancient times, it has been a people united by similar beliefs with their own Gods, traditions and society. Accustomed to a life full of difficulties and hardships, 1,500 years in the past they launched great invasions towards the south, sacking all the populations that stood in their way. Unfortunately, after the death of King Holst, their first great monarch, the territories were left without a strong leader to unify the clans. They tried to continue their advance towards warmer lands but, fighting separately, were defeated and forced to retreat to the mountains in the north. The aftermath was a war-like period in which the clans fought one another. It was not until the arrival of the Messiah when they, supported by their own deities, clashed with the armies of Abel trying to preserve their independence; but following the destruction of the God Fenrisulf, the clans were forced to join the Holy Kingdoms under the supervision of the Apostle Saul. Even so, most of them retained their old traditions, adapting the new beliefs to their own ancestral rites. The War of God caused the downfall of the Holy Kingdoms, and the area returned to be independent clans until, one after the other, Zhorne incorporated them into the Sacred Holy Empire.

The principalities that compose The Barren Icy Lands have never mantained a strong union with the Empire, and they have taken advantage of Abel's current weakness to become openly independent. None of the three keeps relations to the others; on the contrary, they feel a considerable mutual antagonism. They do not usually use imperial laws, preferring their own traditions, which vary from place to place.

Most of the people in The Barren Icy Lands live in ignorance to the Empire and their latest developments. Many of them know nothing of the current status of Abel, because they have never been integrated into it.

Common Characters of The Barren Icy Lands

Here a series of samples are shown of the most common characters of The Barren Icy Lands. The following statistics have been created without taking Creation Points into account, except for the Shaman.

Warrior of the Deserts

Class Weaponsmaster; **Level** 1
Initiative 55/5/35; **LP** 130; **AT** Fur; **Attack** 70; **Dodge** 65;
Weapons Bastard Sword/Hand Axe; **Damage** 90/55
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 8 **STR:** 8 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 15, Ride 15, Climb 25, Intimidate 30, Notice 25, Search 15, Track 15, Composure 40, Feats of Strength 50, Resist Pain 20.
Special: Barbarian Module
Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 30, PsR 30.

Chamán

Class Wizard; **Level** 2
Initiative 55; **LP** 95; **AT** None; **Magic Projection** 70
AGI: 5 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 6 **STR:** 6 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 9 **WIL:** 6 **POW:** 8
Abilities: Intimidate 15, Persuasion 30, Poisons 30, Notice 25, Search 15, Track 10, Animals 30, Herbal Lore 30, Medicine 15, Occult 30, Magical Appraisal 50.
MA: 40 **Zeon:** 910 **Level on Path:** 30
Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 45, PsR 40.

The Legend of King Holst

Although the history of the Barren is full of heroes, none of them comes close to the myth of Holst. His legend dates back over 1,500 years, at a time of war and chaos in which the clans fought amongst themselves. According to the fable, after a bloody battle, Holst's mother died hanging from a tree while he was still in her belly, so the boy should have never been born.

Because of his cries, the little one attracted the attention of a young elven woman named Melkiren, who cradled him in her arms and took care of him like a son. The young elf, who lived alone in the forests, taught the small child to hunt and fight, sheltering him from the world of the men. While she raised him, Melkiren realized that he was not a normal boy, since he possessed qualities that she'd never seen in a mortal before, even among her own people. Holst could communicate with the spirits, understood the language of the animals and saw things that not even she understood. Therefore, when he turned fourteen, Melkiren explained to the young boy that it was not his place to stay with her, and that he should have to begin a long journey to find his true destiny. As memento, she gave him a sword, which Holst named Mournehäven, which means "Ice Biter".

While wandering through the woods, Holst met a host of unusual characters; even the God Uruz, who he challenged to a hunting match in which he obtained a bow and nine arrows. Two years after he started his journey, Holst encountered King Olaferson, the lord of one of the great clans that tried to unify The Barren Icy Lands. Olaferson was traveling to kill the demon dragon Brahmius, the greatest and most terrible of all the children of The Devourer, because if he presented its head before the Conclave of Chiefs, he would be appointed King of Kings. The two soon became fast friends and Holst decided to accompany him on the hunt. But when they reached the lair of the creature, Olaferson became frightened after witnessing the enormous power of Brahmius unleashed and flew, leaving their fate in the hands of Holst. The combat between the young man and the dragon was terrible, but the future hero finally emerged victorious. But King Olaferson, who had witnessed the battle from outside, feared that Holst would speak of his cowardice and caused a landslide that completely sealed the cave of the dragon, trapping the boy inside.

That's when one of the three fates, Verdal, descended to the world to collect the soul of Brahmius, and was surprised to see the young man trapped inside the cave. Apparently, Holst should have died in the belly of his mother, and his presence was an auspicious event, that not even the goddess of fate had anticipated. However, although she should have taken his life, Verdal fell in love with Holst at first sight, as he did with her. Following an oath to meet again, the fate released him and returned to heaven, ignorant of the fact that she could never fulfill the promise that she had made.

Holst immediately ran to the Conclave of the Chiefs, where Olaferson had already announced his victory over the dragon and was preparing to receive the greatest of honors. When the young man appeared at the celebration with the head of Brahmius, the King called Holst a liar and attacked him alongside his two sons, both talented soldiers. Holst defeated all three and gained the recognition of many of those present. Unable to claim the title "King of Kings," he was considered a great hero for years where he wandered with many clans, claiming great victories and recognition. Over time, he was proclaimed Supreme King of the entire land, because his fame had already become legendary and any soldier of the Barren would have gladly given his life for him.

He then founded the great Kingdom of Haufmarsormen, which extended the power of the clans everywhere. He was forced to marry the beautiful daughter of King Slyganar because of a misunderstanding and, though he never forgot his mysterious first love, he lived out his days in great happiness beside his queen, who bore him three children.

The details surrounding the death of King Holst are contradicting. The story most widespread (although not necessarily the true) is that Bragii, his best friend, who had been cajoled by the goddess Helion when he discovered that the fate of the King was to die years ago, mortally wounded him during a hunting game. According to some versions, Verdal offered her own divinity in exchange for Holst's life, but her sister Aishia did not want that fate for her, and tricked her, preventing her from saving her beloved.

GOLDAR

Capital: None.
Population: 3,400,000+
Ethnic Groups: Norne (91%), Zínner (6%), Asher (2%).
Government: Varies (commonly tribal types).
Languages: Arkes.
Religion: Aityr, Christianity (minority).
Technology: 2.
Denomym: Goldarian.
Flag: White and gray with a howling wolf and a moon in the background.
Masculine Names: Plow, Bjorn Delling, Halden, Hans, Henrik, Kort, Loki, Rolf, Skylar, Sven, Torgny, Torsten, I had, Valdemar, Viggo, Yorick.
Feminine Names: Anika, Brenda, Elin, Elsa, Freja, Finery, Gersemi, Hanne, Helsa, Ingrid, Karina, Krista, Maija, Marja, Sign, Sonja, Swann, Tyra, Toril.
Last Names: Aabak, Arnestsen, Baarlund, Crantz, Flensborger, Gaden, Helgesen, Hoflund, Horn, Juel, Klocher, Marcussen, Paaske, Sevaldsatter, Torgnes, Bon Andersen, Bon Strachen, Weisser.

Goldar is a harsh land where life can be very difficult. After the fall of the Empire, it could not truly be considered even a nation, because its people had no true unity between them. Each area is independent and belongs to a clan that, in many cases, is either fighting their neighbors or wants nothing to do with them. The landscapes are characterized by having a wild natural beauty with mountains, great moors and dense forests populated with wolves and other wildlife. The climate is extremely cold, especially in winter; when the severe snowfalls turn the entire nation pure white.

Goldar is comprised of many small cities, as well as hundreds of villages and hamlets scattered all over the principality. They are generally self-sufficient, able to survive on the crops stored during the spring and hunting in the wild.

The law in the region is based on ancient tribal customs, where the issues can be settled through force or through the intervention of a council of wise people and priests. Being a nation that holds honor sacred, the worse punishments are those that imply disgrace, which typically involves marking the criminal with some sign on their body stating the crime. In the worse cases, they can be exiled or even executed using the ritual of The Ten Swords.

Until recently, the principality was ruled by Prince Kristrem Ygnling, leader of the city of Komerfest, but each region is actually ruled by a feudal lord who governs one or more clans. In many cases, these lords have as much or even more power than the previous Prince.



Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Goldarians of ethnic group Norne

The fall of the Empire has made very little difference for the people of Goldar, who for over fifty years have been completely disconnected from Abel. At present, much of the principality is in a chaotic state due to the initiation of several conflicts between the clans. Prince Kristrem, who only had slight control thanks to the power that the mysterious fourth Lord of the War granted him, can no longer prevent the revolt of the feudal lords and their armies. Now each region has declared itself sovereign, and tries to rise above the others with the hope of achieving total control of Goldar. To do this they gradually impose higher taxes that impact the farmers, with the intention of strengthening their personal armies. Only the threat of an external force would unite them in a common goal; maintaining their independence.

The three most well-known clans are the Ygnling Clan, made up of the followers of the former prince, the Baldisung Clan, which claim large areas in the south, and the Thurizung Clan, which is preparing for a great offensive thanks to the military support of Hendell. In recent months, one of the most war-like clans, the Skuling Clan, has also emerged with great force using terrifying supernatural beasts to attack the borders of neighboring principalities.

Culture and Society

The citizens of Goldar are people who have been changed by the hard land in which they live. Accustomed to hardships, it is not surprising that it is customary for them to struggle every day to survive. Centuries of arduous work have made them coarse people, who detest the sophistication and refinement of other lands.

Despite the influence of the west, Goldar culture comes from the ancient traditions of the caste of Holst; their customs are completely different from those of other lands. Most people do not know Latin and solely speak Arkes, the traditional language of their ancestors. For them, honor has become the cornerstone of their society, marking the course of their lives.

People are separated into clans of various sizes and significance, each of which has its own practices and functions. Each clan maintains absolute servitude to a family or a feudal lord, whom they follow even at the expense of their own lives. To disobey their lord is something that brings dishonor and even exile. Generally, the title of chief is hereditary, but it is necessary that the heirs prove their value and thus be worthy of the honor that is professed to them. An incompetent chief or lord that incurs dishonor loses his privileges and is forced to leave the clan. There are currently 27 of the 32 clans that existed in the past. Nobody knows whether the missing clans were eliminated or if any of them still live somewhere, completely isolated from the rest.

In order to reach adulthood, a young man must first spill his first blood, either by confronting a wild animal or from an enemy in combat. The latter are called Erling, and from that moment are considered soldiers in their own right. The women reach adulthood when they have their first period.

In their society, only the warriors have the right to be heard. Those who are not willing to fight are not necessarily despised, but they don't have right to express their ideas. However, it's customary for Goldarians to do a bit of everything; so a famous hero may well cultivate the fields when necessary, without undermining his value in any way. Normally, the role of warriors are reserved for men, but those women who prove their talent for combat are admitted as Sklamo, which means "Shield Maiden," and they comparable any male warrior in the tribe.

A figure that deserves mention is The Escaldo, poets who narrate the sagas of the heroes of their people to entertain banquets and remind warriors to honor their memory. To be the hero of a saga is the greatest of honors, because for the people of Goldar it's the path to immortality. The greatest Escaldo of all time was Sven Braggison, who accompanied King Holst on his adventures and even after his death, accompanies him at his table.

The Ritual of the Ten Swords

Capital punishment is implemented in an unusual way in Goldar. Even for the most terrible crimes, it's customary that nobody can be executed without a chance to defend themselves, because that would be as much of an insult for the condemned as it would for the executioner. Therefore, in these cases the death sentence is performed with the Ritual of the Ten Swords.

The criminal, naked and unarmed, stands in center of a large circle surrounded by ten men wielding swords and shields. These people are usually elite soldiers from the village or city, although when it is a crime of blood, a family member of the condemned also commonly participates. When the judge gives the signal, the ten combatants simultaneously throw themselves at the criminal. Typically, the ritual always ends with the death of the accused, but if the condemned somehow manages to survive, his crimes are condoned and he can lead his life as if nothing had happened.

The Ritual of The Ten Swords is only used with those people who have retained their honor. Those who have lost it through their actions, or that never initially had it (as with many foreigners of different ethnic groups), are directly executed.

The some of the cruelest clans use a slight variation of the ritual, in which they replace the circle with an immense cage and the soldiers with wild animals, which are released into the cage one by one.

The clans of Goldar

The clans normally take the name of their first lord or some deity, using the suffixes -ing or -ung. Of the twenty-seven clans that now populate the land of Goldar, five of them are more famous and powerful than the others.

Ygnling: The Ygnling are a clan descended from one of the sons of Holst, so it's always been considered one of most important and is associated with royalty. The Apostle Saul left the Ygnling in charge of the Holy Kingdoms, and during the creation of the Empire, Zhorne made the head of the clan the Prince of Goldar. The Ygnling is the clan more influenced by the western imperial culture, so they blend the old traditions with some of Abel's. They are more open to foreigners than their compatriots, but remain extremely independent. The vast majorities reside in the great city of Komerfest, which accommodates many more people than other Barren settlements.

The leader of the clan is Kristrem Ygnling (Weaponsmaster Lv. 3, ♂), the former prince of Goldar that wishes to unite again all the clans under his command. However, he lacks sufficient strength to achieve it, and for now is satisfied in keeping under his control the territories that he already rules.

Uzuring: Generally known as "The Hunters", the Uzuring is a large nomadic tribe that travels all around Goldar looking for temporary places to live. They are descendants of Urzug, a legendary hero of who proclaims himself the son of the God Uruz, lord of the wilderness. They are excellent archers, since both men men and women train their children towards that goal. The Uzuring does not have the least bit of interest in starting a conflict with other clans, but they will not hesitate to respond to any provocation or threat to their honor. If necessary, they can easily assemble a thousand of warriors. Its current leader is the elder Orn Balterson (Ranger Lv. 4, ♂), who is in deplorable health condition.

Thurizung: The Thurizung is a warrior clan that stretches through the lands of northeastern Goldar. They live in just over a dozen large towns and villages, led by various leaders who all report to the great Gustave Thorgrum (Weaponsmater Lv. 5, ♂), Lord of Lords. The clan, descendant from great heroes and warriors, is accustomed to battle and their members fear virtually nothing. Also, years ago, many Thurizung worked as mercenaries in the service of other nations or the fourth Lord of War, where they learned the modern military tactics that they use in their own clan today. They have recently reached an agreement with King Erick Sterki, ruler of Hendell, in exchange for their support to take control of Goldar. This provides them weapons from Dwänholf, food and some warriors with which to strengthen their military power.

The Thurizung have not yet initiated any conflict openly, but their mobilization indicates that their first move isn't far away.

Baldisung: The Baldisung receive the title of "Lord of the Horses" for their incredible skill as riders. They predominantly stretch along the southern area of Goldar, where they have several villages and a town of several thousand inhabitants. It is one of the most important warrior clans which rivals with the Thurizung, with whom they maintain an ancient enmity. The present leader of the clan is the young warrior named Aricin Bjorg (Warrior Lv. 5, ♂), who despite his age, surprises everyone with his talent and mettle in battle. His friends believe that he will soon become a hero whose legend will spread across the Barren Icy Lands.

A few years ago, the Baldisung posed a serious threat against the Church, which was about to culminate in a small war. Apparently, members of the Inquisition accused the high priest of the clan, Olin Ravenwing (Wizard Lv. 6, ♂), of being a dangerous sorcerer, and demanded that he be handed over to them immediately. Outraged, the Baldisung refused to yield to the demands of the Inquisition, and took up arms to ensure that nobody would touch Olin while any one of them remained alive. Fortunately, the intervention of the Prince of Helenia Dorjan Kartarbak, who spoke in Olin's favor, convinced the Emperor himself to order the Inquisition to stand down. Consequently, the Baldisung consider that even without to having to ask for help, they are indebted to Dorjan, and do not look favorably on the Skuling Clan's assaults on Helenia.

Skuling: The Skuling Clan consists of more than 5,000 nomadic warriors who travel from place to place in Goldar. Until just a few months ago they were barely known and nobody could even imagine the warlike power they possessed. The Skuling are savage barbarians who love the sacking and the bloodshed of battle. They dress in animal hides and wield huge, menacing weapons. They formerly resided near the Miürenheim Mountain Range, where they grew accustomed to coexisting with the dangerous mountain creatures and trained them as beasts of war. Some Tuan Dalyr from Alberia also joined the clan a couple of centuries ago, since their shape-shifting capabilities were a distinguishing characteristic of The Devourer's lineage. Its current leader is Gunnar Skulinbert (Warrior Lv. 8, possessed by Bloodbane, ♂), a wild man and a lover of war whom all fear.

A little less than a year ago, Alystaire Fardelys, the sister of the chancellor of Gabriel, contacted Gunnar, providing him a large shipment of weapons in exchange for safe passage through the roads of the Miürenheim Mountain Range. There she found one of temples of The Great Beasts where, after finishing a complex ritual she had discovered in a grimoire in her collection (the real reason she planned to travel to the mountain range), released the demon dragon Bloodbane, one of the five children of The Devourer. Bloodbane, weakened by centuries of imprisonment, proposed that Gunnar became the container for his essence, to which the warrior consented without hesitation. Housing an entity of chaos and war and calling himself "The Doom Bearer", he reunited with his followers for battle. Using the essence of the demon dragon, Gunnar increased the number of warbeasts they had tamed, multiplying the clan's forces. Alystaire saw an opportunity to weaken the borders of the Empire with the Skuling forces, so she began to provide weapons and other provisions to the clan in exchange for focusing their raids on Helenia and Dalaborn.

The clan continues its offensive with deadly efficiency, completely devastating small border settlements and many caravans. Generally, they travel in groups of between 20 and 50 men, using various types of demonic mastiffs as mounts. Nevertheless, they are able to launch raids in greater numbers to attack greater targets. With each victory, the power of Bloodbane and "The Doom Bearer" grows, like the bloodthirstiness of the Skuling. Presently they plan to conduct a large-scale attack, and request the support of some smaller clans so that they help them to regain the lost glory they had in the past.

Regarding the Supernatural

Whether by tradition or the old legends of their land, the people of Goldar have no compunction in accepting the supernatural as just one more a force in the world. Although they generally treat anyone who demonstrates unusual abilities with suspicion and caution, they will merely marvel at their powers if they are favorable, or fight them savagely if they perceive it as a threat. But there is one kind of supernatural power that they will not tolerate: flashy combat magic. Mystical projectiles, energy shields, fireballs... they consider it fighting dishonorably, and those that use them disregard the basic principles of battle. According to their beliefs, magic must be something much more spiritual. With the exception of the animals and the things they consider sacred, there is little affection for the non-human creatures, and since they're so accustomed to fighting beasts, they tend to think about other races like enemy monsters.

The History of Goldar

It is widely believed that Goldar was never a nation per se, but a set of disjointed clans that descended from the Great Kingdom of Haufmarsormen. For years, even during the two centuries in which the Holy Kingdoms were formed, the clans were still fighting among themselves and the outside world. Ironically, following the War of God, it was the Sacred Holy Empire that granted the zone the stability that their people had yearned for over so many centuries.

The first prince of Goldar was Balder Ygnling, head of the Ygnling Clan, who first received the support of the Lord of War to subdue the clans and face their most dangerous problem: the myriad of creatures emerging from the Mountain Ranges of Miürenheim, commanded by the children of The Devourer. For over four decades it was a land ravaged by war and, just when it seemed that peace could be reached, another conflict erupted. Finally, after countless lives lost, the five children of The Devourer were either sealed or destroyed, and the clans agreed to submit to Abel's laws, as long as the Emperor proved his mettle in combat. Even though he was 83 years old, Zhorne accepted the challenge and personally defeated the 29 leaders of Goldar one after another. After that, the clans kept their word, although they never truly felt like part of the Empire.

The Ygnling Clan returned to power, but its mandate would always be discussed and had little importance between the great leaders. During the following centuries, Goldar was a land full of turmoil, with inter-clan conflicts being common (which even ended up with the destruction of some of them), or fights with the neighboring regions. The most significant problem was when the Thurizung clan initiated a sudden war against the principality of Haufman in the year 547. The battle erupted without imperial approval, but the rugged terrain of the land delayed The Lord of War's troops from openly taking part in the conflict for several months; their feeble attempt at preventing more deaths was unsuccessful.

The fall of the Empire had little repercussion on the clans, although they took advantage of the opportunity to declare their independence. Most agreed that it was the ideal time to release the shackles of Abel and find a strong king that could reunite the clans and lead them. Only the threat of an imperial intervention gives the Goldarians a sense of unity between them.

The Battle of the Chiefs

Tradition dictates that when two clans are faced with a blood conflict by which they do not want to start a war, the chiefs can agree to a duel that will decide the outcome of the offense. The fight takes place at a pre-established location, which is usually announced so the other clan chiefs may attend if they wish. Duels between chiefs are always to death; once the combatants have entered fight, only one of them can leave with their lives.

Relevant Geographical Features

The great icelands and dense forests blanketed in the white of winter compose most of the Kingdom of Goldar. Moth borders its Eastern boundary in the Miürenheim Mountain Range, in the same way that its northern boundary is marked by the lowest part of the enormous mountainous mass The Peack of the World.

Muspellheim: Located near the border of Hendell, Muspellheim is an active volcano that emanates a smokestack visible from many miles away. The continuous rain of volcanic ash caused by the volcano's frequent eruptions blackens all the surrounding lands. A local legend says that at the feet of the Muspellheim there was a small kingdom called Hvergerlmir, whose people, the Clan of the North, were men of exceptional forging ability, because they stole the secret of creation from the Gods. The angry deities blew up the mountain completely burying the kingdom in lava, so the clan was pushed to the ends of the world to preserve their secrets. Although it is only a legend, the travelers prefer not to approach it, because they say that it brings bad luck.

Miürenheim Mountain Range: For better or for worse, the Miürenheim Mountain Range is the most famous natural formation in Goldar. Located in the east of the kingdom, this huge mass of rugged mountains shares a border with the principality of Moth. Most of the cliffs reach a considerable altitude; so they are often covered in snow throughout the year. There are many mountain passes, but most of them are really labyrinths and very easy to get lost inside of.

Miürenheim is famous for its monstrous inhabitants, since the mountain range is full of strange beasts, many of which attack man with unusual savagery. That is why there are no large towns in the vicinity, and most people stay away from them. On several occasions, especially when the beasts become too numerous, Goldarians organize hunting expeditions to end the problem. However, although several attempts have been made, nobody has been able to completely eradicate them. One myth about the mountains, this time seated in reality, tells of a series of buildings called the Five Temples of the Great Beasts, where the children of Skuling, The Devourer, are imprisoned for eternity.

Forad Forest: The mile-long green strip of the Forad Forest separates the southern part of Goldar with the principality of Gabriel. Although it is also fraught with myths and legends, the forest is home to several smaller towns and clans, some of which buy various products from the Coast of Commerce. It is where the legendary King Holst grew up beside the sylvain Melkiren, and also where he was buried; although the exact location of his remains is a true mystery that no one has discovered yet.

The Komerlëigh Plains: The central region of Goldar is known as the Komerlëigh Plains. This combination of plains and low hills is presented like a step landscape in the north, which transforms into smooth prairies as it advances towards the south. The temperatures are not as low as they should be at this altitude, since The Peack of the World forms a huge natural wall against the cold winds from the north. Komerlëigh is the largest expanse of grassland in the Barrens, and almost all the livestock in the kingdom is concentrated here. It is also the region most traveled by foreigners because, especially in the south, it is one of the main thoroughfares between the Empire and northern block of the Old Continent. Few travelers venture futher north to Komerfest, but even on those plains it is still possible to find some commercial caravan crossing the principality.

Most of the clans based in this region charge a toll to the merchants and travelers in exchange for allowing them to cross their lands, but these are rarely excessive or unjust.


Maëlstrom
Hild Archipelago
Wall of Eternal Ice
Island of Tir
Gesjnacht
Ritgernhauf
Belgenmir
Hendell
Bergenfaur
Mullenheinn
Haufman
Peack of the World
Muspellheim
Hymir
Schild
Gaïtende Castle
Hildestheim
Alfrothul
Liæufar River
Castle of Midnight
Door of Surthein
Annar
Olafer
Kainkasutur
Landhoff
Falanda
Forest of Wulfgar
Goldar
Miürenheim Mountain Range
Herimagor
Tel´Haroth
Port Leena
Sleepy Lake
Plateau of Argadas
Komerfest
Nürern
Billkenfest
Inner Valleys
Komerlëigh Plains
Pernov
Eron
Taranov
Plain of a Thousand Thunderclaps
River Thunderclaps
Forest of Forad
Trivium
Inanimate Forest
Eustace
Swamp of Agamemnon
Helenia
Lenci
Veenhuigen
Great Lakes
Bretoulau River
Heverville
La Roche
MAP KEY
Capital
Metropolis
City
Building
Fortress
Path
Road
0 250 500 750 Kilometers
0 250 500 Miles

The Forest of Wulfgar: This vast expanse of firs and pines are located in the central part of the kingdom and contains many myths and legends. One of them says that it is enchanted by many of spirits, and that the trees act as portals to unknown worlds. True or not, it is one of the densest forests in the entire northern part of the continent and is very difficult to cross. Wulfgar is also home to gigantic albino wolves, which avoid attacking man unless they are threatened. If we study the legends, Bilkanda, the great mother of all the wolves, lives somewhere inside the forest.

Illustrated by Raúl Rosell

The Sleepy Lake: Located in the middle of the Komerlëigh Plains, halfway between Komerfest and the Forest of Wulfgar, The Sleepy Lake is nourished by very small rivers that born in Miürenheim or The Peack of the World. It is fairly shallow and its surface is always absolutely calm. In the coldest winter months it commonly forms a fine layer of ice, but this can be a deadly trap, as it is extremely fragile. In spring and summer it is quite common to see many animals in the vicinity come drink from it, as well as groups or riding patrols of the Baldisung Clan.

A rare story of unknown origin claims that when The Sleepy Lake is frozen and somebody makes their way to the center, they can see the image of a large inverted castle in the ice. Despite such a bizarre conjecture, this myth is absolutely true, because what they see is a castle that only exists in the reflection of The Wake.



One of the frozen villages of Goldar

Places of Interest

Goldar is a rugged and dangerous land as much for the casual traveler as it is for its own people; each clan has its own customs and laws, manifested in the wide variety of places that stretch through their vast territories.

Billkenfest

(Rural Community, Population 16,000+)

Billkenfest is a community composed of five villages of different sizes united by the Baldisung clan. Located in the south, near the Forad Forest, it has a strong economy due to the horse trade. The leader of Billkenfest is Aricin Bjorg, who recently succeeded his father, although each community group has a spokesman who influences major decisions. Every year the community organizes a great riding competition, and prestigious horseman from other lands occasionally participate.

Falanda

(City, Population 32,000+)

Falanda is the largest port city in Goldar. Centuries ago, it was a great wharf of warships from which the Haufmarsormen raiders went to sea to launch their attacks all along the northern coast. The city still preserves some warships, but today is used more as a fishing center, given the great profit at a reduced cost. It is a booming place, where the market is increasingly beneficial, and attracts many clanless nomads. The Black Sun has a small division in the city, from where they organize the operations of their Seekers in the Barren Icy Lands.

Nürern

(Town, Population 2,000+)

Nürern is quite unusual, because at certain times of the year, this medium town of roughly 2,000 people multiplies its population tenfold. Located south of The Sleepy Lake, it is nearly the only trade route that crosses the Komerlëigh Plains and therefore, in the eighth month of the year a major trade fair is celebrated here. In the two-week long festival, members of all the clans as well as merchants from other principalities come to Nürern, filling the sleepy town with life. For the independent and self-sufficient men that the northerners are, who are rarely used to such events, the Nürern Fair is most important (if not only) in the whole region.

The town itself is built on a large earthen terrace. Most of the buildings are wooden and, with few exceptions, are usually no more than two stories high. The streets are broad, with wide-open spaces, which during the fair are packed with shops and stalls. The functioning mayor is Krealarg, of the Fehung Clan (Weaponsmaster Lv. 3, ♂), although most of clans have at least a couple of homes in town. Aware of the problems that mixing a community can pose, Krealarg has chosen to act with wide sleeves and to tries to maintain relatively cordial relationships with all of them. However, during the fair and the busier months, this is not enough to prevent clashing between rival groups.

Landhoff

(Rural Community, Population 1,500+)

It is quite common that some clans consider Landhoff a village, when in fact it isn't. This is a small valley in the shadow of the Peack of the World, where hundreds of houses converge that have nothing in common past their proximity. Neither the "village" nor its citizens belong to any clan, or harbor any hatred towards them either. Landhoff would have no major relevance in Goldar if it weren't for the scene of a unique spectacle of Gaïa; all their citizens, down to the last one, are from different races of Nephilim. The reason for this incredible phenomenon is unknown, but of course, nobody in the world except Imperium has noticed it.

Researchers of the Power in the Shadows believe that it must be a glitch in the continuum of reality in regards to the flow of souls, a sign that this place or its surroundings are going to defy the predictions of fate sometime in the future.

Komerfest

(City, 160,000+ inhabitants)

While no one can say that Komerfest is Goldar's capital, it's still the greatest city in the kingdom. Its people mainly consist of the Ygnling Clan living beside several other smaller clans, but there are also a limited number of immigrants from other principalities, who are devoted mainly to trade. It is a very old city and some historians claim that its origins trace back to the days of Haufmarsormen.

Unquestionably Nordic in style, Komerfest has a significant imperial influence as far as building designs, so there are several paved districts (especially in the central zone, for the most important families), and a strange network of ditches that diverts the four streams of water nearby. It is a somber and gray city in appearance, although it has wide roads and impressive monuments in memory of past glories. The various clans that live there divide the neighborhoods up between them, but over time have also made large common areas for markets, foreigners and couples with members of different zones.

The young chief Kristrem Ygnling, who hopes to become the first great king that Goldar has known since the dawn of the Empire, rules it. To control Komerfest he meets with the heads of the other clans that live there periodically, which have been discontent recently. In fact, if he had not severed his ties with the Empire, Kristrem would be facing a coup d'etat right now. In recent months there have been some serious incidents, among them the expulsion of all the senior officers of the Church and the Inquisition, following their attmempt to take control of the city. Only a few low-ranking priests remain in their parishes, but most of people are still watching them suspiciously.

Samael has a considerable presence there, especially the Duk´zarist, who have recently taken part in a secret war against the Order of Yehudah, which they have wiped out completely.

Kainkasutur

(Fortress, Population 8,000+)

Kainkasutur is an immense stone fortress, built in the year 452 on the remains of a Jayon building. Situated on a hill and surrounded by steep rocks, it is a nearly impenetrable stronghold. Not only is it large enough to hold several thousand soldiers, but also civilians devoted to agriculture and livestock, making the fortress self-sufficient. Despite being in Goldar, it bears no relation to the Goldarians, because it belongs to the mysterious fourth Lord of War. So far, the people of Kainkasutur have done nothing more than continue on with their lives, but there are many clans that distrust them, or even see them as potential enemies in the future.

The Door of Surthein

(Building, Population 50+)

This place is a huge black stone building full of windows, like a great cathedral, inside of which there is a monumental metal gate that apparently leads to nowhere. In the past there were serious problems between the Church and the Clans of Surthein since The Inquisition demanded on many occasions that the door was destroyed. Only through the intervention of Tol Rauko, the site was officially protected. According to the northern myths, Surthein it is the gate that The Aityr used when they left the material world. True or not, the architecture of this building is like no other in Gaïa and it's highly unlikely to be built by man.

Other Settlements: *Hermagor, Veenhuigen.*

Adventures

Goldar, with its dozens of clans, internal strife and the complex situations of its people, is an ideal place to have all kinds of adventures. Not only it is a land full of wilderness hazards, supernatural beasts and thieves preparing to pounce on unsuspecting travelers, but also conceals great mysteries waiting to be unraveled.

Payback: The Inquisidor Lyal Rottermaier (Warrior Lv. 5, ♂), who initiated the wicht hunt against Olin Ravenwing of the Baldisung Clan a decade ago, has not yet forget his obsession of killing him. For Lyal, the priest has become a nightmare, and he would do anything to eliminate him.

However, he is trying for years to obtain the 13th Cardinal's approval to execute a covert operation against Olin, so he plans to take advantage of the present state of chaos to eliminate his nemesis once and for all, independently of the Church. By acting without the official support of the Inquisition, Lyal has only a handful of loyal soldiers at his disposal, so he plans to hire some mercenaries to help him find Olin, lure him to some place and execute him like he has dreamt of for years. The characters can be part of the mercenaries hired by Lyal or rather, find themselves in the middle of Lyal's ambush against Olin and be his defenders.

The Sixth Temple: Unknown to even the wisest prophets, there is a sixth temple in the Miürenheim Mountain Range in which, according to the myth, is imprisoned The Devourer. The Aityr, who gave the clans five seals with which to contain it, chained the ancient beast there long ago. To see the hidden temple, one must first collect the seals, which belong to several chiefs and priests of the small clans, and place them in each of the five locations where The Devourer's children are sealed. Presently nobody, not even Bloodbane, knows that this place exists, but Alystaire Fardelys has started to become interested in the topic after uncovering certain texts during his visit to the mountains. The agents of Alystaire or another great organization may soon attempt to return an entity to the world that should never be released.

Written Law: Riijkard (Freelance Lv. 2, ♂) is a middle-aged Ilmorense scholar with adolescent delusions. As his mother was native of Goldar, he always dreamed of seeing the frozen kingdom evolve into a unified society. The main problem that Riijkard sees is that each region has its own customs and laws, transmitted soley by oral tradition. He is convinced that if he can write up common laws that apply to all the clans, it would undoubtedly be a big step towards ending the hostilities. The first stage of his project is to tour the region and write down the rules and regulations that apply to each area. He will try to hire a group of foreigners for this who are ignorant to the local customs, accompanying him as bodyguards under some elaborate lie. He can pretend to be a merchant, a linguist studying Arkes, or a botanist interested in the local flora... but he uses his companions as guinea pigs. Throughout his journeys, he will secretly force to them into different situations that accuse them of various crimes (preferably serious ones), to personally oversee how the customs of each town function. Of course, he'll make sure that nobody finds out he's behind it.

Another thing he will not mention is that he has no intention of paying them; he will give them continuously long, succulent promises of compensation as soon as he sells his merchandise or as soon as he completes the study.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Common Characters of Goldar

Here a series of samples are shown of Goldar's warrior clans. The following statistics have been created without taking Creation Points into account.

Ygnling

Class Warrior; **Level** 1
Initiative 55/5; **LP** 110; **AT** Fur; **Attack** 90; **Dodge** 85; **Weapons** Battle Axe; **Damage** 80
AGI: 5 **DEX:** 8 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 8 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Ride 20, Swim 15, Jump 25, Climb 10, Intimidate 10, Notice 30, Search 15, Track 15, Composure 10, Feats of Strength 55, Resist Pain 10.
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 30, PsR 30.

Uzuring

Class Ranger; **Level** 2
Initiative 65/15/60; **LP** 115; **AT** Fur; **Attack** 105; Dodge 90; **Weapons** Long Bow/Short Sword; **Damage** 35/45
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 8 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 7 **PER:** 8 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 15, Ride 25, Swim 25, Jump 15, Climb 15, Hide 20, Stealth 15, Trap Lore 30, Poisons 5, Notice 40, Search 40, Track 70, Animals 30, Herbal Lore 20.
Special: Hunt Module
Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 35, PsR 35.

Thurizung

Class Warrior; **Level** 2
Initiative 65/45; **LP** 125; **AT** Hardened Leather; **Attack** 100; **Dodge** 100; Weapons Long Sword; **Damage** 55
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 8 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 7 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 25, Ride 35, Swim 20, Climb 15, Intimidate 20, Leadership 10, Notice 25, Search 15, Composure 10, Feats of Strength 60, Resist Pain 20.
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 30, PsR 30.

Baldisung

Class Warrior; **Level** 1
Initiative 60/45; **LP** 110; **AT** Leather; **Attack** 85; **Dodge** 85; **Weapons** Cavalry Lance; **Damage** 45 on foot/85 when mounted on a horse
AGI: 8 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 7 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Ride 80, Intimidate 10, Notice 25, Search 15, Track 15, Composure 10, Feats of Strength 40, Resist Pain 10.
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 30, PsR 30.

Skuling

Class Weaponsmaster; **Level** 2
Initiative 60/10/0; **LP** 166; **AT** Fur; **Attack** 115; **Dodge** 100; **Weapons** Battle Axe/Two-Handed Axe; **Damage** 80/110
AGI: 5 **DEX:** 8 **CON:** 8 **STR:** 8 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Ride 30, Intimidate 30, Notice 25, Search 15, Track 15, Composure 20, Feats of Strength 40, Resist Pain 30.
Special: Barbarian Module, Area Attack Style Module
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 35, PsR 35.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Exiled /Peasant: Athleticism +15, Ride +10, Swim +10, Hide +10, Notice +10, Track +15, Animals +5, Herbal Lore +5.

Northerner: Athleticism +10, Ride +10, Swim +10, Intimidate +10, Notice +10, Track +10, Animals +5, Feats of Strength +15.

Erling, Sklamo or Honorable Escaldo: Athleticism +10, Ride +10, Swim +10, Intimidate or Music +10, Notice +10, Track or History (local) +10, Animals +10, Leadership +10.

Table 12: Goldar

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-15	Dishonored Northerner or Exile	Some fur or cloth tied with ropes and sewn as clothing, food for a couple of days. 1 CC.
16-50	Peasant	A couple of changes of clothes, food for a week, a backpack with some personal items. 50 SC.
51-85	Northerner	Nice clothes, an extra pair of boots, a blanket, rations for a week and a weapon. 50 SC.
86-100	Erling, Sklamo or Honorable Escaldo	Several changes of clothes, food for more than a week, a horse, a weapon, light to medium armor or a good musical instrument (for the bard), a backpack with some personal items with the clan symbol. 50 GC.

HAUFMAN

Capital: Hildestheinn.
Population: 1,300,000+
Ethnic Groups: Norne (98%), Zínner (1%).
Government: Monarchy.
Languages: Arkes (dialect).
Religion: Aityr.
Technology: 2.
Denomym: Hauf.
Flag: A mountain peak with two crossed axes.
Masculine Names: Axel, Boden, Britt, Dyre, Erling, Harold, Kris, Lamont, Mimir, Nansen, Olaf, Orn, Soren, Trygg, Vidar, Wray.
Feminine Names: Astrid, Brigit, Brynja, Eirny, Er it, Gerd, Gisli, Ildri, Karena, Laine, Lily, Malin, Savea, Thora, Úrsula, Winka.
Last Names: Adamsdatter, Aslaksdotter, Clemensdatter, Danchertsen, Doth, Frey, Gjevik, Hakonsson, Kitteslvik, Morseth, Olrich, Skjeldulvsson, Thygesdatter, Vosbein, Wadel, Wenzel.

As their own people see it, Haufman is the true heir to the ancient kingdom of Haufmarsormen, because for over 1,500 years they have remained faithful to its ancestral traditions. Forced to live in extreme conditions, with pressing blizzards and snowfall throughout the year, is undoubtedly one of the most harsh and unflinching nations throughout Gaïa.

Located in the northern part of the Old Continent, Haufman is virtually an immense mountain range called The Peack of the World, which isolates the kingdom from other nations. With very few valleys between all the mountains, the whole area is very high above sea level. The kingdom also includes some huge islands on its vast northern coastline; most of which are barren, uninhabitable blocks of ice.

Given the natural ruggedness of the territory, nearly the entire population gathers in three great cities, although that does not prevent small villages from forming on the slopes of many mountains. By sheer necessity, all of them must be completely self-sufficient, since traveling through The Peack of the World is extremely difficult. For the same reason, trading with outside nations is practically impossible. As elsewhere in the Barren, the law is based on ancient customs. Generally, almost all disputes are settled by means of combats or duels between parties or, if the offense is a crime towards the village or town, the local champion. Occupied with other problems, people have little time for sophisticated trials.

Haufman has always had a member of the Grimsson dynasty as a king (even though imperial customs prohibited such title), who has absolute power. The monarch's law is absolute, with power over life and death. The Grimsson, like its people, never felt like a part of the

Empire and has governed the land following their own guidelines. That was due to the inaccessible location of Haufman, which allowed them to live independently. The kingdom does not have an army per se, but if they were called to arms, each man, woman and child of Haufman would not hesitate to wield a sword to defend their land.

The principality has not noticed the fall of the Empire. Even King Hagen Grimsson, the present monarch, has only heard rumors about what happened. For this people, things have not changed nor does it seem like they ever will.

Culture and Society

Unlike other principalities of the Barren Icy Lands, the Haufs descended from a single clan, which has remained unified throughout its more than ten centuries of history. Either by the extreme conditions that they have suffered during all their lives or by their own warrior-like culture, the people here value strength and courage in combat over all things.

Haufs have poor education, and only a few scholars, who also fill the role of priests, know how to write and decipher the complex language of their runic alphabet. Even so, people are distinguished by a sharp wit and even uneducated, they learn from the traditions as if these were the best schools. The only language they know is a very archaic dialect of Arkes, which is not easy to understand even for other people of the Barrens.

Although there are no social classes per se, there are certain families who are regarded as noble because of their achievements throughout the years. Just as in Goldar, adulthood is earned through the ritual of first blood, but in Haufman, the young person leaves to hunt alone and, until he returns with the skin of a wild beast, he is not considered a man.

Although nearly the entire population of Haufman lives at The Peack of the World, there are also some towns on the numerous islands in the north, whose people are called Saerinmir. Some of them are really savage, and when the weather permits, they go on pirate raids sacking the coastal villages of the other principalities.

The people of Haufman fervently believe in the religious teachings of the Aityr, and believe that their Gods still watch over them. They despise Christianity, and they consider its imposition nothing more than another sign of the weakness from a false God. Without doubt, the most important figures within their culture are heroes, who meet with their Gods after proving their worth. All men and women in Haufman dream about being truly immortalized by their town through their heroic deeds.

The Trial of Holst

If there is a disagreement between two people, they go outdoors down different roads, carrying a single weapon and little clothing. This strange custom is called The Trial of Holst and involves skill, intelligence and resistance to the elements. The goal is to find the other person and to kill him (or her) in any way possible. Sometimes this test ends in few minutes, and other times it can go on for days.

Regarding the Supernatural

The people of Haufman can accept supernatural forces, since they more or less coexist with them. Hauf are accustomed to facing the mystical beasts that dwell in the mountains, seeing the magic of the elementals in the rivers and forests, or even just witnessing the rituals that their own priests perform. Of course, they still feel nervous before powers beyond their comprehension, but not with irrational fear. In many respects, they are similar to the Goldarians, and also consider the use of "flashy magical combat skills" as something dishonorable.

Without a doubt, their greatest fear is of the strange creatures at The Peack of the World, since the powers of many of the spectral entities that haunt their desolate places are the sources of their darkest legends.



Illustrated by Sergio Melero

An arduous clash between two Frostkolier in The Trial of Holst

The History of Haufman

While the territories that now compose Goldar and Hendell disintegrated and fought among themselves after the death of Holst, the clan of the north settled on The Peack of the World proclaiming themselves the true successors of Haufmarsormen. They wasted no time in launching several assaults to the south, until various clans headed by the Thurizung in Goldar, were able to stop their advances. Over time, the inhabitants of The Peack of the World began to consider themselves an independent nation and took the name Haufman.

During the formation of the Holy Kingdoms, Haufman radically opposed the doctrines of Christ and fought the armies of the Messiah with all its forces. After thousands of casualties, only the destruction of the God Fenrisulf made King Holdagen admit his defeat by recommendation of the High Priest Saul (who would end up becoming one of the Apostles, and later on the King of the Barrens). The decision of the fallen monarch disappointed many warriors and it was only a matter of time after the death of Saul that the people of Haufman rose in arms to retake what they considered their kingdom. Led by Olgard Grimsson, who would become the new king, Haufman would hence be a nation by its own right, prepared to defend their ideals against the outside world.

The kingdom was nearly oblivious to the War of God, because the armies of Rah never reached The Peack of the World. Even the first Emperor overlooked Haufman during the creation of Abel when he measured the high cost in lives necessary to take a region that was sparsely populated.

More than a century the kingdom remained isolated, until the year 373, when its darkest hour began with the arrival of so-called "The White Night". Rising apparently from nowhere, an immense undead army, full of reanimated corpses and specters, started their slow and solemn advance towards the cities of Haufman. A power that even the warriors of the kingdom could not stop...

Given the desperate situation, and fearing that The White Night could extend through other principalities, Lazaro Giovanni, Zhorne's heir, ordered the fourth Lord of War to support King Askell Grimsson with all the forces he had available. Between the both of them they were able to destroy the mass of undead, and the remaining creatures mysteriously disappeared shortly thereafter. Even today, some rumors told about the possibility that a small group of people managed to stop The White Night at its source, thus bringing an end to the fighting. Anyway, after those events, Haufman agreed to officially join Abel, although its relationship with the Empire has always been nonexistent in practice, something that has changed very little since then.

The last major conflict of the kingdom happened in the year 547, when a disagreement started a heartwrenching war against the Thurizung Clan in Goldar. Had it not been for the intervention of the Lord of War, Haufman would have advanced towards the south, completely exterminating the Thurizung and its allies. An enormous tension between both clans exists even today, and many warriors of Haufman would like to have the chance to take the lands in the south, considering them theirs by right.

Relevant Geographical Features

Practically the entire principality of Haufman is on the mountain range of the Peack of the World, although several islands in the north, where the Saerinmir live, are also considered part of the kingdom.

The Peack of The World: Although it is not the largest mountain range in the Old Continent, the Peack of the World is undoubtedly the highest mountain mass in Gaïa. With summits ranging between 15,000 and 30,000 feet, their enormous height and latitude keep it frost-covered throughout the year. The two highest mountains in the world, Surt and Steinkel, with 34,000 and 36,000 feet respectively, are here. The mountain range has very few trails, making it exceptionally difficult to pass through or travel from one summit to another. Moreover, for the unusual distribution of its mountains, valleys are scarce, but are always large enough to build cities and towns. A great part of the mountain range is habited, but some are still inhospitable areas of myths and legend. Steinkel is the mountain that, according to the beliefs of the region, united the kingdom of Gods with that of men.

The Peack of the World is also the home of all sorts of wild beasts, from extraordinary ice wolves to fairy tale snow creatures. Among its more dangerous and mythical inhabitants is Svaldifari, a great ice dragon that woke from its slumber less than a decade ago. Intelligent and guarded, it avoids attracting attention while waiting for his mate, Andvaranut, to also wake up.

Some of mountains near the coastline are hollow, possessing intricate maze-like caves and a host of passages. Many geographers and adventurers of Haufman think that unknown people lived on these in the past, and it's likely that they contain ruins and remains of these cultures.

In some places, the barrier between The Wake and the real world is extremely fragile, so some travelers can be swallowed up by it when they pass thought exceptionally strong blizzards. In such cases, they appear in areas of absolute calm and eternal silence, where the snow falls slowly across the horizon. For some unknown reason, to be in contact with one of these snowflakes before it touches the ground slowly steals fragments of the memories from people, until they are no more than Wake Specters who wander back and forth, unable to make a sound.

Belgenmir: Belgenmir is the largest island in northern Haufman, whose length is such that it dwarfs certain principalities like Ilmora. Its entire surface is practically covered with snow all year, especially in the central zone, where there is a small plateau. It incessantly suffers strong ice storms and buffeting winds, which makes the island a truly inhospitable place. Still, there are several sparsely populated villages that survive by hunting in the areas that are not frozen. The coast is terribly rugged and filled with dangerous cliffs, making it almost impossible for conventional boats to approach it. Only six or seven small coastal zones on the whole island allow for problem-free docking.

Mythically, long ago the island was inhabited by a race of ice giants that braved the Gods and were defeated. Some say that the crystal monuments in the central area of the plateau are the remains of the giant castle where they once lived, although according to others, they are the prisons in which The Aityr confined them.

The Wall of Eternal Ice: In the northern part of the island of Belgenmir, beyond the central plateau, stands an immense wall of ice over 400 miles long, tall and shimmering as if it were glass. The locals call this place The Wall of Eternal Ice and say that beyond it lies The Kingdom of the Dead. Although this statement seems rather questionable, it is true that there are numerous compartments inside the Wall, inhabited by creatures that do not seem to belong to the world of men.

The Island of Tir: The Island of Tir is located about a mile from the easternmost part of the Straits of Belgenmir. It is close enough to the continent that you can even see the horizon from the coast on a clear day. It has no human inhabitants, but it has an impressive array of wildlife including seals, lions, polar bears and other creatures considerably more "bizzare".

Around the island there are different marine species and large shoals. Thus, many fishing boats from Haufman and Hendell frequent the area. Conflicts are rife, as both countries claim that Tir belongs to them. Typically this friction doesn't end in damaged ships (they rarely get sunk) or lost shipments, but they sometimes lead to significant bloodshed. "Officially" the island is currently Haufman's, but without the control of the Empire, Hendell's fishing boats have begun to remove their neighbors by force, which are prepared to respond them in the same way.

The Floating Island: Another myth of these waters is the one of The Floating Island. During very cold years and in very northerly latitudes, there are sailors who claim to have encountered a small floating island, consisting largely of ice. According to almost all the descriptions it seems to be about six miles in diameter and drifts along slowly, dragged by the currents. Apparently everything points that this is an enormous iceberg that broke off from some of the glaciers. However, not only is it unusual that it's been floating during years withouth being thaw, but that the few that have landed on it claim that its center has a surprising amount of trees and vegetation; an warm oasis within the ice. However, none of them can remember exactly what happened after setting foot on it, or how they returned to their boats.

The Maëlstrom

More than a myth, the Maëlstrom is a nightmare for the sailors of the frozen regions. The legends refer to it as a huge whirlpool in the sea, so huge that it can reach several miles in diameter, and with enough force to drag an entire fleet of ships to the depths of the ocean. Vessels that enter it find no salvation; they end up at the bottom of the ocean, where the sharpened coral reefs shred them to bits. The exact location of the whirlpool is unknown but there are those that say it changes its position each time it appears. It is customary to see the old captains in the ports of Gaïa narrating stories of how they faced the Maëlstrom in their youth and survived, but these are no more than tall tales and embellishments. The truth is that nobody who has witnessed it firsthand has ever been heard from again.

The Maëlstrom manifests several times a year off the northern side of the island of Belgenmir, beyond The Wall of Eternal Ice. When it arrives, it is preceded by a storm that turns the skies red ("the Aityr must be fighting", is what the northern sailors usually say when they see it) and the appearance of strange will-o'-whisps. Before any of these signs, an intelligent captain will give the order to retreat and leave as quickly as possible. There is a deep-rooted habit among the sailors to say a prayer when crossing these waters, especially when they see thousands of wood chips floating in the sea.

The true cause of The Maëlstrom's formation is a vortex in The Barrier and the adjustments it makes into reality to keep everything stable. Sometimes boats have been swept away by the alteration, and part of the crew ends up being devoured. The passage does not lead to Hell, but to Heinlein, one of the Intereings worlds.

Places of Interest

Although the vast majority of villages in Haufman are so tiny that nobody knows them, the kingdom has three major cities and many legendary places.

Hildestheinn

(City, Population 97,000+)

Hildestheinn, a formidable city-fortress located on the mountainside of Surt, is the capital of Haufman. It is built like a huge, impregnable military stronghold and its thick walls, which sit on the peak of the mountain slope, stretch up just over 160 feet high. So when somebody sees it from outside, rather than looking like a city Hildestheinn seems like an immense wall completely wrapped around part of the mountain. The city itself is supported by various stone surfaces full of gaps, so that the different parts of neighborhoods sit at diverse heights, though none of them stand out above the walls.

Created as defense against both attacks and possible natural disasters, Hildestheinn is a somber city distinguished by the gray stone tonality of all its buildings. However, the enormous size of some of them, combined with the snow-covered tile roofing and streets, give it an ambience that is melancholic and fascinating at the same time.

The most striking place in Hildestheinn is The Gargoyles Square, which owes its name to the 13 imposing black metal beasts that top the surrounding buildings. The citizens consider them guardian spirits, and claim that the capital will always be protected while they roost there.

The city is usually self-sufficient and requires little to no trade with outsiders. Their only transactions are with neighboring towns or Mullenheinn, and are usually selling weapons because Hildestheinn has excellent blacksmiths, known for the brutal effectiveness of their creations.

Hagen Grimsson (Warrior Lv. 5, ♂), King of Haufman, rules his domains from Castle Ragnhildur, a building partially embedded into the side of the mountain with dozens of caves that descend into the bowels of Gaïa.

Gaïtende Castle

(Building, Population 300+)

Built as a fortress to control maritime traffic in the Bay of Eiss, Gaïtende Castle is one of those strange situations in which a poor execution destroyed a wonderful idea. What originally started out as a commercial port of passage between the North Sea and the bay, ended up becoming a semiabandoned town. Located on a frozen island, bad weather and the steep cliffs of the coastline ensured that no one visited it. Seen his failure, the King of Haufman decided not to invest further funding, leaving it incomplete.

Today, all that remains is a sparse population with a dozen residential houses. In the center, crowning the steep cliffs is the very Castle of Gaïtende; the only building that has survived in good condition. Now it is used as cheap lodging for sailors and hire-swords. Mercenaries from many parts of the world have traveled here in search of employment, since the current ruler of the castle, the mysterious woman known as Nadya Chernomyrdin (Dark Paladin Lv. 9, ♀), is dedicated to assigning orders and missions. Whether she is arranging an assignment herself or by fulfilling orders, Nadya always has an appropriate task for the skills of each group, in exchange for a percentage of the payment. There are so many adventurers who come here, that people often call it The Castle of Mercenaries.

Nadya is around thirty years old and, although beautiful, has her whole body and part of her face bandaged up due to a series of serious injuries she sustained years ago. Her past is unclear, but it's obvious to all that know her that she had to be related to the army. Nadya directs her subordinates with military discipline, and her skills are comparable to the finest elite soldiers. The widespread rumor is that she and her men were a special task force for some army in Gaïa until they deserted for unknown reasons. There are even those who venture that she might have been a former Arbiter.

Annar

(Town, Population 2,500+)

Although seemingly no more than a simple mountain village, Annar has achieved renown thanks to the great talent of its soldiers. A little more than two centuries, after an odd oriental master came to town, its people began to apply Ki techniques to their fighting styles. Soon, many of them surpassed their instructor, mastering cold-based techniques that earned them name Frostkoliers; "The Ice Breakers." Their incredible skills have earned them the reputation of being the best fighters in the entire kingdom, and King Hagen considers them his champions.

Mullenheinn

(City, Population 83,000+)

The city of Mullenheinn is located in the eastern part of The Peack of the World, near the border of the kingdom of Hendell. Unconventionally, it was built on a great stone platform at the edge of a vast abyss. With the mountain wall on one side and the dark precipice on the other, Mullenheinn is a city like no other in the world. Moreover, the only way to reach it is over the enormous bridge of Balgmund, half a mile long, which connects to a nearby mountain, bridging the large gap that separates them.

Although blizzards are very common in the area, Mullenheinn keeps from being buried in the snow thanks to the mountain that partially covers it. The city itself stands out in comparison to other northern cities because its buildings seem much more monumental than what is expected of Nordic architecture. Although it still tends to lean towards the characteristic dark gray hue of the kingdom, Mullenheinn is replete with detailed multi-story buildings, with heights that are occassionally connected to each other via elaborated bridges. It has several luxurious constructions, among the most notable being the Temple of Tjórvi, a large building dedicated to the Aityr and the Coliseum of Stymir, where every week the warriors have fun competing in various games. Strangely, there is small stone house that belongs to the Templars of Tol Rauko, who are allowed to stay in the city as payment for their help in the past.

Centuries ago, Mullenheinn was famous for being the scene of the final titanic battle of The White Night, which was fought on the bridge of Balgmund for four whole days. Some people swear that they sometimes still hear the moaning of the thousands of corpses that were thrown into the depths of the abyss.

The Castle of Midnight

(Building, Population Unknown)

Halfway between myth and reality, The Castle of Midnight holds a special place among the legends of Haufman. While some claim that they have seen it with their own eyes, many official investigations, even of the Inquisition, support the theory that it is merely a tale. In any case, its history is so old that it has gotten lost throughout the ages. The widespread belief claims that it was the fortress of the great northern kings that ended up being set aflame for unknown reasons and disappeared in one night.

The following morning, nothing remained.

Actually, the Castle of Midnight gets its name because it is only manifests between eleven and twelve at night on a new moon. Anyone who enters will have only one hour to do what he wants, since when it disappears, no uninvited living being can remain inside past twelve.

The Castle of Midnight is where the Lord of the Dead Hringham rests while he observes the passage of time. All kinds of creatures and servants of The Undying King inhabit the citadel. Most of them are undead of various kinds, although there are also many other entities of different nature, like demons, elementals or even young dragons. People assume that Hringham has accumulated many treasures, books, artifacts and wealth beyond imagining after thousands of years. People say that visitors amuse The Undying King, because they are a unique distraction to his monotonous existence. If they are not rude or disrespectful (which he deeply despises), Hringham allows them to keep any of his treasure that they find within the Castle in the limited period of time it remains in the world, while he watches them struggling from the throne room.

Illustrated by Luis NCT



The Castle of Midnight

The Legend of Hringham

The Lord of the Dead, The Undying King, Nosferatu... are only some of the names by which Hringham is known, to whom they call The Immortal One. For many he is just a fairy tale being, the story northern parents tell their children to frighten then when they do not want to go to bed.

But he is real.

As the tales told, Hringham was an invincible warrior whose skill in combat was incomparable. Nobody could face him; great beasts fled from his way and even Gods admired his talent. But like a so many other heroes, his downfall came in the form of a woman. He fell in love with a young maiden, which he secretly married against the wishes of her parents. Days later, while he was at war, his wife accidently broke her neck falling off a horse and died immediately. Refusing to accept it, desperation made him devise the craziest plan. He tore out his heart with his own hands and when Aishia, one of the three fates, descended to collect his soul, Hringham challenged her to a duel. And against all odds, he won. Basking in his victory, the warrior demanded that she returned his beloved. But Death was proud and, as punishment, did something that was never done before: admitted her defeat. With that simple act, she barred Hringham from the afterlife, trapping him in his body halfway between the two worlds.

Neither alive nor dead, wrath overcame Hringham like he had never experienced before and he gathered an army of undead so numerous to face the Gods themselves. The battle was terrible, although Thuriz and his wife Kenaz were able to finally defeated The Immortal One, cursing his flesh for all eternity; from that moment, sunlight will burn him like fire.

After that, Hringham retreated to the bowels of the earth, feeding on the blood of the living to regain his lost energies. Since then, as the centuries passed, his character became pensive and melancholic. He traveled to all the corners of the world, and his name spread in the shadows. Tired, The Immortal One finally returned to his home at The Peack of the World, where he reunited his hosts of undead followers.

Since then, he often became bored and laid in torpor for decades until some relevant event draw his attention. Centuries ago, one of his lieutenants took advantage of his slumber to send The Undying King's armies against humanity. When Hringham awoke and discovered what was happening, he destroyed his servant and withdrew the forces that were advancing. After that, he returned to his slumber.

Just a few years ago, he felt the emergence of a powerful primeval force that was triggered by none other than Black Sun's discovery of the Book of the Dead. Since the essence of the Undead he controls and the necromantic science of the Book are radically different, Hringham feels true distain for Black Sun's work and what they represent. Made of flesh, metal and bone, more crafted than raised, it goes against everything that The Undying King represents.

Alfrothul

(City, Population 8,000+)

Alfrothul, meaning Sun, is a veritable oasis among the cold and the snow that covers The Peack of the World. Inexplicably, the valley where this city is located enjoys a warm and pleasant climate, uncharacteristic of the rest of the region. Unlike its sister cities, Alfrothul has no walls, but it consists of several hundred buildings of stone and wood decorated according to the ancient customs of Haufmarsormen. Accessing the valley is a daunting achievement, not only because it is in the center of The Peack of the World, but also because there is no mountain passage that enters or leaves it. The citizens live happily and peacefully, thanks to the rich harvest of fields surrounding their home.

Its citizens jealously guard the secret of the valley; a small crystal orb that they call The Stone of the Sun. Somehow, this artifact can change the climate, making Alfrothul the oasis that is. The Orb is stashed in a mysterious location in the city, a secret that is shared only between the lord of the city and its high priest.

The ruler of Alfrothul is Hjörtur Trygvi (Weaponsmaster Lv. 3, ♂), although the most well known of all its citizens is the legendary Hrafn Shady (Technician Lv. 7, ♂), the enigmatic warrior lord of the city.

Other Settlements: *Schild.*

Adventures

The mere geographic location of Haufman and the dangers that lurk in The Peack of the World lend themselves to significant plot ideas for developing adventures.

The Ice Girl: While the characters travel through an inhospitable area of The Peack of the World, they will be caught off guard by a terrible ice storm without any place to take shelter. Fortunately, before their lives are threatened, a strange voice carrying through the wind will offer them aid, telling them where to find refuge. Once they are safe, a girl no more than eight or nine years old with blue skin and white hair will approach them. The young one, who introduces herself simply as Álbini, will explain that she is a crossbreed, the offspring of a powerful ice elemental who lives in the mountain range named Arnleif, and a simple human woman. This certainly the first time she has ever seen men of flesh and bone. The problem is that, for no apparent reason, her mother has disappeared, and without anyone else to ask for help, she has decided to look for his father. Fearing what might happen if normal humans saw her (because of the dark stories her mother has told her), Álbini decided to ask the characters to help find him because they looked like nice people. As far as she knows, his father is a Saerinmir living in the islands of northern Haufman. In order for the characters to recognize him she shows them a medallion with his picture inside and, according to what her mother told her, he has something similar.

In the event the characters become interested in the fate of Álbini's mother, she has been captured in a sphere of containment by the Templars of Tol Rauko that live in Mullenheinn; within a few months, when the weather improves, they plan to transfer her to their island.

For Bare Bones: Apparently, Black Sun has been greatly concerned about the remains of a body thrown into the depths of the ice centuries ago. It is the corpse of Alkaiser, King Hringham's lieutenant who was executed for treason following the arrival of The White Night. The Delacroix family believes that if they can acquire Alkaiser they could start researching new categories of necromantic creatures. The problem is that they don't know exactly where he is, so the organization have organized several search parties and taken some time combing the region, with few results. The last possibility, which is very unlikely, is that the remains lie in Fog Gorge, a remote area of very difficult access. To keep from wasting time with their specialized teams, they will order a secondary group of Seekers, or mercenaries equipped with mystical abilities, to begin the complicated and dangerous journey into the Gorge. Trying to hide its intentions from the Steiner family, they will give as little information as possible on the body and what they intend to do with it.

Ironically, the remains they are looking for are there.

The trip to the gorge is not only costly and time-consuming, coping with storms, avalanches and beasts that lurk in the area, but Asdis Kyrbreger, a specter who loved Alkaiser and followed him to his tragic fate, also protects the remains. Asdis controls a small patrol of skeletons and minor spirits, and does intend to let anyone disturb the remains of her beloved.

Cold Ice: While traveling through some city under the shadow of The Peack of the World, the characters will meet an outlandish man who seems like a foreigner. He has dark skin and dresses flamboyantly, wearing a turban and several strangely colored layers of clothing. The curious foreigner calls himself Fadir Al Dawla and claims to be a wise man of the distant nation of Kushistan. Very enthusiastically, he speaks of the contrast between the luxurious palaces and the warm deserts of his land, explaining to them that ice doesn't exist there. Precisely for this reason, a couple of weeks ago Fadir had a "brilliant idea"; if Kushistan had ice, it would open up a whole new field in food preservation, and the frozen water would be as valuable as gold for the wealthy nobility of Kushistan. The wise man's plan is to take a piece of ice to Kushistan as a present to the Great Sulton Omar Ben Sharid, and later request him an awarding to establish a constant traffic of ice between the north and the south. Fadir has already tried several times, but the ice always melts within a few days. But in his "great wisdom", he has deduced an irrefutable fact of logic: if the ice were colder it would remain ice throughout the whole trip. For this reason he has traveled to Haufman, at the highest mountain in the whole world. Unfortunately, the wise man is pretty puny and would be incapable of climbing to the top. Therefore, he is prepared to pay someone extremely well if they climb to the top of Steinkel Mountain and bring back a great piece of ice to him.

If the characters accept his proposal, once they have climbed to the top (after facing any problems along the way) and have managed to obtain the precious ice, Fadir will fulfill his part of the bargain. After paying them as agreed, he will happily take his treasure back to Kushistan.

But months later, he will return putting a high price on the Characters' heads, accusing them of swindling him. The inevitable has happened; the ice melted before arriving at its destination, and the wise man firmly believes that his theory was correct. According to him, the characters never reached the top of the mountain and tried to give him a Pig-in-a-Poke.



Illustrated by Luis NCT

The Maëlstrom

Common Characters of Haufman

Here a series of samples are shown of the warriors of the Goldar clans and the people of the frozen islands. The following statistics have been created without taking Creation Points into account.

Common Frostkolier Warrior

Class Technician; **Level** 3
Initiative 70/20; **LP** 110; **AT** Leather; **Attack** 110; **Dodge** 105; **Weapons** Bastard Sword; **Damage** 80
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 8 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 7 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 8
Abilities: Acrobatics 15, Athleticism 15, Ride 15, Swim 15, Jump 10, Climb 15, Style 50, Intimidate 10, Notice 25, Search 15, Composure 10, Feats of Strength 25, Resist Pain 25.
Accumulations: Agi 1 Dex 3 Con 1 Str 3 Wil 1 Pow 3
Ki: Agi 6 Dex 28 Con 7 Str 27 Wil 5 Pow 28.
Special: Use of Ki, Ki Control, 1 or 2 techniques from the Frostkolier Table.
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 50, PsR 40.

Saerinmir

Class Warrior; **Level** 1
Initiative 50/30; **LP** 110; **AT** Fur; **Attack** 75; **Dodge** 70; **Weapons** Hand Axe; **Damage** 50
AGI: 5 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 7 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Acrobatics 5, Athleticism 20, Ride 10, Swim 30, Jump 15, Climb 10, Intimidate 20, Notice 35, Search 20, Track 20, Composure 5, Feats of Strength 20, Resist Pain 5, Forging 15.
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 30, PsR 30.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Northern/Northern Peasant: Athleticism +10, Climb +10, Intimidate +10, Notice +10, Track +10, Composure +10, Feats of Strength +10, Resist Pain +10.

Saerinmir: Athleticism +10, Climb +10, Intimidate +10, Notice +10, Swim +10, Composure +10, Navigation +10, Resist Pain +10.

Nobleman: Athleticism +10, Intimidate +10, Notice +10, Leadership +20, Composure +10, History (local) +10, Resist Pain +10.

Table 13: Haufman

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-20	Northern Peasant	Clothes worn, a blanket, and food for a couple of days. 3 CC.
21-60	Northern	A couple of changes of clothes of winter, rations for a week, snowshoes to walk through the snow, a weapon or climbing equipment and survival equipment. 50 SC.
61-85	Saerinmir	A couple of changes of clothes, food for a week, a weapon, a backpack with some personal items. 50 SC.
86-100	Nobleman	Several changes of clothes, some heavy waterproof blankets, rations for more than a week, a couple of weapons, snowshoes, a small sleigh, a backpack with good equipment for climbing and survival, and some personal items. 50 GC.

HENDELL

Capital: Karlsrude.
Population: 3,600,000+
Ethnic Groups: Norne (92%), Asher (5%), Zínner (2%).
Government: Monarchy.
Languages: Hermital, Latin.
Religion: Aityr.
Technology: 3.
Denomym: Hedense.
Flag: A menacing black dragon curled up on the ice.
Masculine Names: Adrian, Andrei, Bronislav, Feofan, Ferapont, Fyodor, Igor, Ilari, Isidor, Ivan, Maksim, Mikhail, Nikolai, Rolan, Shura, Vlasi, Yasha, Yulian, Yuriy.
Feminine Names: Alisa, Annushka, Ivanna, Manya, Marfa, Sasha, Sofya, Tanya, Uliana, Valeriya, Yesfir, Yevdokiya, Yuliya, Zhanna, Zinaida.
Last Names: Abramova, Aleksanshkin, Artamova, Balakirev, Batalova, Budarin, Bzowski, Chernekov, Donkova, Gaidar, Gerviev, Koukleva, Kulikova, Militenko, Omelchenko, Radinov, Shcerbina, Svartsevich, Vertinskaya, Zheronkina.

Hendell is generally considered the most civilized and important of the nations that compose The Barren Icy Lands. It is a powerful kingdom, characterized by two vastly different parts. The south, known as The Warm Barren, is a huge plain enjoying a mild climate and fertile vegetation. There are some forests and swamps, but infrequently very lush. By contrast, the northern region is a vast and inhospitable icy wasteland, full of ponds and swamps that are hit by storms in all four seasons.

Most of its people meet in the huge city-fortress of The Warm Barren, which are known as Bastions. These cities are the center of life in the kingdom, where all the important decisions and major commercial transactions are carried out. The few villages that exist are always built near the Bastions, with the sole purpose of providing food and other necessities to the big cities. In return, they enjoy the protection afforded by them in difficult times.

Hendell does not experience great economic prosperity, but neither does it need it. It is usually self-sufficient, with only the nobility dealing with products from abroad. Extremely militaristic, the nation has a very strong army and, thanks to the large amounts of money that its rulers have always invested in its modernization, it enjoys the greatest advancements that money can buy.

Hendell has a strong monarchy government. The current dynasty, House Sterki, has had all the power and absolute control of all political issues for several centuries. They intervene in the affairs of all the great noble families and dictate the law. To the people, "they" are Hendell. King Erick Sterki, nicknamed The Strong, rules the country after the death of his father. Erick is acclaimed by his people as a hero, and is considered the best king that ever ruled Hendell. Said to be one of the best fighters in the entire continent, very few can match his skill.

The fracturing of the Empire has had some impact on Hendell, although the ties the kingdom maintained with Abel were rather scarce. Shortly after the death of the Emperor, Erick Sterki declared Hendell completely independent and granted his unconditional support to Gustave Thorgrum, of Clan Thurizung in Goldar, hoping to reap the benefits of his coronation as king of the neighboring territories. Sterki's goal, as well as his people's, is to recreate the mythical kingdom of Haufmarsormen with Hendell as its capital, and he has even suggested that the next step might be to attack Dwänholf, as Holst planned to do in the past.

Culture and Society

More than one society, the people of Hendell is separated into two different worlds, depending on the territory they live in. The vast majority resides in the warm south, meeting inside the huge Bastions, the city-fortresses that were the pride of Haufmarsormen long ago.

Of all the people in The Barren Icy Lands, the Hedenses have best adapted to the passage of time, because even without excessive contact with other kingdoms or principalities, they have made considerable progress thanks to the influence of tourism and the long periods of relative calm their nation has enjoyed in recent centuries. To a large extent, both things are due to the existence of various fortresses of the fourth Lord of War, which are present throughout the territory. Thus, people here have learned to combine the warlike habits of their ancestos with cultural progress, creating a rich and varied society. Although still regarding as fundamental the use of weapons, they do not possess the same ferocity that characterizes other Nordic warriors, but a cold determination combined with a refined fighting style.

Hedenses have an archaic system of social classes, in which the nobility are called The First Caste and enjoy certain privileges and powers. Since families with economic power also habitually control the commerce, The First Caste is both the nobility and bourgeoisie. It is not an absolutely closed estate, since if a person gains enough personal power, goods or social recognition, he can be considered a full member of The First Caste.

The people of Hendell are full of national pride and feel that their kingdom is an indispensable part of their life. Despite the fact that they do not stress education, each Bastion typically has one or two schools, where children are forced to go for a year to study the history of their nation. In addition to the hermital tongue, most people hold Latin as a secondary language or speak a mixture of the two, because it serves them well in dealing with members of other principalities. Visitors are welcome, and one of the major pastimes is to do tours of the cities.

If anybody that visits a Bastion for the first time think that Hedenses are unsophisticated, that's because they have never been in Goldar or Haufman. The worst things that a visitor can do are ridiculing Hendell's customs or disrespecting the crown; these are serious insults that can even escalate to bloodshed.

Those who dwell in the north moors are called Lochgjest, or "The People of the Lakes." They are nomadic clans which wander from one area to another without settling too long in one place. Remarkably tribal, The People of the Lakes are considered strange form the outsiders point of view. Both spiritualists and warriors, uneducated and yet wise, Lochgjest are mythical figures. Traditionally, they are obligated to help whoever needs it, always taking in those who have fallen by the wayside, even their worst enemy. Paradoxically they never they forget a slight, and are able to travel around the world to punish in a cruel and ruthless way whoever deserves their wrath. Ocassionally, some Lochgjest enter the Bastions selling ointments, grass and skins, and their natural products are highly regarded.

The only thing that theoretically unites both cultures is the belief in the Aityr and pride as a nation, but ironically, in practice are two completely different people.

Regarding the Supernatural

Being more influenced by the western customs and not having to deal with continuous attacks from mythical beasts, Hendell lives much less accustomed the supernatural than its neighboring nations. Even so, nourished by the same myths and legends as the other descendants of Holst and despising the doctrines of the Church, they do not believe that supernatural abilities are anything malignant in theory. Anyway, the people will commonly try to expel such problematic persons using any method at their disposal.

The Lochgjest are much more tolerant of such practices, since most of their shamans secretly have limited mystical powers.

The History of Hendell

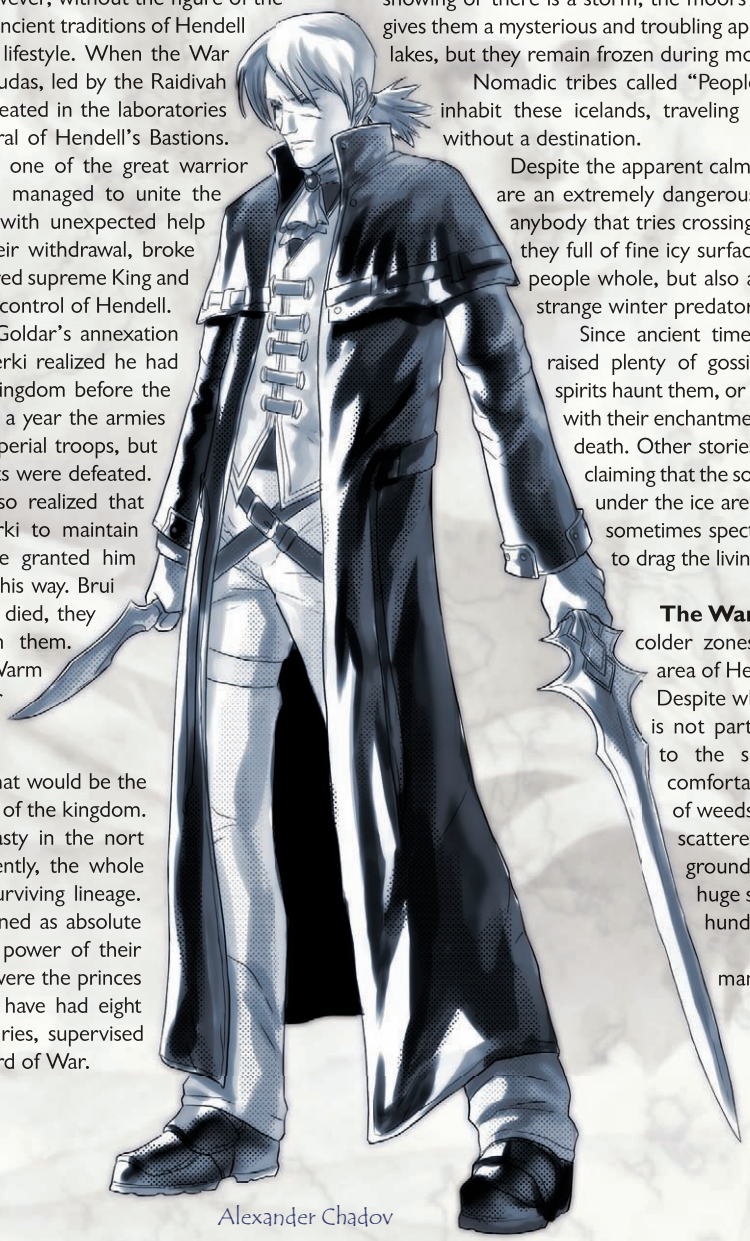
In the past, The Warm Barren belonged to a group of Jayan tribes and other races at war with each other. When Holst founded Haufmarsormen, he gathered an impressive army of northerners with which he claimed the land for himself, expelling all the former inhabitants by force. His goal was to settle his people there and launch attacks to the south and the east of The Warm Barren. After the death of Holst and later the separation of the clans, they began building the fortresses that would become the Bastions of the present day. During that time, the fighting never ceased, either against attackers from other lands or among the other Bastions.

About 200 years before the advent of the Messiah, the great chief Alfjorn managed to gain control of the area, subjugating all the Bastions. Having proclaimed himself king, he was the first in giving the territory the name Hendell, which it still uses today. Alfjorn, who wasn't half as good at ruling the kingdom as he was a warrior and conqueror, was on the throne for less than a decade when a new chief snatched the crown from him. A long period of chaos began and, for two centuries, hundreds of kings briefly sat on the coveted throne.

Hendell briefly teamed up with Goldar against the armies of heaven during the War of the Cross, but some of the Bastions decided to join the Christian doctrines and the nation ended up becoming a part of the Holy Kingdoms. However, without the figure of the Messiah, they soon revived the ancient traditions of Hendell and returned to their previous lifestyle. When the War of God erupted the armies of Judas, led by the Raidivah (a race of demons artificially created in the laboratories of Tol Rauko), devastated several of Hendell's Bastions. Among the chaos, Brui Sterki, one of the great warrior lords of the Barren Icy Lands, managed to unite the forces of the other clans and with unexpected help from the Duk´zarist during their withdrawal, broke the opposition. Sterki was declared supreme King and for several years tried to regain control of Hendell.

In the year 240, following Goldar's annexation to the Sacred Holy Empire, Sterki realized he had to be prepared to defend his kingdom before the advance of Zhorne. In just over a year the armies of Hendell bravely faced the imperial troops, but one after another, all their fronts were defeated. However, the first Emperor also realized that he needed somebody like Sterki to maintain the control of the area, so he granted him the title of Prince and went on his way. Brui had two children and, when he died, they divided the kingdom between them. The older one received The Warm Barren, along with the order to rebuild what was left of the great Bastions, and the younger one the cold northern pools. That would be the beginning of the strange division of the kingdom. Some years later, Sterki's dynasty in the nort came to an end and, consequently, the whole kingdom fell to hands of the surviving lineage. Since then, the Sterki have reigned as absolute monarchs, always ensuring the power of their land. Their traditional enemies were the princes of Dwänholf, with whom they have had eight disputes in last the seven centuries, supervised by the Arbiters of the fourth Lord of War.

Illustrated by Salvador Espin



Alexander Chadov

After several years of weakness, Hendell has resurfaced due to Erick Sterki's ascendance to the throne, who many consider the greatest monarch of the history. He has not only led his kingdom to a state of great prosperity, but when the Supreme Archbishop Eljared ordered the attack the principality, Erick repelled the imperial troops, forcing them to retreat past the borders of Hendell. Now he hopes that his plan to take Gustave Thorgrum to the throne of Goldar is successful he and can exert his control over the neighboring kingdom.

Relevant Geographical Features

The entire kingdom is separated into two radically different areas, the great lakes of the Barren Icy Lands in the north and the large prairies of The Warm Barren in the south. Hendell also includes islands of various sizes, but given its frosty weather, they are not usually populated.

The Ponds: Under this common name, hundreds and hundreds of miles of icy moors stretch all across northern Hendell. The Ponds are a vast and inhospitable region often hit by sub-zero temperatures and heavy snowstorms. Surprisingly, despite the extreme climate there is lots of vegetation, among which an unusual plant called "Crystal Spikes" grows, covering a great percentage of the area. When it isn't snowing or there is a storm, the moors are filled with a thick fog that gives them a mysterious and troubling appearance. There are also many lakes, but they remain frozen during most of the year.

Nomadic tribes called "People of the Lakes" or Lochgjest, inhabit these icelands, traveling from one side to the other without a destination.

Despite the apparent calm felt in these pools, The Ponds are an extremely dangerous area, able to take the life of anybody that tries crossing it without help. Not only are they full of fine icy surfaces that can brake and swallow people whole, but also a plethora of wild animals and strange winter predators.

Since ancient times, these desolate places have raised plenty of gossip. Some believe that old ice spirits haunt them, or that snow witches mislead men with their enchantments and force them to freeze to death. Other stories and legends are even darker; claiming that the souls of those who have drowned under the ice are trapped in the water, and that sometimes spectral arms rise from the surface to drag the living down with them.

The Warm Barren: In contrast to the colder zones of the north, the southern area of Hendell is a large green meadow. Despite what its name might insinuate, it is not particularly warm, but compared to the surrounding areas, it's quite comfortable. The Warm Barren is full of weeds and has some small forests of scattered trees and large gaps in the ground. The people of Hendell built huge strongholds around them, with hundreds of farming villages.

With such a varied wildlife, many predators inhabit the area, but the most of them do not attack man or get closer to the roads if they can avoid it.



Illustrated by Sergio Melero

A Hunter in The Warm Barren

Molofart, The Submerged Bay: Northeast of Hendell, running along the eastern part of the Hild Archipelago, is the region of Molofart, also known as The Submerged Bay. It is a large area of land located a few feet below sea level. Depending on the strength of the tides and the temperature, the zone can be dry, covered in water or completely frozen. During periods of relatively warm tides, it is completely submerged and no one suspects that the bottom is just a few feet below the surface. In contrast, in the colder months, this reef is quickly frozen and a layer of ice forms on its surface. Finally, in the months where the tides recede, Molofart becomes a frozen marsh, where the bogs are peppered with rock coral. For confused travelers this poses great danger, since they can never be certain of what's under their feet.

The Uruz Grave: Not far from the coast, northeast of Muninborg, the seabed drops sharply, reaching an unfathomable depth. This huge underwater depression is known in Hendell as The Uruz Grave, but the nearby Christian community calls it The Abyss of the Leviathan. The waters here are completely black and remarkably cold. There are no currents to disturb it, and at night the surface almost looks like a mantle of black silk. Fishing is abundant, as rumors of sightings large marine monsters, such as giant squid or sea serpents, abound.

Nobody can say that they have seen it with their own eyes, but it's true that from time to time a ship disappears in the area. Once a year, on a day in early autumn in Saint Yemaia, the boats of Muninborg are overcrowded with people approaching the Abyss of the Leviathan to throw a statue of the saint overboard in order to bless next year's festival. Especially, they request the protection of the sailors who navigate the area.

The Hild Archipelago: The group of islands stretching along the northern coast of Hendell is called The Hild Archipelago, because of a legendary snow witch who, according to the tale, reigned over them long ago. At present, most of the islands are virtually uninhabited; it is only possible to find a few villages, many of which haven't had outside visitors for centuries. Completely isolated from the rest of the world, nobody knows what could be discovered there.

Gesjnacht: This is the name by which the People of the Lakes call their only cemetery, or as they call it, "The Land of Death." Located in Cape Hild, the stretch of land that makes up Gesjnacht is the coldest and most desolate area in the entire country, a gray and misty territory noted for not having any smell. The customs and traditions of Lochgjest dictate that when someone ages and becomes a hindrance for the rest of the group, they must walk alone until they die face down on the ice. Those people go to the frozen wastelands of Gesjnacht, where they dig their own graves. Sometimes, they can pick somebody to accompany them if they are too feeble to make the trip alone.

Nobody who knows the meaning of these lands goes near them, since they believe that every step towards Gesjnacht brings them a little closer to death.

Places of Interest

The strongholds are, undoubtedly, the most important places in the whole kingdom, as the villages in The Warm Barren are always too small and sparsely populated. They are named for an ancient beast or spirit of the clans, who becomes the guardian of the city. In addition to the strongholds, there are also several unusual places that can attract the attention of any tourist.


Ocean of the Children
Hild Archipelago
Island of Tir
Gesjnacht
Ritgernhauf
Molofart
The Ponds
Uruz Grave
Hendell
Bergenfaur
Nackasen
Mullenheinn
Gilnangor
Muninborg
Warm Deserts
Muspellheim
Hymir
Redgafer
Karlsrude
Black Marsh
Enkido
Barachesi Forest
Doel River
Laenfaur River
Door of Surthein
Terrasanta
Kirion Monastery
Desert of Memories
Olafer
Lukka
Gehena Forest
Kainkasutur
Village of Three Crosses
Pragna
Mürrenheim Mountain Range
Cave of The Murmurs
Forest of Wulfgar
Somer Plateau
Iadului Gorge
Moth
Hermagor
Tel´Haroth
Jaarenghäff
Dürgabenh
Moor of Shadow
Inner Valleys
Torda
Sea of Salt
Monastery of Stelea
Eldiah
Alessa
MAP KEY
Capital
Metropolis
City
Building
Fortress
Path
Road
0 250 500 750 Kilometers
0 250 500 Miles

The Karlsrude Bastion – The Dragon

(Metropolis, Population 345,000+)

Karlsrude is the main Bastion of Hendell and for foreigners has become the unofficial capital of the kingdom. Like all the Bastions massive walls of stone, so tall that they almost completely obscure the large buildings behind them, surround the city. While it doesn't compare to the great western metropolises at first sight, after a more detailed inspection it's obvious that Karlsrude doesn't have much of a reason to envy to them. Their buildings are made of stone, most of the streets are paved and even some of the main roads have streetlamps for nighttime illumination. In homage to the guardian of the Bastion, the whole city is full of allusions to dragons, and it is normal to see gargoyles or buildings full of flags adorned with these mythical reptiles. The most famous of these decorations is the main entrance, simply called The Dragon Gate, which takes the form of two wryms facing each other, one white and the other black.

The great King Erick Sterki (Warrior Lv. 9, ♂) is the Lord of Karlsrude, although he has little time for duties like administration, leaving such matters in the hands of his younger brother Ingimund Sterki (Warrior Lv. 4, ♂). Despite living in his shadow, Ingimund admires his brother overall, and is always trying to improve his reputation and gain his approval.

Karlsrude is well known for having numerous combat schools, which have been refining their styles throughout the years. There is a huge rivalry between its members, which sometimes produces bloodshed among them. The most famous one is the academy of Hrolfeir, where Erick Sterki himself was taught. Every year, different schools compete in The Dragon Games, sending multiple fighters to compete. It's one of the flashier events of the city, attracting countless visitors from everywhere in Gaïa.

Karlsrude is one of the few cities of the north that hosts a strong presence of Samael members. Unfortunately, most of them are Sylvain and Duk´zarist, and unlike other places, the racial tension makes them to face each other, dealing with the risk of being discovered by the people of the city for what they are.

The Hymir Bastion – The Hawk

(City, Population 42,000+)

Nobody can deny that a visit to Hymir is a true spectacle. Despite the apparent normality, the city is packed with all kinds of animals from the northern wilderness, from large brown bears to wild wolves of the steppes. This is largely due to the dozens of training schools in the city, which are responsible for preparing them for all kinds of functions. After centuries of improvement, the people here have achieved a great affinity towards wild animals, living alongside them as if they were simple pets. To see a carriage pulled by a bear or a pack of wolves alongside a hunter is unimaginable in other parts of the world.

The worst thing about the Bastion is the terrible stench that emanates from many of its suburbs, caused by the defecation of the countless animals in the city. Fortunately, this provides a fantastic fertilizer to the surrounding villages, achieving higher crop prosperity than any other place in Hendell.

Liv Frifdottir (Ranger Lv. 4, ♀), a believer of Eihwaz who has a strong synchronization with the Beryl Rafael, is regent of the city following the death of her father. Young, beautiful and good natured, yet with an ironclad sense of duty, the people of the Hymir were surprised at first when King Sterki left Liv in charge of Hymir, but little by little they have grown accustomed to her until reaching the deep admiration they feel today. Secretly, Liv has formed a deep friendship with Akari Eiorios (Thief Lv. 4, ♀ Daimah), a Daimah who acts as the Samael Archon in the city, although only there are twelve members of the organization throughout the whole Bastion.

Recently a faction of the Order of Yehudah has secretly settled in Hymir, convinced that it would make a wonderful base of operations.

The Gilnangor Bastion – The Serpent

(City, Population 46,000+)

In the northern region of The Warm Barren, just on the edge of The Ponds is "the City of the Serpent". Gilnangor is quite an original Bastion and also the most poorly defended city of the nation. It began as a simple border guard post built around the Tower of The Sea, a tall building over 300 feet with a fantastic view of a large part of the region. It is very broad at the base, almost like a small castle that tapers off as it grows in height.

The rest of the city is built in constricting concentric rings around the tower, and it is clear how the site has grown over the centuries. As the city grew, some areas of the outer wall were knocked down (the sections that were useless for future construction) and new defensive walls were built around the most recent restructuring. Throughout its history, Gilnangor has undergone over ten reconstructions (or shedding of skins, as the people say), but only now just less than half its original walls are still standing. Funnily enough, these walls are also the greatest works of art of the city, since they are decorated with serpents carved in stone chasing each other's tails. Interestingly, these ornaments also function as a large sun dial: The Tower of The Sea is the needle whose shadow stretches across the walls, where large crenellations mark the hours by means of numbers in relief. In old times, each one of them had a bell that made a unique and specific sound when the shadow of the tower touched it, but most of these have already disappeared. Although almost all the governors who have succeeded in Gilnangor promised to replace the bells, the truth is that there are barely four of them in between the merlons. The last restructuring took place a little over fifty years ago, although the city has continued its extension since then, and new houses are already outside the walls.

The Redgafer Bastion – The Hedgehog

(City, Population 39,000+)

Like the animal from which it takes its name, the Bastion of Redgafer is probably most unassailable in Hendell. The city is meticulously designed to be the bane of any attacker. The design of the streets, narrow and convoluted, is set up so that enemies can only assault the main avenues, which are easily defended with heavy catapults and crossbows. Even the outer walls are doubled and covered in sharp metal spikes (the "spines", as the people like to call them), closely packed together to prevent them from snapping off with a single attack from a ram or catapult. The only defensive flaw in Redgafer is that, perhaps, its design leaves very little space for food storage and provisions.

As a city, the Bastion of The Hedgehog is as impressive a place for travelers as it is inconvenient for its citizens. All the houses and streets are made of stone, and many of the walls have engravings or embossed scenes of ancient battles. If a tourist departs from the main avenue they can get lost very easily, but will always find a small square, a magnificent tower perfectly preserved or a beautifully decorated wall. It is a city for tourists to leisurely walk through and lose themselves discovering hundreds of little spots, each one as special as it is different. However, even though the people of Redgafer already know their streets and hiding nooks, they're tired of their uncomfortable distribution, narrow alleys, roads blocked off by walls, and bridges and ladders that, although very useful in the event of a siege, are little more than daily annoyances. Therefore, citizens are not so proud of the Bastion as foreigners might first believe. That is the reason why they may seem sullen when are occasionally asked to explain directions to tourists (who have the annoying tendency to stop at each corner or misinterpret directions).

Presently, Redgafer continues to be an impenetrable bunker, although in times of relative peace its trade activity is much more prominent.

The Olafer Bastion – The Giant

(Metropolis, Population 76,000+)

Olafer has always been a Bastion riddled with problems. Located at the intersection of Goldar and Moth, near The Mountain Range of Miürenheim, this large city-fortress has dealt with beasts from the mountains and numerous attacks from the clans of the west. Therefore, it's much less advanced than the other Bastions, as its rustic buildings and unpaved streets can indicate. The people of Olafer are extremely superstitious, possibly because of its proximity to Moth. They have customs against virtually any kind of bad spirit, and it's common to see amulets and talismans hanging on doors and windows.

Another problem is that, for some unknown reason, over the past two centuries there have been an unusually high number of Nephilim Jayan births in the city, some of which even have horns. Although the first baby with facial deformations was considered a monster (called "Children of the Beast"), King Sterki soon discovered their terrifying combat prowess and gathered them together to create an elite corpse of soldiers that have become the pride of the city; The Giants of Olafer. These "giants" have always cut off their horns to avoid problems with the Empire and the Church, but now no longer have the need.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

The Bergenfaur Bastion – The Spider

(City, Population Unknown)

Bergenfaur is one of the Bastions that the Raidivah destroyed during the War of God. What seven centuries ago was once a fertile region became a large swamp. The city of the spider was known in the past for its low, half-buried houses, of which only a few had skylights. Their tallest constructions were defensive walls and towers. The original design made most of their buildings immune to fire and catapults, making it very easy to seek and destroy attackers in a virtually open field. The problem was that this became absolute useless when the Raidivah appeared in the center of town through a portal and began destroying everything.

Today, all that remains of the former city-fortress is an icy marsh and the broken remains of some walls and towers. However, what few suspect is that the complex network of tunnels and underground passages connecting most of the buildings have been kept more or less intact. Not only are there noxious animals and reptiles in the marsh, but scientists of Rah also constructed a tecnomagic laboratory to create new Raidivah and transform prisoners into monstrous genetically altered soldiers. Since Brui Sterki and the Duk´zarist destroyed the place before they could activate it, the creatures and the ancient inhabitants of Bergenfaur still lay dormant in its depths. The previous century, Eljared spent some time inside Bergenfaur making changes to the machines that were there. Fortunately, none of the lethargic creatures has awoken yet, nor will they without somebody consciously activating them.

Muninborg

(City, Population 28,000+)

Muninborg is a small independent port that has little or no connection with the customs of Hendell. This is a Christian community, founded years ago by a wealthy group of immigrants who left Dwänholf believing it was a corrupt and weak principality. Soon they were joined by many people in the region who shared their religious beliefs, making Muninborg flourish quickly.

The only reason that the city always has been tolerated is due to the substantial benefits it regularly provides to the Bastions. Its people are dedicated to filling their warehouses with furs, wood and minerals with which to later trade, although the true value of the city is as an exchange hub for many of the excess goods that the Bastions produce. Today, its more prosperous trade are the weapons provided by King Sterki to his allies in Goldar.

Bishop Victor Kirby (Wizard Lv. 4, ♂) governs the city; leading the stray sheep back into the fold with the divine gifts that God has granted him. It is also one of the few large cities of the north that has an Inquisitorial Court.

The Island of Alessa

(Building, Population Unknown)

Located several miles from the reef wall along the coastline, until recently Alessa was no more than another uninhabited island of The Hild Archipelago. Nineteen years ago, Jean Pierre Delacroix, head of the Delacroix family and one of the two leaders of Black Sun, bought the island from Sterki for an exorbitant amount of gold. Then he invested enough money to destabilize an entire principality in the construction of a large complex, to which he gave the name of his deceased wife, Alessa Delacroix. Jean Pierre put special emphasis on keep in secret the complicated structure of the facilities; and many of the builders and designers, among who were talented occultists, architects and engineers, began dying in bizarre circumstances after they had completed their work there.

Immediately after finishing his project, Delacroix personally moved to the island accompanied by an impressive number of occultists and investigators, with whom he began development on new necromantic weapons. Many of the major successes of the organization, like the Slayers, the Hunters or even the mighty Raziels, were created here. For that reason, higher-ranking members of Black Sun conjecture that the original Book of the Dead could be on the island.

Even the people who have actually worked on Alessa don't know the complex very well, since they were prohibited from leaving their assigned sections. What is certain is that the plants are composed of several buildings, among which there are residences, laboratories of experimentation, and even a prison to lock up their guinea pigs for research. There is also a huge mansion belonging to Delacroix, where he theoretically lives today. Probably, in addition to all these buildings, an ample underground complex must also exist, although nobody can assure it. Since the entire island is filled with cliffs, the only way to access it is to use a small hatch located on the northern coast.

Thanks to the resources of Black Sun and their discovery of The Lost Logias, Alessa has an archaic system of magical technology used to control the whole island. As the largest research and development center of Black Sun, it also has some unparalleled security systems, both technical and supernatural. Moreover, the last time that someone visited the facilities, the island had elite guard corps and also could use the most powerful undead weapons. It is unknown whether these agents are still there or not.

Just three years ago, after Jean Piere Delacroix obtained a strange piece of dark metal, he isolated the island and ordered none went there until further notice. Since then his first-born son, Adrien Delacroix, has lead the family making sure that nobody approaches Alessa, as his father had commanded. Some believe that Delacroix is carrying out new experiments, combining The Book of the Dead with whatever that piece of metal could contain. Others conjecture that there has been a failure in the containment system and that the whole island has been destroyed by his creations, who roam now free. There are even those who believe that it's both. Either way, the last message received from the island, one year ago, is at least intriguing, as it cited only three cryptic words: "The Ghost Angel."



Ritgernhauf

(Village, Population 280+)

In deepest of The Ponds, hidden away from all the known roads, is the fortified village of Ritgernhauf. What at first sight seems no more than a Lochgjest camp, as its people tries to make visitors to believe, is no mere temporary settlement. It is a small fort, mainly populated by well-equipped warriors who train daily for war. Belu Greingel Sterki (Assassin Lv. 4, ♀) runs the place claiming to be a descendent of Brui Sterki's younger son and a Lochgjest shaman. Therefore, according to the historical division of the territory that Brui established in ancient times, she would have the right to the throne of the entire northern region. Currently, Belu has no chance or intention of taking it by force, although she is trying to assemble a small army of loyal followers (which, at the moment, do not exceed 200 soldiers). In the future, the young woman would be willing to compromise or negotiate with enemies of Hendell to achieve her goals, and even accept a more equitable distribution, taking some of the richest and fertile lands of The Warm Barren.

Belu does not desire unnecessary bloodshed, but if anyone discovers the truth about Ritgernhauf or what she's planning and does not want to join her, she will not let them walk away alive if that's what it takes to keep all her grand schemes from being disrupted.

Other Settlements: *Nackasen.*

Adventures

A visit to The Ponds can already mean true adventure for those who enjoy exploring inhospitable and dangerous principalities, where the unknown lurks between the snow and fog. Similarly, the great Bastions are a host of conflicts and significant events, where the unexpected can be found around every corner.

The Albatross: Being in a town or coastal community, the characters will hear that a sailor is recruiting people to rescue the cargo and crew of his ship. If they are interested in the work, he will introduce himself as Rutger (Ranger Lv. 1, ♂) and explain that he belongs to a freighter called The Albatross. While they were crossing The Hild Archipelago, they ran into a wind gust and lost control of the ship. After a few days, the vessel got caught in the ice. He returned with great hardships, and is now trying to form a caravan of men to rescue the rest of the crew and recover the boat's cargo.

If the characters prepare for this company, they will soon discover that nothing is as easy as it seems. When they finally arrive at the trapped ship after several days of walking on the frozen sea, they can confirm that most of the crew has been horribly slaughtered. The few that are alive are completely mad and only murmur on about strange monsters in the ice.

It happened that the boat was carrying a cargo of Black Sun's necromantic weapons, among which there were two enhanced Slayers, Type-005 and countless zombies. After the accident, some of the crew decided to open the boxes thinking that they might contain food, releasing horrors beyond their understanding. Trapped in the ice by a strong storm, the characters will have to find a way to survive on the doomed ship.

Common Characters of Hendell

Here a series of common characters in Hendell are shown. The following statistics have been created without taking Creation Points into account.

Lochgjest

Class Ranger; **Level** 1
Initiative 55/50; **LP** 105; **AT** Fur; **Attack** 65; **Dodge** 60; **Weapons** Short Sword; **Damage** 45
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 7 **PER:** 8 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 25, Ride 25, Swim 25, Climb 15, Trap Lore 20, Notice 60, Search 40, Track 65, Animals 35, Herbal Lore 10.
Special: Hunt Module
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 30, PsR 30.

Giant of Olafer

Class Weaponsmaster; **Level** 3
Initiative 70/0; **LP** 194; **AT** Hard Leather; **Attack** 125; **Dodge** 125; **Weapons** Two-Handed Axe; **Damage** 130
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 8 **CON:** 8 **STR:** 10 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 25, Swim 15, Intimidate 40, Notice 35, Search 15, Composure 10, Feats of Strength 145, Resist Pain 10.
Special: Nephilim Jayan, Barbarian Module, Area Attack Style Module.
Resistance: PhR 65, DR 50, VR 50, MR 30, PsR 40.

Animal Trainer

Class Freelance; **Level** 1
Initiative 55/50; **LP** 100; **AT** None; **Attack** 60; **Dodge** 70; **Weapons** Short Sword; **Damage** 45
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 7 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 6 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Ride 45, Swim 15, Intimidate 10, Leadership 20, Notice 35, Search 15, Track 15, Animals 70, Herbal Lore 25, Medicine 25.
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 30, PsR 30.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Peasant: Athleticism +10, Ride +10, History (Local) +10, Notice +10, Track +10, Animals +15, Herbal Lore +15.

Northerner: Athleticism +10, Ride +10, History (Local) +10, Intimidate +10, Notice +10, Track +10, Animals +10, Feats of Strength +10.

Lochgjest: Athleticism +10, Swim +10, Notice +10, Track +10, Resist Pain +10, Hide +10, Stealth +10, Memorize +10.

The First Caste: Athleticism +10, Ride +10, History (Local) +10, Intimidate +10, Notice +10, Leadership +10, Persuasion +10, Appraisal +10.

Table 14: Hendell

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-20	Peasant	Some clothing, some blankets, food for a couple of days, some personal items. 2 CC.
21-65	Northerner	A couple of changes of winter clothes, food for a week, a weapon, some items and basic survival equipment. 50 SC.
66-90	Lochgjest	Warm clothes, some blankets, rations for a week, a weapon, a backpack with a good survival kit. 30 SC.
91-100	The First Caste	Several changes of clothes, good food for over a week, a weapon, a horse, a backpack with personal items and some crafts to sell. 70 GC.

THE DARK LANDS

The northeastern territories of the Old Continent compose the Dark Lands, which are located between The Coast of Commerce and The Barren Icy Lands. They get this unusual name from the vast obscurity contained there and because they have always been problematic. Generally, these principalities are cold and damp, often plagued by rain and storms.



The Dark Lands have no real history. In fact, before the emergence of the Empire they didn't even exist as a nation and their only human population lived independently in small towns and villages, alongside tenebrous legendary beings. During the unification of Abel it split into two principalities, but even so its people have never had common roots or the feeling of being a unified nation; it has always been an ambiguous territory of the Empire. Although officially integrated into Abel, the lack of unity and isolation of its people have made them live independently, ignorant of everything outside of their daily rutine. Its foreign policy is almost nonexistant, and sometimes have gone years without an official representive in the High Senate.

The other nations believe that the Dark Lands are savage lands and with little order. Their people live afraid, either from criminals and bandits or from their own fears.

Apparently, as both Moth and Dwänholf have severed ties with Abel, although not as much by open proclamation as by the neglect and lack of response that they give to the imperial edicts. Although Abel considers them part of the Empire, their absence of authority there tells a very different story. In any case, the Empress has not yet made a decision on what to do about these lands, either because there's no strategic interest at the present time, or because they need to cross The Barren Icy Lands or the Coast of Commerce to reach them.

MOTH

Capital: Torda.
Population: 3,200,000+
Ethnic Groups: Asher (57%), Zínner (41%), Norne (1%).
Government: Monarchy (officially).
Languages: Latin (there are many local dialects).
Religion: Christianity.
Technology: 3.
Denomym: Mozzer.
Flag: The Mark of Morrigan: Three crows in a circle filled with an intrincate maze of lines.
Masculine Names: Andrei, Ciprian, Constantin, Gavril, Nicolae, Petrica, Serghei, Silviu, Sorin, Stefan, Stelian, Traian, Vasile, Viorel, Virgiliu.
Feminine Names: Andrea, Cemelia, Doina, Georgeta, Ileana, Ioana, Ionela, Iuliana, Luminita, Mihaela, Nicoleta, Ruxandra, Stefanía, Tereza, Viorica.
Last Names: Arcs, Balitiu, Boji, Christinel, Cristea, Dancescu, Eliade, Ivanescu, Luca, Nicolae, Szekely, Tomescu, Urzica, Vlas, Zeklos.

Moth is a land full of dark shadowy legends. In many respects, it has stronger ties to the past that most of nations of The Old Continent, as during the last the seven centuries it has shown little progress.

The principality lives in almost total isolation from the rest of the world, because their lands are inaccessable due to the surrounding mountains and plateaus. Its cold and vast landscapes are littered with swamps and rivers, most of them located in small valleys surrounded by thick ominous forests. Because of the high humidity, the region is usually covered by a dense fog, which gives the landscape a gloomy appearance that only strengthens the superstition surrounding it.

Moth has no large cities or towns. On the other hand, it is filled with hundreds and hundreds of small villages scattered across the principality. Each settlement is widely dispersed and the region's difficult terrain makes traveling from one to the other very complicated. Thus, its people feel even more isolated. This is why any trade with outsiders is nonexistent; each area managing to get by as well as they can with what they produce.

While the official government follows the traditional system of the Empire, it holds little power in Moth. Each region tends to have some minor feudal lord, notably a count or baron, who controls his lands without other authority than their own. As for the villages, a mayor or chief elected by the nobility typically rules them, or in the case of an independent population, by the villagers themselves.

The principality has no army. While each town has a few guards dedicated to keeping the peace and feudal lords to manage their services, the Princes of Moth have never needed any more than the minimum amount of soldiers to keep order in their cities.

Due to the hazardous landscape of the principality, there are still many unexplored areas in the region. Major expeditions are organized to draw up maps of these zones from time to time, but most of them have disappeared under mysterious circumstances. For some years the rumor has been that, by order of the Prince, a great called city called Graven is being built, which many people have found by accident. Curiously it doesn't appear on any map, and those who have stumbled upon it cannot seem to find their way back.

The Lord of Moth is Prince Lucer Grey, who succeeded to the position after the strange disappearance of his father and his older brother. Lucer not yet has been introduced to society and, at the moment, he is only a "lord" on paper. His objectives, policies and pretenses are unknown, but so far he has exerted little or no control over his lands.

Moth has not officially separated from the Empire, but neither has it responded to the calls of the Empress or the High Senate. Most Mozzers ignore these requests, caring very little for outside matters and, as far as its leaders go, they do not make an effort to think of any solutions.

Culture and Society

The Mozzers live tied to the traditions and mysticism that have been infused in their lands for centuries. Their society is stuck in time and has barely changed since the Empire was created. Whether from the gloomy places where they live and the misery that accompanies them or the dark superstitions of their land, the atmosphere is always pessimistic. Their people have no hopes for improvement, but are content to continue on with their drab lives hoping that things don't get any worse.

Most folks live in small self-sufficient villages or cities. Therefore, trade is limited, and barter and swap are very common practices among its people. Being very isolated and inaccessible communities, they distrust foreigners and do not look favorably on visitors. This doesn't mean that people will deny them shelter, but of course, they will always make sure to keep an eye on any stranger.

The nobility, though a bit weak, are the absolute lords of the larger communities. The people of a region are often bound by right of servitude to the landowners where they work, and cannot leave without first obtaining official permission.

A large percentage of the people are devoted Christians, and consider the doctrines of the Church their principles of salvation. All villages have at least one or two priests, who people respect as pillars of the community. Even so, they combine these beliefs with superstition; like using crosses to ward off the undead, putting garlic in their windows or painting archaic symbols on their doors to frighten away bad spirits.

Moth also home to a lot of Gipsies, also called Zigeuner, who are characterized by their nomadic lifestyle. They travel from one place to another in brightly painted wagons and caravans, in groups of various sizes. The Zigeuner do a little bit of everything, from circus performing to work in the fields when there are labor shortages, although their most important function is establishing trade networks with each village. They usually buy and sell articles from different areas, and almost always travel with one or two wagons that are no more than traveling shops. The Zigeuner guard their secrets jealously, which commonly involve twisted magic rituals. They are very closed people; despite the fact that they behave nicely to everyone, do not usually allow other ethnic groups into their ranks.

Regarding the Supernatural

If there are people who openly believe in the supernatural, they are undoubtedly the Mozzer. While few ones have actually seen something unexplainable through the course of their lives, the oral tradition and the stories they hear from their parents and grandparents everyday have carved out a place in the heart of each and every person.

In return, each village has deeply-rooted superstitions that have been commonplace for centuries. Crossing their chest when entering a forest, avoiding black cats, throwing salt on the grave of someone who has died under bizarre circumstances... Whether these strange customs lend credence or not, nobody can be sure, but there should certainly be a good reason for people to keep them going so many centuries later.

From experience, people in Moth believe the supernatural is without exception synonymous with evil, suffering, tears and ultimately, death. There is nothing they both fear and hate more than magic and the inexplicable.

Before the intervention of supernatural forces, the villagers will only react in one of two ways. If they feel they can stop them, they will gather into mobs and try to neutralize anyone who can use them with any means at their disposal. Otherwise, they will simply shrink away terrified, barring themselves deep in their homes with the hope that everything passes and they remain safe until tomorrow.

Unfortunately, this last option rarely works.

The History of Moth

Until the creation of the Empire, Moth has never been considered a land of man. Millenia ago, the principality was only one set of grim and chaotic areas, where no ethnic group of Gaïa found it easy to live in. What had brought this region to such a state has been erased from history.

In the Dark...

From darkness

Beyond myths and legends, and beyond the gloomy folktales, Moth is truly a sinkhole of darkness. In the past, beyond man's memory, the domains that now make up Moth were deeply plunged into the dark. What happened, whether it was only one event or many, has already been long forgotten. Maybe it became a place cursed by incomprehensible powers, or perhaps it served as tomb for lost fallen gods, which dead souls infused the lands as a spreading cancer.

Or maybe, Moth has always been this way.

Whatever happened, it left an imprint on reality so deep that it was never erased, plunging the land into darkness and shadows. Therefore, the reflection of the principality in The Wake has become nightmarish, attracting countless creatures and monstrosities from various worlds. In many places, the membrane that separates Gaïa from The Wake is so weak that it allows its gloomy inhabitants to exit, or partially merge into the shadows large areas. Therefore, Moth is full of dark creatures, many of which coexist with man without showing themselves until it is too late.

For several centuries, Moth attracted the attention of several entities of various power levels, including some of "The Nightmare Lords". These beings have occupied numerous territories, acting from the shadows to hide their presence from man while they slowly extend their influence. After a long conflict two of them, Malekith, The Prince of Crows, and Darcia Kaliger, have gained some dominance, exiling or destroying the others. However, even the Nightmare Lords do not truly control the principality, as there are still too many dark areas left where their powers cannot reach.

Supernatural powers

Moth is influenced by unusual energies that affect supernatural forces. First, certain magic cast inside Moth automatically gains two additional side effects. Magic from the Darkness Path is cast as if it had an extra 20 points of Zeonic Value. Similarly, the Necromancy Path applies an additional 10 points of Zeonic Value. Secondly, the fragile membrane of The Wake makes attracting shadowy creatures much easier, though they have more independence. Therefore, any character with summoning abilities applies +40 to Summon dark beings, although he also suffers a -40 penalty to Bind, Control or Banish them.

The Curses of Moth

While it is common in many places to cast or lay curses, the consequences of such actions in Moth are much worse than anyone can imagine.

Anyone with at least Gnosis 5, who is mired in anger, pain or fear at the moment of their death, can get emotionally carried away and lay a true curse. Instead of becoming a Wake Specter, the high residual energy creates other effects, producing unexplainable and terrifying events. Curses do not always work as intended, but once begun, a curse always ends up having some kind of terrible repercussion. Naturally, depending on Gnosis and the circumstances surrounding death, their effects may have different intensities.

Some occultists claim that this is not innate, so it is possible that there is some dark force molding that residual energy to manifest it. What or who does it, can only be left to speculation.

The Mayors

While most communities in Moth aren't necessarily influenced by dark powers, some mayors from different villages are in fact living nightmares in the service of The Prince of Crows, Malekith. These dark entities slipped into the world using the bodies of sleepers caught in lucid dreams. Now, with their dream consciences virtually consumed, the nightmares have complete control of the bodies as if they were theirs. The Mayors, as these creatures are commonly called, use their human identities to mingle with the communities they live in to exert their control over them. Some nights they slip into people's dreams and feed off their vital energy like parasites. However, their true function is to form a large influential network in the service of their lord, allowing him to build Graven quicker and manifest the dark metropolis as soon as possible.

The Mayors have often been confused with vampires or similar creatures by their ability to feed off the life energy of their victims. Malekith will occasionally grant the title of Dark Executioner to some of the Mayors, and sends them out on missions outside his area of influence.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

The first human inhabitants were definitely the Zigeuner, who wandered the area from place to place, under the influence of its dark forces. During this time they mingled with other races adopting customs and superstitions that allowed them to survive in those sinister emplacements. Roughly 200 years before the Messiah, a large number of refugees from The Pelegrí Coast settled in the principality after being expelled by the battles between the Sylvain and the Duk´zarist. Therefore, they were the first to raise villages and small independent cities where they tried to defend themselves from the darkness.

Because of its small percentage of human inhabitants, the Armies of Heaven did not consider Moth a civilized region, and consequently never became part of the Holy Kingdoms. In the years that followed powerful entities arose that proclaimed themselves lords of different areas, initiating minor hostilities that ended up triggering a conflict in the year 64, the War of the Shadow Lords, which lasted over four decades. Without a clear winner, the different sides declared a truce that would stay in effect until the activation of Rah's machine, which produced a drastic decay in the supernatural forces of the region. Weakened to the brink of extinction, the surviving creatures were forced to retreat into the shadows, having stayed there ever since.

In the years of the Empire's unification Zhorne found Moth and, for the first time in long time, he didn't know exactly what to do. The land wasn't in true chaos, but simultaneously, controlling it would require an immense amount of time and resources. Consequently, the first Emperor entered the northern section of Moth, leaving a simple detachment to establish a unified government that would transform the territory later into a principality under the Crown of Abel. These soldiers initiated the construction of a city called Torda, created with the failed intention of becoming the capital. During the first fifty years, the military tried to exert some control by sending small detachments to various parts of the region, thus achieving a certain approval and recognition from the feudal lords. However, it would be the Church the one who obtained the true support of the people.

In the year 331 the Emperor granted the control of principality to the Bram dynasty, one of the more significant noble houses of Moth, which remained in power for a century until the mysterious disappearance of all its members. During this time, the Bram dynasty organized many expeditions with the purpose of mapping unexplored areas, managing to map over half the principality. After the strange disappearance of the prince and his heirs, some tension began between the noble houses, which either aspired to the title or refused to accept anyone else in that position. In the end, the Grey dynasty won the coveted position, but never had true power in the region. For practical purposes, it was only a noble house with representation in the High Senate. Mysteriously, many Grey family members, sometimes including princes themselves, disappeared without a trace. This led people to believe in the so-called "Curse of The Moth," for which certain members of the ruling houses disappeared without explanation, leaving behind only a few dead moths and flies.

Years passed while the dark forces that were still present in the principality became more and more active. That's when the first Nightmare Lords arose and three of them claimed some fragments of Moth in The Wake as their domains. A secret war began, called the Second War of The Shadow Lords by some occultists, which ended with the apparent victory of the being called The Prince of Crows and the expulsion of Seline Luna, The Lady of Mirrors.

Moth's recent history has been full of tumultous events, including some clashes between feudal houses. The most significant event happened three years ago, when Nikolae and Radú Grey, the Prince of Moth and his heir, were victims of "The Curse of The Moth". The weight of the crown fell on Lucer, the younger brother of Radú, who until then very few had seen. Coinciding with the Empire's chaotic situation, one of his first actions as prince was to transfer the capital to a great metropolis called Graven, which has generated many rumors in recent years.



A couple of Zigeuner


Ocean of Children
Uruz Grave
Hild Archipelago
Gesjnacht
Ritgernhauf
Molofart
The Ponds
Hendell
Bergenfaur
Nackasen
Muninborg
Gilnangor
Warm Deserts
Hymir
Redgafer
Karlsrude
Black Marsh
Enkido
Port Amphora
Barachesi Forest
Doel River
Terrasanta
Dwänholf
Tibas Port
Monasterio de Kirion
Anateri
Desert of Memories
Scar of the Martyr
Mukerji River
Pelegri Coast
Lumsfar River
Olafer
Lukka
Village of Three Crosses
Gehena Forest
Mnemósine
Mürenheim Mountain Range
Cave of the Murmurs
Pragna
Pleasant Forest
Iadului Gorge
Moth
Dürgabenh
Somer Plateau
Tel´Haroth
Jaarenghäff
Silnor River
Inner Valleys
Moor of Shadow
Port Rue
Torda
Monastery of Stelea
Sea of Salt
Forest of the Ropes
Eldiah
Seifenschwein Forest
Akasta Lake
Eastern Gate
Saulxerotte
Val du Genevrier
Lucille Mountains
Phaion
Bretaldau River
Port Meidel
Heverville
Astria Academy
Rio Zelai
Gate of the West
La Roche
Bellegarde
Schlotterstein
Zabil Villa
Ourges
Plains of Roh
Gabriel
Pantano Akquo
Dupois
Beaufort Citadel
Hong Kua
Yokai
Arklo
Carignan River
Voillemont
L' Arc Forest
Grebar River
Castle Takeda
Mifune
East Coast
Busselton
Matsu Forest
Deimos
Hung Whan
Le Drac
Chateau de Justine
Pitcher Peninsula
Paradis Paradis
Huan Zhou
MAP KEY
Capital
Metropolis
City
Building
Fortress
Path
Road
0 250 500 750 Kilometers
0 250 500 Miles

The Twilight Brotherhood

Although the Church has no real strength in Moth, for over two centuries the Inquisition became truly aware of the darkness that infects the principality. Realizing that its power there was uncommon, the Thirteenth Cardinal assembled a squad of agents to banish forever the darkness within Moth called "The Twilight Brotherhood." Even among the Inquisition, the Brotherhood uses quite radical methods to carry out its objectives. After years of failure and disappointment, its members concluded that only darkness could overcome darkness. Therefore, most of them employ the same powers that they fight, walking the fine line that separates them from what they attempt to destroy.

The members of The Brotherhood are full-fledged Inquisitors and, as such, they act independently. Nevertheless, they never use subordinates or ecclesiastical guards. They are solitary and autonomous and never reveal their identities or make use of their positions. The few that are aware of them call them Dark Hunters, shady personalities that are as feared as they are venerated. Nobody knows whether the arrival of a Hunter to a village is a good or bad omen.

Although they still officially belong to the Inquisition, The Brotherhood maintains few common ties with the Church, and they report to the Thirteenth Cardinal only very rarely. For that reason, many Inquisitors do not look favorably on The Brotherhood.

For a couple of decades, the hardships undergone by the organization have forced them to adopt a measure that even the Church ignores. They have begun to accept applicants into its ranks that do not belong to the Inquisition or feel any religious devotion; people with special abilities that simply feel a staunch hatred towards the dark powers because of their tragic pasts.

The Brotherhood has no base of operations (they had one long ago, but it was destroyed by their enemies), and now its members wander from one corner of Moth to the other hunting all the evil entities they encouter.

Illustrated by Raúl Rosell

Relevant Geographical Features

Moth is isolated by a variety of natural formations, like the Miürenheim Mountain Range in the west or the Somer Plateau in the northeast. The mainland is full of marshes and dark forests, and although most of them are too small to be located on a map, it's rare for any of them not to have their own history and legends. Finally, the northwest still has so much unexplored areas.

Forest of the Ropes: This frozen forest located in the county of Slatior, in southern Moth, is made of beech, willow and checkerberry trees several centuries old. It gets its name because in the past, one of the counts of Slatior ordered whoever dared to oppose him to be hanged there. When a rebellion broke out in the country, over 5,000 people were executed in these woods. Even today, centuries later, countless ropes hang from the branches rocked by the whispering wind, a dark reminder of what happened in the past. However, it is impossible to dance with death without suffering the consequences, and much less in the darkness of Moth. It is said that if someone buries the corpse of a person he has assassinated near the roots of an old tree, it will rouse the wrath of the forest. In this case, The Wake will engulf anyone inside the forest, traping them in a world where the sky is as red as blood, and countless corpses hang from the trees trying to strangle any living being within their reach.

Miürenheim Mountain Range (Eastern Zone): Although a part of this great mountainous mass is located in this principality, the eastern side of the mountain range is considerably different from the one in Goldar. Much more rugged and impenetrable, Miürenheim lacks mountainous steps or practicable entrances on this side, so for Moth is no more than an inaccessible wall of rock that completely closes the road to the west.

The Moors of Shadow: This is the name given to the vast and cold stretch of land in the center of the principality. It is dotted with a few small woodlands or marshes. Most villages in Moth are scattered throughout these lands.

The Gehena Forest: More than one forest, Gehena is composed of dozens of forests of varying sizes that stretch through the center of the principality. The separation between them is subtle, yet it is easy to realize when leaving one and entering another by the changes in the flora and fauna. People know these woods as "The Layers of Gehena" and give different names to each one of them. Generally, most people avoid walking too deep into this forest, because of the dark and macabre legends of the creatures living within its depths. However, there are a small number of villages, some of which have never heard of the Empire or the outside world. There are people who believe that Graven is located somewhere in Geneha, but nobody knows exactly where. Because of the general fear, many of the forest layers are unknown and there are still many areas left to explore.



Inside The Gehena Forest

The Somer Plateau: Situated between Moth and Dwänholf, The Somer Plateau is an intermediate point between the two principalities. It is a fertile area with some dangerous bogs and wild animals that proliferate everywhere. There are a considerable number of towns located on different points in Somer, ruled by several feudal lords of lesser importance. The lower region of the plateau is exceptionally steep, creating dozens and dozens of almost inaccessible valleys.

The Seifenschwein Forest: The Seifenschwein is one of the most beautiful forests of the principality, characterized by its tall trees and green surroundings. Except for some very dense areas, Seifenschwein is much more scattered than the other forests of Moth, allowing sunlight to enter and offering travelers a bright and pleasant atmosphere. But despite its beauty, from time to time people tend to avoid it because of the old legend of Baron Lugvid Asaln. Lugvid was an alchemist obsessed with the spiders, which he saw as the most fascinating beings in creation. As an aristocrat with great economic resources, he moved inside of Seifenschwein because of the great variety of arachnid species living there. He initiated strange experiments shortly thereafter to create a new species of arachnid and, at the height of his madness, he decided to kidnap women to use as part of his research. Lugvid's actions drew the attention of the people, who contacted the Church and, in turn, The Inquisition. When the hunters arrived at the mansion, they found its owner wrapped in spiderwebs, no more than a dry husk. New disappearances sprung up a year later, but this time, among people traveling across the forest. Some claim to have seen gigantic spiders inside Seifenschwein, where others have witness monstrosities with female torso and extremities like a spider swarming arround.



The Iadului Gorge: Also known as The Road of The Demon, it is the only natural pass that access the Inner Valleys without crossing the mountains. It's several miles long and full of curves. Iadului draws particular attention to the fact that both walls of the gorge are decorated with hundreds of extraordinary statues, carved directly from the stone. The figures, which resemble hooded men, extend along the passage as if to monitor visitors crossing through. The sculptors of these works is unknown, but were probably carved before the Zigeuner began to populate the principality. Despite its intimidating appearance, there have never been problems in Iadului, which paradoxically makes it one of the most tranquil places in Moth.

The Inner Valleys: The vast western area of Moth near the Mountain Miürenheim Range is a cluster of small mountains and isolated valleys. Forests and villages spread throughout the inside of the valleys, some of which go decades without receiving visitors.

The Sea of Salt: Inside of one of the Inner Valleys, near the Miürenheim Mountain Range, is one of the largest salt veins in Gaïa. There are miles and miles of white salt hills as far as the eye can see, which gives to the landscape the appearance of a snowy field. As the people of Moth believe that salt frightens the evil spirits away, they consider this salty sea free of any dark influences.

Cave of The Murmurs: This cavernous area located in the foothills of the Miürenheim Mountain Range, northwest of the Iadului Gorge, has small and narrow entrances that offer no hint whatsoever about the miles and miles of hidden tunnels underneath. Hundreds of corridors, ducts and openings cross the inside of the mountains, and small creeks and underground rivers, filtered through the stone, can be found in some of them. So the walls, floors and ceilings are completely covered by stalactites and stalagmites of all shapes and sizes.

The thousands of small filtrations have a strange effect of keeping the cave perpetually noisy; the tinkling of the water droplets bouncing off the wall cavities resonate like a repeated whisper echoing into infinity. But this isn't the only sound that can be heard in the cave; below the incessant dripping, slight vibrant murmurs can sometimes be perceived. Whether these strange sounds are effects of the wind or some animal that inhabits the caves, it's hard to say.

Many children and adolescents of the region tend to enter the caves due to lost bets and personal dares, although very few go more than a few feet. The truth is that it is very dangerous, not because of those mysterious sounds, but the slippery surfaces and the complicated nooks and passageways, which make easy to get lost and trapped.

Places of Interest

Despite its lack of large cities, Moth is full of thousands of villages. The following list only includes the larger or well-known settlements.

Schlotterstein

(City, Population 32,000+)

Schlotterstein is the second most important city in Moth and, in all likelihood, the only one that maintains steady commerce with other principalities. Its origin as a human settlement goes back to an old monastery dating back to the year 310, built by the Church as its base of operations in Moth. It soon began to attract many travelers, who thought that they were safe thanks to the proximity of the priests and the good weather of the area. It would soon draw wealthy people in, who would build mansions or small palaces there.

Unusually to Moth, Schlotterstein is a luxurious city. Streets are paved, lampposts illuminate the nights and large houses line the streets making it an impressive place to live. The Tebren River runs through it, providing fresh running water to its citizens. Also, being close to Gabriel, people often trade with The Coast of Commerce, which provides the city with various goods from other lands.

Schlotterstein is a peaceful place, although it's recently had problems with gangs of zinner thieves, which has led to a social uprising against them. The city council is seriously considering banning the Zigeuner from the city, accusing to them of being no more than a bunch of swindlers. Perhaps the only truly dark event in Schlotterstein is the series of ritual murders that have been committed each year during Walpurgis Eve, which is attributed to a sect of devil worshippers.

Baron Roin Piepenschnurz (Freelance Lv. 3, ♂) is the mayor of the city, a cold and quiet man who has no relationship with any supernatural force. His only obsession is his city and would do anything within his power to protect it. If necessary, he will hire any kind of guards or will order the assassination of anyone who threatens Schlotterstein.

Jaarenghäff

(Town, Population 1,200+)

Initially, Jaarenghäff was no more than a handful of wooden buildings on a small marsh in The Moors of Shadow; small houses built in trees or on platforms supported by pillars along the swamp. The town specializes in the cultivation of the Jaaren Leaf, a small reddish vine of unpleasant odor that has an excellent flavor as a spice. These plants need plenty of water and shade, which is why the quagmire of Jaarenghäff is ideal for its cultivation in the shadows of the platforms. Its flavor is such popular that the town has experienced a great boom in recent years, becoming a prosperous yet uncomfortable place to live. The community has expanded and most of the houses are now constructed on land, on the banks of the marsh. Only the nostalgic elderly people continue to live with the old platform-style housing.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

The Tales of Moth

Moth is packed with dark legends and myths, halfway between tales of terror and the horrible reality. What comes next are only a few examples of the most pervasive and widespread stories that are repeated in several towns and villages, but certainly not the only or the most terrifying ones.

The Cuckoo: Although its name can seem comedic to those who don't know the legend, The Cuckoo has become one of the most terrifying symbols to any father in Moth. Somehow, this creature of ill omen steals bad or disobedient children. It's typically represented as a bird as black as night, whose shape merges with the chaotic shadows surrounding it. People attribute it many powers, like blinding people with simple cawing or stealing their soul with a mere touch of its feathers. The Cuckoo is said to know the smell of innocence in children and the stench of wicked adults. Whereas it respects the former (it never injures the "good children"), it hates the latter and it plucks out the eyes of any corrupt grown up it meets. Nobody knows for certain where it takes the bad children or what it does with them, but the popular belief is that it devours them slowly, starting with their eyeballs. If there is a way to destroy it, or even stop it, it has yet to be discovered.

Years ago, a group of powerful occultists investigated the legend of The Cuckoo of Moth with the belief perhaps that it was one of the "Lost Tales". All disappeared without a trace.

Illustrated by Salvador Espin

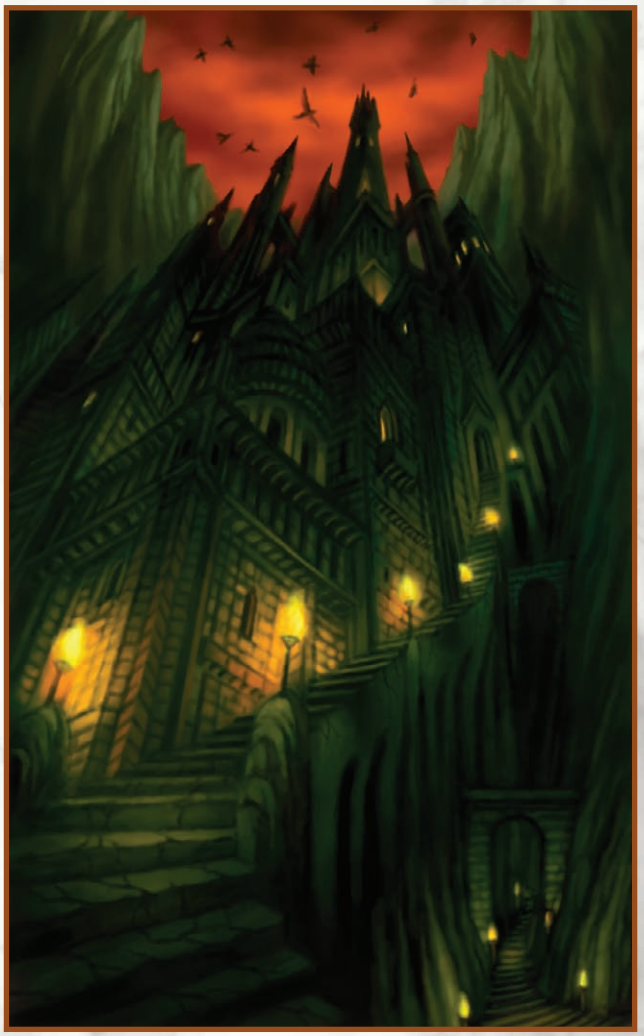
The Sayona: History tells us that long ago there lived a very beautiful, but very jealous gypsy girl that killed her husband and her mother thinking that they were romantically involved. In the agony of death, her mother cursed her, condemning the woman to wander endlessly without rest or reprive. Henceforth, the legend tells that she became a powerful specter with long nails and the face of death itself. Some claim that she moves by jumping, and others claim that she walks making strange noises, like the clacking of bones. She appears at night under the guise of a beautiful young woman who approaches men who have fiancèes or are already married and seduces them into sleeping with her. If they accept, she takes her true form and skins them alive with her claws, leaving them in a pool of blood. People say that it is impossible to destroy her and, no matter how much she is damaged, reappears time and time again. The Sayona will incessantly purse her victims until they hear the first crowing of the rooster at dawn.

The Host of Souls: Perhaps one of the most widespread stories in the principality is the one of The Host of Souls, a procession of wrights that roams the roads in two long rows looking for new members. The spirits dress like priests in white clothing and carry a black oil lamp in their hands surrounded by moths. They are an omen of death and only manifest themselves if someone dies nearby. Apparently they are unaware of the presence of the living, and The Host can only see them after somebody stares at them. When this happens, the wrights chase this person down tirelessly to rob him of his soul and unite it with the procession. At that point, the gypsies say that the only way to keep the members of The Host from catching another victim is to draw a great circle and enter it with eyes shut. If the person does not open their eyes until morning, the dead will be unable to grap him.

Under the Bed: Some say that sometimes, when someone is lying down alone in a room, they can hear a kind of whisper emerge from underneath the bed repeating their name over and over again. In such case, the person who hears it must never look down to see what it is, since a gate to Hell has been opened from which dozens of arms will inescapably drag them inwards. When this happens, the individual (or individuals) that has been caught will appear in a macabre sort of labyrinth, and only has until sunrise to find his way out. Otherwise, he will be swallowed by the darkness forever.

The Guliash: Nobody knows where this legend first appeared, or whether it refers to a single creature or a more widespread class of horror. Whatever it is, The Guliash only appears when the harvests are collected, and only when the production has been exceptionally good. In order to avoid its manifestation it's necessary to burn a quarter of the grain or otherwise it may appear on the last night of collection. If it does, The Guliash will look to devour the entrails of a child, and will return for the next five nights until it is completely full. Although it prefers children, this horror will kill whoever dares to get in its way. One of the most terrifying aspects of this myth is that when The Guliash manifests, everything goes silent and nearby people are incapable of making a sound. The only thing that can be heard is the grinding of teeth and the distant cawing of the ravens. This horror has no skin or eyes and its arms and legs are flipped around, so when it moves it seems to be walking backwards. They say that no force in the world can destroy it except for the laughter of an innocent child.

The Demon in the Mirror: The 6th of June is a day of ill omen; because tradition says it is the date on which the devil himself stares at the world. Many think that if somebody looks into a mirror at midnight on the 6th, they will see the face of the devil for a split second and will be damned for the rest of their lives. Upon waking up the following morning they will have a strange mark on their body that will spread throughout the whole week, until forming the name of the condemned. At the end of this period, they will lose their soul and their body will be possessed by a demon, which controls them like a marionette. To save their souls, they have to trick somebody into drinking their blood mixed with wine, thus passing the curse onto them. The only way to save the soul of the deceived is to murder the one who was originally damned.



Tel´Haroth

Monastery of Stelea

(Building, Population 100+)

Dedicated to the resurrection of the Messiah, the Monastery of Stelea is the Church's largest stronghold in Moth. This vast walled construction consists of three bodies: the Church of Illumination, the Basilica of The Heart and the Chapel of The Forgotten Ones. Once a luxurious place, the years have been unforgiving with Stelea, so many of the constructions are in terrible condition. The monks who live in the monastery are principally engaged in meditation and study. Sometimes, when a village goes without a parish priest for any reason (which happens more often than the Church would like), the Monastery of Stelea sends one of its members as a substitute.

Around the year 450, a group of individuals with extraordinary supernatural abilities met secretly in Stelea with the goal of developing a formula to return the dead to life. Even Eljared herself apparently participated in its development. After significant progress, the project seemed to stray from its original course, diverting towards a different goal. It is unknown as to what this objective could be, but after the careful analysis of a few stray notes left behind, it could be theorized that they were trying to create some kind of artificial God. For reasons unknown, the project went wrong and the result was a distortion in reality of titanic proportions that barred passage to The Wake from the monastery. It seems quite impossible to enter The Wake to see what was left there. However, there is a secret entrance to The Wake in the cellars of the basilica, but the monks believe that it is a door built into the wall that leads to nowhere.

Tel´Haroth

(Building, Population Unknown)

Tel´Haroth is an ancient monument built before the Messiah by an extinct civilization that considered evil the predominant force in existence. The place was a consecrated temple to the Shajad Abbadon with the intention of becoming a gateway to Hell itself. For many people, the myth that worshipers were transformed into demons and disappeared from the world centuries ago is simply an incomplete version of what really happened. It is possible that monstrous creatures still live inside of it today, since The Nightmare Lord Darcia Kaliger has spent years trying, unsuccessfully, to claim Tel´Haroth as his dominion.

The temple is partially built into a cave in a mountain on the Somer Plateau, which keeps it well hidden. The only way to access the building is through a complex network of caves and ladders.

Illustrated by Raúl Rosell

Torda

(City, Population 43,000+)

Torda, the city of misfortunes, is a place with a long history of tribulations and sufferings. It began its construction in the year 295 by imperial troops, but at the moment of its official inauguration a great flood swept across destroying the original buildings and forcing the soldiers to begin again from the foundations. Despite this tragedy it regrew quickly, because the security that the presence of military troops offered managed to attract villagers from many nearby towns. Unfortunately, only a decade later a terrible fire devastated the city, killing thousands of people who could not escape the flames. Two years later, when it underwent construction again, its cemetery was already much larger than the town itself. In the year 331, at the coronation of the Bram dynasty, Torda was declared the capital and quickly returned to prosperity. But misfortune struck again, this time in the form of an earthquake that devastated almost two thirds of the homes. A few hours later, the Bram family disappeared under the Curse of the Moth. Since then, Torda has been rebuilt over and over every 50 to 100 years after some catastrophe hits, each one different, killing a large percentage of its population. A plague, a hurricane, a swarm of locusts and even a meteor are only some of the catastrophes that have occurred throughout the years. While many speculate what new kind of disaster will strike next, the pessimists wonder why they keep rebuilding when Torda has been doomed from birth.

Despite continuous misfortune, Torda is the largest urban center in Moth (since the size of Graven has never been officially confirmed). It is a dark city of very weighty gothic architecture. It is full of narrow, dark alleyways where a person can easily get lost. The Old Town has many old mansions that belong to the nobility and the wealthiest families. There's Bier Castle, home to the Princes of Moth until Lucer Grey moved to Graven. Since then, the ruler of the city is Duke Vasska Faivorich (Wizard Lv. 6, ♂), a powerful wizard who belongs to both The Magus Order and the Order of Yehudah.

The city has three large cemeteries on the outskirts. The first two, The Old Cemetery and The New Cemetery, are used by commonfolk; the third, The Field of Heaven, belongs to the nobility. All three are enclosed by high gates which remain locked up at night to keep graverobbers out and whatever that can lurk there inside. And it is not such a crazy idea, since The Old Cemetery, of almost 600 years old, is haunted with creatures and specters that until the moment have managed to hide their presence from men. Some of them (especially a group of Ghouls) now plan to move to The New Cemetery, which is undoubtedly problematic for the citizens, since it gets more visitors.

Torda is the only city in Moth that has a Black Sun store of supernatural items.

Graven

(Metropolis? Population Unknown)

The strange capital of Moth has recently become a legend for the people of the principality. Almost everyone has heard of it and hundreds have visited it, apparently by accident. However, nobody can say where it is for sure and, no matter how hard they try, it's impossible to find their way back. The reason is darker than anyone can imagine.

The truth is that Graven isn't a city in the real world, but a metropolis under construction in The Wake that serves as a gateway to Gaïa. When people travel through Moth and fall asleep, there is a remote possibility that their conscience attracts Graven and they wake up on its outskirts. The easiest way to connect to it is near the Gehena Forest; hence the widespread belief that Graven lies somewhere within the wood.

Its creator and ruler is the Nightmare Lord Malekith. Graven is his masterpiece; a project more ambitious than anything he has ever tackled before. With each stone placed and every house raised, The Prince of Crows comes one step closer to manifesting the dark metropolis in the real world, thus achieving a perfect fusion between Gaïa and The Wake. If successful, he will have total control over a fragment of reality as if it was part of his kingdom, increasing his powers and their control over the world to unprecedented levels.

On the surface, Graven is a colossal city that extends as far as the eye can see. The metropolis mirrors Archangel, but with dark and twisted architecture instead. Their buildings are very tall and opulently adorned with hundreds of monuments and treasures. However, the supernatural nature of Graven allows for slight alterations to the city grid, so it's possible for some streets to have a different layout from day to day (or sometimes from hour to hour). So no one can effectively map the city, although it seems that Graven is separated in seven different sectors; The Market District, The Residential Zone, Uptown (or The High Quarters), Downtown, The Midnight Parks, the Sewers and The Castle of Nix.

Most people in Graven are dreamers who ignore the secret behind the city. They are ordinary folk, who simply live out their daily lives normally without realizing that their mere presence extends the borders of the dark metropolis. Currently many powerful supernatural entities use Graven as meeting place, and some lesser gods (that hid in The Wake after the activation of Rah's machine) have decided move there and make it their home. It is therefore impossible to know what's behind every corner of Graven, or if the owner of a mansion is much more than they first appear to be.

Illustrated by Luis NCT



The murky streets of The Village of Three Crosses

The Village of Three Crosses

(Town, Population 800+)

This small town, located on the outer slope of the Miürenheim Mountain Range, is merely composed of a hundred old houses and a large cathedral. It was named for three stone crosses that mark the entrance of the town, forming an ancient monument. So far, nobody has been able to confirm how or when the crosses were built for sure, although it is possible that they date back several centuries before the arrival of the Messiah. The villagers have their own theories, but based more on superstition than on knowledge. The few stone houses that there are stick to a single floor with one or two rooms. The large chapel is undoubtedly the most modern and impressive feature in town, having been constructed within the century. However, no priest stays too long in Three Crosses. Father Holgen, the first priest who practiced in the region, committed suicide by hanging himself from the bell tower within a few weeks of his arrival. Since then, no other holy man has occupied the cathedral for more than one or two months before running off or dying in a bizarre accident. Despite everything, the people in town are deeply religious, so a priest of some nearby community comes up to Three Crosses at least once a month. Occasionally, the Monastery of Stelea sends a new priest, but his fate usually follows the others eventually. At this time, the cathedral has remained closed to litany and song for over ten years.

Their people are also very superstitious, which is usually reinforced by the fact that on the darkest moonless nights the bells of the cathedral begin to sound at midnight without anybody ringing them. On these occasions, villagers resort to scattering salt in the doorways and windows of their homes, and lock themselves in until the morning light.

The Sleeping Sickness

For more than a decade, a considerable number of people in Moth have fallen prey to a strange disease called "The Sleeping Sickness." Its victims remain in a peaceful sleep placidly to which they cannot awaken. They can sometimes remain so for years or even stay asleep indefinitely. When they regain consciousness, they no longer remember anything at all and often become melancholic and withdrawn individuals.

The origin of this disease is Graven, because the consciences of those sleepers are caught by the city of nightmares and become its inhabitants, helping to build it day by day.

Dürgabenh

(Town, Population 500+)

Dürgabenh, seemingly just a small village located in the mountains southeast of Gehena, hides a secret: Leopold (Wizard Lv. 3, ♂), its local priest, is the leader of a sect that includes most of the villagers. He claims he is the very reincarnation of Abel and proves it with occasional miracles (which are no more than mere illusions). In exchange for his "divine" presence, he demands total devotion from his followers and the occasional sacrifice of nonbelievers. The priest assures that he does not want to show himself to the world until, as he himself says, "a column of fire will fall from heaven covering me like a holy aura, which will announce that the moment has arrived for man's redemption." It is unclear as to whether Leopold is a fool or a trickster, but his followers firmly believe in him.

Hidegart Ritza (Freelance Lv. 2, ♂), a nobleman of low class that is theoretically in control of Dürgabenh, thinks that Leopold merely taking advantage of everyone, though he and his supporters are forced to remain silent under threat. Of course, neither the Church nor the religious authorities of the region know anything about the priest's ideas and simply see it as an amiable man with a friendly community.

Adventures

Dark forces dominate Moth; so merely entering its mysterious places grant endless possibilities. Each of its villages, big or small, have an adventure waiting, something undoubtedly beyond the scope of its citizens and that only the characters can solve.

The Reunion: Berkel Rosdale (Freelance Lv. 1, ♂) is a man close to forty. His pregnant wife mysteriously disappeared in the Gehena Forest almost 20 years ago. Since then, Berkel has focused on businesses, accruing considerable capital. Recently a new leader, Rasgrizt Fostell (Shadow Lv. 6, ♂), has arrived at Berkel's village accompanied by some of his trusted assistants, including Lia (Wizard Lv. 5, ♀), his personal secretary. When seeing her, Berkel was entranced, because the young woman had an extraordinary resemblance to his missing wife. The most surprising thing is that she looked exactly like his wife before she disappeared, as if no time had passed for her. The man had tried speaking with Lia repeatedly, but she insisted she did not know him. Despite everything, Berkel is convinced that she is his wife and is looking for someone to investigate what happened no matter what the cost. He wants evidence that they are the same person, or if that fails, something that that proves that Lia and his wife have nothing to do with each other. Actually, both are true in a way, since Lia is his daughter. The young woman was born in Graven, where she lived and grew up until recently, so has no idea that she has a father or of what happened. If they uncover the truth, Berkel's daughter has a few last-minute surprises because of the strange conditions surrounding her birth. She is a hybrid between the dream world and the real one, and can enter The Wake at will. Lia is a pleasant young woman at heart and very generous, but is slightly confused and doesn't really know what to believe.

The Rebellion of Salt: Fadir al Dawla (see Ice Cold in Haufman) is still looking for a way to preserve food, and this time considers salt. On one of his travels he came to The Sea of Salt and, assisted by a small group of guards and an army of workers, will now begin the extraction and mass export of the commodity. Fadir swears he holds a permit and a commercial contract from the hand of Lucer Grey himself. It matters little to the people of region whether the document is genuine or forged, since they would never think to let a foreigner rob them of their salt under any circumstance, although the vein is practically inexhaustible. They say that the salt ward off monsters and nightmares, so it would be a bad omen if a visitor took it to trade with. They are even willing to take up arms to keep Fadir from stealing their salt. Of course, al Dawla has made everything up and doesn't have any documents.

The Cartographer: Cesarion Atreo (Freelance Lv. 2, ♂), a wealthy Ilmorense researcher obsessed with cartography, dreams of being the first to map out the unknown areas of Moth. Driven by his persistent idea, he has taken about a year organizing an expedition that allows him to achieve his goal, but now requires bodyguards that are not scared of any "garbage" that the fool villagers believe in. Completely skeptical, his goal is to travel all across the Gehena Forest and the northeastern areas.

The "Goblins": Not everything that happens in Moth necessarily has supernatural qualities, because sometimes it's faked. In the small town of Gorl, near the Somer Plateau, beautiful young girls have been disappearing for months, and all witnesses claim to have seen demonic creatures committing the crimes. In fact, there's absolutely nothing supernatural about the kidnappers, being no more than a group of criminals from Dwänholf who use the fears of the villagers to get teenagers to sell on the black market as slaves. Cynically, they plan to come to the city as a group of mercenaries, offering their services in exchange for exorbitant sums of money. Of course, if the people of Gorl agree to hire them, the disappearances will decrease until they're finally convinced that the problem has been dealt with. Naturally, the criminals will explain that it was "too late" for the unfortunate teenagers.

Common Characters of Moth

Here a prototype of a traditional Zigeuner is shown. The following statistics have been created without taking Creation Points into account.

A Zigeuner Traveler

Class Freelance; **Level** 1
Initiative 60; **LP** 90; **AT** None; **Attack** 50; **Dodge** 65; **Weapons** Dagger; **Damage** 30
AGI: 8 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 6 **STR:** 5 **PER:** 7 **INT**: 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Acrobatics 40, Athleticism 20, Ride 20, Swim 20, Jump 10, Climb 15, Persuasion 40, Lock Picking 10, Disguise 10, Hide 10, Theft 20, Stealth 15, Notice 20, Search 15, Occult 25, Appraisal 15, Dance 25, Music 10, Slight of Hand 25.
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 30, PsR 30.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Middle-Class / Lower-Class: Ride +10, Climb +10, Notice +15, Track +10, Herbal Lore +15, Occult (Local Myths) +10, Composure +10.
Zigeuner: Ride +10, Climb +10, Notice +10, Herbal Lore +5, Animals +5, Persuasion +10, Appraisal +10, Occult (Local Myths) +20.
Nobility: Ride +10, Notice +10, Herbal Lore +10, Occult (Local Myths) +15, Composure +10, Leadership +15, Intimidate +10.

Table 15: Moth

Value	Social Class	Initial Euipment
1-25	Low-Class	Simple clothes, wild food for a couple of days, a collection of bags of various items used as false lucky amulets. 2 CC.
26-70	Middle-Class	A couple of changes of clothes, food for a week, a weapon, some personal items and several fake amulets. 70 SC.
71-90	Zigeuner	Zigeuner clothing, wild food for a couple of days, a pet (dog, goat, horse), a backpack with items for trade. 50 SC.
91-100	Nobility	Several changes of clothes, a mount, a couple of weapons, food for a week, a backpack with some personal items, a pendant of personalized luck (also fake). 60 GC.

DWÄNHOLF

Capital: None.
Population: 2,800,000+
Ethnic Groups: Asher (22%), Zínner (19%) Tayahar (16%), Vildianos (15%), Ryuan (11%), Aion (7%), Daevar (6%), Norne (4%).
Government: Varies (Each city has its own government).
Languages: Tarazv, Latin (minority).
Religion: Christianity, Children of Judas, Cult of the Ascended Ones.
Technology: 3.
Denomym: Dwanense.
Flag: An anchor on a purple background.
Masculine Names: Adelheid, Cornelis, Ernst, Frits, Godfried, Jozua, Kort, Laurens, Nicolaas, Pieter, Rembrandt, Ruben, Siemen, Stefanus, Valentijn.
Feminine Names: Aleida, Ans, Carolien, Gisela, Hadewych, Katrien, Liesje, Lijsbeth, Maartje, Marja, Mieke, Myrthe, Renate, Sanne, Theria, Willemina.
Last Names: Ampte, Breed, Buckout, Conklin, Dag, De Graff, Devenpeck, Haswell, Hogarth, Lansing, Mesick, Ostrander, Spoor, Van Keuren, Van Schoonhoven, Vanderspeigle, Westerveldt.

The vast majority of individuals consider Dwänholf a land full of thieves and criminals, where decent people are as scarce as morality and principles. Most likely, this is merely the truth.

Dwänholf is the most northeastern principality of The Old Continent. It is an unfertile land of marshes and deserts, especially in the inland areas bordering Moth and Hendell. The weather is constant, and torrential rain and strong winds are common. Most of the population is concentrated along the coast, where there are large, important ports that are a hotbed of visitors and goods from all over. The rest of the country has fewer people and their inner cities are of lesser importance.

Without many natural resources, land fit for agriculture or prosperous manufacturing, Dwänholf is not a nation known for its good economy. Therefore, a large percentage of their people are mercenaries, pirates or criminals of all kinds, who ensure their survival by abusing or taking advantage of others.

Dwänholf has been without a ruler for over a century. Officially, a council of 32 nobles and bourgeois, who make the most important decisions, governs the principality. However, there has always been a lack of depth and many bickering lords govern every area or city. Consequently, the principality has no army of its own, but several dozens of armed groups serving different lords. The most controversal figure of the principality is the Fourth Lord of War. Although it is impossible to confirm that he resides in Dwänholf, it's true that his troops are greater here than in any other principality.

The fall of Abel has made many of Dwänholf's people recognize the unique opportunity to increase their wealth or personal power. As if there wasn't already a lack of control, chaos has erupted among the population and many crimelords have become the owners of several cities and towns. A group of bourgeois and nobles have publicly declared that principality is no longer part of The Empire, and attempts to regain control of the coast with the dream of one day turning Dwänholf into a strong and unified nation.

Culture and society

Life in Dwänholf has never been easy. It is a land where poverty prevails and kindness and confidence are a luxury nobody can afford. Consequently, people are usually forced to take advantage of others when they can, and even children are familiar with theft and fraud at a young age. In more than one sense, the rule that the strong command the weak is a fundamental principle in this land, although cunning and craftiness are more valued.

In Dwänholf there is no other social class than money and power. Titles and honors, while they aren't supported by money or strength, are no more valuable than a few miserable bronze coins. People usually have a low level of education and rarely even know how to read or write. Although crime and delinquency are common, this doesn't mean that most people don't at least try for an honest lifestyle and work for a living. The majority of craftsmen, farmers or small merchants are ultimately the ones who keep things running. Most of the income comes from piracy and the trade of stolen goods; Dwänholf has the largest black market in the world, which it takes advantage of to sell products to The Coast of Commerce cheap. There is very little to no tax, but it's also customary to pay certain amounts to the local Mafia as protection.

A few important nobles or bourgeois that control the underworld usually govern the towns as well. Recently, a few crimelords have officially taken control of some cities, disposing of their former lords and becoming the highest authorities.

Logically, it is unsafe to live in these lands, as banditry, assault and looting are extremely common. Foreigners are always welcome, because the natives consider them just another source of income to steal or swindle from.

Regarding the Supernatural

The supernatural is nothing new to the people of Dwänholf and, although they have learned to fear these powers, they don't consider them much worse than the mob or the criminals they have to deal with every day. Although uncommon, most people are aware that some individuals are endowed with extraordinary powers. Many crimelords and organizations consider supernatural abilities an important asset, and try to recruit agents and subordinates who possess them. Anyway, they are careful not to become too popular or well known, for fear of attracting the attention of the Inquisition and producing a large-scale witchhunt that is counter-productive for them.

History of Dwänholf

Dwänholf was originally a confederation of coastal cities that joined to create a large commercial center to check passage of goods from beyond the Ocean of Children. The cities were a melting pot of different races that gained considerable importance over all of Gaïa during the Age of Chaos. They soon attracted the attention of the Duk´zarist metropolis Mnemosite, which was on the inner lands. The Duk´zarist began to gradually approach the ports, integrating with the coastal communities. 600 years before Christ, a dispute arose between them and the native Sylvain population, which caused several battles. When other races joined the conflict, it didn't take long to escalate and there were many that feared it would lead to another War of Darkness. Thus, the cities of The Pelegrí Coast were divided in a civil war that lasted more than two decades. The confrontation known as The Pelegrí Wars ended abruptly when, for unknown reasons, the city of Mnemosite disappeared without a trace. In any case, the union of ports was broken and the coast gradually plunged into corruption.

Upon reaching the Age of the Messiah, most of the human cities joined the Holy Kingdoms expelling the other races, which increased the tension on the coast even further. After serious riots and almost two centuries of continuous problems, when the War of God began, the Duk´zarist's floating citadels and the Raidivah of Judas eventually destroyed every city on The Pelegrí Coast. During the war, everything was plunged into total chaos, marking the beginning of racial hatred and exterminations. Gradually, the number of Jayan, Sylvain, Duk´zarist and other races in the area increased considerably, because of the migrations of refugees from the imperial forces unifying the continent in the west. When the Sacred Holy Empire finally entered the territory in the year 255, they faced a conflict of titanic proportions that they really weren't prepared for.

After nearly a year of bloody fighting, Abel achieved absolute victory in The Battle of Memories, where the last supernatural creatures standing allied themselves in vain to halt the advance of mankind. Realizing that the influence of Rah's machine meant they were condemned, the five leaders of the armies met to form Samael, becoming the original Fallen Angels, after which the few survivors dispersed and hid themselves from the eyes of man.

But victory was very costly for Zhorne, both in lives lost as well as morally. Understanding that he lacked the necessary manpower to carry out reconstruction, he enacted amnesty for all prisoners of the Empire who accepted work in Dwänholf for ten years. This law led to a massive number of immigrants, many who decided to live there after finishing their work. Gradually the principality emerged as a trade power focused on the reconstruction of the ports on The Pelegrí Coast. Due to the difficulty of maintaining a singular law in the entire zone, the Emperor appointed several nobles as imperial commanders to supervise the ports and to form a council to direct the principality over the years. In this way, slowly but surely, Dwänholf became the land it is today.

The past few centuries have had little effect on the principality. Resorting to a second trading post because of the daunting economic power of the Coast of Commerce, the influence of the pirate-lords was gradually increasing until becoming an indispensable asset to the nation's economy. However, the recent history of the principality has been very turbulent, even before the fall of the Empire. Less than five years ago, Phaion accused the government of Dwänholf of openly supporting the piracy and pillaging, initiating a small war that had to be stopped by The Shadow of the Emperor. Using the battles as an excuse, the agents of Phaion managed to infiltrate the cities and capture several Pirate Kings, causing some commotion in the power balance of Dwänholf. After the fall of Abel, the situation has become even more chaotic with the crimelord's domain over the cities, while important bourgeois and noble groups try to regain control of the ports at the same time.

Relevant Geographical Features

Destroyed during the old Pelegrí Wars, the inner areas of Dwänholf are known for its dark lands, full of desolate moors that stretch further than the eye can see. On the contrary, its coastline is rich and productive, with plenty of large beaches and lush vegetation.

The Pelegrí Coast: Located in the south, The Pelegrí Coast coast borders The Eastern Sea. It is an area full of fishing, which provides substantial facilities for ships that want to stop by any of its ports. It's also well known for its strong hurricanes that violently wipe out the coastline every two or three years.

Scar of The Martyr: Deep in the inner lands of Dwänholf is a vast chasm known as the Scar of The Martyr. Nearly 200 miles long and spanning over 300 feet from one side to the other, it splits the principality in two forcing travelers to make detours around it. It is extremely deep, so much that it is difficult to see the bottom in some areas. It seems that its whole base is covered by lush vegetation anomalous to the region. More like a thick tropical jungle than a cold northern wasteland, the place swarms with all kinds of legends. In fact, the place gets the name of the Scar of The Martyr because the ancient customs demanded the sacrifice of a young maiden in hopes of calming the nature spirits dwelling at its heart. There are many rumors running around the jungle, but the most widespread is that the vegetation itself is alive and devours all strangers who enter it. True or not, it seems that the Scar exclusively contains numerous exotic plants that would fetch a high price among herbalists and alchemists. There is no easy way down to the ground, except for directly climb down the rock wall using ropes and mountain equipment, which is not easy because of landslides.

Nobody knows how or when the Scar appeared, but historians believe that it emerged at the end of The Pelegrí Wars, near the city of Mnemosite. Whether this is unrelated to its disappearance or not only depends on which ancient stories you choose to heed.

The Somer Plateau (Eastern Section): The eastern section of the Somer Plateau is equally as fertile as the one in Moth, except it lacks the dark marshes. On the other hand, it is affected by the strong winds from the east, which have eroded much of the plateau and formed dangerous gorges. Traveling through it is risky, since landslides are constant and unexpected. As in the west, there are many independent towns situated throughout Somer. The area is known for being a hotbed of bandits and robbers who take advantage of the villagers whenever they can.

Barachesi Forest: This forest borders Hendell, acting as a natural barrier to the principality of the nort. The Barachesi is known for its varied wildlife and all the fierce animals that run about, which has attracted the attention of several noble families of Phaion in the past, which traveled here with the intention to use it as hunting grounds. Only a few years ago, the forest has inexplicably begun to rot, and a growing number of trees die as if their roots were running out of nutrients.

The Black Marsh: This bog gets its name from the color of its land, which varies from dark, grayish-green to deep black, almost giving it the appearance of being burned. The surface of the marsh represents its biggest danger, since it's porous and nearly impermeable for several feet, which causes rainwater and melted ice to mix together creating a huge tub of thick mud. Especially during the cold and dry seasons, the land is dense enough to walk on with difficulty; but when it's humid, it becomes a death trap. Countless travelers, some even riding their horses and wagons, have sunk into the thick layers of mud. This feature makes it the perfect place for bandits and plunderers of the region to easily dispose of bodies or items they want to get rid of. It is difficult to say how many corpses were dumped into the depths of the marsh. Wild animals, a few insects and small reptiles are the only inhabits of the region. In practice it would be easy to say that The Black Marsh, rather than being a swamp, is nothing more than a huge pool of mud.

Pleasant Forest: Quite different than what its name suggests, the Pleasant Forest is a dark mass of trees that many smugglers and thieves use as temporary storage for goods stolen from Phaion. Whoever enters the forest must be careful where they stay, or otherwise they risk an unwanted fight.

Although only a rumor, it seems that in the most remote areas of the forest there are nonhuman ruins that date back to the golden age of The Pelegrí Coast. The place is sealed by Tol Rauko, which keeps a small garrison there to make sure that they are not looted.

Moor of Memories: Scene of the last great conflict between the supernatural beings and the armies of the Sacred Holy Empire, this great plain is consumed by the power unleashed in it. Surprisingly, there is little trace of the brutal conflict left in The Wake, although Nephilim that pass through this area sometimes have past visions, and can sometimes even glimpse scenes of the terrible battle that was fought.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Places of interest

Most of the cities of Dwänholf are bound together in the coastal zone, being much rarer on the mainland. There are also many ruins of the past, although most of them are totally devastated by the continuing conflicts that have befallen the region.

Tibas Port

(Metropolis, Population 82,000+)

Although not the capital, Tibas is the most populated city in all Dwänholf. This is a very old port, rebuilt on large ruins left behind after the War of God. Ostentatious and elaborate in its origins, Tibas has gradually sunk into decline until becoming no more than a shadow of what it once was. Dirty streets full of poor people and drunks are their unmistakable trademarks. Because of the continuous trafficking of stolen goods and the black market, some people consider it virtually a city of free trade, although officially still part of the principality.

The city has always has been ruled by The Four Lords, a council of noble and bourgeois families who have managed to keep the power in this chaotic age thanks to its control of the underworld and their contacts with Black Sun. The four families who currently hold that title are the Von Malakai, the Barons of Somer, the Lords of Raveola and Marquis of Radfest. Thanks to their economic power they are the main promoters of Dwänholf's independence and try to extend their influence over other cities.

The presence of Samael in Tibas is considerable, especially the D´Anjayni, subtly influencing most of the transactions of the underworld.

Port Rue

(Metropolis, Population 76,000+)

Known as "The city of Pirates", Rue is the only port in the world that rivals the island The Eye of the Hurricane from the large number of pirates and buccaneers who live there. The city has huge docks full of all sorts of places where it's possible to find virtually any kind of perversion for the right price. Accordingly, most travelers come to Rue to sell their stolen goods and enjoy their winnings.

Walking through Port Rue looking like a foreigner or showing opulence can be a deadly mistake because assailants don't hesitate to kill or steal from anyone. The guard of the city is corrupt and cowardly, so counting on the support of the law is almost impossible without money.

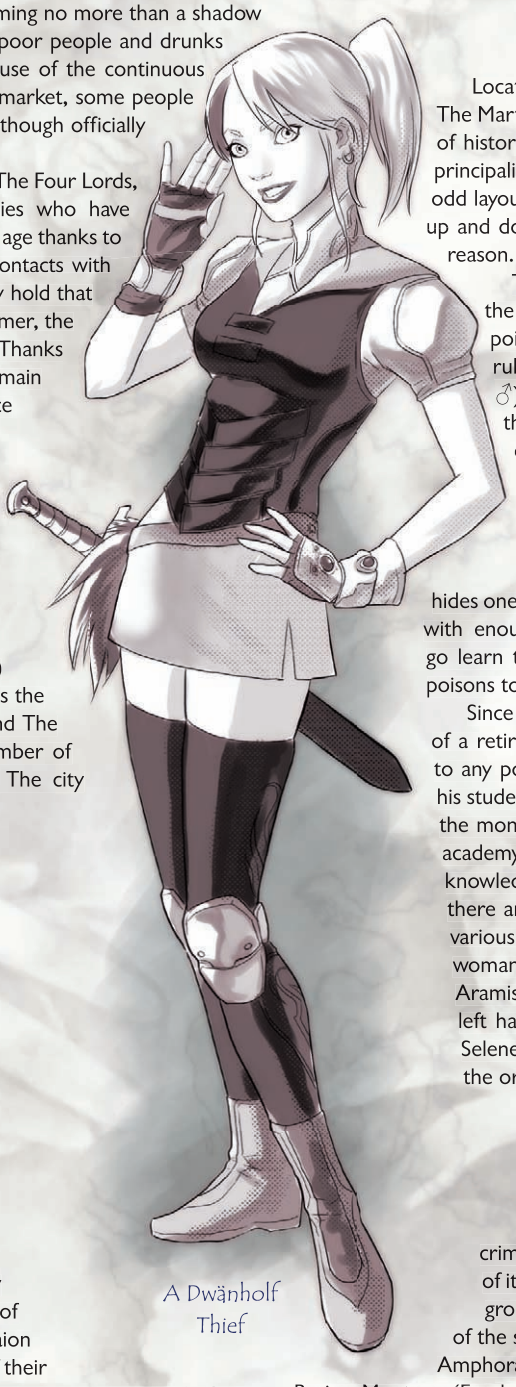
Until recently the port was ruled by a council of twelve Pirate Kings, but only a few years ago the city entered a state of disorder and chaos when a group of Phaion special forces kidnapped or killed seven of their members. The survivors began fighting to monopolize control of Rue, until a mysterious figure named Balthasar Dux, a legendary crimelord nobody had ever seen, unified them all under his control. Now, the enigmatic Dux exerts a subtle influence over the anarchic city, becoming the main enemy of the alliance of The Four Lords.

Rue is home to many strange stories, including The Seeker of Eternity, a kind of shady boogieman who has lived for centuries thanks to the essence that he robs from others. For a large part of the population, including criminals, many of the mysterious disappearances that occur in the slums are his doing.

Mnemosite

(Metropolis, No Population)

The ancient city of Mnemosite is buried deep within Gaïa, a few miles from the Scar of The Martyr. Its history and description are detailed in the chapter Stories of Gaïa in this book.



A Dwänholf Thief

Illustrated by Salvador Espin

Pragna

(City, Population 27,000+)

Located on the side of a mountain near the Scar of The Martyr, Pragna is a small town with many centuries of history, because it is the only one large city of the principality that survived the War of God. From its odd layout, it is a labyrinth full of alleys and stairs going up and down from place to place without an apparent reason.

The city's specialty is smuggling goods from the Coast of Commerce, but is a regular meeting point for all sorts of mercenaries. The current ruler is Karlen "one-eye" Braxtus (Warrior Lv. 5, ♂), a former renowned mercenary who become the local crimelord after killing the ruling noble council and his own contractors.

The Kirion Monastery

(Building, Population 100+)

Under the guise of a simple monastery, Kirion hides one of the best assassin schools in all Gaïa. Anyone with enough money to pay their exorbitant fees can go learn the fine art of killing, from the most bizarre poisons to the darkest Ki techniques.

Since its inception two centuries ago at the hands of a retired assassin, Kirion decided to remain neutral to any political event, so the relationship it keeps with his students stays completely professional. After leaving the monastery, they completely sever all ties with the academy and are free to do what they want with the knowledge they've been imparted. Currently, although there are more than twenty professors specialized in various fields, the director of the school is a sensual woman named Aramis Malik (Assassin Lv. 8, ♀). Aramis, a legendary assassin, has horribly burnt the left half of her face after a battle with an agent of Selene, so she harbors a deep resentment against the organization.

Port Amphora

(City, Population 29,000+)

Amphora is most likely the only city in Dwänholf not infested with criminals. It is a thriving port that takes advantage of its privileged location, close to important fishing grounds, to catch enough fish to provide the rest of the surrounding cities.

Amphora is free of criminals thanks to its mayor; Count Barion Montego (Freelance Lv. 4, ♂), who has set a goal for himself to keep his city free of all dregs of society. Thanks to his enormous personal fortune, he hires mercenaries from all over to maintain order. Montego has recently discovered the existence of Samael in Amphora and, being a very practical man, has established an alliance with the local Archon for obtaining the secret support of the organization.



The dark fate of Terrasanta

Terrasanta

(Metropolis, Population 121,000+)

Terrasanta is the great capital of Dwänholf and also its main city. Built on ancient ruins of unknown origin, the metropolis has become the most luxurious place of the principality. Although there is enormous corruption, crime is not as widespread as is in the ports thanks to the control that the rich bourgeois exert on the underworld. In fact, the whole city is in one way or another under the control of Black Sun, because the organization is has invested great amounts of money in Terrasanta over the years, assuring its prosperity. Consequently, it has great advancements, like paved streets, lampydirae lampposts and beautiful architecture full of luxurious decorative elements.

Several members of Samael coexist within the city, as do a small branch of the Magus Order. Naturally, there are many secret test laboratories developing new necromantic weapons. Most important of these are built in the center of the ancient ruins that were used as a foundation for the city.

Enkido

(Fortress, Population 15,000+)

Enkido is one of the greatest fortresses of the Fourth Lord of War. It is located on the northern coast of the principality; it's an important military port where several hundred boats belonging to the The Shadow of the Emperor are stored. Its construction is quite amazing, because it separates in two distinct parts. The stronghold itself is embedded in a cliff surrounded by great walls, whereas the port is situated at the foot of the wall of rocks surrounded by large gates. Both parts are joined by an intricate system of stairs and elevators.

Enkido is self-sufficient and tolerates few visitors other than The Shadow's troops. Explicit permission is required to enter and, in no case, can a person remain inside for more than a week. The most common visitors are merchants that provide the fortress with all the products that they need.

Nobody in Dwänholf knows exactly what the soldiers of Enkido intend to do, but they feel uncomfortable with such a large number troops in their territory without apparent mobilization.

The lord of the fortress is Edmond Darokin (Technician Lv. 8, ♂), one of the four great generals of The Shadow. Edmond seems to be exceptionally important, since it's rumored that he is one of the few who know how to contact the Fourth Lord of War.

Other Settlements: *Lukka, Anateri.*

Illustrated by Salvador Espin

The End of Terrasanta

The existence of Terrasanta is about to end. A few days ago, an accident during an experiment has deactivated the complex security system of the Black Sun laboratories, suddenly releasing the creatures inside. Apparently, it was a major error that a team of elite agents from the Steiner family caused while looking in secret for evidence of the monstrosities that their organization was creating. Appalled by what this could entail, the Black Sun investigators have activated a supernatural containment system that blocks all city exits, except for the few secret passages that the organization has prepared. Therefore, the people are going to be trapped in Terrasanta, prey to a hoard of living dead and other monstrosities until they are completely eliminated.

It's just a matter of hours before the largest slaughter in decades begins.

To make matters worse, a high Black Sun researcher named Serguei Colbert (Freelance Lv. 7, ♂), was putting the final touches on one of his most ambitious projects; Ragnarok, an undead weapon of extraordinary power that even makes Raziel pale in comparison. Fortunately, it's still in the laboratories, but most likely to be released soon.

But there are many other powers that will be active in Terrasanta with very different objectives, while Black Sun is trying to destroy the city to completely erase all traces of its intervention. Among them there are members of Samael and Magus Order who seek to escape the doomed city, or Locerot Greim (Shadow Lv. 8, ♂), one of the most prominent crows of Wissenschaft who has been in Terrasanta for some time trying to acquire the incomplete copy of The Book of The Dead that, quite possibly, is somewhere in Black Sun labs.

Adventures

With criminals in every corner and a great need for mercenaries, Dwänholf has many opportunities to introduce the characters in different adventures. It is possible that they are enlisted on some of the pirate ships, hired to cause (or prevent) some dirty business, or simply decide to visit the principality's prominent black market. They could also take part in the power struggle between the Pirate Kings and The Four Lords, or being involved in the ancient mystery of Mnemosite. Of course, Terrasanta provides also all kinds of great possibilities; the characters might be visiting the city when the horror triggers and will have to find a way to escape or perish.

The Ghost Pirate: In recent months, strange rumors circulating throughout the coast and the ports of the country say that there is a ghost ship that is attacking many boats regardless of their origin or faction. Half destroyed, with its sails in tatters, it appears in the fog and rarely leaves survivors. Not even thePirate Kings of Rue know the mystery of this ship, but yearn to have it, convinced that its nature is much more "earthly" than phantasmal and that if they took control of it, perhaps they could finally overcome The Eye of The Hurricane. Therefore, an envoy of Dux, Maltus Acab (Assassin Lv. 4, ♂), is recruiting a crew in Port Rue to find and chase the ghost ship. The Pirate Kings don't plan to sink it, but seize it intact and take control of its powers. For that reason they cannot allow their plans to leak out. Once they achieve their goal, they plan to kill all the hired sailors and mercenaries (that's why they won't use their own men). When the crew is engaged, they will see a ship fully equipped and prepared for boarding, but without cannons or other weapons that could damage or destroy the target. Maltus also will go on board as the captain, to see that everything goes as planned.

Just as The Pirate Kings assume, the boat is real; an old pirate ship lost in The Wake for so long that the boat and the whole crew were imbued by the darkness that floods those waters. Now they serve The Prince of Crows Malekith, trying to spread the fear of the supernatural among all the people of the region.

Common Characters of Dwänholf

Here some common characters of Dwänholf are shown. The following statistics have been composed without taking Creation Points into account.

Dwänholf Guard

Class Warrior; **Level** 0
Initiative 45/35; **LP** 70; **AT** None; **Attack** 55; **Dodge** 55; **Weapons** Short Sword; **Damage** 45
AGI: 5 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 5 **STR:** 6 **PER:** 5 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 10, Swim 20, Notice 20, Search 10, Feats of Strength 35, Resist Pain 10.
Resistance: PhR 20, DR 20, VR 20, MR 20, PsR 20.

Pirate

Class Acrobatic **Warrior**; Level 1
Initiative 60/50; **LP** 95; **AT** Leather; **Attack** 70; **Dodge** 70; **Weapons** Saber; **Damage** 50
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 6 **STR:** 6 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Acrobatics 25, Swim 40, Jump 20, Climb 35, Intimidate 10, Theft 10, Notice 25, Search 15, Navigation 15, Composure 5, Feats of Strength 15, Resist Pain 5, Slight of Hand 20.
Special: Pirate Module
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 30, PsR 30.

Table 16: Dwänholf

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-30	Poor Class	Poor clothing, food for a couple of days, some personal items without value. 4 CC.
31-85	Middle-Class	A couple of changes of clothes, food for a week, a weapon or a set of picks, a bag containing personal items. 50 SC.
85-100	Wealthy Class	Several changes of clothes, a couple of weapons, a horse, a simple forgery of a document or a small object of value, some personal items in a chest with false bottom. 60 GC.

Pirate Captain

Class Acrobatic **Warrior**; Level 4
Initiative 95/85/75; **LP** 125; **AT** Leather; **Attack** 110; **Dodge** 115; **Weapons** Saber/Pistol; **Damage** 50/60
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 8 **CON:** 6 **STR:** 7 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 7 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 6
Abilities: Acrobatics 65, Athleticism 50, Swim 45, Jump 55, Climb 15, Style 65, Intimidate 20, Leadership 25, Persuasion 15, Theft 20, Notice 25, Search 15, Navigation 55, Appraisal 15, Slight of Hand 60.
Special: Pirate Module
Resistance: PhR 50, DR 50, VR 50, MR 50, PsR 45.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Middle-Class/ Poor Class: Swim +10, Intimidate +15, Persuasion +5, Notice +15, Navigation +10, Hide +10, Theft +10, Stealth +5.

Wealthy-Class: Swim +10, Intimidate +10, Persuasion +20, Notice +10, Leadership +10, Theft +5, Appraisal +15.



Sergei Ogata, a Pirate Captain of Dwänholf

Illustrated by Salvador Espin

THE COAST OF COMMERCE

The Coast of Commerce is composed by the principalities that stretch across the northern coast of The Inner Sea towards The Oriental Sea. The local climate and the vegetation are Mediterranean and the entire region is full of lush vegetation and green forests.

Endowed with vast natural resources and a very powerful economy, the area receives its name for controlling a third of all commercial transactions in Gaïa. Gabriel and Phaion, the two nations that form The Coast, are in a desperate race to be the cultural and economic center of the entire world.

The Coast of Commerce was unified under the rule of the man in the age of The Messiah, becoming The Holy Kingdom of Apostle Joachim. During this period he transformed it into one of the richest and most influential lands. Consequently, just after the War of God, the Empire focused on merging these territories into the Sacred Holy Crown. Since then, both principalities have played a very active part in the politics of Abel, influencing and intervening in almost every decision that the High Senate made.

Though Gabriel and Phaion have separated themselves from the Empire, they haven't severed their relationship with Abel or with the newly established Azur Alliance. Its goal is to be completely independent of both powers and maintain their open trade routes and political interventionism. Therefore, they keep to the sidelines of current events, but they have not closed their borders and they still keep representatives in the High Senate.

GABRIEL

Capital: Chaville.
Population: 5,900,000+
Ethnic Groups: Aion (46%), Asher (32%), Zínner (21%).
Government: Plutocracy (Based on money).
Languages: Latin (Dialect).
Religion: Christianity.
Technology: 4.
Denomym: Gabrielense.
Flag: A red rose on an elaborate white and gold background.
Masculine Names: Adolphe, Alphonse, Armand, Camille, Edgard, Évariste, Fernand, Gastón, Julien, Léopold, Lothaire, Philippe, Nicolas, Stéphane, Vespasien, Zacharie.
Feminine Names: Adelaïde, Alice, Angeline, Arianne, Christine, Corinne, Florianne, Hyacinthe, Joceline, Lucille, Melissa, Morgane, Sophie, Yvette, Zoé.
Last Names: Ackerman, Aldridge, Beaumont, Bernard, Bussey, D´Aubigne, De Lorme, Deville, Edith, Facet, Garnier, Louis, Neal, Rousseau, Vasser.

Gabriel is one of the richest and most influential nations of Gaïa in its own right. It is a principality that dominates manufacturing and trade, exerting almost absolute control over the trade routes of the Inner Sea. Thanks to their contacts and the volume of the merchandise that they move, it's not hard to believe that the largest commercial transactions in the world happen here. In fact, economically speaking, Gabriel is more powerful than any other principality in the world, except for Abel.

The principality of Gabriel enjoys fertile green plains, ideal for agriculture, and has abundant resources in the mountains, especially jewels mines. The land is peaceful and their roads, most of them paved, offer great safety due to the numerous patrols that patrol them.

The system of government mixes elements of the largest commercial principalities with the most deeply rooted traditions of the Empire. A council of high nobles and bourgeois governs the nation choosing an Arch-Chancellor to administrate Gabriel like its Prince during a decade. The Arch-Chancellor's power is great, but not absolute, and is obligated to justify his actions to the council, which has the right to veto some specific issues.

Gabriel's army is almost symbolic, since up to today they have been using their political mastery to keep under control any dangerous situation. However, every great noble or bourgeois house has its own group of mercenaries who, as a whole, are a force to be reckoned with.

The current Arch-Chancellor is Joshua Fardelys, a man known for his incredible talent in both politics and business. Many attribute the actual splendor of the principality to his unmatched administration and the intelligent maneuvers that have taken advantage of the fall of the Empire.

So far, Gabriel's only objective seems to be to maintain their newly declared independence from Abel as it expands its commercial control over the Inner Sea, although in secret, the council of high nobles is investing large sums of money to subvert principalities of the Empire, with the intention of weakening it. This is because, although not interested in the outbreak of large-scale war, they don't want Abel to recover, since it would become a danger to their actual sovereignty.

Culture and Society

If one had to use two words to describe Gabriel's society, these would have to be luxury and ostentation. Its people refer to themselves as the cultural core of the world, considering that the Empire was in decay for decades.

With the highest income per capita among its citizens, the people here are refined like nowhere else in Gaïa. Slaves to fashion and style, they follow the annual trends as though it was the only thing worth living for. The society parties and political games are common, where an inappropriate word or a badly chosen outfit can make mockery and isolation of the entire social circle. In contrast to such luxury, there are a high percentage of poor and homeless, who barely survive with nothing to put in their mouths or working for a pittance.

All this causes an enormous crack in the social structure, so that each class only mixes within their own group. The bourgeois look down on the less fortunate and socialize only with their peers, whereas high society behaves as if everything foreign to them simply didn't exist. Although there are no laws expressly prohibiting it, the relationships of the bourgeois classes with other social circles is strongly frowned upon, and results in almost immediate rejection by society.

Gabriel's major cities have an incomparable way of displaying wealth and luxury. Palaces, amphitheaters and imposing towers of incredible beauty are everywhere. Naturally, this means that poverty always concentrates in the suburbs, where the poor are forced to live. Elected mayors govern metropolises, although administration of trade lies in the hands of minors chancellors appointed by the Arch-Chancellor.

Populated by skillful merchants and politicians, Gabriel possesses a complex and exhaustive legal system that covers all aspects of society. This result in a tangled bureaucracy, which requires endless queues and paperwork to get any class of information or permit. The courts are controlled by the wealthy, and expecting justice without social status is impossible unless one can arouse the pity of the judges.

Travelers are welcome provided they intend to trade or be aesthetically pleasing. People dressed as savages, carrying rusty weapons or lacking manners are quickly expelled or relegated to the slums.

The Titles of Nobility in Gabriel

In a place where money is power and respect, anyone can buy a noble title if they can afford it. This way the bourgeois have a way to measure their status and know who is superior or inferior to them.

The Lords represent the lowest echelon of high society, but are distinguished from traders as respectable or "true bourgeois." Barons, Counts, Viscounts and Marquis are the second tier, and are usually considered the true business elite. For the highest-ranking Dukes and Archdukes, it's slightly different. In addition to payment, approval by the High Chancellor himself is required. Not for nothing, those who can afford the title of Archduke are those that are part of the principality's governing council of nobles. Naturally, all the money collected this way goes to the coffers of Gabriel.

The rates may vary from year to year, but the current price list is:

The Prices of Noble Titles

Lord	3.000 GC
Baron	20.000 GC
Count	25.000 GC
Viscount	40.000 GC
Marquis	50.000 GC
Duke	100.000 GC
Archduke	250.000 GC

Regarding the Supernatural

The mere idea of the existence of supernatural powers is cause for laughter and mockery for Gabriel's people. The general opinion is that things like magic and witchcraft are just fairy tales bred over an age of ignorance. Therefore, its people regard the inexplicable with some skepticism, thinking it is only a trick or a very elaborate ruse. If they encounter anything authentic, the first thing they'll usually do is become speechless, unsure of how to react. Given their lack of religious convictions, the Gabrielenses would not consider it evil automatically, but certainly would be uncomfortable around it. Probably, they would just file a report to the Inquisition, even if is only to secure their position and avoid problems with the Church.

The History of Gabriel

Gabriel was the essential core of the Holy Kingdom of the Apostle Joachim after the death of Abel, which soon became the true economic engine of the human nations for dominating the trade of the Inner Sea. For almost two centuries it served as a bridge between the kingdoms of man, and even maintained secret trade relations with Judas. After the War of God erupted, Rah and his agents influenced many local lords, so the territory surrendered with minimal resistance. For many, it was the beginning of the political mastery that Gabriel's rulers have always been known for. At the end of the conflict, the nation had not suffered as much destruction as its neighbors, but nevertheless the chaos spread everywhere. Ironically, bandits and robbers were threatening to do what Judas' armies had failed to. Then Nazhael appeared, a conqueror that subjugated the territory. This former Rah's general used his remaining detachments and various groups of Jayans still under his control to quell the region. Zhorne, realizing the fundamental importance of the Coast of Commerce and the threat Nazhael posed, focused on the region by initiating a series of attacks that ended in year 241 with Gabriel's unification to The Empire.

Of Dances and Swords

Of all the extremely popular customs among Gabriel's high society, there are two that have become vitally important for the nobility: duels and ballroom dancing.

Dances: One of the typical activities of the dissolute Gabrielense aristocracy is the celebration of ostentatious dances. Any reason is a good one for this celebration: a child's initiation into society, a good business transaction abroad, birthday or engagement. In these events the ladies dress in their finest clothes, wearing garments of obscene value and dazzling jewels. The Lords, however, use the time to show their knowledge of current events and to close the most important deals. The highlight of the evening is the first dance, which is usually done by the honored guest or the hosts. This is when everybody focuses very hard to keep their composure and postures correct down to the smallest detail, as any error may cost many months of shame.

Duels: In a place where appearances and reputation are more important than reality, it is inevitable that quarrels arise even for the most insipid insults. Any bourgeois Lord must be respected and be treated properly, because if he is insulted, he may challenge the offender to a duel. However, there are rules to calling these challenges. A contestant may only defy individuals with a status of one level above his own. That is, although a Lord could face a Baron, he would not have enough social status to fight a Count (although, if intelligent, he may force the Count to challenge him). Depending on the affront, both may agree to a duel of satisfaction (a first blood one, where it is customary to bring a doctor to deal with the injury) or to the death. Traditionally each of the contestants has two referees to testify that everything goes fairly and there are no tricks. There are usually two types of combat: sword fighting or gun fighting. If gun fighting, both are only entitled to one shot, and the contestants must take seven steps away from each other before opening fire.

Gunfights *(Optional Rule)*

To reflect the importance of staying calm in gunfights, both sides must make a Moderate Composure roll check to avoid a –30 penalty to both their Attack and Initiative. They must also secretly declare if each of them wants to hurry the shot or not. If so, you should point to a sheet of paper with a number between 10 and 30 on it, which is the bonus earned on the Initiative for the turn in exchange for an equivalent penalty to Attack.



The newly created principality soon did what it did best; rebuilt The Inner Sea trade routes and assured power of its own economy. Taking advantage of both elements and the military security that Abel provided, it had regained its former glory in only a century. Then Gabriel began its policies of intervention, always remaining a prominent voice in the High Senate. The principality was an instigator of external conflicts only to achieve greater economic profit. If it saw that one of their trade routes was threatened or had a surplus of unmarketable goods, it used its skillful political maneuvering to achieve alienation between two nations to open new markets. Sometimes, they even went so far as to promote wars, thus earning them reproach from the Emperor.

Gradually, the people began to adapt to this way of life, feeling superior to the rest of principalities and considering themselves the cornerstone of Gaïa.

The last two centuries have been quite turbulent for the nation's government because of its economic boom. Arch-Chancellors became proud and foolish, losing part of its market share to Phaion. The recent appointment of Joshua Fardelys has been a real renaissance for the nation. After eight years in power, Gabriel has completely recovered economically, especially using its independence from the Empire and the desperation of the other principalities. Many believe that Fardelys will renew his title in the elections taking place two years from now.

Relevant Geographical Features

Gabriel isn't known for having many natural wonders. Except for a few lakes of considerable size and the mountain ranges of Lucille in the east, the landscape of the principality is fairly uniform. Generally, their vast plains are fertile and ideal for agriculture.

Fencing Schools

There are few bourgeois in Gabriel who do not know to handle a weapon, even if is only because of the popularity that has been imposed in recent years. As fashion forces them to use foils and rapiers whose aesthetic qualities do not completely clash with the ornate dress of the wealthy classes, one of the most common businesses are the fencing schools, where all kinds of masters teach their art to whoever can afford it. Fencing styles greatly increase mobility and agility, and sometimes the stylishness and elegance is considered more important than the true martial skill. There are several classes of fencing establishments in Gabriel:

Academies: Competent swordsmen, who look like great masters to the populace, run the Academies. They actually only teach the basics of a style, but sometimes you can find there great talents.

Fraternities: Fraternities are schools where one master and his main disciples teach their style to the students in exchange for a monthly payment that varies by the reputation of the teacher.

Company: The companies are genuine universities where popular and reputable masters teach their style secrets to the children of the richest nobles. Monthly rates can reach hundreds of gold crowns in some cases, which keep plebeians out of their classrooms.

Private Schools: The most competent teachers usually start private schools, which admit a limited number of students that rarely exceeds four or five members. Prices for classes are insane, and there are few families who can afford them.

The Divas

Gabriel women are an essential element in high society and politics. Far from being mere ladies of the court, many have a role as active as the men in the power structure, but they always act much in a more subtle way. A large number of them are specialized in mediating in intrigues, especially those carried out in foreign countries. A comment placed at the right time or a mere smile to the appropriate person can be a deadlier weapon than any sword when achieving the objectives of Gabriel.

Lucille Mountains: This is the name given to the mountain chain that occupies northeastern Gabriel, separating the frontier of Moth. Lucille is a fundamental element for the principality's economy, since there are diamond veins and precious stones in some of them. Consequently, throughout the rocky strip there are a considerable number of mining towns dedicated solely to the extraction of valuable gems. There are also a great number of volcanoes in Lucille that, fortunately for the people living in the area, have been inactive for years without any indication of changing. In several of the lower mountain peaks there are many mansions of the nobility, some of which are used by wealthy members of the Magus Order to live in peaceful isolation far from society.

Straits of Ribeau: Between the continent and The Isle of Gulls (Ile des Mouettes) are the Straits of Ribeau, a channel through a steep gorge of cliffs over 300 feet high. The island was formerly connected to the continent, but was separated as many others from The Inner Sea due of the activation of Rah's machine. Nowadays it is an unusual route for the boats sailing along the coast, and only pirates and smugglers often pass through them. The reason for this is that both walls of the strait housed many interconnected caves before the separation, which have become an ideal hideout. At night, the boats stop near the rocky walls while their buddies send ropes down to them with which to raise the merchandise.

I´Ark Forest: Although little more than a century ago I´Ark was just another simple forest in Gabriel, it's now one of the most famous places in the principality. This is because, years ago, a group of bourgeois decided to turn it a large hunting reserve where the high society could indulge in their feral desires. So they began bringing all kinds of wild beasts in from all corners of Gaïa. The forest is divided in several zones, depending on the kind of hunting desired and fee paid. In each area there are strange constructions, like walls or labyrinths, created to add excitement to the hunt. In addition to the known hunting grounds, there is a hidden zone in the deepest part of the forest to which only a very select group of nobles has access. Tired of the same game, they sought out new excitement, which led them to use humans in their hunts. They have recently discovered a still greater challenge: buying supernatural races at exorbitant prices, like Sylvain, Daimah or Jayan and using them as prey in their macabre games.



Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

The Great Lakes: In the western end of the principality is the great stretch of land known as The Great Lakes. These are a beautiful set of full blue waterfalls and other natural beauties. The place has become a recreational area for the members of Gabriel's high society who visit it regularity to escape of the bustle of city life and relax. Numerous hotels and luxurious leisure spots have been built near the lakes, as well as a couple of popular spas. One of the main attractions are the peaceful boat trips, and many of the pools have been populated with beautiful swans to pander to the tastes of the nobility. In contrast to the apparent calm, the trading spots of the area have launched a secret war to monopolize the economic control of the market. Anything goes in this dangerous game, from arson to murder, so many establishments hire mercenaries at exorbitant prices as bodyguards or agents to attack their rivals.

All this is deeply irritating the spirits who live in The Wake of The Great Lakes, as the area has been an oasis of calm tranquility for thousands of years.



Illustrated by Raúl Rosell

The Great Lakes

Terra Umbra: This is the name of the vast region west of the Orlen River. It's a volcanic area that important geographers claim was a lake over a thousand years ago. Nobody knows the exact reason why Terra Umbra looks like it does, since there is no volcano nearby. The only truly striking feature in this desolate place is the beautiful volcanic glass, with which many artisans create gorgeous decorative objects.

Val du Genevrier (Valley of the Juniper): Located on the west end of the Lucille Mountains, Val du Genevrier takes his name from the extensive coniferous forests that surround it. For most of the nobility of the principality, this valley is an accursed place, little more than a pimple on the beautiful face of Gabriel. This is due to the unusual community that populates it: lepers, the disfigured and the sickly. For the noble sybarites of the nation, the physical deformities, as well as the degenerative ailments like leprosy, are not permissible. When a citizen without a title of nobility (either by birth or by accident) is deformed, he is not allowed to beg for alms and he is automatically expelled from any city. The same applies to lepers, who in other principalities are treated in the infirmaries of the churches. Therefore, these pariahs have found a place to live in Val du Genevrier, where nobody judges anybody by his lineage or appearance. The population of the valley has been tolerated by Imperial edict until now, but even without the supervision of Abel, no nobleman has been able to convince a division of soldiers to go there and risk exposing himself to leprosy infection.

Recently, rumors have circulated on a miracle cure in Genevrier, and some people talk of a strange woman with the ability to heal to the sickly is touring the area. Some even say that it must be the true Saint Helena, who has returned in their time of need. To date it has been impossible to confirm the veracity of this story.

Places of Interest

Gabriel has many interesting places, most notably its large metropolises, among which are some of the largest and most populated cities in Gaïa.

Chaville

(Metropolis, Population 620,000+)

Chaville, the capital of Gabriel, is the most important port in Gaïa. It is an immense city completely devoted to trade, where each day thousands of businesses and hundreds of large transactions take place. In many ways, it is the heart of the principality and a reflection of the ideal lifestyle of its people.

Both the luxury and grandeur that fascinate high society manifests in the streets downtown because they are full of gardens, the most luxurious mansions and the most illustrious monuments. The most significant and representative of these is The Clock Tower, a thirty floor building in whose summit is the largest clock of gears in the world. The Tower is adorned with gargoyles and angels, which give it a regal bearing. Another building of great relevance is the Great Capitol, where the bourgeois nobles who form the principality's governing council meet to make the most relevant decisions and monitor the performance of the Arch-Chancellor.

Their extraordinary ports, equipped with all imaginable modern conveniences, stretch for miles and miles to receive thousands of boats. The city's residences boast that, if necessary, Chaville could harbor all the merchant boats of The Inner Sea. There are several wharves separated by quality and the services that they offer, although many of the best ones are private docks belonging to great bourgeois families and their personal fleet of ships.

The poor congregate in huge slums called the Districts of Lorne, plenty of dirt, mud and countless unidentifiable odors. The differences between this area and the rest of Chaville are so radical that visitors find it hard to believe that it's the same city.

Chaville is home to the Arch-Chancellor Joshua Fardelys and his sister Alystaire, who govern the nation from an enormous palace. There are also many noble families who compete for control of the city, although in these times the title of Chancellor falls to Archduke Beauregard Poubel (Freelance Lv. 3, ♂), personal friend to Joshua Fardelys and one of his most trusted men. The Chancellor is enamored with Alystaire, who uses these feelings to secretly pull the strings of many important events in Chaville.


Dwänholf
Goldar
Moth
Phaion
Gabriel
Inner Sea
Vasago
Tol Rauko
Door of Surthein
Kainkasutur
Olafer
Village of Three Crosses
Cave of The Murmurs
Forest of Wulfgar
Hermagor
Tel´Haroth
Iadului Gorge
Billkenfest
Inner Valleys
Sea of Salt
Monastery of Stelea
Forad Forest
Muirenheim Mountain Range
Laraghan River
Barachesi Forest
Docf River
Kirion Monastery
Terrasanta
Anateri
Desert of Memories
Lukka
Gehena Forest
Scar of The Martyr
Mnemósite
Pragna
Pleasant Forest
Jaarenghäff
Dürgabenh
Somer Plateau
Silmor River
Moor of Shadow
Torda
Forest of the Ropes
Seifenschwein Forest
Eldiah
Akasta Lake
Eastern Gate
Port Meidel
Zelai River
Zabil Villa
Schlotterstein
Saulxerotte
Val du Genevrier
Lucille Mountains
Bretouleau River
Great Lakes
Veenhuigen
La Roche
Heverville
Bellegarde
Astria Academy
Ourges
Schlotterstein
Akquo Marsh
Plains of Roh
East Coast
Hong Kua
Mifune
Castle Takeda
Busselton
Matsu Forest
Beaufort Citadel
Duppois
Carignan River
Voillemont
L´Ark Forest
Grebar River
Deimos
Cathedral of Saint Helena
Arklo
Spring Leap
Fathia
Terra Umbra
Island of Corvinus
Corvinus
Straits of Ribeau
Ile des Mouttes
Chateau de Justine
Chaville
Le Drac
Paradis Paradis
Pitcher Peninsula
Markusias
Ile du Hirondelle
Selene
Ovens
Borris
Moriya
Alba
Adam
MAP KEY
Capital
Metropolis
City
Building
Fortress
Path
Road
0 250 500 750 Kilometers
0 250 500 Miles

Given the immense size of the city, many organizations have a remarkable presence in it; from the officially recognized, like The Inquisition or Tol Rauko, to the ones that act in the shadows, like Samael, Black Sun or The Magus Order.

La Roche

(Metropolis, Population 480,000+)

While Chaville is the center of maritime trade in the principality, La Roche is the metropolis that controls the manufacture and traffic of goods inland. It enjoys a powerful industrial infrastructure with dozens of factories that take advantage of the cheap manual labor provided by the poorest classes. It also controls the mining towns in the Lucille Mountains, storing all the gemstones that are mined there. This situation has forced the noble of the city to hire small private mercenary armies to ensure the transport of the valuable goods.

It has many museums, music halls and libraries, to which only the rich people have access. It also has nearly a dozen gentlemen's social clubs, where society's most elite gathers. These clubs are divided into different levels, depending on the class of their members; the two most significant, The Men's Club and The Retailer's Club, maintain an open rivalry which is becoming increasingly dangerous for its members.

The market in La Roche is really amazing and very little has to envy the legendary Streets of Lys in Archangel. With money and the right contacts, it possible to buy here virtually any kind of product. There are many jewelry shops in the city and, thanks to the influx of gemstones, they all have enormously competitive prices.

In contrast to the opulence of the city, La Roche has immense, overcrowded slums of people who just want something to eat. These people are prohibited from entering the wealthy sectors, and the guards rudely expel whoever dares to defy this law. The only exception is made for children, and though they have banned begging, they're allowed to sell flowers and gifts through the streets.

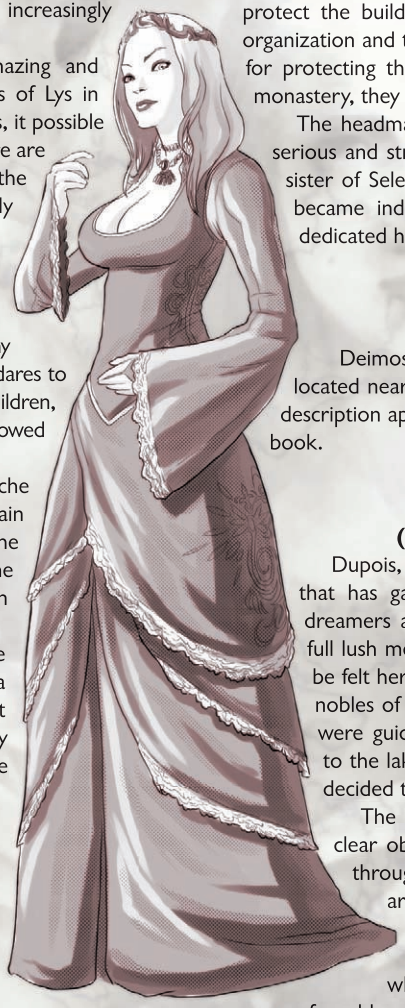
One of most popular locations in La Roche is The Convent of Saint Catherine, whose main attraction is not the merciful devotion of the nuns, but the great field behind it where the duels of the city usually take place. When an offense occurs, it's usually settled here.

The Chancellor of La Roche is Archduke Armand Leconte (Freelance Lv. 4, ♂), a hardened man who lacks any emotion not related to preserving the pride of his family and increasing their personal fortune since the death of his wife.

The Beaufort Citadel

(Fortress, Population 5,000+)

As the largest garrison in the nation, Beaufort is a mix between a fortified stronghold and a fairy tale castle. It looks impressive, with its white towers gleaming in the sunlight and silvery roofs. Soldiers always patrol within its walls wearing brilliant red uniforms. Inside, the recruits are trained by groups of former soldiers, whereas those that have some kind of title learn the rigors of military discipline. Recently it's become customary for the nobles to force their rebellious children to go to Beaufort Citadel, more as punishment than with any hope of straightening them out.



A Diva

Illustrated by Salvador Espin

The Astria Academy

(Building, Population 300+)

Undoubtedly, Astria is the most exclusive academy in Gabriel; in fact, it may also be one of the world's most unusual. It's an ancient monastery located near the summit of the Astrega Mountain, one of the higher peaks on the Lucille Mountains, which is surrounded by clouds. A little over two centuries ago it was converted into a private institute, where they only admit the most beautiful young Gabrielense girls of high society. There, the young ladies learn more than mere academic knowledge, because they specialize in mastering all the secret arts of seduction. They learn about the customs of many countries in addition to Gabriel, assimilating what men of different cultures like to dominate them effortlessly. The girls can be authoritarian or indulgent, Machiavellian or innocent; no matter what role they must adopt, they can do it. Thereby, they serve the interests of their nation by manipulating in the shadows ambassadors and politicians from other principalities. Undoubtedly, the finest Divas in Gabriel emerge from these walls.

To avoid kidnappings or male intrusion, the monastery has exceptional protection; twelve agents of Selene disguised as professors protect the buildings. Astria has reached a compromise with the organization and the monastery will always shelter them in exchange for protecting the academy. If anyone tries something against the monastery, they will certainly gain a dangerous enemy.

The headmaster is Antoniette d´Roüan (Assassin Lv. 7, ♀), a serious and strict woman with a kind heart. She was formerly a sister of Selene who worked in Astria for a long time, but she became independent from the organization and completely dedicated herself to the place that she has grown to love.

Deimos

(Metropolis, Population 235,000+)

Deimos, one of the four major cities of free trade, is located near the border of Gabriel and Phaion. Its history and description appear in detail in the Chapter Stories of Gaïa of this book.

Dupois

(Metropolis, Population 123,000+)

Dupois, the city of the white swan, is a dazzling metropolis that has gained a prestigious reputation among poets and dreamers all around The Coast of Commerce. Located in a full lush meadow with crystalline lakes, the harmony that can be felt here is greater than in any other place in Gabriel. The nobles of the area tell that the settlers that founded Dupois were guided to this location by a flock of swans that flew to the lakes. Surprised to find such a magnificent land, they decided to stay here.

The city pays tribute to beauty and its people have a clear obsession with neatness and attractiveness. Strolling through its streets, seeing the gardens in the wealthiest areas and its white marble buildings, can be a quasi-ghostly feeling for those not accustomed to it. In center of Dupois there is a large lake of swans on which stands the Palai Du Blanc, a huge concert hall of marble and glass.

One of the most beautiful spectacles witnessed in the city is "The Rain of Feathers" at the time when the swans begin their flight to the mountains dropping plumage onto the streets. This event is a sign of good omen, and a great dance is always held in its celebration.

The most flourishing industry is glass blowing. Many glasses and the most beautiful decorative figures in Gaïa have their origins here. Also here is where they make Swan Feathers, a small hollow glass pen filled with poison that has become very popular between the ladies of Gabriel.

The Chancellor of the city is Jacques Mordaunt (Freelance Lv. 5, ♂), Count of Dupois, and a mature man, ugly and deformed whose gift for the politics and oratory clash with his unpleasant appearance. Mordaunt hates his body as much as he loves his city and it would be willing to do anything to become beautiful. His deformity makes him a bitter person who rarely goes out in public. For any public appearances he delegates his two sons, Alphonse and Louis, who are young and attractive.

Dupois secretly hosts one of the largest groups of Barakiel followers in all Gaïa, who worship her as the embodiment of the beauty and the perfection. The organization performs many rituals in her name, most of which are completely harmless. This threatens to be changed due to the arrival of Mirielle Ledoyen (Wizard Lv. 5, ♀), a fanatical perfectionist who wants to drive the group according to her own radical ideas.

Île Du Hirondelle

(Building, Population 500+)

Île du Hirondelle is an impregnable island on the eastern coast of Gabriel. Located just half a mile from the coast, it is a prison where they detain everyone whose ideas or behaviors make them dangerous to the strict mindset of high Gabrielense society. The prison warden, Jean Louis Mercroix (Dark Paladin Lv. 4, ♂), is a sadist who takes pride in the fact that nobody has ever escaped his prison. For this purpose, he keeps his "guests" undernourished and subjects them to beatings by his guards that admonish any conduct short of absolute submission. The despair and helplessness of the prisoners, as well as all the murders that have been committed inside the walls of the prison, give Île du Hirondelle a frightful reflection in The Wake. The barrier that separates the two worlds is feeble, and only the influence of The Inner Sea prevents the ghosts of the dead from haunting the island.

The Order of Justine

The Order of Justine was founded by Dominic de Lys, a nobleman of high rank who was disgusted with the way of life in Gabriel. With the help of his family inheritance, he decided to devote his life to establishing an order of knights who demonstrated the misconduct of their fellow citizens and the virtues of chivalry. Justine quickly gained an enormous prestige, especially from the exceptional quality of its fencing teachers and the enthusiasm that young people showed in the order. However, the order eventually became little more than a club of high lineage, filled with young nobility just looking to show off their positions. Disgusted, Dominic decided to leave the institution and nobody ever saw him again. Currently, Master Louis de Calabrielle (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 5, ♂) leads The Order of Justine, a corrupt man who sees the organization as an instrument of social and political power.

The knights of Justine are almost always competent fencers. Although many of them are little more than fops, some follow the principles of Dominic: honor, courage and equality. That, in a nation like Gabriel, is an achievement in itself. The two most well-known knights in the capital are called "Le pair du Justine" by the people: The Count of Fethe (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 5, ♂), a mature aristocrat who personifies the purest values of the order, and Fortune d´Avernne (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 7, ♂), a young nobleman whose greatest vice is women. Both are quite popular, to the disapproval of Louis de Calabrielle, whom they cause many problems for with the amount of duels they start among their ranks.

Chateau de Justine

(Building, Population 100+)

A mile from the capital is The Chateau de Justine, home to one of the best-known gentleman's society all the principality. The Chateau is a place of incredible luxury, with eccentric ornaments from all corners of Gaïa. Great celebrations are held in Justine to whom only select groups are invited.

Bellegarde

(City, Population 8,000+)

Bellegarde is known as The Sword of Gabriel. If not for the reputation of its master swordsmen, this city would have never outgrown being a small mining village in the Lucille Mountains. In the late sixth century, a blacksmith named Philippe Le Samount gained such a reputation that the Arch-Chancellor personally commissioned a sword from him. The work was so beautiful and perfect that this weapon became a symbol of power in Gabriel. This led to the commercial instincts of some noble families to invest money in the small town, and simultaneously, many forging apprentices moved to Bellegarde to try to discover Le Samount's secret technique.

Other Settlements: *Heverville, Voillemont, Saulxerotte, Ourges, Le Drac.*

Adventures

While the supernatural is not emphasized in Gabriel, the huge trade intrigues coupled with the competitiveness of the local nobles are perfect plot hooks for various adventures. They may have to rescue somebody from the Île du Hirondelle (or who knows, maybe they are the ones who end up there) or fail to meet some criteria of rigorous etiquette of high society and being challenged by some skilled swordsman.

The Noir Tournament: René Noir is one of the most dangerous men in Gabriel. Almost two centuries ago, when he was no more than a simple merchant, he obtained a powerful necromantic artifact called The Hand of Lenas, which allowed him to rob the vital life-essences of other living beings to prolong its existence. After replacing its own hand with the artifact, it became clear to him over time that the device had a side-effect: it requires recharging more and more often and also demands the life-essence of people with powerful souls. Therefore, Blanc organizes a clandestine tournament in the city of La Roche every three years, offering many rewards to the victor. The true reason behind this competition is to find a man or woman of strong spirit who he can kill and later absorb their life-essence. This is why he offers the winner a private duel against him, telling their enemies that if they win they can keep everything he owns. If they decline the invitation, Noir deals with them later.

Despite his age, René Noir appears to be just over 20 years old, although his gray hair and his tired eyes reveal much more. Not only has he become a true master of combat, mastering many skills stolen from his victims, but The Hand also gives him the ability to wither the body of his opponents with only a touch. All this, plus his half-living condition, makes him extremely difficult to defeat.

Now his time is running out since the last souls he consumed were not as powerful as he thought. This is why Noir will organize a new tournament in less than a month hoping that this time only the best fighters are drawn to the call.

The Dance: While strolling around the city of Dupois, the characters meet a beautiful high society girl being harassed by a group of bullies. If they decide to help her, the young lady will introduce herself as Eloise Du Ferdeine, and will insist, ever thankful, in inviting to them to dine with her at home, an impressive mansion uptown. There they will meet her father, Marquis Du Ferdeine, who happens to have company. Halfway through supper, one of the guest, Madame du La Sardon, will notice a young and attractive member of the group and will sarcastically comment on how appropriate it would be for Eloise to invite her young "hero" (or "heroes") to the dance that will be held three days hence in the mansion. To make excuses would be insulting, and even more so when the young lady do it with the best intentions. The problem is that Eloise has a lot of suitors who would frown on interlopers, and they will try to be sure that the characters do not arrive at the celebration under any circumstance.

A Dangerous Duel: One of the characters is harassed by a drunk in one of the inns of Chaville and, before none can help it, ends up being challenged to a duel at dawn. The fighting doesn't seem to be the problem, but the challenger is none other than the son of the Marquis du Malache, a ruthless man who will do anything to keep his first-born son from getting hurt. The night ahead is long, because the men of the Marquis will do their utmost to keep the character from attending the duel.

The Nobleman and the Maid: Lionel Leconte, the only son of Archduke Armand Leconte of La Roche, has secretly fallen in love with one of his maids, Cheryl Bobins, who returns his sentiments. The young Lionel, who cares very little about the people's gossip or the social standing of his beloved, has directly confronted his father about the situation, having warned to him that he plans to marry with her with or without the consent of the rest of the family.

Armand, cold and ruthless, realizing that he will not be able to sway his son, tries to kidnap Cheryl and take her far away (he doesn't want to kill her, fearing some careless action on behalf of his temperamental son) to some remote island in The Inner Sea. Naturally, as Lionel discovers that his beloved has disappeared, he will attempt to find her making use of all his money and family influence. The characters could be the ones responsible for the kidnapping or to join the search party organized by Lionel. It goes without saying that neither side will spare any expense hiring out the best mercenaries.

Joshua and Alystaire Fardelys

Joshua and Alystaire Fardelys are two of the most important people in Gabriel.

When Joshua was just seven and Alystaire six, their parents died under mysterious circumstances, leaving them alone and burdened with debt. Unable to maintain the standard of living they were used to, the young children lost everything except for an old mansion in the suburbs. The siblings, having only one another, grew up in that empty house while facing all sorts of hardships. This forged a special bond between them, which only drove them on to stay together. And so they did.

Joshua was a financial prodigy, and despite his age, had soon amassed a small fortune. Upon turning 16, he was already one of the ten richest men in the principality thanks to his genius. Alystaire became a young woman of captivating beauty, and with a brilliant mind and incomparable cunning, steered her brother away from any potential obstacles he could run into.

Joshua's talent soon led him towards politics and, at only 19, he became the youngest member of the Council of Gabriel in history. Meanwhile, Alystaire became obsessed with power, searching for anything that could help her brother. She discovered the existence of supernatural forces, almost by chance, and soon realized that she was endowed with a natural talent for them. She used both instructors from the Order of Yehudah and The Magus Order to secretly train herself and, when she had surpassed them all, eliminated them without linking any criminal activity back to her.

Finally, Joshua's success could no longer be ignored, and eventually received the title of Arch-Chancellor at 21 years old. As the country's most powerful family, the influence of the Fardelys spread until their name was known throughout Gaïa.

Joshua Fardelys (Freelance Lv. 9, ♂) is now 29, a handsome man who makes all the ladies of the nation swoon. Ever since he became Arch-Chancellor eight years ago, Gabriel has been ruled with true genius, greatly increasing the power of the nation and his own fortune. Although he knows that everything cannot be done legally, he prefers to play as fair as possible (especially if his opponents do), because he finds it more of a challenge that way. But above all he likes to win, and knows that there are times at which a victory is worth more than an honorable defeat. Right now he has many open fronts, both political and economic, and while he tries to secretly undermine the Empire and the Azur Alliance, he plans to take control of the influence that Phaion has in the east. Sharp as he is, only the dark machinations of his sister, whom he never suspects anything of, seem to escape him.

Alystaire Fardelys (Summoner Lv. 11, ♀) just turned 28 and her attractiveness has done nothing but flourish. Unlike her brother, she prefers to act from the shadows, without disclosing her actions and schemes. Everything that Alystaire does is only to elevate Joshua, completely destroying whatever or whoever threatens or impedes him. Her ultimate dream is to see him spread his influence throughout the entire world, as she thinks he deserves.

While Joshua loves and appreciates Alystaire, undoubtedly the most important person in his life, the feelings she has towards him are completely different. Alystaire loves him as a man and wants to be seen as something more than a sister. Although she knows that this is completely impossible, it doesn't matter to her as long as she can stay by his side and make Joshua happy. For this reason she is incapable of be close anybody else or loving another man, completely devoting herself to Joshua's existence. She cannot bear to see any other woman near him and, in the event that one gets too close, she addresses the issue in the most appropriate way. In fact, the death of his former fiancé was a well-orchestrated plan by Alystaire.

The young woman has an immense personal power, being able to command supernatural forces and creatures like no one else. Her fortune allows her access to a wide collection of banned books and dangerous artifacts, and controlling a large network of agents and influences. She keeps in contact with several secret organizations, like Black Sun, Samael, the Order of Yehudah, The Magus Order and Selene (Alba Zimmerman [Shadow Lv. 7, ♀], her personal bodyguard, is one of the most capable agents in this society of female assassins), and does not hesitate to use them whenever necessary to achieve her objectives. Like her brother, she has secretly maintained many fronts, and is trying to unleash ancient supernatural powers in the principalities that may pose a problem for Joshua.

Common Characters of Gabriel

Here a series of common characters of Gabriel are shown. The following statistics have been composed without taking Creation Points into account.

Order of Justine

Class: Acrobatic **Warrior**; Level 3
Initiative 85/80; **LP** 125; **AT** None; **Attack** 125; **Dodge** 120; **Weapon** Rapier/ Parrying Dagger **Damage** 45/35
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 8 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 6 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 6
Abilities: Acrobatics 55, Athleticism 45, Ride 25, Swim 15, Jump 45, Climb 10, Style 75, Notice 25, Search 15, Dance 25, Slight of Hand 80.
Special: Duel Module
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 45, PsR 40.

Diva

Class: Freelance; **Level** 2
Initiative 60; **LP** 80; **AT** None; **Attack** 20; **Dodge** 30; **Weapon** None **Damage** 10
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 5 **STR:** 5 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 8 **WIL:** 6 **POW:** 6
Abilities: Ride 25, Swim 25, Style 75, Persuasion 90, Lock Picking 25, Disguise 25, Hide 20, Stealth 20, Notice 65, Search 25, History 50, Memorize 50.
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 40, PsR 40.

Gabrielense Guard

Class: Acrobatic **Warrior**; Level 1
Initiative 60/40; **LP** 95; **AT** None; **Attack** 60; **Dodge** 60; **Weapon** Long Sword/Crossbow; **Damage** 55/50
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 6 **STR:** 6 **PER:** 5 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 6 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Acrobatics 30, Jump 20, Ride 35, Climb 30, Style 40, Notice 30, Search 20, Slight of Hand 20, History 20.
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 35, PsR 30.

Nobleman (High Lineage)

Class: Freelance; **Level** 4
Initiative 75/70/55; **LP** 105; **AT** None; **Attack** 110; **Dodge** 105; **Weapon** Rapier/Parrying Dagger/Pistol; **Damage** 45/35/50
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 8 **CON:** 6 **STR:** 6 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 6 **WIL:** 6 **POW:** 7
Abilities: Acrobatics 25, Ride 65, Swim 20, Style 25, Intimidate 15, Leadership 15, Persuasion 65, Notice 25, Search 15, Science 15, History 75, Appraisal 75, Dance 65, Slight of Hand 20.
Resistance: PhR 50, DR 50, VR 50, MR 50, PsR 50.

Bourgeois Teacher

Class: Freelance; **Level** 3
Initiative 70/65/50; **LP** 100; **AT** None; **Attack** 80; **Dodge** 85; **Weapon** Rapier/Parrying Dagger/Pistol; **Damage** 45/35/50
AGI: 8 **DEX:** 7 **CON**: 6 **STR:** 6 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 6 **WIL:** 7 **POW:** 6
Abilities: Acrobatics 30, Ride 20, Swim 20, Style 15, Intimidate 15, Leadership 15, Persuasion 65, Notice 25, Search 15, Science 55, Memorize 55, Appraisal 80, Dance 70.
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 45, PsR 45.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Middle-Class /Indigent: Athleticism +10, Acrobatics +10, Ride +10, Swim +10, Persuasion +10, Notice +10, History (local) +10, Feats of Strength +10.

Bourgeois: Ride +10, Style +10, Persuasion +20, Appraisal +10, History +10, Dance +15, Music or Art +5.

Nobility /High nobility: Ride +10, Style +20, Leadership +10, Persuasion +10, History +10, Dance +10, Music or Art +5.

Table 17: Gabriel

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-25	Indigent	Clothes, leftover food for a couple of days, some personal objects gathered off the street. 2 CC.
26-65	Middle-Class	A couple of changes of clothes, food for a couple of days, a backpack with some personal items, a weapon, a mount or complete travel equipment. 1 GC.
66-90	Bourgeois	Many changes of clothes, food for a week, a horse, a weapon, a chest with some personal items, a jewel or a work of art. 30 CG.
91-100	Nobility	Many changes of clothes, good food for a week, a horse, a weapon, a chest full of personal items that can be imported from the furthest corners of Gaïa, a small jewel collection or works of art. 170 GC.
Priv.	*High Nobility*	*Designer clothes of high quality from which you can probably never improve, exquisite food in abundance for more than a week, a good weapon beautifully decorated, a matchlock pistol with ammunition (powder and bullets) for four or five shots, several horses (some of them purebreds), a good jewel collection and works of art. 1,000 GC.*

PHAION EIEN SEIMON

Capital: Markushias.
Population: 4,700,000+
Ethnic Groups: Asher (50%), Ryuan (40%), Aion (9%).
Government: Oligarchy (Corporate Government).
Languages: Latin, Yamato, Ogashima.
Religion: Christianity, Shukyokami.
Technology: 4.
Denomym: Phaiano.
Flag: A tower located between the two columns of The Eastern Gate.
Masculine Names: Akira, Brushes, Calvin, Daisuke, Devereux, Henry, Hugh, Isamu, Kazuki, Louis, Makoto, Martin, Paul, Ryo, Troy, Yoshiro.
Feminine Names: Ai, Adela, Akemi, Brittany, Fran, Francene, Frannie, Haruko, Hitomi, Smooth, Lorraine, Midori, Nancy, Ran, Sakura, Suzume, Yuri.
Last names: Ada, Agnew, Asuhara, Dangerfield, Douay, Eguchi, Everard, Fujimoto, Goodrich, Hisikawa, Herman, Koizumi, Koyama, Kurogane, Rowena, Sully, Ueda, Worth, Yoshida.

Phaion Eien Seimon, or The Eternal Gates of Phaion, is a unique land because of the strange mix of western and eastern culture that occurs there. Like Gabriel, it is a very powerful nation with remarkable production and controls trade with the eastern islands and parts of The Inner Sea.

Perhaps Phaion's land mass isn't as large as that of neighboring countries, but instead has an enormous variety of landscapes. Plateaus, mountain ranges, dense forests and deep lakes are just some of the elements seen in its principality. It has a warm climate, punctuated by regular rains and some small-scale hurricanes. It also has abundant flora and fauna, although several are ferocious and make some of the roads unsafe.

The Merchant's Association Of Eien

Considered the world's largest trading company, The Merchant's Association of Eien has governed Phaion since year 622 when Prince Suoh William II created it. Although it's a private company, its goal is to increase the profits of the country and ensure the welfare of its people. Therefore, the association acts in a manner similar to the trade councils of other nations, like the one in Gabriel or in Kanon, except for the fact that anyone with any financial pull can buy stake in the company and participate in the country's government. Typically, all the companies with minimum shareholding have the right to vote. The greater the economic participation, the greater the weight of the vote. The top 15 with the greatest control in the company are called The Meisters of The Association, and in practice are the ones who run the country. Most powerful of them are:

Akio Takeshi (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 5, ♂)
High representative of the Takeshi Family in Phaion, Akio is the soul of The Merchant's Association and many see him as their president. Of advanced age, this man is as honorable as intelligent, and is considered the mastermind behind the principality's most brilliant decisions.

Archduke Aldan William III (Freelance Lv. 4, ♂)
Descendant of Suoh William II, founder of the association, Aldan is a powerful and influential man who controls the domestic trade routes. He is intimate friend of Akio Takeshi, and together they form the driving force behind The Meisters. Aldan is the main instigator of Phaion independence, and would do anything to keep his nation away from the Empire.

Osric Himura (Freelance Lv. 3, ♂)
Undoubtedly the most radical of all Meisters, Osric feels a staunch hatred towards Dwänholf since losing his wife in an attack orchestrated by The Pirate Kings. If it were up to him, he would do anything to start a war against the north nation and crush it forever. Although he does not know it, his beloved Rin is still alive, having been kidnapped and sold into slavery in Kushistan.

Felicia Steiner (Mentalista Nv 5, ♀)
Daughter of Richard Steiner, one of the two greatest Black Sun members, young Felicia represents the interests of the organization in Phaion. Woman of great talent and a devotee of work well done, she brutally loathes the necromantic experiments that Black Sun is carrying out, and makes sure that they do not encroach upon her territory. Lately she has suffered several assassination attempts that have forced her to increase their personal security. The assassins are agents sent by Adrien Delacroix, knowing that if Felicia died, someone more compatible with his ideas could replace her.

Cardinal Vicente Aparicio (Freelance Lv. 3, ♂)
Representative of The Church in the principality, the Cardinal Vicente is a bulky good-hearted man. Known for his progressive ideas, which have caused problems for him on more than one occasion, he is responsible for school funding, hospital funds and helping those in need. It is greatly appreciated by the people, who more than once have clamored for his beatification.

The ranching and agriculture on the mainland ensure the staples of the principality, but the true source of income lies in manufacturing and trade. Its huge commercial fishing gives it great economic power, with which it has managed to become the main importer of goods from Lannet and Shivat to the Old Continent. Moreover, during last the three decades it has managed to retain a significant market share of The Inner Sea, having snatched it from Gabriel, its main competitor.

Phaion is the only nation in the world ruled by a private corporation, the renowned Merchant's Association of Eien. Centuries ago, the Prince of Phaion formed the company with the sole intention of leading the nation as if it was a great corporation, achieving considerable success. Many feel that this system can be dangerous because of the ease of corruption, but for as long as it's been running, the performance of The Merchant's Association has always been impeccable.

Although Phaion's army isn't very large, its members undergo intensive training, and what they lack in number they make up for in combat prowess. The nation also has several special operation groups, whose actions have provided a great appreciation for the entire Coast of Commerce.

Like Gabriel, the principality of Phaion became independent from the Empire soon after the death of Emperor Elias, and its main goal is to maintain complete independence from Abel. It is also in a moment of extreme tension with Dwänholf, its northerly neighbor, which for years has been a thorn in The Merchant's Association for its pirate raids. Now, without the Empire's control, many voices are raised calling an end to their old antagonist once and for all, taking advantage of the chaotic state in which is it.

Culture and Society

Phaion's society is truly unique; it combines western customs with ancestral traditions of Lannet and Shivat. The result is an unusual mixture of styles giving the principality a personality different from anywhere else in the world. Although most of the population is still western, a high percentage of Phaionenses are eastern. Fortunately, despite this duality, there is no racial tension in the nation of any kind; people have actually already adjusted to the ethnic groups. The mixed marriages, increasingly frequent, have diluted these differences even further.

One thing that draws considerable attention is the open-mindedness of its people. The society is divided into ordinary citizens and the bourgeoisie that, in most cases, is comparable to the nobility. However, social differences do not reach the excessive levels of Lannet or the neighboring Gabriel, but rather it's a mere class organization that seeks to remember which place corresponds to each one. Women are not subordinate to men in society, although it is true that they tend to take less active positions. Phaionenses have also inherited the high sense of honor of the ancient samurai caste; a fundamental element in their lives, but they do not let this completely govern them. People often speak both Latin and Yamato, but more commonly speak Ogashima in their daily lives, an unofficial slang that draws on elements from both languages.

Phaion is a flourishing nation with a booming economy at the moment, so it's very easy to find work and there are very few poor indigent people. There are a large number of both farmers and fishermen (in fact, the country has the largest fishing fleet in the world), and trade with other principalities is what occupies most of its time. Phaion maintains a strong bond with the Takashi Clan of Lannet; and even today, a considerable number of people are still officially considered members of the clan and often deal with their brethren across the sea. This allows them to hold a unique position of favor with Lannet, which greatly benefits both countries.

The population is scattered; although most gather in large cities, especially in the capital, there are a large number of people living in small towns and fishing ports.

The Phaionenses harbor a bitter hatred towards Dwänholf, whom they despise for their piracy. Typically, they hire many mercenaries as escorts to guard their ships, a very respected and valuable job. Neither do they have too much appreciation for Gabrielense nobility, with whom they compete commercially, considering them ostentatious and pretentious.

Regarding the Supernatural

Of easterly origin, much of the people in Phaion believe in the existence of supernatural forces, though their lack of contact with such power makes them consider it merely legend. Furthermore, the influence of the doctrines of the Empire and its proximity to Moth and the twisted tales that originate there, have considerably darkened the opinion of its people.

The only unusual skills that they show permissibility towards are the Ki Dominions, as many descendants of samurai families have grown up listening to the legends of the great masters of the past. Therefore, using combat techniques or certain special disciplines can be tolerated, provided they appear the result of training rather than "magical" forces. That is, it would not be a welcomed sight to see anybody fly, but anyone who could slice the air and attack his adversaries at a distance would arouse more admiration than fear.

The Inquisition has little presence in Phaion, but is watching for any strange situation that falls within its jurisdiction.

The Lottery and Gambling

One of the biggest hobbies of the Phaionenses is gambling. For that reason, its cities are home to enormous casinos, betting rooms and stadiums for Eden tournaments. The principality is also known for the lottery, because although it's not the only nation of the world that has one (Abel or Togarini also has it), in no other place in Gaïa are the payouts so high. Weekly prizes usually climb around 10,000 gold crowns, and sometimes go even higher.

The Merchant's Association sponsors Phaion's lottery; the participants choose a combination of 12 numbers between 1 and 99, receiving ticket and entering their choice in a ledger. The dispenser, who delivers books to the ones responsible in The Association to make sure that everything goes smoothly, signs both documents. Prizes worth more than 500 gold crowns are always collected in the capital, Markushias.

The tickets in Phaion are 10 silver crowns each, and drawings are held weekly.

The History of Phaion Eien Seimon

Explaining Phaion's history is to speak of ancestral conflicts with the island of Varja. Circa 1,200 years before The Messiah, the empire of Kuon Teikoku, that had until then held relations with The Old Continent, attacked city-states of the east coast. They called their recent acquisition Eien Seimon, or Eternal Gates, considering it an entrance to the west. Amaterasu's most powerful armies soon met with strong opposition from a confederation of cities that not yet had been subjugated led by a quasi-divine being called Markushias. Despite that victory was within reach of Amaterasu, a sudden military coup on the islands forced The Eternal Emperor to retire most of his soldiers. Those who stayed back, a few thousand men tasked to maintain the conquered territories, were unable to resist.

After his victory, Markushias organized some of the coastal cities forming the Confederation of Phaion, assembled for no other reason than to create a common front against possible threats. Phaion repeatedly proved its usefulness by repelling attacks from several nomadic tribes and destroying great dragons. 400 years later, when the Empire of Lannet tried to reclaim the land that Amaterasu won in the past, the Confederation succeeded in halting the invasion. In fact, the armies of Varja only managed to take a city, although they were able preserve it for centuries to come.

Following the demise of Markushias the unit in Phaion cracked, beginning a series of useless internal conflicts that only weakened the cities' power. The arrival of The Messiah stopped this fratricidal fight and Archduke Joachim Thurston, lord of one of the most important cities of the area, became an Apostle. For a brief time, the territories of Phaion and Gabriel collectively formed the 9th Holy Kingdom, achieving an absolute control of the economy of The Inner Sea. When The War of God erupted, the western cities that belonged to Gabriel surrendered to the armies of Judas, whereas Phaion's land was completely destroyed by the power of Rah's armies.



Illustrated by Salvador Espin

Levia Mei

Around the year 236, even before Gabriel joined the Imperial Crown, Zhorne Giovanni journeyed to the territory and claimed it for Abel as an independent principality. The annexation was entirely peaceful, as the survivors had heard of Giovanni and the stability that the Empire brought with it. Thus began a short period of reconstruction that ended just two years later, when Lannet organized a sudden attack to the principality, crushing its defenses. The troops of the Empire were embroiled in other conflicts at that time, so were unable to respond to the aggression, and for nearly two decades Phaion was a part of Lannet. After three attempts to recapture the principality, Abel reunited the central bulk of their armies in the year 258 and, led by Zhorne himself, they re-liberated Phaion.

Nevertheless, during the two decades that the nation was under the control of Lannet, large numbers of eastern immigrants from the Takashi Clan had already moved from Varja to Eien Seimon to begin their lives there. Now, unable to return, all these people were forced to stay as minorities in Phaion. During the early years the relationship between the two communities was very rigid, but after having to face all kinds of problems together to continue on with their lives, they began to gradually unite. The event that finally sealed the integration happened in the year 332, when a sudden attack of the pirate kings was on the verge of destroying the great coastal capitals. Had it not been for the invaluable help of the eastern immigrants, the entire principality may have been reduced to ashes. After this act, the official name of the principality would change to Phaion Eien Seimon, in representing the unit that would be obtained thereafter.

The newly consolidated nation struggled to rebuild using its natural resources to found new cities and towns. Over time, it was obvious that the principality had the potential to become a major economic power, especially if it took advantage of its eastern contacts on the islands to be the main importer and exporter of the eastern seas. In 622, the governing prince Suoh William II made one of the most surprising decisions of his age when founding The Merchant's Association of Eien, a private company to which he ceded the control of Phaion. Despite the initial suspicion that this act aroused in many people, The Association proved its worth, greatly increasing the power and splendor of the principality.

The modern history of the nation passes through a recent conflict against Dwänholf. Accusing the neighboring principality's government of promoting piracy for years and coming to ravage its coasts, the High Imperial Senate accepted a war against the northern territories. The Association used the conflict to send several of its special operations groups to capture the Pirate Kings, striking a hard blow to its traditional enemies. Now, after the fracture of the Empire, Phaion has used the opportunity to secede from Abel and their leaders have set their main objective to become the most powerful nation on The Coast of Commerce, and thus ensure their complete independence in the coming years.

Relevant Geographical Features

The principality of Phaion has enormous variety; it's possible to find all kinds of natural formations. Most of its frontiers border The Oriental Sea or the principality of Moth, while to the west the Grevar River separates the nation from Gabriel.

Akasta Lake: The Akasta Lake is situated in the north of the principality, surrounded by the lower Somer Plateau and the Plains of Roh. It is extremely chaotic, as its main body is separated into dozens of tributaries that are in turn a large number of smaller lakes. Several fishing villages surround Akasta, taking advantage of their beautiful view to receive many visitors. In the south, a large recreational complex is dedicated to organize games and boat trips. The lake has a lot of little islands full of dense woods, which are populated by dangerous wild animals. One of these islands hides a considerably powerful magic node, which has gone centuries without use.

The East Coast: Surely the richest area of the principality, the eastern coast of Phaion is characterized by its large fishing ground and good weather. Most of the largest port cities are located here, which occasionally suffer terrible attacks from pirates and privateers.

Akquo Marsh: Located near the border of Moth, people considered it an extremely dangerous place, not as much for the animals that inhabit it but more for the large areas of quicksand scattered across its surface. Tucked away in one of its darkest corners is a small village of Grendels, who have spent centuries in seclusion fulfilling the mission entrusted to them by their ancestors long ago; protecting one of the great tecnomagical weapons of Judas that fell into the marsh and ended partially submerged.

The Pitcher Peninsula: Southern Phaion is perhaps its most prosperous area, the Peninsula of Keitan, better known as The Pitcher Peninsula. Keitan is surrounded by a small mountain range that severely impedes access to the sea, but they have fertile central highlands comparable only to The Eternal Prairie of Abel. It is a rich agricultural land, where there are many large estates and small woods.

Matsu Forest: Located near the sea, Matsu (or Forest of the Pines) is a forest which provides wood and hunt to Markushias. Many believe that several of the Kami that traveled with the armies of Amaterasu thousands of years ago to take the continent, now rest here. While nothing seems to confirm this ancient legend, it holds truth, and both Kitsunes and smaller spirits of the forest protect small clearings full of stones that serve as resting places to the Kami who were unable to reach the Ten Gati. The guardians are concerned about how deforestation is drawing closer to their sacred areas and fear that if it continues, could even disturb the slumber of their ancient lords.

The Plains of Roh: The mid-eastern zone of the principality is composed of the immense Plains of Roh; large ponds flood the plains, ideal for rice cultivation. Some farmers say they have seen Kappas or Kelpies in several ponds, dragging people into the water's depths to drown. The attacks from ferocious Rakshas, a species of monstrous black-eyed hounds, are also frequent. These creatures are supernaturally altered animals created by Judas with the intention to use them as war beasts in the War of God. Apparently, some of them were abandoned on the plains and managed to survive all this time. They were thought to be extinct, but less than a decade ago they have reappeared, becoming a nightmare for local farms.

Places of Interest

Phaion Eien Seimon is full of the most amazing places, from towns of various sizes to buildings and ruins of the past.

The Eastern Gate

(Building, Unpopulated)

The Eastern Gate is one of the oldest buildings in the principality. It originates almost 2,000 years ago, at the time when the Eternal Emperor's troops invaded the coast. Supposedly, the gate was built by two of the most powerful Kami, who were ordered by Amaterasu himself to create a junction between the islands of the east and the mainland. The site was formed with the intention of being a supernatural portal connecting to the Western Gate of Lannet, which it faces.

Today, they form two extraordinary columns of over 300 feet high, joined at the top by a large slab of metal chains and dozens of seals. It doesn't seem to have a magical function, but is a popular place for many tourists. There is an old legend among lovers stating that if a couple declares their love under the arch of the gate, they will undoubtedly be reunited someday.



The Eastern Gate

Illustrated by Luis NCT

Markushias

(Metropolis, Population 540,000+)

Although sometimes the huge port of Hong Kua eclipses its reputation, Markushias is the largest city in Phaion in addition to its capital. Located in the middle of the Peninsula of Keitan, the splendid metropolis is surrounded by prosperous farmland that provides it a booming economy. Not only is it the hub of the commerce in the principality, benefiting from its proximity to the city of free trade Deimos, but also manufactures all types of products moving to Hong Kua for subsequent sale to the eastern islands.

For the people unaccustomed to Phaion's society, visiting Markushias is a fascinating spectacle. The city is a perfect symbiosis between western and eastern architecture, where pagodas and mansions mix with houses decorated with evocative gardens and artificial ponds. The wood is the material of choice for the large majority of homes, but there are a great variety of stone houses as well. The most beautiful is the Almond Tree Avenue, a long tree-lined street that tries to emulate the Passage of the Eternity from distant Tsukikage. In summer, when the almond trees bloom and shed their petals, it is a truly moving sight. In addition to large mansions the Palace of Sukey, the headquarters of The Merchant's Association of Eien where the Meisters congregate, is also in Markushias. However, these all pale in comparison to the majesty to the huge Eden Stadium in the city, the greatest and most important one in Gaïa, only behind the one in Archangel.

Officially, the lord of the metropolis is Archduke Aldan William III, who rules advised by a council of merchants.

Known only by those that move in mystical circles, Markushias has the largest establishment of supernatural objects of Black Sun: The Roxxon Antique Shop.

The Eighth Guild

The Eighth Guild is just a large organization of oriental thieves who collect tithes from merchants to respect their business. A thief who steals something from a shop protected by the Guild and then tries to sell it later, will receive a beating and will be thrown into an alley (if lucky enough to tell the tale). For centuries, the guild leader has been a mysterious figure called Kirie. All kinds of legends circulate about him, each one more disturbing than the last. Many poor people believe he is an immortal being that knows all Phaion's secrets. The reputation of this enigmatic man is so notorious that the mere mention of his name makes the rich local merchants tremble. However, Kirie doesn't actually exist, since he is only a character invented by members of The Eighth Guild, who feed his legend with gossip and rumors. Occasionally, some loudmouth who doubts his existence will disappear without a trace, only reinforcing Kirie's reputation.

Mifune

(City, Population 22,000+)

Mifune's fame is worldwide, and many travelers make long journeys to visit this unusual place. The reason is that the whole city is entirely devoted to gambling; practically every one of its streets has a game room or access to one of the big casinos. It also has one of the largest racing enclosures in Gaïa, where competitions are held for the best thoroughbreds in the world.

Although the city boasts luxury and opulence to attract players, it exacts a terrible toll on the number of people indebted to the casinos who are forced to work there for years just to break even.

Hong Kua

(Metropolis, Population 330,000+)

Not many cities in the world are as well known as Hong Kua, the legendary port that serves as a link to the eastern islands. This formidable emporium is one of the largest markets in Gaïa and some even dare to compare it to a city of free trade controlled by the government of a principality. If somebody cannot find what he is looking for in Hong Kua, it may not exist at all.

The origin of the city dates prior to the War of God, but was completely remodeled in year 238 by order of the Shogun of Lannet when their armies took the principality. Since then, Hong Kua has survived all kinds of disasters, from monumental fires to Pirate King raids. The city soon became well known in Shivat for the flow of goods arriving from the continent and, amazed by their stories, many Shivatenses moved there, forming a huge community within it.

Visually, Hong Kua is a hodgepodge of Lannetense and Shivatense styles, with buildings erected prior to the Empire itself. It is separated into four broad areas known as The Districts. These are The Sheng District, mainly populated by the Shivatenses, The Haruhi (or Central) District, The District of Lights and The Dockyards. The local custom is to decorate everything with flags, and hundreds of them wave over most of their walls and buildings, giving an appearance of continuous celebration. The city exhibits high towers along the coastline, serving both as lights and lookouts.

Although most roads are unpaved, The Merchant's Association has hired many ex-imperial engineers to build a sewer system. Until now, the construction is in a very advanced stage in the richer areas, but there were complications after the workers found remains of what seem to be ancient ruins beneath the foundations of the city. For now, some strange events have occurred, and a couple of workers have even disappeared under mysterious circumstances. Samael members on the city don't know what's happening, but there's definitely something in the environment that's making them nervous. Hitomi Yamaoka (Shadow Lv. 6, ♀ Daimah), the Archon of Hong Kua, plans to organize a group to investigate what can be done.

Meister Akio Takeshi, who constantly visits Markushias to preside over the most important decisions of The Merchant's Association, rules the city.

Zabil Villa

(Town, Population 4,500+)

Despite being nothing more than a prosperous town of great size, Zabil is known in the principality for the peculiar customs of its inhabitants, who are fascinated by participating in all sorts of strange tournaments. The villa has dozens of unusual traditions that drive its people to performing any outlandish test, be it for festivities or for their own personal amusement. Moreover, a secret drawing is held annually that anyone, even foreigners just passing through, may win without even knowing it. The chosen person becomes "Mayor for a Day", and from early morning until dawn of the next day, he is the absolute lord of Zabil, able to issue any order to its people that doesn't break the law.

Zabil is located along a major vein of mineral water that has a strange property: whoever drinks it increases their luck for a few days. Naturally, it is only a myth that nobody gives much credit, but the water's powers are real. Interestingly, this is the origin of why the strange bets of Zabil's citizens, regardless of their eccentric challenges, never usually ends with severely wounded people.

Despite being small, Zabil has one of the best Eden teams in the world, and three of their players make up Phaion's national team.

Castle Takeda

(Fortress, Popular 18,000+)

Takeda is largest city-fortress belonging to the Fourth Lord of War. This great stronghold is built in oriental style, but its walls and the distribution of its buildings were designed adopting strange supernatural patterns. As a result, the fortress has strong magical protections and is impervious to magical penetration and scrying. Takeda is made up of eight large buildings that surround the central body, all decorated in blue and covered in gold engravings.

Takeda's dwellers are soldiers in the service of The Shadow of The Emperor, where also reside the best elite forces of the Fourth Lord of War: The Voidlords. Here they train daily, welcoming teenagers who wish to join their ranks. Unlike the other emplacements of The Shadow, its inhabitants do not live in seclusion; during the last century they have worked several times for The Merchant's Association of Eien and get many visitors in Takeda. At present, there is great mistrust of the fortress, because after the independence of Phaion, few relish the idea of having a military force of such a size in the heart of the principality.

The lord of the fortress is the Arbiter Eligor (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 8, ♂), the only Arbiter who is under the banner of The Shadow of The Emperor. Eligor is quite mysterious, tending to disappear for long periods of time without notice (to the despair of his subordinates). Some think that he has a secret identity that uses to operate in the principality unrecognized.

Port Meidel

(City, Population 12,000+)

Meidel is the second largest port in Phaion, although in comparison with Hong Kua, it is merely a small shadow. About five years ago, the city was attacked by the joint effort of three Pirate Kings. Almost half of Meidel was razed, and many died or were taken prisoner by pirates. In response to these actions, Phaion declared war on the principality of Dwänholf. Meidel is in now in the process of reconstruction, which is implemented by Meister Osric Himura.

The Akaryu Company

Akaryu is one of the most highly regarded companies of Phaion mercenaries. Founded in year 911 by Hoshitaka Meizo, a ronin of Lannet that had worked with a few caravans, it quickly gained a great reputation for the skill of its members. This was due to the extreme training that Meizo subjected his companions to, to whom he taught the secrets of Ki.

As the years passed, Akaryu began to diverge into five battalions commanded by the more gifted disciples of Meizo, and many Lannet ronins crossed the sea with the intention of joining them and bringing meaning to their existence. Currently, the company enjoys an enviable status in the principality, exceeding 500 members. They've got one barracks in every city of Phaion, easily identified by its red serpent-dragon emblem. They usually work for The Merchant's Association of Eien, but may be hired as prestigious mercenaries for whoever can afford their rates. The company has a strict code of honor that forbids them to kill a helpless enemy, women or small children, like abandoning a mission in which they have undertaken.

Presently, not every member knows Ki disciplines, but the high-ranking ones know diverse techniques that they call The Way of Meizo.



The cloudy streets of Eldiah

Eldiah
(Ghost Town, Unpopulated)

Eldiah was a small town in a deep valley near The Somer Plateau. Unlike other cities in Phaion, it is less influenced by eastern architecture, and most homes have a more traditional look. 11 years ago, a group of five powerful Summoners gathered in Eldiah with the intention of returning the world to one of The Forgotten Gods. Each held an important role in the community, and used their influence to prepare the city as the largest summoning circle ever created. But the things didn't go exactly as they expected and, at a crucial moment in the ritual, their plans were thwarted when somebody stole one of the key elements in the ceremony, a talisman that broke into four pieces. Everything was engulfed in darkness and the entire population disappeared instantly. However, something dark and perverse was left behind; as if somehow, the whole city had come alive and oozed evil.

The city is empty now, lost in a perpetual fog that never ceases. The transition between the real world and The Wake is very weak, and people who enter in Eldiah move between the different realities with extreme ease, even though they are often unaware that they do. There are shadows and monstrosities of all kinds that silently crawl in the alleys between the buildings. Only the five wizards who initiated the ritual have kept their minds, trapped inside, while hiding themselves from the constant marauders. They all hope that the pieces that were stolen from them get returned so they can complete what they started; they know that sooner or later the dark city will bring it back somehow.

Other Settlements: *Busselton, Borris, Moriya.*

Adventures

A nation like Phaion, known for its continuous need of mercenaries, can certainly put the characters into all sorts of problems or work. To this we must add the many supernatural mysteries that plague the principality; perhaps they unwittingly disturb some of the slumbering Kami of the Matsu Forest, or even have the misfortune of wandering through the dark Eldiah.

Liberation: Hans Crandelt (Warrior Lv. 5, ♂) is one of the Pirate Kings who was captured by the agents of Phaion in the war against Dwänholf five years ago. Since then he has been shut up in the maximum-security prison of Markushias, but it has not yet been executed because of a rumor that claims that during his travels, he encountered a great treasure. This attracted the interest of The Merchant's Association, who intend to take the money. Seren Lockley (Assassin Lv. 5, ♀), the girlfriend of Hans, is looking for a group of mercenaries to help her rescue him because she feels like her beloved's time is ending. Seren says that she cannot count on her own crew, because they are well-known outlaws. She swears that her supporters will get a substantial part of the treasure as compensation. And if the breakout itself wasn't problematic enough, the story is further complicated because Seren is being possessed by an ancient spirit who is searching for the coveted treasure for a very different reason: among the objects that the Pirate King discovered is an artifact capable of returning his physical body.

Illustrated by Luis NCT

A Lucky Coward: Goro Walter (Thief Lv. 2, ♂), a pickpocket of Hong Kua with many enemies, has had the luckiest day of his life a few hours ago when he won the grand prize in the lottery. However, what would normally be immensely joyful to him is merely a cluster of problems. Apparently, anyone who knows him knows that he has won the prize because he always plays with the same numbers. Being a man who has won many enemies for his lack of discretion, it stands to reason that few people want to see him rich.

So while the characters stroll down one of the narrow streets of Hong Kua, they discover a group of thugs beating him to death. If they decide to help him for some reason, Goro will see his salvation in his rescuers and, after explaining the situation to them, he will make an interesting proposal: if they protect to him until he arrives at the capital, he will give them half of the grand prize. But Goro hasn't told them everything. The real reason he is so terrified is not only because of his enemies in the port city. The Eighth Guild of Markushias swore to kill him years ago, and the poor thief fears that when he gets to the capital, his problems will only multiply.

A Dangerous Wedding: Nekane Watanabe (Summoner Lv. 2, ♀), daughter of a rich family in Phaion that possesses small shipyards, has spent several years studying at the universities of Ilmora where The Magus Order recruited her. After spending a long time away, she has finally returned home to Phaion, where her parents have prepared an unexpected surprise. When the girl left the principality she had a fiancè and, during her absence, Nekane's family have made every preparation for the young people to marry. The desire of her parents is to see their daughter fulfill her vows that were made before she left, and inherits the family business. The problem is that Nekane has no intention to marry. Ever since she went away to study to Ilmora many things have happened to her, and one of them is that she has fallen in love... but with a companion of the Order. She planned to return home only to tell her parents that she's pregnant (just so they know) and to leave again, because she wants to return to Ilmora and secretly continue with her supernatural studies. The trouble is that after seeing the intention of her parents and all the preparations they have organized, she doesn't dare tell them now, especially after they confess to her that the family shipyards are in ruin and that they trust in her and her marriage (her former fiancè is very rich) to restore the family finances. Now she doesn't know what to do, because she doesn't want to get married, but also doesn't want to be responsible for ruining her family.

For this reason, she has drawn up an ingenious plan: she will marry her former fiancé and, at moment she says "I do," a group of "kidnappers" hired by her will burst into the ceremony and take her out of there (by any means, without harming the guards). As a final touch, she will make sure that some supernatural monster scares the guests, so that no one will follow them out.

The characters could be the fake kidnappers, either through a chance encounter or because they have contacts with The Magus Order and want to help out a member. Another interesting possibility could be just the opposite; that they were friends of the groom or mercenaries hired to retrieve Nekane, as her fiancé's feelings are genuine.

Common Characters of Phaion

Here a series of common characters of Phaion are shown. The following statistics have been composed without taking Creation Points into account.



Illustrated by Sergio Melero

Kentaro, captain of The Akaryu Company

Bourgeois

Class: Freelance; **Level** 1
Initiative 45; **LP** 75; **AT** None; **Attack** 20; **Dodge** 30; **Weapon** Dagger **Damage** 30
AGI: 5 **DEX:** 5 **CON:** 5 **STR:** 5 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 7 **WIL:** 6 **POW:** 7
Abilities: Ride 20, Swim 10, Style 35, Intimidate 15, Persuasion 75, Notice 55, Search 25, Science 35, Appraisal 70.
Resistance: PhR 30, DR 30, VR 30, MR 35, PsR 35.

Akaryu Captain

Class: Technician; **Level** 3
Initiative 70/50; **LP** 110; **AT** Leather; **Attack** 115; **Dodge** 115; **Weapon** Katana **Damage** 70
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 8 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 7 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 8 **POW:** 6
Abilities: Acrobatics 15, Athleticism 15, Ride 15, Swim 15, Jump 15, Climb 15, Style 30, Intimidate 30, Leadership 15, Notice 25, Search 15, Composure 20, Feats of Strength 15, Resist Pain 30.
Accumulations: Agi 2, Dex 2, Con 1, Str 1, Wil 2, Pow 1.
Ki: Agi 22, Dex 28, Con 7, Pow 6, Wil 23. MK: 150
Special: Use of Ki, Ki Control, 1 or 2 techniques on The Way of Meizo Module.
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 45, PsR 50.

A Merchant Association Guard

Class: Acrobatic **Warrior**; Level 1
Initiative 65/45; **LP** 105; **AT** Leather; **Attack** 75; **Dodge** 75; **Weapon** Katana/Crossbow; **Damage** 60/50
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 8 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 7 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 5 **WIL: 5 POW**: 5
Abilities: Acrobatics 25, Athleticism 35, Ride 15, Swim 20, Jump 25, Climb 15, Style 20, Intimidate 10, Leadership 20, Notice 25, Search 15.
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 30, PsR 30.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Middle-Class/Low-Class: Athleticism +10, Ride +10, Swim +10, Persuasion +15, Notice +10, History (local) +10, Navigation +10, Feats of Strength +5

Bourgeois/Nobility: Ride +10, Style +10, Leadership +10, Persuasion +15, History (local) +10, Appraisal +10, Dance +10, Music/Art +5

Table 18: Phaion Eien Seimon

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-15	Low Class	The clothes worn, food for a couple of days, some personal possessions of little value. 4 CC.
16-60	Middle-Class	A couple of changes of clothes, food for a week, a weapon, a backpack with some personal items. 80 SC.
61-85	Bourgeois	Several changes of clothes, food for over a week, a weapon, a horse, complete personal equipment that can include material of the eastern islands or The Inner Sea. 60 GC.
86-100	Nobility	Several changes of clothes, good food for over a week, a couple of weapons, a small sailboat or a wagon drawn by two horses, fairly complete personal equipment including some rare or valuable imported items. 60 GC.

THE EPISCOPAL STATES

The powerful theocracy governing Argos and The Dominion has earned them the name of The Episcopal States. Both principalities are tightly bound to The Church, which exercises an almost absolute control over them. Its people are deeply religious, for whom faith and devotion are their cornerstones. Geographically they are located in the southeast area of The Old Continent, on the coast bordering the Calistis Ocean. Of difficult climate, they are lands with few natural resources except for good vegetation and large fields.

The history of both principalities is intrinsically linked to the appearance of The Messiah, for it was there where he first appeared and began spreading his word. Moreover, during the age of The Holy Kingdoms both areas were part of the same kingdom, which became the largest center of power of The Church for its time.

Neither has formally seceded from The Empire, but they haven't recognized the Empress as the legitimate successor either and they don't reject The Azur Alliance. Both have currently chosen a new Supreme Archbishop; power that traditionally only belonged to The Sacred Holy Emperor, and have withdrawn its presence from the High Senate after a recent Imperial edict in which Elisabetta proclaimed religious freedom.

At the moment, nobody can say what will happen to The Episcopal States; if they'll join The Empire, support The Azur Alliance or become a third independent power.

THE DOMINION

Capital: Albidion.
Population: 950,000+
Ethnic Groups: Vildianos (51%), Asher (39), Daevar (9%).
Government: Theocracy.
Languages: Latin.
Religion: Christianity.
Technology: 4.
Denomym: Domino.
Flag: White with a golden cross.
Masculine Names: Aaron, Allon, Carpus, Chenaniah, Damaris, Drusilla, Gemariah, Hezekiah, Ichabod, Jacob, Jeremiel, Lemuel, Nereus, Nimrod, Raphael, Samuel, Uriel.
Feminine Names: Abiah, Abilene, Adah, Eunice, Hephzibah, Huldah, Jael, Jedidah, Jemima, Julia, Leah, Martha, Moriah, Noa, Persis, Sapphira, Selah, Zibiah.
Last Names: Abijah, Bartholomew, Bartimeus, Youngest child, Cone, Daniels, Davids, Heber, Jones, Jorden, Judd, Levy, Mary, Miriam, Thomas, Zachariah.

The Dominion is the heart of The Church, the principality that has been the backbone of Christianity for years. Although in theory The Holy Throne and The Dominion are different institutions (the first is used to describe the heart of The Church and the second describes the principality as a nation), people often speak of them as being equivalent, which is true in practice.

Although it consisted originally of the large island of Narses, over the centuries has slowly been expanding its borders to include Tarvos and a considerable part of the coastline of The Old Continent. Due to the distance between them, each of these territories is very different, both in weather and rough geography.

The Dominion is composed of a few independent cities of small size, all of them overshadowed by its monumental capital, the holy city of Albidion. Trade in the principality is low, and given to its precarious industrial level and their limited natural resources, its unable to feed its population by itself. However, it is still a major economic power thanks to the donations and tithes coming from almost every corner of Gaïa.

The principality's government is a theocracy, as The Archbishop also holds a title equivalent to a Prince and has absolute power in his lands. Instead of nobility, there are cardinals and priests who control the various regions of the nation. Its army, the Ecclesiastical Guard, is a merely representative force mainly devoted to ensuring order in the cities and supporting the Inquisition. Still, The Dominion can take advantage of thousands of devoted followers to defend The Holy Land, just as it has the absolute support of Argos, whom many consider the armed hand of The Church.

The current situation of The Empire and the religious schism has led to a sudden breach between The Dominion and Abel. Eljared's appointment as Archbishop, who never got around to visiting the principality, caused a huge backlash among the cardinals. Refusing to recognize Elisabetta's authority as mistress of The Church, the council has appointed a Supreme Archbishop named Magnus. The new lord of The Dominion has only been in power for a few months and nobody is quite sure what his policies will be, but so far, he seems to have quite radical view on those who depart from Christianity.

Culture and Society

As might be expected, religion is the most important for the inhabitants of the principality. Although it would be improper to call them fanatics, it's true that they are all ardent devotees. Practically the whole culture is based on Christian teachings and traditions, as The Church brings meaning to people's lives. They usually visit the local parish daily, and form communities and groups depending on the congregation that they visit.

The social structure is divided in the three traditional estates and, although there is more nobility than in other principalities, this only has symbolic power; the real one resides solely in religious authorities. A quarter of the people is member of the The Church or has some link with it. Those who wish to become priests are entitled to free education and many parents send their children to monasteries to be educated.

Accustomed to receiving continuous visits from travelers who want to know the holy city (which include many other seminarians from other principalities who travel there to conduct their studies), the people of The Dominion are very friendly and sociable. They reach out to everyone in need and always welcome the homeless. However, people are completely intolerant of people declaring themselves atheists or behaving in a disrespectful manner toward faith or The Church. Blasphemy is a serious crime that can be punished with torture, forced labor or, in the most extreme cases, with a burning at the stake.

Regarding the Supernatural

There is possibly no other place in Gaïa as intolerant to the supernatural as The Dominion. Devoted followers of Christian principles, any sign of unexplainable abilities, even on a miniscule scale, are automatically considered witchcraft and Satanism. The suspicion over these forces is so great among the people of the principality that misunderstandings and dumb coincidence can often be confused with supernatural powers.

The individuals who display such powers are not only treated with hatred and rejection, but people will also consider them monsters or demons. When this happens, anyone witnessing an inexplicable event will immediately report it to The Church, warning them of possible wizards or demons in the area. If it's a large community, they may even try and subdue and imprison suspects until the pending authority arrives.

Being the birthplace of The Inquisition, the power and intervention of the organization in the principality is unrivaled, and its members can act anywhere within the borders almost immediately. After a warning, an inquisitor may appear wherever required within a period of four or five hours.

The History of The Dominion

The true history behind The Dominion began on the island of Narses at the same time in which The Messiah formally appeared to the world. Accompanied by Pietro Giovanni, he toured every city spreading his word and changing the hearts of man. Thus, Narses would become the first unified nation under Christian dogma, and also the first to join The Kingdom of Heaven.

After his death, many traveled to the island to explore the birthplace of Abel, establishing The Holy Kingdom of Domine, which was considered the most holy place in Gaïa. Consequently, The War of God was especially harsh there, as Rah put special emphasis on eradicating what it symbolized. At the end of the conflict, there was no one left alive on the entire island.

Circa year 235, while Zhorne was consolidating the Sacred Holy Empire, a group of priests moved to the desolate expanse of land to rebuild the holy city of Albidion. Soon, news spread of their work and thousands of people from all around the globe arrived to help them. Thus, what began as just a humble project would grow into a stunning city. Initially, The Emperor considered the island as part of the principality of Argos, but when Supreme Archbishop Jud asked for a formal headquarters for The Church, Narses seemed like the most suitable place to everyone. In the year 250, Jud was given reign over the region, and renamed it The Dominion (an abridged version of The Dominion of The Church) and, thanks to the financial support that Abel provided it and to the faithful who began to settle the island, it managed to become a principality in its own right.

Throughout its history, the Dominion has undergone two major expansions. The first took place in year 411, when the island of Tarvos joined its borders by Imperial dictation. The second occurred less than 50 years ago, at the time that the principality of Argos voluntarily ceded a large swath of the coastline to The Church.

At the moment, the principality's power has increased thanks to the unconditional support granted by Argos and to the large number of followers who, discontent with the religious policy of Abel, have moved there. Now, as the head of The Church, its influence is felt anywhere in Gaïa where Christianity is the majority religion. Less than a month ago it began promoting war between Argos and Kushistan, taking advantage of the lack of control that the Empire has over military conflicts.

Relevant Geographical Features

Divided into three completely different places, each part of The Dominion has a very diverse geography and natural features. In many ways, it would almost be more appropriate to think of it as three separate principalities.

Narses Island: Narses Island is one of the largest in The Old Continent. In the past, its entire surface was completely devastated by the power of The Conclave, who annihilated any lifeform on it. Since then, despite the efforts of its people, the island has never completely recovered, so the crops are poor and unproductive. Most of the territory is a large wide-open semi-desert, with some rolling hills where vegetation is sparse and rocky elevations lie. The most common activity among different populations is shepherding.

Some of last specimens of the white lion of Gaïa are in Narses, a much larger and intelligent race of lions, considered a sacred animal in memory of the first Emperor and his Lion Arturia.

The Black Desert: In all Narses, this desert area was the most devastated by Rah's armies during the assaults of The War of God. According to the few old maps that still exist, most cartographers believe that a small mountain range rose here long ago, a theory that seems confirmed by the large amount of fragmented rocks scattered everywhere. Despite being a quite disturbing and dark region, the truth is that it's very peaceful because of the lack of wildlife in it. The Church recommends its parishioners not to come, ensuring that it can be dangerous, although this statement is merely intended to hide its secret function. The Black Desert is an Inquisition training ground for its fledgling members, where they face supernatural creatures that are released so their agents can chase them down. Here is where the final test to turns apprentices into true Inquisitors takes place.

Tarvos Island: Far smaller than Narses in size, Tarvos is an island near the coastline of Argos. Unlike its "older sibling", it's full of wild vegetation and lush forests due to a mountainous wall located on the western coastline, as it blocks the strong sea winds. The residents of the island provide the necessary crops for The Dominion's survival, so the entire world considers it essential to the principality.

Reitz Mountain Range (western part): This mountain range served as a natural border with the principality of Lucrecio in the past. Although the mountains are lower than usual, Reiz has some really tall peaks, so steep and difficult to climb that to date have not been conquered. Its fame has become such that many explorers and mountaineers have their minds set on climbing them. Naturally, no one knows what may be on top of these peaks.

Caves of Sália: The fame of this complex labyrinth, which stretches for miles through the inside of the Reiz Mountain Range, comes from the myth that The Messiah wrote a piece of the Word of God on its walls. The caves are populated by the Order of Knowledge, a religious brotherhood that spent entire centuries just studying the true meaning of the words Abel left behind. The entrance to the inside is strictly prohibited to anyone unauthorized by the council of cardinals themselves because the knowledge hidden on those walls is considered one of the best-kept secrets of The Church. The truth is that The Messiah only discovered them inside the caves; they already existed several thousands of years ago. The Church and the Order of Knowledge are conscious of this fact and have spent centuries trying to conceal the truth hidden there. In fact, there's not only a small group of elite soldiers protecting Sália, but three High Inquisitors are also assigned to the same mission.

Forest of The Cross: This forest is located inside The Dominion, near the Argos border. The place has a slightly tropical climate, although not so warm that winter and summer are indistinguishable. The Cross is full of small chapels and shrines, where many monks live apart from the world. There are also a few towns of varying size that are engaged in logging.

Less than two years ago, the Chapel of Sacred Liberation was secretly taken by Ophiel (Warlock Lv. 10, ♂ Duk´zarist), one of the 12 Fallen Angels of Samael, who has used his powers to maintain the appearance that the sanctuary is still under priestly authority. He controls his agents in the principality from there, pulling the strings that allow him to carry out the objectives of the most radical sector of his organization.


Holy Plains
Holzburg
Fuchs Plains
Lucrecio
Port Tahar
Keltia
Karjah
The Great University
Du'Lucart
Haruma
Elisio
Metzger Forest
Bellafonte
Seine Desert
Krause
White Mountain Ranges
Ann River
Cedonia
Quarry of Lavin
Creix Mountains
Turin River
Ribera
Kushistan
Creixburg
Reitz Mountain Range
Port Misrech
Wideann River
Medina del Monte
Pylaia
Madha
Caves of Sália
Sierpe River
Llanoverde
Bastionblanco
Lake of Canto del Gallo
Santa Clara
Valentia
Serrano
Celes Basilica
Veracruz Passage
Forest of The Cross
Serra Mountain Range
Eurasia Mountain Range
Mountains of Elucidation
Black Desert
Ilion
Khwarel
Ancona
The Dominion
Bohiles
Argos
Albidion
The Faith
Baldemar
Valls
Narses Island
Tylon River
Gray Mark
Elisalda Mountain Range
Cerezomuerto
San Lorenzo
Arzano
Tarvos
Tarvos Island
The Towers
Lazio
MAP KEY
Capital
Metropolis
City
Building
Fortress
Path
Road
0 250 500 750 Kilometers
0 250 500 Miles

Mountains of Elucidation: Located near the northwestern shore of Narses, the Mountains of Elucidation are a rocky mass of average height. Eroded by the wind from the west and weakened by the powers that were unleashed on them in the past, the area is unstable and dangerous because of its constant rockslides. Still, they are a famous place where The Messiah liked to go to pray when he was just a boy. It's said that the most devoted believers have dreams and visions there relating to their destiny, so many priests are accustomed to visit them before finalizing their votes.

Places of Interest

If there is anything characteristic of The Dominion, it's the large number of churches and monasteries throughout the territory. The ecclesiastical principality has three large populations, most notably the monumental holy city of Albidion, its legendary capital. In the past there were remnants of other cultures and ethnicities, but The Inquisition has been busy these last few centuries exterminating them.

Albidion

(Metropolis, Population 185,000+)

The city of Albidion is the heart of The Church, considered a holy land in Gaïa. It was previously a large metropolis built on the small town of Netzah, the site of the first appearance of The Messiah. Destroyed during The War of God, a group of priests were responsible for its reconstruction, aided by thousands of travelers living in the area.

The present Albidion has been intentionally built in the shape of a cross, which divides the city into four major districts, joined in the center by The Sanctuary. Each of these, named Gabriel, Mikael, Uriel and Rafael representing the four archangels protecting the cardinal points, are full of temples, shops and buildings of the most diverse nature. On the streets, one can find both large and luxurious mansions, decorated with monumental angels, as humble homes with simple earthen roofs.

The Sanctuary is the original building that serves as the core The Church. It is separated from the rest of the city with huge walls and is composed of an intricate network of cathedrals connected by dozens of high passages. Its architecture is so convoluted and complex that everything seems part of a single building. Access to The Sanctuary is only granted to members of The Church or those who have special permission. Thousands of priests, monks and seminarians of noble families live inside, who have travelled there to complete their studies. The Church opens their doors twice a year to the devotees for The Ceremony of the Birth and Ascension of Abel, the most celebrated events for believers.

The most famous places in The Sanctuary are The Cathedral of Liturgy, the largest Christian building in Gaïa, and The Basilica of the Servants of God, the Archbishop's official residence and the place where The Conclave of Cardinals meet. The Monastery of Caedus is also here, the inquisitorial center where several hundred teenagers are trained up to the rank of Inquisitor. This hidden cloister is in turn separated from the rest of The Sanctuary by a second layer of walls, which prevent both entry and exit from the building. The best inquisitorial instructors and an impressive elite guard composed of all those trainees who have failed to become hunters of The Church to protect Caedus, making it one of the most inaccessible places in the world.

Although the metropolis seems to breathe peace and tranquility, the truth is that Albidion is full of hectic political plots and internal power struggles. Many senior members of The Church, among whom some of their own cardinals are included, face each other in intricate challenges to increase its authority and influences over the community.

The Supreme Archbishop Magnus (Freelance Lv. 8, ♂), discussed Lord of The Church, resides here, controlling the city through a network of personally selected followers.

The Faith

(Town, Population 1,300+)

Despite its small size, The Faith is a majestic place. It was built with the sole purpose of being the main gateway to Narses Island and to impress all the travelers who would later head to Albidion. Consequently, all the buildings are luxurious and there are dozens of shops and hotels for wealthy visitors. The most striking initial feature is the entrance to the port itself, which is decorated with two enormous white marble statues over 250 feet high, representing the archangels Mikael and Gabriel.

Since it is the preferred entrance to the island, The Faith is guarded by a garrison of Church Guards, always accompanied by at least two Inquisitors to ensure that there is no interference from wizards or demons.

Tarvos

(City, Population 6,000+)

The port of Tarvos, a large city named after the island on which it is located, was founded with the sole purpose of sending shipments of food and goods to Narses. The city is responsible for collecting the production from the scattered surrounding villages and later to take them to The Faith. Without Tarvos, Albidion would have serious problems surviving more than three or four months.

The people of Tarvos are very closely related, since they all descend from just thirteen families. Even being so numerous, most of them are familiar to each other and can identify foreigners at first sight. The port has enjoyed peace and prosperity during last the three centuries, and everyone expects this to go on for a long time.



The sacred city of Albidion

Illustrated by Luis NCT

The Shadow Of The Fallen Angels

Samael leaders have used the decline of The Empire to launch a secret attack against The Church. After months of effort, they have managed to integrate several of their agents into high ecclesiastical positions, emphasizing the replacement of Cardinal Maurice de Almao by Ozz (Shadow Lv. 8, ♂ D´Anjayni). His master plan consists of replacing The Supreme Archbishop with a puppet, with which to control both The Inquisition and Christian dogma.

Ophiel, one of the twelve Fallen Angels, has moved to the principality to facilitate the fruition of their plans, and will not stop before anything to obtain his goals. However, The Thirteenth Cardinal has his suspicions, and has started his own secret purge of possible infiltrators. Many of the priests who are dying have no connection to Samael's objectives, but The Thirteenth Cardinal just considers them martyrs necessary to maintain the integrity of The Church.

Santa Clara

(City, Population 46,000+)

Formerly considered one of largest ancient jewels of Argos, Santa Clara is now the second largest and most important city of The Dominion. Unlike the rest of the region, this part is surrounded by fertile land that sows good agriculture and active livestock. With modernized, shiny architecture, Santa Clara is a really beautiful place. It has many religious monuments, such as statues of angels or famous saints, and pleasant nature reserves with beautiful artificial ponds. The city takes its name from one of the most venerated saints of The Church, known not only for the gifts that he had but also for his self-sacrifice. Been born into high status, Clara gave up his life of luxury after hearing the call of God and performed some of the greatest miracles recognized by The Church. She died in this city when she was still very young, saving it from the flooding of The Carpia River, which would have razed it to the ground. Her remains rest beside those of other saints in The Cathedral of Martyrs, the most beautiful Christian sanctuary in Gaïa.

Santa Clara also is admired for its Book House, a royal monastery known for being the largest manufacturer of documents of The Old Continent. Although since the advent of the printing press it's lost much of its importance, its handwritten samples are still very popular, mainly because many of the manuscripts in their catalogs are nowhere else in Gaïa.

The Celes Basilica

(Fortress, Population 5,000+)

Celes is a huge military fortress under the title of a basilica. Anyone who sees it, with its formidable walls and towers, wouldn't hesitate to consider it a large military stronghold. It has been used to train the members of The Ecclesiastical Guard for years, as it is the home to The Knights Templar of The Sanctuary, one of the most illustrious military organizations in the direct service of The Church. Cardinal Yanichel (Paladin Lv. 5, ♂), faithful follower of The Supreme Archbishop Magnus, governs the fortress.

Baldemar

(City, Population 27,000+)

Baldemar is a port city located on the coast of the continent that Argos also ceded to The Church. An ancient trade center, it grew to gigantic proportions during the last decade thanks to The Dominion vessels not being required to pay taxes or tariffs. Baldemar often serves as a bridge between the mainland and the islands of Tarvos and Narses, because dozens of ships depart daily in their direction.

The Port is the only city of the principality not under absolute control of The Church because one of the conditions of the deal was to maintain government from their Dukes.

Other Settlements: *Ancona, Lazio, Arzano.*

Adventures

If the characters are endowed with supernatural abilities not recognized by The Church, merely visiting The Dominion can be challenging. They may have to rescue someone who has been captured by The Inquisition, unwittingly intervene in Samael plans or become involved in the intrigue of power struggles among senior clergymen.

The Black Cardinal: 16 years ago, Malfleur Bourne, a resident cardinal in Baldemar, was publicly executed for heresy. He had reportedly amassed a large collection of banned manuscripts, previously confiscated by agents of The Inquisition, and devoted his time to implementing some of their obscene teachings. Malfleur learned the twisted secrets of creation and necromancy, but lacking subjects, he was unable to put them into practice. Obsessed, he began to seek ways to synthesize some of the worst spells in the books, rituals so depraved that only the insane would perform them. He kidnapped children from the most underprivileged districts for his sacrifices, including some little babies. After several attempts, he succeeded in drawing the attention of an entity called Zeamon, a greater spirit in the service of the Demon Prince Pride. Viewing the lust for power within the priest, Zeamon thought that he could easily control him if the demon granted the madman some lesser gifts to encourage him to get more children. For months, Malfleur's perversions continued, each act crueler than the last. Finally, a young rebellious inquisitor named Pascal Reinhauer grew suspicious of the cardinal and eventually surprised him during one of his rituals involving nobles that supported him in his practices. The punishment was exemplary; The Inquisition was especially harsh with him to demonstrate that the members of the senior clergymen got no special treatment.

But the horror was far from over.

A few months ago a mysterious figure wearing the clothes of a cardinal has been spotted wandering the slums of the city, and the kidnappings have begun again. In fact, Zeamon claimed the soul of Malfleur at the time of his death and reanimated him, giving the fallen priest a new body that reflected the darkness within his soul. However, to truly return to life, the cardinal must complete the rituals that were disrupted, which also increases the power of his demonic master.

The characters may meet him at any moment, and without Malfleur expecting it, they will see his face. This simple act has far more significance than it first seems, because this prevents the cardinal from achieving his rebirth unless he kills them. From then on he will try to kill them every night, using some of the monstrosities that Zeamon has put to his service, while he continues kidnapping kids from the slums.

The Migratory Bird: Ryke Cliffrider (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 2, ♂) is an intrepid Rider of the Winds from Galgados whose only passion is flying. After soaring through skies of his country, he began a long journey using his Windrider to visit every nation in the world. His actual challenge is taking advantage of the currents of Reiz Mountain Range to ascend as much as possible and to conquer some of the peaks that nobody could climb. He has traveled to The Dominion with this goal, but is soon chased and attacked by unknown assailants. He doesn't know who is responsible, but he suspects that a familiar person or group is behind it since, although dressed like paupers, vagabonds or thieves, the style of their attacks in movements is very professional. Although he doesn't know why, he thinks that somebody is trying to keep him from his goal of flying to the mountains. Naturally, Ryke is unwilling to let anybody stand between him and his adventure, so he will try looking for a party to "escort him" while he's in the region.

Common Characters of The Dominion

Here a series of common characters of The Dominion are shown. The following statistics have been composed without taking Creation Points into account.

Ecclesiastical Guard/Templar of the Sanctuary

Class: Warrior; **Level** 2
Initiative 60/25/40; **LP** 125; **AT** Breastplate; **Attack** 85; **Dodge** 90; **Weapon** Halberd/Long Sword **Damage** 70/55
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 7 CON: 7 **STR**: 7 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 15, Ride 30, Style 20, Intimidate 10, Leadership 20, Notice 35, Search 15, Composure 10, Feats of Strength 20, Resist Pain 5.
Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 35, PsR 35.

Priest

Class: Freelance; **Level** 1
Initiative 45; **LP** 75; **AT** None; **Attack** 10; **Dodge** 10; **Weapon** None **Damage** 10
AGI: 5 **DEX:** 5 **CON:** 5 **STR:** 5 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 6 **WIL:** 6 **POW:** 7
Abilities: Swim 20, Persuasion 80, Notice 45, Search 25, History 75, Medicine 25, Memorize 70, Occult 30.
Resistance: PhR 30, DR 30, VR 30, MR 35, PsR 35.

Senior Clergyman

Class: Freelance; **Level** 2
Initiative 50; **LP** 80; **AT** None; **Attack** 10; **Dodge** 10; **Weapon** None **Damage** 10
AGI: 5 **DEX:** 5 **CON:** 5 **STR:** 5 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 7 **WIL:** 7 **POW:** 7
Abilities: Ride 10, Swim 20, Style 15, Leadership 25, Persuasion 105, Notice 45, Search 35, History 75, Memorize 75, Occult 55.
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 40, PsR 40.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Middle-Class/Low-Class: Swim +10, Persuasion +10, Notice +10, History (Christian) +25, Occult (Religion) +25.

Nobility/Priest/High Nobility/Cardinal: Leadership +10, Persuasion +20, History (Christian) +20, Occult (Religion) +30.

Table 19: The Dominion

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-20	Low-Class	Clothes, food certificates in the parish for a week, some personal items. 2 CC.
21-75	Middle-Class	A couple of changes of clothes, food for one week, a crucifix or rosary, a backpack with miscellaneous equipment. 70 SC.
76-100	Nobility or Priest	Several changes of clothes, food for more than a week, a Bible, a beautifully crafted crucifix or rosary, a weapon or some kind of jewelry with religious significance, some personal items. 80 GC.
Priv.	*High Nobility or High Clergy*	*Several changes of elegant clothes for all the occasions (for all holidays and celebrations for the High Clergy), good food for over a week, a horse, a Bible, a crucifix or rosary of gold or ivory, a high quality weapon, a couple bulls or a simple holy relic, a small collection of gold jewelry and gold ornaments both secular and religious. 700 GC.*

ARGOS

Capital: Ilion.
Population: 5,300,000+
Ethnic Groups: Vildianos (89%), Asher (4%), Daevar (3%), Tayahar (3%).
Government: Monarchy.
Languages: Latin.
Religion: Christianity.
Technology: 3.
Denomym: Arges.
Flag: Divided into four quadrants; a tower on a red background, a sword on a blue background, three silver stars on a white background and a golden cross on a black background.
Masculine Names: Adolfo, Alberto, Basilio, Desiderio, Felipe, Germán, Guillermo, Hernando, Íñigo, Juan, Octavio, Raúl, Rubén, Salvador, Víctor.
Feminine Names: Adelaida, Ángela, Beatriz, Carmen, Cristina, Esmeralda, Isabel, Laura, Noelia, Pilar, Sofía, Susana, Teresa, Verónica, Zoraida.
Last Names: Aguilar, Aranda, Cano, Fernández, García, Hernández, Lázaro, Lorenzo, Menéndez, Ortega, Ramírez, Román, Tortajada, Vázquez, Zamorano.

Generally, Argos is considered the armed branch of The Church, since The Dominion always has exerted a huge influence on it. However, the principality is very powerful, able to act of independently without having to answer to anybody. Before the fall of The Empire it had a lot of influence in The High Senate, and even now, its reputation is still recognized by both Abel and The Azur Alliance.

Argos possesses a vast area of land that makes it the fourth largest principality in The Old Continent. Unfortunately, more than half its surface is composed of bleak moors and large stony deserts, which greatly reduces the size of the living spaces. It also involves an intricate network of mountain ranges that considerably impede travel through interior. The climate is very diverse; while the north is moderate and peaceful, the south is dry and rough, with strong winds continuously ravaging its great deserts. Most of the people of Argos converge in the north, where there are many villages and several cities. The south, with all its shortcomings, is less populated, although there are also some villages and ports.

The principality retains the advanced system legal of The Empire though, like The Dominion, the punishments for religious crimes are very serious.

It is said that Argos has one of the largest armies in Gaïa, with well-equipped soldiers prepared for war. If this wasn't formidable enough, the nation has many organizations of crusaders whom, even if they are not under the direct command of Argos ruler, devoutly support the principality and its ideals.

The lord of Argos is King Guillermo Andreas II de La Rocha del Castillo y del Monte, an enterprising, idealistic man of strong character. Guillermo, who takes full account of the views of his people, usually surrounds himself with many advisors representing the nobility and the clergy of the principality. Of these stand out Cardinal Salvador Meruelo, who is a close friend of the monarch. Some say that Meruelo has, in the shadows, almost as much power as the king himself.

Following the edict concerning the religion the Empress has proclaimed, Argos has followed the example of The Dominion, immediately withdrawing its presence from The High Senate. Although it has made no official proclamation concerning its independence from The Empire, its actions have clearly placed it at the level of any other separatist principality.

Presently, the nation has focused its interest on its eastern border, since it is no secret that an enormous hatred between Argos and Kushistan has existed for centuries. Both countries have been long desired to destroy one another, and only the presence of The Empire has prevented an outbreak of war between them. Now, without the supervision of Abel, it is expected that both nations will initiate an open conflict soon.

Culture and Society

Argos is a nation of old customs and ancient traditions that lives bound to its history. Its inhabitants are often as proud and stubborn as they are courageous, because that is how they have learned to live.

The society of Argos is remarkably feudal. Each district is governed by a noble house and supervised by a canon, which shows the great importance of religion in the principality. The nobility of the nation is very chivalrous and bears a close relationship to The Church. It is customary for aristocrats to bequeath their titles and possessions to the first-born son, and that the other heirs take up church careers.

There is a remarkable difference between the northern and southern parts of the principality, due to the different living conditions. In the south, which has many more amenities, there are large cities and traditional manufacturing which competes on equal terms with livestock and agriculture. By contrast, people living in the south are far behind, as the vast desert distances slow travel between one village and another, which in practice are virtually cut off. These people survive however they can, cultivating the land and caring for their small livestock.

Proud to defend their religion and their nation (in that order), the male population is drafted for military service during a period of six months, although many of them choose to make the army their profession. Those who belong to families of ancestry or who demonstrate exceptional talent for weapons can join any of the known organizations of crusaders, that are undoubtedly some of the most admired and respected individuals of Argos.

Regarding the Supernatural

Argos differs little from The Dominion when dealing with supernatural powers. To its people, any kind of inexplicable power not officially sanctified by The Church, is considered demonic and must be stopped or destroyed.

Normally, Argueses take a very active role in the pursuit of the supernatural. Not only are there civil groups that work to support The Inquisition, but also when somebody sees or suspects the existence of a "witch", they usually form a hunting party to capture it. Sometimes, dragged down by hatred and agitation, a lynching is carried out in which the victims end up burning or drowning without a trial. The Church does not have too much sympathy for such actions, not only by the fact that sometimes some innocents were executed, but also because it restricts their authority.

The History of Argos

Before the arrival of The Messiah, the territories of Argos were called The Gray Mark and were considered a dark area populated by many people and ethnicities. Abel changed the face of this land when, after an attack orchestrated by the Order of Yehudah, he declared the start of the War of the Cross, proclaiming the formation of The Kingdom of Heaven. The men of The Gray Mark soon took up arms beside him, becoming the bulk of his armies. With the death of The Messiah, the territory came under the control of the Apostle Julian de Zed, who dubbed it the Holy Kingdom of Argos. During the next few centuries it grew into a powerful country, regarded as one of the most militaristic nations in the age of man.

Fatefully, all its warlike power wasn't enough to halt the combined advancement of Rah's forces, when they unexpectedly attacked its borders halfway through the second century. Although it desperately endured the assault and managed to resist for several months (which gave rise to numerous epic legends), all its hopes were dashed at the time when Serreno, one of the greatest human strongholds at that time, was destroyed in just a day by just three members of The Conclave. The Argueses were forced to retreat into the mountains and stone deserts, where they began a long and successful guerrilla war. The conclusion of the conflict left the kingdom in ruins, but not completely destroyed. The overall resistance strove to restore what little they had left while trying to contact Zhorne, who had become a legend throughout Gaïa. Argos was the only nation that sought the Emperor out to request joining the Abel Empire, which is why their monarch was the only one who held the title of king from the beginning. Thus, it became the southern frontier of The Empire, even before Lucrecio annexed it.



Illustrated by Luis NCT

Cardinal Salvador Meruelo receives his mission

Argos soon initiated skirmishes with Kushistan, a nation that always had coexisted in bad terms with the principality because of the religious discrepancies of both cultures. The tension increased, and in the year 245, the Kushistani armies did a surprise attack on Argos borders, achieving important victories over the frontier cities. Thus began The Desert Wars, which lasted for two years until Abel's forces directly disembarked on the shores of Kushistan.

The Argueses did not welcome the incorporation of the Al-Enneth nation to Imperial crown, and these enmities did nothing more than increase with the pressures of The Church. During the following centuries, Argos and Kushistan would enter war under the supervision of Abel over a dozen times, emerging victorious in eight of them. But despite their military successes, around the 6th century bad harvests and the long periods of droughts threw the principality to a strong economic recession, which it only managed to leave thanks to the large subsidies provided by The Dominion. This further reinforced the mutual need of both nations, and the influence that the canons began to exert on the indebted nobles.

Recently the principality has revisited serious conflicts with Kushistan. In just a year and a half, as chaos erupted throughout the Empire with the appointment of Eljared as Supreme Archbishop, King Guillermo's fiancé, Lady Monica Miro, disappeared under mysterious circumstances. So far, the most widespread theory is that she was kidnapped by a group of fanatic followers of Jihamath, but since there was no solid evidence, they did not initiate revenge. Now, The Dominion strongly supports Argos, urging it to start a holy war and to exterminate its ancestral enemies once and for all.

The War with Kushistan

While it's true that the main antagonism between the two nations is due to differences in religious beliefs, this is not remotely the only reason why the aristocrats of Argos want to start a war with Kushistan. The truth is that, for many years, the Arges nobility is keen on gaining commercial control of the large Kushistani cities, as well as exploiting the operations in The Samutai Mountains, one of the greatest natural resource areas in Gaïa.

To date, Imperial supervision has made impossible to start a true war between both principalities but now, without the rules of Abel Empire over them, both The Church and the nobility of Argos are inciting an increasingly imminent conflict. The two nations know they must work carefully, because although The Dominion completely supports Argos, Kushistan has the aid of Estigia and Salazar. Either way, the borders have become a real hotbed, and violent clashes have already taken place ending with numerous casualties. Only a miracle can stop the imminent launch of a new holy war.

Relevant Geographical Features

The vast principality of Argos has a great variety of natural features, most notably the maze-like network of mountain ranges found in its central part and the great stone deserts of The Gray Mark.

The Gray Mark: The southern part of the country still receives the same name that was known there before the arrival of The Messiah. The Gray Mark is a large inhospitable desert area, with high temperatures during the day (usually exceeding 80 degrees Fahrenheit) and very cold nights. The deserts, stone gorges, and great canyons ravaged by erosion abound everywhere. There are also many natural craters, from among which "The Fingers of God" lie, five huge chasms of great depth that resemble the mark that a hand leaves when pressing on the ground. Occultists and magicians that visit the zone always claimed that there is something unusual about them, but have never been able to give it a good investigation.

There are numerous villages in The Mark. Their people live completely isolated from the rest of the world, but increasingly more and more young ones are deciding to take a trip to the north, which endangers the continuity of many towns. There are also several ruins prior to The War of God, both human cities as well as some unknown civilizations.

Unusual predators plague the territory, most notably a silent gray feline called acinonyx, whose most striking feature is the long tentacle coming directly out of their heads. These animals were commonly used by the Duk´zarist as hunting companions and have a great killer instinct.

Llanoverde: Opposite The Gray Mark, the lands of the northern region of Argos get this name from their abundant crops and healthy livestock. Llanoverde is full of small woods and lots of hills that give a green color to their landscapes. The strong winds that often blow have led to the creation of hundreds of windmills, one of most characteristic parts of the landscape.

Serra Mountain Range: Serra is one of the three great mountain ranges that divide the heart of Argos. Located in the western sector, it presents a complex shaped of arc that extends chaotically. Most peaks of Serra have little altitude and, though full of steep slopes, the area is accessible. Centuries ago, the Argueses were forced to take refuge in these mountains as a result of the conflict with the armies of Judas, and many traces of crevices and hiding places that were used around that time still remain.

Elisalda Mountain Range: Also called The Mountains of Elisalda by their small size, this rocky mass is the smallest mountain range in the principality. As the source of the Tylon River, Elisalda enjoys the richest vegetation of all the southern lands of Argos, so the mountainside is littered with small towns built on slopes of the lower hills. Just months ago, these villages have started having problems with raids from Kushistan, and more than one has been completely destroyed. Consequently, King Guillermo has entrusted one order of crusaders to protect Elisalda, delaying further incursions.

Reiz Mountain Range (East Zone): The Reiz is much less abrupt and high in its eastern part, allowing the passage between mountains to Lucrecio. Merchants traveling from one principality to the next heavily use these roads, because it shortens the transport of goods by more than a week. Brigands have plagued the area for years, and some bands there have become almost legendary. The authorities are desperate to get rid of them, but their chivalrous behavior toward the poor (to who never attack) has made the people almost consider them local heroes.

Veracruz Passage: The zone between the Mountain Range of Serra and Eurasia is the main road that connects Ilion to other cities. The whole territory is one great Duchy belonging to the Veracruz family, one of the most powerful aristocratic houses in Argos. The Veracruz has always been highly acclaimed by its people, until only seven years ago when Duke Iñigo (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 4, ♂) came to power, after the death of his father and the mysterious disappearance of his older brother. Iñigo has shown to be a heartless man, who has no qualms when it comes to taxes and subjecting his people to terrible injustices. He also has the unconditional support of the priest Diego Garcia (Wizard Lv. 5, ♂), a member of the Order of Yehudah who wants to extend his power in the principality thanks to the Veracruz. Combined, their crimes know no limits.

All this has impelled many men, until then honest, to form bands of heavily armed bandits and assault travelers crossing the Veracruz Passage. Carlos de Zalte (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 5, ♂) commands the most famous of these groups, who is known for his cleverness and chivalry. The famous outlaw is actually Javier de Veracruz, the brother of Iñigo, whom The Duke ordered imprisonment to claim the inheritance of his father. After remaining five years in confinement, Javier has managed to escape, vowing to put an end to the injustices of his brother.

The Lake of The Crowing Rooster: Located at the intersection of the Eurasia Mountain Range, this lake originated over a century ago during a rainy season. The water accumulated in caves of the mountains, until the weight caused a flood in Montemolino Valley, swallowing up the village that stood there in a single night. Its entire population died; no one escaped the flood. The people of the area tell that, when the disaster happened, all the roosters in the surrounding regions woke up in the middle of the night and began to crow madly.

Today, more than 100 years later, the area has changed little since the lake is fed by several underground springs that keep water levels fairly stable. The Crowing Rooster is rich in fish, particularly in a species of gray back pike that is very popular. How those fish ended up nesting there has no explanation. Several fishermen say that if you stay the night, you can hear the ringing of the church bells of the Montemolino church, calling the dead. When people hear them, they gather their things and run as fast as they can from the area, fearing misfortune befalling them; perhaps the walking dead cannot rest peacefully.

Eurasia Mountain Range: Eurasia is the most rugged and maze-like of the three central mountain ranges in Argos. Highly fragmented, it extends east of the principality both separating it from Kushistan and offering a fantastic natural protection from any attack coming from the lands of Al-Enneth. The mountains lack any easy footholds, so people generally consider it impassable. Devoid of vegetation, gold mines or other resources, Erasia rouses little interest among the people of Argos.

Despite this popular idea, the depths of the mountain hide one of the greatest and complex underground buildings in Gaïa, called by the few that know it "The Lightless Halls." This endless network of maze-like tunnels is full of so many spacious chambers that they could hold entire cities... and is possible that they did it in the past, because several of them contained ancestral buildings. The caves are spread over levels, even beyond the mountain range itself, and descend to the bowels of the earth. They are so wide and deep that no one has yet been able to determine their true size. Although most of the chambers of The Lightless Halls remain empty, strange creatures and violent supernatural entities inhabit others. Some of them are enormously powerful, and it's hard to understand why they live there.

The existence of The Halls stays secret to normal people; only Tol Rauko and some organizations, like Samael and Black Sun (who make incursions inside looking for all kinds of goods), currently know where they are, and by all means do not reveal its existence to others.

There are many entrances to The Lightless Halls, mostly inside some caves of Eurasia Mountain Range. Several are sealed by Tol Rauko, but there are certainly still many that neither them nor Black Sun have discovered.



Illustrated by Luis NCT

One of the deep chambers of The Lightless Halls

Places of Interest

Argos is one of the principalities with the most cities and towns, especially in the north. Unfortunately, The Church has destroyed most ancient ruins and buildings, and there are very few left that are still relevant.

Ilion

(Metropolis, Population 292,000+)

Ilion, capital of Argos, is a well-known mythical city in every corner of Gaïa. It's called both "The City of The Holy War" and "The Gate to the Kingdom of Heaven". Its fame is rooted in the fact that it was in here where The Messiah took up arms and declared the beginning of the Wars of The Cross after receiving an attack orchestrated by the Order of Yehudah.

It is located at the heart of Argos, in a large circular plain between the Mountain Range of Serra and the Erasia Range. The city has a serious style, typical of the past, and almost all their buildings are made with stone. Except in its central district, the streets are unpaved, although they have recently installed a lighting system similar to the one in Archangel.

During the formation of The Empire and before the creation of The Dominion, many priests felt that Ilion should be the heart of The Church. The whole city has large churches, most notably the Cathedral of the Redeemer, home of Cardinal Salvador Meruelo (Dark Paladin Lv. 5, ♂), the greatest exponent of The Church in the Principality. Cardinal Salvador is a very manipulating as well as pragmatic man, and also one of the main instigators in the war against Kushistan.

The most well known place is the Square of Tears, the monumental white marble esplanade where The Messiah fought for the first time. The square houses a large number of statues dedicated to the most famous saints in history, as well as hosting The Chapel of War, where they keep the sword that Abel hoisted for the first time before forging his Lawmaker and the ones of his Apostles. Despite having no power, the symbol has accompanied to the kings of Argos throughout history, and Argueses consider it the emblem of holy war. If war with Kushistan erupted, nobody doubts that King Guillermo would demand it.

The legend has turned Ilion into a true hotbed of young knights aspiring to join some of the great crusading organizations of the principality. They come from everywhere to prove their worth, and tournaments are as common as the spectacular organized duels in the street.

The city has enormous inquisitorial tribunals, which are rumored to have executed a large number of wizards and demons. Apparently, there are several prisoners inside of them, but it's unknown why they're still alive. The Order of Yehudah considers Ilion a wicked symbol opposing everything that they represent, which is why they want to see it reduced to ashes. For that reason, the dark society of wizards has several of its members in the metropolis, whose sole purpose is to generate chaos and make sure that, if war does erupt, Kushistan could destroy it.

Guillermo Andreas II de La Rocha del Castillo y del Monte (Paladin Lv. 3, ♂) himself rules the city, who lost some of his entrepreneurial character after the disappearance of his fiancée. Now, his majesty feels imprisoned by a dark anger, and blames the followers of Jihamath for what happened.

Serrano

(Fortress, Population 9,000+)

In the past, Serrano was one of the largest fortifications of man, an unyielding bastion that was considered invincible. The myth finished when just three members of The Conclave were able to raze it to the ground, destroying the greatest symbol of power in Argos. Serrano started to rebuild years after the end of the war, but various problems delayed the work for more than a century. Finally, in the year 472 the fortress was finished.

Serrano is located on the Seldo Plateau, in the north corner of the Eurasia Mountain Range, an unmatched strategic location for the control of Argos. The bastion was built with the ancient customs from the time of The Messiah, so it lacks many of the current Imperial advances. Still, it remains an almost impregnable fortress because of its seven heavy layers of walls. It's under the control of the King's armies, but The Crusaders of the Holy Mountains moved there less than a decade ago to reinforce the garrison of the fortress.

Ignacio de La Roca (Paladin Lv. 7, ♂), marshal of The Crusaders, cousin of King Andreas and current lord of The Knights of Argos, leads Serrano. He has a reputation for being an invincible warrior, and his love of battle leads him to accept any challenge that comes his way. Many teenagers with wild reputations have tried their luck, as well as many accomplished fighters, but to date, the Lord of Serrano remains unbeaten.

Pylaia

(Metropolis, Population 172,000+)

The second largest city in the principality is Pylaia, a city as proud as it is wealthy. Until recently it was the only city trading with the Enneath, and their people have always desired the economic power of their traditional enemies.

The city, near the border of Kushistan, has recently become a hotbed of tension. The sudden cessation of trade threatens to ruin many families of high birth. As a solution, the nobility began to invest large sums of money in forges and weapons business, preparing the principality for a future conflict.

Compared to the other cities in Argos, Pylaia is quite modern, since due to the heavy investment from noble families, it's managed to create an archaic sewage system and artificial lighting for the wealthiest neighborhoods. Their people are proud of being the ones with the greatest spending power in the principality, feeling like the aristocracy of the nation.

For months, many farmers have begun to migrate to Pylaia fearing the war looming on the horizon. The city no longer is capable of supporting a larger population, so that the newcomers are now camped out in the suburbs using hundreds of canvas tents. King Guillermo has strengthened the defenses of Pylaia by sending several garrisons to the area, just as it has mobilized a large number of crusaders.

Medina del Monte

(City, Population 30,000+)

Medina is one of the major cities of Argos, ruled by the widow Duchess Lady Carlota de Bosqueblanco (Freelance Lv. 4, ♀), an old cunning woman like the devil himself and twice as merciless. Under her leadership, the city operates like the gears of a clock, offering an example of self-sufficiency and effectiveness.

The canon Elias de Mazariaga (Freelance Lv. 2, ♂), a stern and harsh man and member of the Ministry for the Conservation of The Faith, is the personal consort to the Duchess and he advises her on all the terms, including meting out justice.

Everything in Medina del Monte works perfectly, from the nearby farms of the surrounding villages to the manufacturing of the various guilds. The taxes are collected on time and the soldiers of the city keep crime at bay. In addition, churches are always packed with devotees and the populace maintains a pious attitude. The flag of Argos waves on all the towers as a reminder of who owns the lives of its people. The Duchess maintains the institutions created by her late husband, like The Weapon Academy, where all farmers must dedicate 20 days out of the year to military training (their spearmen are quite famous). This allows the people in Medina to kept their combat skill more or less intact.

Several members of Samael live in the city, though they have never caused the slightest problem for its people, who are totally unaware of their existence.

Bastionblanco
(City, Population 22,000+)

Neighbor and rival of Medina del Monte, Bastionblanco is known for the exceptional quality of its horses, the result of a series of crossbreeding with Kushistan thoroughbreds. Thanks to their animals the famous order of the Crusaders of the White Cross, which has its headquarters in the city, has become one of the most admired light cavalry in the country.

The Lord of Bastionblanco is Duke Sergio de Garragris (Ranger Lv. 2, ♂), nicknamed "The Lynx" both for his political skills as for his hobby of training hunting felines. The Duke is a gray-haired man, accustomed to few pleasures (reading is his only hobby). He has never harbored any interest other than a job well done, and so far has not had time to look for a wife. Sergio is unaware of it, but one of the servants in his house, Remy Miyuki (Thief Lv. 6, Daimah ♀) it is the Archon of Samael in the city, who has been madly in love with him for many years.

Cerezomuerto
(Town, Population 500+)

Cerezomuerto, one of the many tiny towns of The Gray Mark, would not deserve to appear in this section if it wasn't for one detail: it is the largest group of heretics in Argos. The village, which gets its name from the barren land that surround it, radically changed over two decades ago with the arrival of a young girl with hair as black as the night called Agatha. After being adopted by a family, in a few days everyone witnessed how her benefactor's garden improved in a surprising way. Some neighbors approached Agatha to request farming advice from her and she helped as much as she could. The fields that had never before provided abundant harvests began offering fruit, and gradually the lives of the villagers improved thanks to the mysterious girl. However, the local parish priest accused Agatha of witchcraft and threatened to go to The Inquisition or burn her on the spot if she did not leave. In a heated moment, he had a bonfire ready to burn her, but in the end the angry villagers ended up burning him instead.

Since then, the locals have been slowly sinking into depravity in exchange for an easy life, until everyone began practicing witchcraft. Once a month, they must make a human sacrifice on the night of the new moon, which is why they capture lone travelers crossing The Gray Mark, or even kidnap people from other villages. Agatha (Summoner Lv. 6, ♀) rules the town, a faithful follower of the Shajad Abbadon who transcended her human condition due to his dark gifts. She has not aged a year from the moment she arrived at Cerezomuerto, and soon plans to leave the city in the hands of her lieutenants, Bernardine, Amador and Ignacio, her top three apprentices of her dark teachings. If Agatha has any plans for the future, only she knows them.

Bohiles
(Town, Population 1,500+)

This town, situated in a hidden area of the Serra Mountain Range within The Gray Mark, was the main stronghold of the Arges resistance during The War of God. Although over the years its precarious location has caused many to leave town, the pride of its people, all expert mountaineers, prevent them from leaving their ancestral home.

All the people of Bohiles go through extensive training when they are just children, and some feel that, despite the lack of quality equipment, they are by far the best fighters in the principality.

Valls
(Town, Population 1,800+)

Valls is a town in The Gray Mark that was created in something less than 80 years. Its people are of the ethnic group tayahar originating from Kushistan, who left their lands because of their religious beliefs; they are all devout Christians and could not stand the treatment they received in their country. Despite their devotion, the people of Argos have never trusted them, thinking that they are spies or wizards. In these moments of tension, a small detachment of soldiers has been sent to the town, believing that its people are the cause of the attacks on villages in the Elisalda Mountain Range. In truth, the people of Valls aren't even slightly connected to these events, but if they aren't extremely careful, they may face serious problems.

Other Settlements: *The Towers, Valentia, San Lorenzo, Ribera.*

Adventures

The proximity of a war with Kushistan opens a wide range of opportunities for visitors of the principality, who can undergo all kinds of attacks or even be mistaken for spies. Argos also offers plenty of interesting places, like The Lightless Halls (especially if the characters have some relation to Black Sun and their Seekers) or the problematic Veracruz Passage.

The End of a Symbol: The obsession of the Order of Yehudah with the city of Ilion has made Asad Ad Arauk (Summoner Lv. 6, ♂), one of its leading members in Argos, devise a sinister plan. Invoking a Djinn for help, Asad attempts to steal the sword of The Messiah from The Chapel of War. With this simple act, he will be able to destroy a very important symbol to the city and enormously undermine the spirit of its people. The old wizard is not a follower of Jihamath and has no connection to Kushistan, but he hopes that he can rise to a lead position in its organization.

However, the characters' Gnosis could draw them to the place of the robbery at the moment it happens, witnessing how the monstrous Djinn kills the guards and priests. Immediately after this, the creature will throw itself at them, while Asad enters the chapel with his other servants to escape with the sword. If he gets it, he will start traveling to Kushistan with the artifact, where he will seek to futher precipitate the war.

Unfortunately, the situation will worsen for the characters, since if they show any supernatural powers during the combat will be accused, as scapegoats, of the robbery of the artifact. In such case, both Argos and The Church will stop at nothing to kill them, which leave them only one way out: chase down Asad and recover the ancient sword. Upon succeeding, they would be considered "saints", and their special skills would be mostly ignored.

Of course, with The Order of Yehudah and The Inquisition on their heels, getting it might be more difficult than one imagines.

Crazy Noelia: While traveling through The Gray Mark, the characters encounter a strange situation. A wild and lively young woman named Noelia (Thief Lv. 2, ♀) is building a large wooden boat. Strangely, she's doing it several miles from the coast, on the stony deserts of The Mark. All alone and without anyone to help her, the girl says that this is not a problem since the boat doesn't go to sea, but that the sea will be the one going to the boat. Noelia says that she had a prophetic dream in which she saw a great flood, and a divine force told her that the only way to salvation was to have faith and build a boat in the middle of the desert. Unfortunately, nobody believes her.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

When she sees the characters claims that she also dreamed about them, explaining to them that, believe it or not, they are destined to help her. Without missing a beat, she will ask them to go to Bastionblanco and bring her some cargo that another visionary like herself has prepared; if they do it, the characters "will take an important step toward attaining their destiny." If they accept, they will have to travel to Llanoverde, where they will have to collect and transport a car full of boards. Interestingly, the road will be attacked by a host of robbers, who seem to want to confiscate the shipment by order of their superiors. And if that weren't enough, they will begin having strange hallucinations, taking the forms frightful monsters.



But... what is really happening? The truth is that Noelia is neither crazy nor has any kind of supernatural sight. She is just a smuggler highly targeted by the authorities of Argos, and with many enemies among the local bandits. She poses as "Chosen of God" hoping that some religious fanatic in the principality decides to help her selflessly, as she is unable to travel in person. The characters are probably not aware of it, but the boards are stuffed with a powerful hallucinogenic drug made of Ramalen Sap; and it is a small leak of the product that produces the unexplainable visions.

Common Characters of Argos

Here a series of common characters of Argos are shown. The following statistics have been composed without taking Creation Points into account.

Crusaders/Crusaders of the White Cross

Class: Weaponsmaster; **Level** 3
Initiative 70/50/20; **LP** 155; **AT** Partial Plate, Open; **Attack** 120; **Dodge** 120; **Weapon** Long Sword/Bastard Sword; **Damage** 60/90
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 8 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 8 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Ride 70, Leadership 20, Notice 20 (40), Search 10 (30), Composure 10, Feats of Strength 75, Resist Pain 25.
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 40, PsR 40.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Middle-Class/Low-Class: Athleticism +10, Ride +10, Climb +10, Notice +10, To track +5, History (local) +10, Resist Pain +10, Occult (religion) +15.

Nobility: Athleticism +10, Ride +10, Leadership +20, Notice +10, Composure +5, History (local) +15, Occult (religion) +10.

Table 20: Argos

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-20	Low-Class	Some clothes, rations for a few days, a weapon of poor quality, a very basic travel kit. 3 CC.
21-85	Middle-Class	A couple changes of clothes, rations for a week, a couple of weapons, complete travel equipment and some personal items. 75 SC.
86-100	Nobility	Several changes of clothes, good food for more than a week, a couple of good quality weapons and light or medium armor, a horse, a cross or rosary or another religious symbol of gold or ivory, full travel equipment and some personal items. 100 GC.

The Lands of Al-Enneth

They call the Lands of Al-Enneth to all countries in where the main language is the Jashú. More than 1,000 years ago it covered the Caliphate of Kushistan and the Empire of Estigia, although with the emergence of Abel the Salazar Desert was included as well. These principalities are all located in the south of The Old Continent, and are mostly semi-arid or densely populated lands.

Etymologically, Al-Enneth means "the destined people", a term often used to denote to the Enneath, followers of the deity Jihamath. The appearance of these lands goes back over 3,000 years, shortly after the death of Eyad, the first of The Enlightened Ones. Since then, the political landscape of these regions has suffered dozens of relevant changes, but their dogmas have always preserved some sort of uniformity in policy and way of life.

Government and the religion are intrinsically bound to their culture, because the rulers have always been commanders of the faith. In antiquity, the community was under the supervision of The Great Sultan, but the division between Zafires and Mulares led to the separation between Kushistan and Estigia, which has remained until now.

The legal system of these lands is completely independent. Even during their integration into Abel, their leaders always tried to avoid compliance with the Imperial edicts using any kind of trick. Moreover, slavery has always been deeply rooted in the culture of Al-Enneth, and while not all their people share a taste for it, it has been maintained to varying degrees. Naturally, Imperial agents have chased after slave traders and their buyers but, nevertheless, the market for human beings continues to exist in the shadows.

Perhaps no part of Gaia has had so many problems with the Empire as the Lands of Al-Enneth. Separated by religion from the beliefs of Abel, its people have always felt subjugated, forced to profess a creed in which they have no faith. Despite this imposition, the people and rulers managed to keep their religion alive, although entailed to do it in privacy. Such a situation has only strengthened the ties that bind their people together, creating a source of cultural opposition and refusing to open its borders to outside influence.

The last decades have led them to the final distance from The Empire, for since the mandate of Lascar Giovanni the Al-Enneth states began to conduct themselves in an ever more independent way. The death of Elias was merely the perfect excuse to sever ties from Abel and The Church.

Common Characters of Al-Enneth

Here a series of common characters of Al-Enneth are shown. The following statistics have been composed without taking Creation Points into account.

Nomad

Class: Ranger; **Level** 1
Initiative 55/25; **LP** 110; **AT** None; **Attack** 55; **Dodge** 50; **Weapon** Short Bow/Dagger; **Damage** 35
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 6 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 25, Ride 15, Hide 15, Stealth 15, Trap Lore 30, Poisons 20, Notice 65, Search 65, Tracking 60, Forging 20, Slight of Hand 25.
Special: Nomad Module
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 30, PsR 30.

KUSHISTAN

Capital: Karjah.
Population: 6,900,000+
Ethnic Groups: Tayahar (97%), Asher (2%).
Government: Theocratic Monarchy.
Languages: Jashú, Latin (minority).
Religion: Enneath (following Zafir).
Technology: 3.
Denomym: Kushistaní.
Flag: An elaborate structure of curved lines that form the tree of creation.
Masculine Names: Abb-Al-Qadir, Ahmad, Fahim, Fihr, Hadi, Hashim, Ibrahim, Khalid, Muhammad, Rabbi, Rashid, Shakir, Tahir, Umar, Wasim, Yushua, Ziya.
Feminine Names: Alya, Ayda, Farah, Fátima, Ghadir, Hadiyya, Ihsan, Jalila, Karam, Lamya, Malaika, Muna, Saira, Tabassum, Thana, Thurayya, Zahra.
Last Names: Abbar, Abdul, Karim, Abu Nayvan, Abu Zinada, Al-Ajou, Al-Saidi, Ansarr, Ashoor, Attar, Baesham, Baroom, Bohaimid, Fitaihi, Jamil, Mufarrij, Nassif, Sa´id, Silsilah.

Kushistan is the second largest nation in The Old Continent, surpassed only by Abel itself, and also one of the few surviving powers from The Age of Chaos. The people of Gaïa consider it the greatest exponent of the Lands of Al-Enneth, thanks to the efforts of its strong economy and military power.

Possessing a vast surface area, Kushistan is full of stony deserts, barren mountains and very arid places, which compose most of their locations. There are also, to a lesser degree, green areas and grasslands considered true jewels of the nation. Their wealth is due to the enormous natural resources of gems and precious metals in many of their mountains. This has enabled the country to build a powerful infrastructure of manufacturing and trade that has little to envy from The Coast of Commerce.

The control of Kushistan has an intricate pyramid character, whose apex is The Great Sultan Omar Ben Sharif, the supreme political and religious leader, who in turn controls a multitude of Sultans scattered throughout the principality. Each of these men, including Omar himself, has his own private army composed of highly trained soldiers loyal to their ideals who would not hesitate to die for their sovereign. These warriors are especially adept at exploiting the natural elements their territory, making them almost invincible when it comes to defense. In any case, and if necessary, The Great Sultan could invoke a holy war, requesting the cooperation of all Kushistaní capable of fighting for their nation.

Kushistan has a close relationship with Estigia and Baho, with both countries having agreed on mutual support against any outer threat. The Great Sultan, who is an old man tired of all the fighting he has had to live through, wants to avoid a war with Argos, but the hatred that the rest of Sultans professed to "the dogs of Abel," as they call them, seems to indicate the otherwise. The situation has become even more critical with the emergence of a new Enlightened, Jaser Sal Kahlim, an energetic supporter of the Zafires, which proclaims a very dangerous radical ideology.

Culture and Society

Unique customs and ancient traditions are the main feature of this ancient land that hasn't undergone a major change for centuries. The Kushistaníes are people of very diverse morality, maintaining a system of values incomprehensible to other civilizations of Gaïa. They are able to accept slavery and torture as something natural and yet are pious to the needy or the destitute. They adapt well to hardships, since they are used to dealing with them since birth.

Although Latin is a language widely practiced, the nation has its own official language, Jashú, spoken by the nomads, the elderly and people who have no relationship with other principalities. Generally, most people live in crowded cities, although many others live nomadically, traveling from one place to another through the deserts in large caravans. Although the country is extremely wealthy, the money lies in the hands of very few, so there is large number of poor folk (although few beggars).

Women have a secondary role in society, and are almost always forced to depend on a man to survive. If a childless woman isn't married within three years after the death of her father or husband, she loses any property or title she has, which immediately goes to the heritage of The Sultan.

The official religion of the country is Enneath in its most orthodox facet, so that most of its people consider themselves Zafires. However, years of compulsory reserve and secrecy have considerably softened the overwhelming bigotry of their devotees in the past. Paradoxically, a large percentage of society feels more hatred towards Christianity from the fact that it was imposed, rather than the religion itself.

Kushistan law has always been very severe, because breaking the rules means following the path of Qamar, the dark path of equivocal. Prisons are unpopular, and most punishments are physical, involving flogging, marking the offender with a branding iron in the face (commonly, with a symbol representing the crime), or even amputations. Foreigners, who except for merchants aren't usually welcomed, especially suffer the weight of the law.

The country is currently divided into ten major sultanates that only report to The Great Sultan. Each lord has supreme power in his region and is governed independently.

Since separating from The Empire the slavery, which had been used during centuries in secret, has become an acceptable practice, so a rich market for hundreds of slave traders who bring prisoners from all over world has reborn.

Regarding the Supernatural

One of the few things that the people of Kushistan and The Church are in partial agreement with is that supernatural forces are generally bad. Many believe that such powers come from the Jinn, who granted them to man to divert us from the right path, while others argue that anyone with such gifts is a Djinn in disguise.

Either way, magic or similar disciplines are not something officially persecuted by the government of Kushistan. Today, a person could publicly declare that he is a wizard without getting more than suspicious glances of distrust or disbelief. However, individuals endowed with magical powers should probably remain anonymous, as people tend to automatically blame them for everything bad that happens, and often end up being expelled from the communities where they live. Therefore, there are very few who have so far shown their powers in public, always trying to seek the approval and patronage of the Sultans. Naturally, if somebody openly uses magic, Ki techniques or psychic powers to harm others, a public punishment serving as an example to others would be handed out.

The Inquisition, expelled from the territory, is still involved in Kushistan, but it is forced to do so incognito, concealing the identity of its members to avoid being persecuted.

The History of Kushistan

Sometimes it's very difficult to follow the long history of Kushistan, because there are many who claim that their origins even predate the rise of the Empire of Solomon. To trace the beginnings of this nation it is necessary to go back to the emergence of Eyad, the first of The Enlightened Ones, who proclaimed the revelations of Jihamath to his followers with the objective of having them spread worldwide. In that age, around 2,700 before Christ, most of the territory was populated by nomadic clans and independent city-states, which gradually became Enneath believers.

Centuries later, several Sultans took control of the regions, which began the long period known as The Age of the Ten Cities. Those were the days of splendor and conflicts, in which the alliances between the sultanates were forged and broken as soon as new wars erupted. This prolonged situation suddenly ended 300 years later when the floating citadel Elura´amman, the largest city of the Ebudan, descended from the skies granting its support to the small Sultan Maatalla Al Alexandria. The lords of Elura´amman assured that the fate of Maatalla was to become the people's guide, giving birth to a conflict (The War of the Sultans) that ended a decade later with the recognition of Maatalla as Great Sultan. That way, Kushistan was born as a strong unified nation that quickly rose as the greatest power in the south.

But after years of expansion and progress, came a long period of hardships and political turmoil. Domestically, a radical faction of the clergy tried to gain control of the government, provoking a civil war of grand proportions, and multiple sultan rebellions tore the country. However, all these paled in comparison to the terrible war that was coming, because an offense caused the Duk´zarist citadel Nogos Roxxas to declare its intention to kill half of the population of Kushistan. The height of the conflict occurred when Elura´amman and Nogos Roxxas clashed in skies over the old Kushistaní capital, destroying each other and instantly causing over 300,000 deaths with their fall. Such a holocaust and the loss of the Great Sultan made the Duk´zarist consider the insult settled, leaving Kushistan in a serious crisis. The country, severely fragmented, reverted to an age similar to the Age of the Ten Cities and remained so for several centuries.

In the third century before Christ, Abdel Majid Al Karjah, the most powerful Sultan at the time, managed to unite his people to face the invasion of Yinnun spirits from the desert of Salazar. His victory, which many believed impossible, made him Great Sultan, thus recreating Kushistan as a nation. A renewed splendor and the close bonds of friendship with the Estigian Empire marked the following period. The relationship of both countries even allowed a brief and unsuccessful attempt to merge the two powers into one, a plan that only failed because of some differences between Zafires and Mulares.

The appearance of The Messiah was a hard blow to the religious government of Kushistan, since many were fascinated by the words of Abel. The nation was on the verge of starting a new civil war when Thanos Shetep, one of the Apostles, proclaimed that these lands were to become part of the eleven Holy Kingdoms. However, Thanos spent very little time in Kushistan, making the creation of the kingdom little more than a utopia. The following years were a truly tense time with the other Holy Kingdoms, and Kushistan had to deal with continuous skirmishes and battles on the frontier of Argos. Still, the country suffered no other significant problems until the War of God. Although during the first months the Sultans thought that Rah would ignore the lands of Al-Enneth completely, the armies of Judas soon hit them with the same ferocity as the Holy Kingdoms. Fortunately, though most of cities were destroyed, its people took advantage of their knowledge of the land to defend themselves in the mountains and plains, achieving remarkable victories.

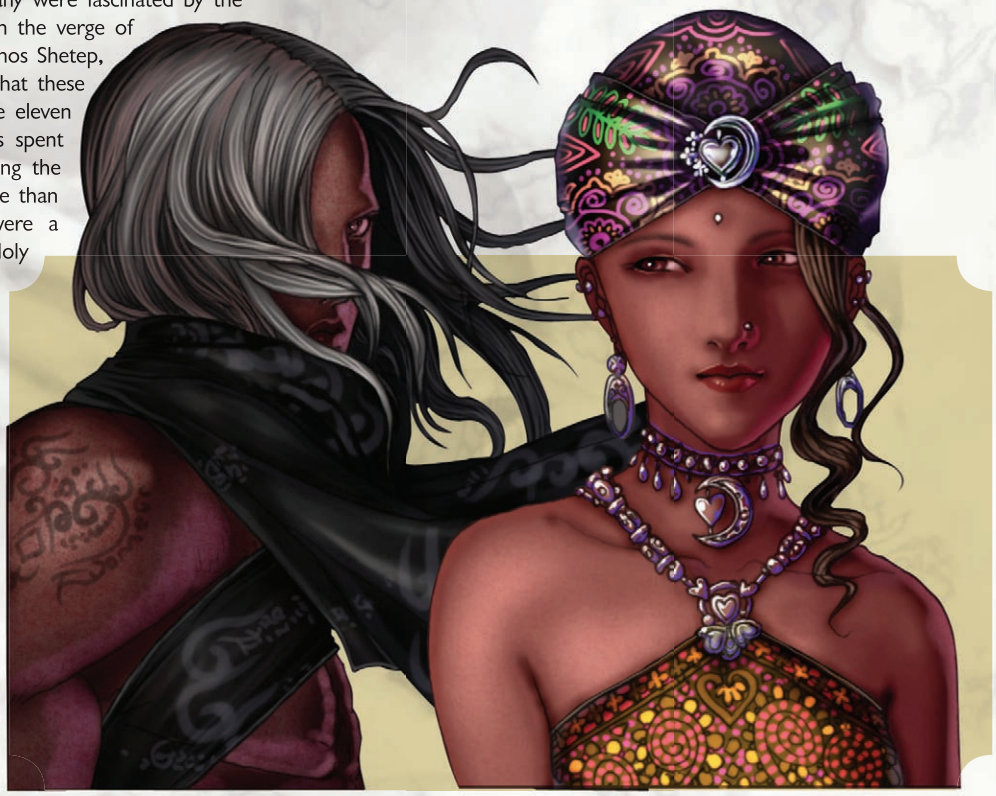
Inevitably, the end of the war left Kushistan in a very weakened state, but not nearly as deplorable as its neighbors. Therefore, when rumors arrived of the creation of a Sacred Holy Empire, the Sultans realized the enormous threat it posed to its nation in the future, so they decided to create a supreme state, unifying the south as the "Lands of Al-Enneth" to counter it. Its first move was to exploit the situation in Argos to orchestrate a strong offensive against the Holy Kingdom, so in year 245 they staged a major incursion to the west, achieving great victories. However, Argos resisted more than the Sultans had expected, stretching the war over two years until Zhorne landed by surprise on the coast of Kushistan with an enormous contingent of troops. Before the soldiers could return to the borders, the nation was already under severe control of The Empire.

What the Sultans most feared had happened.

Thus began the long period Kushistan locals call "The Occupation," when the nation was forced to become a principality of Abel. Stripped of their great military power, the Kusistanis soon realized they would be able to retain some influence through economy, so they reluctantly took advantage of every benefit The Empire could provide them. Slowly but surely, the nation managed to recover a part of their former power. Naturally, its relationship with Argos was marked by continuous problems and throughout the following centuries both principalities were engaged in twelve conflicts under Imperial supervision, which Kushistan usually lost.

The last century has been especially beneficial for Kushistan, as has been characterized by lucrative business with Gabriel, which strengthened the country's economic resources, and the relax in the supervision of Abel, allowing the country to reinforce its armies beyond what the High Senate had allowed.

From the moment the Supreme Archbishop Eljared became the leader of The Church, the Great Sultan Omar Ben Sharif began to prepare himself for any kind of event. Thus, when the Emperor died and The Azur Alliance formed, he didn't hesitate to declare an end to the occupation and consider his country an independent nation.



Kushistanís of Tayahar ethnicity

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li


Zanibar
Trias
†Black Port
Eye of the Hurricane
Forneo Archipelago
Veria
Nisi
Ikwah
Anansi River
Jwahir Mountains
Wuppertal
†Mwanatabu
†Kabalaika
Chasm of Oba
†Haji
†Harekratia
Estigia
†Al Kairr
†Necropolis
Al-Quayan Mountains
Sharanya Mountain Range
†Agihwan
Meskhenet Desert
†Halls of Kings
Glockner Mountains
†Port Tahar
Keltia
†Karjah
Iometh River
Salazar Desert
†Tower of Dreams
†Fortress of Nakhti
†Forgotten City
†Haruma
Temple of Ka
Great Dunes of Hatifah
†Enuma Jannah
Senna Desert
Nasser Mountains
Sand Sea
†Oasis of Mahj-abi
†Oasis of Birds
Ribera
Kushistan
Muhassin
Palm of Jihamath
Salazar
†Nahime
†Pylaia
Madha
Samutai Mountains
Furrows of Ibb
Desert of Destiny
†Lakhdar
Lake of Canto del Gallo
Valentia
†Serrano
Natara Desert
†The Nest
Nil ab Burath Mountain Range
†Garmeh Farath
Gharb Plains
Veracruz Passage
†Irinfahrat
Nanwe
†Khwarel
†Ilion
Eurasia Mountain Range
Qusam River
†Zarb Kiná
Mabo River
Nanwe Jungle
Dun'u Gualai Abyss
†Sauda Citadel
Tylon River
†Mabanu
MAP KEY
Capital
Metropolis
City
Building
Fortress
Path
Road
0 250 500 750 Kilometers
0 250 500 Miles

The Djinn

The Djinn, also popularly known as genies, are powerful spirits of lost civilizations to which the Enneath culture usually equate with demons. They are not necessarily evil, but they like to play with people's fate, deceiving us to their amusement. The followers of Jihamath believe that the Djinn offer easy ways out to mankind, making people stray from the path of Inara and from the effort that everyone must follow towards enlightenment. Their powers are huge and it's very difficult to destroy them.

Although most of people consider the Djinn as little more than an ancient myth, these ancestral spirits really do exist. They typically remain bind to places or objects, so their action range is very limited. Its form is invisible to human eyes, but they can also take physical bodies. Sometimes, they adopt human form to better confuse people and to temporarily mingle in society, although the duration in which they can remain thus is limited.

The Djinn are structured in a rigid hierarchy that separates them into three groups according to power. The first is Yinnun, or lesser spirits, who enjoy meddling in the lives of man merely for entertainment. The second level is the Al-Djinn, or great genies. According to myth, all the Al-Djinn were locked away by the Kalih during antiquity in the Lands of Al-Enneth, binding them to many rules that they are eternally forced to follow, so that they intervene as little as possible in man's destiny. If anyone finds an object where a Djinn is, they obtain a limited power over the genie, although the creature will always try to trick its "owner" to release it. Finally, at the top of the hierarchy are the Yaqaayes Al-Aroth, or the four great elemental spirits. Its power is almost equivalent to gods; in fact, in some places they have been worshiped as such. Their names, which have inspired many classes of elementals, are Jinn (Lord the Wind), Ifrit (Master of Fire), Marid (Queen of Water), and Faun (Spirit of Earth). They have been living in the flow of souls for thousands of years, place from which some of them can be summoned in a similar way as one of the Great Beasts.

Relevant Geographical Features

Both large deserts full of sand and immense stone mountains ranges, gorges and brown hills, characterize Kushistan's geography. The altitude of the territory is very diverse and at the center of the principality is an enormous plateau. There are very few green spaces, around which are built the largest towns and cities.

The Nasser Mountains: These mountains divide the northern flatlands, where the capital is located, from the central plateau that forms The Palm of Jihamath. They have a multitude of passages between the rocks, allowing easy transit. The mountains are the stage for a group of famous bandits. Over a century ago, Almir Al Nasser, the Sultan controlling these territories, was charged with various crimes that forced him to flee to the mountains with many of his followers. There they formed a group of outlaws and were devoted to raiding the merchants traveling towards the capital. The thieves of Almir, as they still go by, try to return his dynasty to its former glory. They try that their current leader, Haroum Al Nasser (Thief Lv. 4, ♂), is recognized by The Great Sultan as the rightful owner of those lands. Nobody knows exactly where Nasser is hiding, but Sultans have spent years looking for him without any result.

The Palm of Jihamath: This is the name given to the plateau that occupies central Kushistan. In this region there are many nomads and tribes traveling from one place to another to trade. Caves and mines with significant deposits of precious stones flood The Palm, so the Sultans have enormous interest in their operations.

Senna Desert: The Senna, the largest of the three stony deserts in Kushistan, stretches to the west serving as border between Lucrecio and Argos. The vast desert is full of slopes, cracks, mountains and canyons with hundreds of natural hideaways. Despite its inhospitable appearance, there are many nomadic tribes in Senna, who survive thanks to the scarce hunt and the secret oasis that only they know of.

The warriors of Kushistan have been taking advantage of their knowledge of this land for centuries to stop any attack coming from the west. There used to always be a few scouting groups, but in past months The Great Sultan has increased the military presence in the area, fearing the worst.

Nil ab Burath Mountain Range: This formation of steep stone needles, which delineate the border of Nanwe, form the largest mountain mass in Kushistan. Narrow and steep, there are few who decide to live there because of the strong gales that whip them. Scaling the mountains sounds crazy, since most are composed of a strange sharp rock that cuts like a knife. This material, known as Alfaruth, is very valuable for weapon production (especially on arrowheads, for its great penetrative power).

The Gharb Plains: On the principality's southern border, between the borders of Salazar and Nanwe, are The Gharb Plains, the most fertile area in the principality. Great meadows filled with lush dense forests are scattered everywhere. Many smaller villages take advantage of the rich agriculture in the fields, providing food to the metropolis of Garneh Farath.

Samutai Mountains: The Samutai is a small strip of mountains located in center of Kushistan. They are considered a sacred place for the Enneath, because it is where the first Enlightened One, Eyad, received the revelations of Jihamath to lead to mankind towards the True Faith. It is said that somewhere of Samutai, known only by the highest members of the clergy, is The Tree of Enlightenment, where the first words of the creator are still kept.

The mountains are full of natural resources, including large emerald veins, rubies, and other valuable precious jewels. However, the sanctity of the site keeps them from being exploited. A dedicated group of warriors, the Habrauk, travel through the mountains making sure that no bandit breaches the ancestral traditions and tries to steal the treasures contained within.

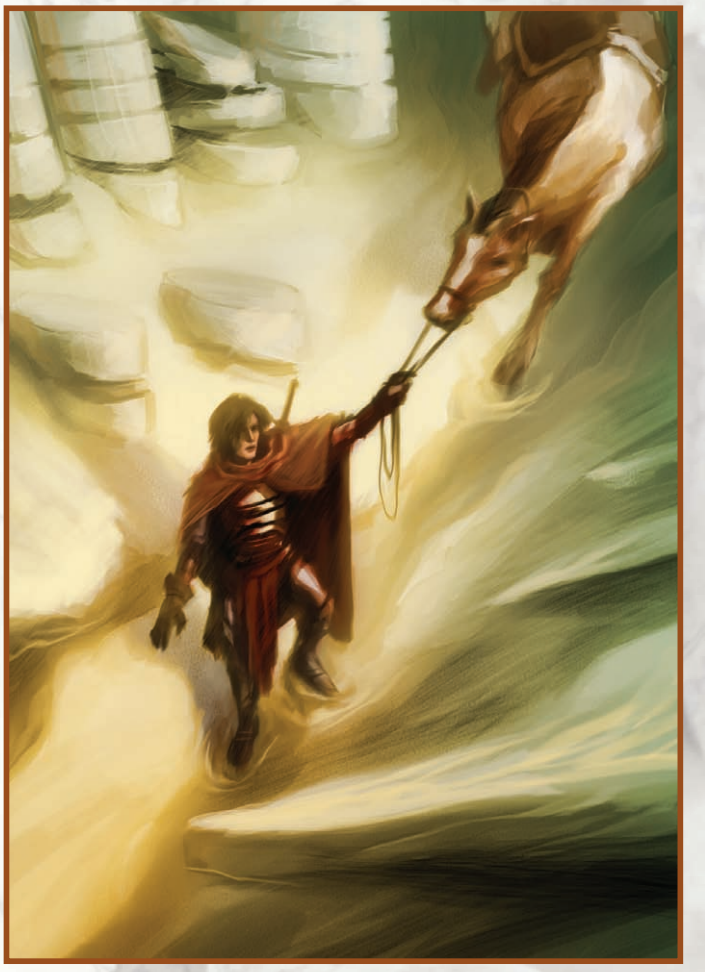
Desert of Destiny: This desert may not be the greatest of the three in Kushistan, but is certainly the most inhospitable. Over the hundreds of miles that compose it there is only stone, dust, and sharp rock needles rising everywhere. Even nomads try to avoid this place, because there isn't the slightest sign of life in them. Its name comes from one old tradition that says if a person has lost their course of his destiny and can cross it on foot, he will undoubtedly find a new path in life. Naturally, there are few who attempt it and even fewer who succeed.

These inhospitable places hide several Al-Djinn locked away from ages past. They are tied to specific places and their area of action is very limited, but when somebody enters it, they will exert its influence by causing strange events or calling elementals.

Somewhere in the desert is the Temple of Yaqaayes Al-Aroth, where it's possible to contact the lords of the Djinn and to sign a pact with one of them.

The Furrows of Ibb: Near the immense plateau that occupies part of central Kushistan, there is an endless mix of canyons and crevices. Its structure, chaotic and very rare, forms a complex maze of underpasses. While some of The Furrows of Ibb are familiar and journeyed (in fact, two of them are used quite often to transport goods from north to south in the principality), there are still countless ones of which nothing is known.

Visually, most of these furrows are narrow steps of high stone walls, which are almost impossible to climb. It is quite certain that they were populated in the past; since strange stone bridges can sometimes be seen in them connecting different walls and penetrating into the depths. It's said that the ruins of sultanates and lost civilizations from previous eras are still in some large openings that can be accessed only through grottos and caves.



The Furrows of Ibb

Natara Desert: Between Mountains of Samutai and the Herabrim River it is the Natara Desert, the desert of secrets. It receives this strange sobriquet for being a place full of stories and legends that have survived to this day. The desert is a dark place, plagued with sharpened needles of stone whose shadows loom in the sunset over the vacant sites, giving it all a gloomy appearance. There are also many dry river basins, suggesting that these lands once enjoyed fertile and dense vegetation in the past.

Sultans have no power over the desert, and nomadic tribes wandering through Natara are not too friendly; in fact, most reject visitors and refuse to provide assistance to them even in cases of extreme necessity. There are rumors circulating that some are extremely violent and try to kill any foreigner they see wandering into their areas. The Kushistaníes avoid crossing these nomads whenever they can, because they are unsure of how to deal with them.

True to its legend, there are remains of ancient cities around Natara, now unpopulated, that once belonged to the former residents of the principality. Some are so old that the historians date them back to the dawn of Kushistan's creation. The tradition tells the nomads not to enter the rubble, because they believe that something is there that brings bad luck and rouses the wrath of its deceased inhabitants. Tol Rauko knows that there is at least one great metropolis dominated by ancient spirits.

Places of Interest

Both the large and bustling cities of Kushistan and the many strange are extremely interesting and flashy places to visit.

Khwarel

(Metropolis, Population 820,000+)

Khwarel of the Thousand Minarets, the city of silk, the three circles, the jewel of Kushistan... by all those names and more is known the city of Khwarel, one of the most populated metropolises of Gaïa. Located along the riverbed of Qusam River in a vast green area, the city emerges as a shining pearl, with its white buildings and its gold-domed minarets. Approaching it, it's surprising to see that it's formed in three concentric circles, an example of the organization uncommon in the country. The inner circle is called The Eye of the Sultan, in whose center stands the Palace of Shamardazhi, and the market square, where thousands of traders provide their daily best. The next circle is known as "The Lucky District." The most opulent buildings serve as housing for the wealthy nobles of the city. Lots of fruit tree gardens provide an idyllic environment and a source of food for songbirds that fly to them. Finally, "The District of Tears" groups everyone who has to work for a living. Over time, the need for space has led to houses built in the most unsuspecting places, so the distribution of the streets is completely chaotic and twisting. Throughout the city there are a series of towers that act like guard spots, as well as summoning the faithful to prayer.

Governing the city from the Palace of Shamardazhi is Djafar ibn Musafar (Summoner Lv. 6, ♂), called by his people "The Ivory Sultan", an attractive young man of regal presence. There are rumors claiming that several Djinns are in his service (although after years of investigation the Inquisition could never get any evidence of it), and often walks the streets of the city disguised as a beggar. According to some, before marrying princess Zobeida, daughter of the former Sultan, he was a lone traveler who roamed the Natara Desert. Djafar has as his vizier the old Ali Al Muyadm (Wizard Lv. 6, ♂), a wise and pragmatic man who holds office honestly.

The products for which Khwarel is famous are their silk weavings, spices and ivory.

Karjah

(Metropolis, Population 780,000+)

Karjah, lordship of The Great Sultan, is the present capital of Kushistan and also the oldest standing city of the nation. Built on an enormous oasis that provides plenty of water, the sprawling metropolis is a green garden full of trees and vegetation that has little to do with the surrounding barren landscapes.

The beauty of Karjah's architecture is the ultimate inspiration for every city of the nation. It contains exquisite palaces of arched design and lush gardens everywhere. Majestic and reigning over all the other buildings, is the magnificent Palace of Azzaraia, made of pure ivory and crowned with golden domes. It is home to The Great Sultan Omar Ben Sharif (Freelance Lv. 4, ♂), the top political and religious authority in Kushistan, whom all the other Sultans revere are their lord.

Illustrated by Luis NCT

All this splendor contrasts with the slums located in the southern sector, where low-roofed houses are made of mud and reed. Despite its size, Karjah continues to grow, and some of the new districts that have spread beyond the protection of the oasis, forced to use the cold stone floor of the desert like bed.

One of the most controverted places is the Market of Stalls, an enormous shopping area in the city stretching throughout dozens of streets. In addition to the mud establishments, every day the market is composed of thousand of fabric bazaars and stalls in which every kind of product is put up for sale, even the most bizarre. Only the great square is reserved for the sale of slaves brought from all corners of Gaïa. Currently, most popular are the oriental young girls, considered a luxury among the upper class.

The Order of Yehudah and Samael have achieved a powerful presence in the city, but its members do not seem to be in good relationship, and both organizations are facing off for no other reason than their mutual hatred. The high master of Yehudah in the principality, Nouh ab Zaiah (Warrior Summoner Lv. 7, ♂) has decided to be known as wizard (though without admitting his order membership), offering his services as an advisor to the Sultan in supernatural matters. Omar distrusts of him, but so far his knowledge and powers have proven to be too useful to ignore.

Nahime

(Ruins, Unpopulated)

Nahime, birthplace of myths and lost legends. More than 2,000 years ago it was one of the greatest cities in the south, an incomparable jewel that stood proud as the capital of The Lands of Al-Enneth. Now, it's just one of the greatest ruins of antiquity.

The metropolis was destroyed during the final assault on the Duk´zarist citadel of Nogos Roxxas, which was probably the greatest disaster of its time. The dark citadel fought in the skies of Nahime against Elura´amman in a battle of titanic proportions, while the primordial powers of Kushistan penetrated inside Roxxas to keep it from triggering its Tear of Deflagration. Tragically, something went wrong and the power center exploded causing a disproportionate chain reaction that toppled both floating cities on the capital. The crash and subsequent explosion destroyed everything for miles around, thus killing over 300,000 citizens - Duk´zarist, Ebudan and men included.

What remains of Nahime is a wide circular crater in The Palm of Jihamath, near The Furrows of Ibb. Surrounded by enormous walls of stone, it's only accessible through the roof or by following an intricate maze of caves passing through the depths of the earth. Few guides know their location, and even these avoid visiting this sad place. Although is more common to simply call it the ruins of Nahime, the remains belong to both the old capital and the shattered citadels of Elura´amman and Nogos Roxxas. Fragments of the two floating cities still lie there, partially embedded in the earth, giving it a varied architectural landscape. The passage of time has not been kind to the ruins, but some buildings and monuments are still standing.

Even now, thousands of years after the brutal massacre, it still leaves a heavy resonance in The Wake, producing a sense of uneasiness and melancholy in those visiting the area. More than pain or suffering, the feeling that pervades everything is a deep sadness.

Throughout the centuries, bandits have tried to loot the remains, but few have succeeded. Tol Rauko decided to seal them long ago, though now its knights have been forced to retire against of their will, safeguarding the openings. Templars fear the possible consequences, for there are many ancient weapons that should not be reactivated, among which the most notable is The Tear of Deflagration itself, the main cannon of Nogos Roxxas. Either way, the truth is that Nahime is not as deserted as it seems. Not only some of the mystical protections remain active despite the years, but that the strange environment has attracted supernatural entities that are hidden among the rubble.

Irinfahrat

(Town, Population 5,000+)

To the south of the nation, between Nil ab Burath Mountains and the jungles of Nanwe, is the sultanate of Irinfahrat. In ancient times it was an independent city in the Lands of Al-Enneth, and within them lived a racially mixed tribe people of Kushistan and Nanwe, the Fahratites. However, the zone was officially annexed to the Kushistaní Empire centuries ago, and most its citizens were forced to live as slaves for a long time.

Today, since Irinfahrat is surrounded by land with few natural resources, its people are born survivors. The town itself consists of low buildings of mud and wood, where the only building that stands out from the others is the Sultan's palace (thus it's no wonder it makes the other buildings look bland by comparison). Despite their relative poverty, the inhabitants of Irinfahrat are quite warm and good natured once they trust outsiders. However, if anything distinguishes this place, it's the quality of cuisine and talented chefs. Even lacking a large variety of foods, its people also use delicious recipes that have gained popularity not just in Kushistan, but also in many other principalities. There are some who travel countless miles to try some of its legendary dishes. Unfortunately, being fairly isolated from the rest of the nation because of its complicated geographic situation, most visits are made by boat, sailing along the coastline.

The Sultan of the Fahratites was until recently Fadir Al Dawla (Ilusionist Lv. 3, ♂), a likeable but eccentric man who has dedicated his life to the developing his own culinary theories and creating new dishes. Not long ago, Fadir grew tired of the lack of recognition that, according to his opinion, its town deserves, and began to traveling all over Gaïa after temporarily delegate the government of the sultanate to his son Hissam (Freelance Lv 1, ♂). Since then he wanders around, testing his ideas in other lands with the intention of helping Kushistan to recover the splendor that it once had long ago.

Garmeh Farath

(Metropolis, Population 567,000+)

Garmeh Farath is the main power in southern Kushistan, and the territory of the Sultan Hakim Al Farath (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 4, ♂), a young and energetic man who fervently wishes to become the supreme lord of the country. The city is considered a holy place, being the resting spot for all The Enlightened Ones from the last few centuries. Their remains are in the Chapel of Seven Halls, a building that always generated continuous disputes between the local government and The Church.

Perhaps the most striking architectural feature of the large city are its high towers of rounded peaks, called "Sentinels of the Stars", which adorn the landscape from every angle.

A high number of slaves from Nanwe were brought to Garmeh Farath dedicated to working the fields and operating the diamond mine located in the suburbs. Many citizens do not approve of this because it has caused the loss of countless jobs. People pay its frustration with the slaves, something that the Sultan's guard has strict orders to avoid.

Recently, the city has really been revolutionized with the appearance of Jaser Sal Kahlim (Freelance Lv. 7, ♂), an Enlightened One that claims to have received his revelation from the Kalih Yareht himself, lord of war and revenge. Jaser promulgates that the destiny Jihamath has designated for Kushistan is to proclaim itself the new light of the world by replacing the "fallen Abel", and to lead mankind down the path of "The True Faith". Society is divided; because half believe that he is only a fake or a fanatic, while the rest fervently believe his words. In fact, thousands of immigrants travel throughout every region to go to Garmeh and listen to The Enlightened One, ready to start a holy war if necessary. For now, the Sultan Hakim tries to take advantage of Jaser using the power provided by the travelers in the city, but even he is unsure of how long he can control him for.

Lakhdar

(City, Population 41,000+)

The city of Lakhdar is located in the northern zone of the Nil ab Burath Mountain Range. Formerly a peaceful haven, the city lives sunken in terror by the oppression of its ruler, Ikram ab Iblis, also known as The Dark Sultan. Despite his human appearance, Ikram is a monstrous demon that uses his position to commit atrocities with impunity. While cities like Kushistan are not very friendly to foreigners, visitors must act with extreme caution in Lakhdar not to break any of the Sultan's rules, or otherwise they can end up in the torture chambers of the palace.

Samael members that live in the city know the true nature of the Sultan and the atrocities he commits. Disgusted by his actions, they have sworn to kill him using everything they have at their disposal, and they secretly combat his agents. The powerful leaders of this crusade are Aldina Ul Del Sálias (Wizard Lv. 6, ♀, Sylvain) and Keenan Dogmus (Warlock Lv. 7, ♂, Duk´zarist), which despite their many differences work together against Ikram, though they do not seem to have a chance of winning at the moment.

Haruma

(Metropolis, Population 126,000+)

Haruma, city of the words, is the birthplace of Enneath knowledge. During the years of "The Occupation", most of the books, parchments and papyruses were hidden here, and in many cases were transcribed on the walls of the caves that run deep. Over time, most scholars moved to the city to study them, and gradually Haruma was transformed into an enlightenment place. Filled with libraries and schools, its people value knowledge and feel uncomfortable with the warlike environment that is infused in the nation. The city maintains a good relationship with Lucrecio, which greatly irritates the Sultans of other provinces.

The Sultan of Haruma is the young Adel Razzag (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 5, ♂). Law student at The Great University of Lucrecio, Adel is a man obsessed with justice. He makes sure that everyone fully complies with it in his city and, foreigner or not, everybody is treated equally by the authorities. The Sultan hates slavery and will not allow it in his land, which results in the rejection from certain nobles who wish to take advantage of cheap manual labor. Some families are planning to assassinate him, but at the moment have not found the right opportunity.

Monica Miro (Freelance Lv. 1, ♀), the fiancée of King Guillermo of Argos, lives in Haruma, but contrary to what everybody thinks, she has not been kidnapped at all. The truth is that she fell in love with a scholar named Almir Faruk (Wizard Lv. 4, ♂), member of the Magus Order, which has a small secret academy in the city.

The Nest

(Natural Feature, Unpopulated)

One of the most dangerous sites in the Natara Desert is what the nomads call "The Nest," a great shell-shaped mountain, pierced by interconnecting caves. The place seems to be home to a countless swarm of giant insects, remotely similar to red ants, which sometimes go out to hunt at night in the vicinity. There are various types and sizes, but the fact is that some individuals claim to have seen monstrosities as big as a horse. The behavior of these insects is very strange, since sometimes they act chaotically while at other moments seem to be perfectly organized. An old legend is told, to which very few believe, claiming that there's something called The Ant Queen deep within the bowels of Gaïa, a sensual creature half human and half insect, that has the ability to control all the inhabitants of The Nest. Her name is T´arazza and remains semi lethargic inside of a secret chamber in the heart of the complex, protected by several of her praetorians.

Ikram Ab Iblis, The Dark Sultan

Ikram was a weak man, whose shakable character provoked the derision of all those around him. Because of this, the Sultan grew up accumulating a deep hatred towards the world, but his cowardice kept him from releasing his wrath. One night, his younger brother tried to assassinate him, stabbing him repeatedly and later throwing him into the river. Surprisingly, the terror caused the Sultan to temporarily cling to life, so his dying body was found outside the city by doctor Schwarzwald. The crazy professor was suddenly interested in Iblis and, at death's doors, he asked him what he desired the most. At that moment of terror and hatred, the Sultan responded that he yearned for unparalleled power with which to punish the world and delight in the cries of humanity's suffering.

Laughing, Schwarzwald's response was terse:

"So be it".

Using his tecnomagical knowledge he dragged him from death, replacing his blood with vital fluids of various demons, substituting his organs with supernatural artifacts and mixing his soul with a dark Djinn. Thus, the man in Iblis died to make room for something else; The Dark Sultan was born. A month later he appeared at his brother's coronation, accusing him of attempted assassination. Without missing a beat, he killed all the guards present for their implied treachery and strangled his brother to death with its own hands. From that moment on, everybody feared him.

Iblis keeps his mortal facade and maintains his apparent submission to The Great Sultan. However, he is a cruel creature that only lives to satisfy its macabre desires. Prisoner to a disturbing ambition, he seeks to gain absolute power and see humanity crushed under his heel. His servants think that he is a cruel and ruthless and are terrified of him, but even they don't imagine what he truly is. Only his closest servants, a group of wizards who worship him, know his intentions and help him to achieve them.

Although his personal power is titanic, one of his goals is to create agents in his own image. To do this, he abducts newborn babies and throws them into a huge pool of demon blood hidden under his palace. The substance infuses the innocent children, corrupting their essence and transforming them into diabolic monstrosities in the service of Sultan: The Kaarkathan. Thus, his dark army of creatures grows every day, hidden underneath the city.

His plan is to wait until the war with Argos is in full swing and take control of the country. Thus, corner by the danger of the knights in the west, Kushistan's only hope will be to submit to him to save the nation.

Iblis' only weakness is that he requires the souls of virgins to maintain his strength. This is why he takes a wife every week to feed on their lifeforce on the night of his honeymoon.



Illustrated by Salvador Espin

The slave market in Tahar

Her brief moments of lucidity, increasingly frequent, allow the insects to synchronize their actions. The Sultans cannot even imagine the terrible threat it could represent if she woke up, because in the worst case, T´arazza would have over 10,000 monstrous soldiers who would willingly fight for her to the death. Luckily, the truth is that The Ant Queen is a calm and reasonable creature, and it's unlikely that any conflict would start without a good reason.

The Temple of Ka

(Building, Population 30+)

At the foot of The Nasser Mountains is one of the most representative buildings of The Lands of Al-Enneth, the enormous Temple of Ka, or The Basilica of Destiny. This is the only major religious building that Kushistan has kept going during all these centuries, despite the continuous protests of The Church.

It's an extraordinary palace of stone full marble of columns, in whose walls are inscribed thousands of strange hieroglyphics devoid of all meaning. They are believed to be Jihamath formulas given to mankind thought Eyad so humanity could decipher its destiny and face its greatest challenges, which is still to come.

The temple is governed by a group of blind, fanatical priests who have plucked out their eyes to not see what, according to them, "humanity must not yet witness." Anyone can walk inside and try to decipher his fate but, but only The Great Sultans of Kushistan are allowed to enter the central chamber, because it's assumed that whatever is shown there is something that only they can (or should) understand.

Tol Rauko has always supported the preservation of The Temple of Ka. The Templars speculate that it serves to seal one of the most dangerous of the Sleepers, and trying to alter to its form or function could lead to tragic consequences for everybody.

The Order of Yehudah has long been concerned with the perceived power hidden inside Ka, although so far have not had the opportunity to study its secrets as it should. In the near future, they plan to attack the palace and control the alleged destructive force of which Tol Rauko speaks.

Port Tahar

(City, Population 26,000+)

The last decades have made Tahar the most important port city in Kushistan thanks to the continuous entry of goods. Years ago, the city was used to illegally smuggle slaves into the country, avoiding the Imperial checkpoints. Now that it has declared the legitimacy of such practices, the port is crammed with prisoners whom The Pirate Kings of The Inner Sea and Dwänholf sell to the merchants.

Tahar, full of small mud houses, is characterized by the confusing mazes of its alleys that cause more of one headache to its visitors. It's one of the few places where foreigners are welcomed with open arms, but the high crime rate remains a serious threat for visitors. If not careful, it's easy to end up unconscious and taken into the custody of one of the slave dealers.

The governor of the port is Sultan Haff (Thief Lv. 3, ♀), a handsome young man whose overwhelming beauty has become legendary in Kushistan. In reality "he" is a woman in disguise, who has been living the role of her brother who has been dead for over ten years.

Other Settlements: *Muhassin, Madha.*



Harod

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Adventures

The culture of Kushistan provides an environment very different from the one from other principalities, allowing the characters to venture into a land of ancient myths and traditions. Both their cities, full of all kinds of adventures, as its interesting places, give many exciting opportunities for combat or intense political conspiracies.

A Strange Request: At some point in which the characters are taking a walk through Lakhbar, a beautiful young woman will come running up to one of them (the most attractive) and will ask him if he wants to spend the night with her. If the characters ask why, the woman explains that her name is Izel Shilaya (Freelance Lv. 0, ♀) and that today, while going to the market, she crossed the Sultan Ikram ab Iblis and his entourage, and he smiled at her. Izel suspects that the Sultan will take her as wife next week, and since he only marries "pure" young girls, her only chance of getting out of marriage is to lose her virginity before he comes looking for her. And since they are foreigners and are not going to be there long, she imagines that they will not suffer any retaliation.

If someone accepts her proposal, the Sultan's guards will appear much earlier than expected, bursting into their room in the middle of the night to take to the girl, and incidentally, her companion. While they finish locking the character up, Ikram will angrily discover that he can no longer feed on Izal's soul. In order to vent his anger he will use the prisoner as a diversion, subjecting him to various tortures before letting him go (since he's not too interested in killing him). His party can try rescuing him from the dungeons or, on the contrary, plead for his life. If they decide on the latter, The Dark Sultan will demand that they find him a beautiful virgin in less than a day, which satisfies his expectations.

Naturally, if any of the characters discover the true identity of the Sultan, he will undoubtedly try to kill them all.

Common Characters of Kushistan

Here is a common characters of Kushistan. The following statistics have been composed without taking Creation Points into account.

Warrior of the Sultanate

Class: Acrobatic Warrior; **Level** 2
Initiative 70/45/20; **LP** 130; **AT** Leather; **Attack** 95; **Dodge** 110; **Weapon** Scimitar/Long Bow; **Damage** 55/35
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 8 STR: 7 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 45, Ride 25, Notice 25, Search 15, Tracking 15, Composure 20, Feats of Strength 25, Resist Pain 20, Forging 15.
Special: Nomad Module
Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 35, PsR 35.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Middle-Class /Low-Class: Athleticism +10, Ride +10, Climb +10, Notice +10, Tracking +15, Animals +10, Occult (religion) +5, Stealth +10.
Bourgeois /Nobility: Ride +10, Leadership +10, Persuasion +15, Style +10, History (local) +10, Occult (religion) +10, Appraisal +15.

Table 21: Kushistan

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-30	Low-Class	Clothes, some food, a few personal worthless items. 2 CC.
31-75	Middle-Class	A couple changes of clothes, food for a week, a weapon, a backpack with personal items. 50 SC.
76-100	Bourgeois	A couple changes of clothes, rations for a week, a weapon, a horse or camel, a backpack with personal items and another one with products for trade. 40 GC.
Priv.	*Nobility*	*Several changes of clothes, delicacies for more than a week, a few weapons, a good horse, several camels, several trunks with personal items and many other products for trade (among which is a bag with gems or precious stones). 300 CG.*

ESTIGIA

Capital: Al Kairr.
Population: 1,200,000+
Ethnic Groups: Taller (96%), Asher (3%).
Government: Theocratic Autocracy.
Languages: Jashú.
Religion: Enneath (following Mular), Aramense Faith.
Technology: 3.
Denomym: Estigian.
Flag: A seated Estigian black cat.
Masculine Names: Akhom, Anpu, Funsani, Hamadi, Heru, Issa, Kafele, Kemnebi, Khenti, Madu, Menes, Mhotep, Nizam, Rameses, Seth, Tau, Wakhakwi, Zahur.
Feminine Names: Asenath, Eshe, Halima, Kanika, Layla, Meshkenet, Naeemah, Nafretiti, Nebt-Het, Ramla, Shani, Tahirah, Theoris, Walidah, Zhara.
Last Names: They do not exist as such. A person cites their last name as the name of their father and grandfather to show their line of succession. The only exceptions are members of the noble houses that use the name of their first ancestor as last name.

Estigia, The Empire of Gold, is an ancient and proud nation that has survived for more than 2,000 years through all kinds of adversity. Independent and powerful in its own right, some believe that it's in decline because its people have lost the ability to build monumental buildings they erected in the past.

Most of the country is barren desert, but its northern coast and the area drained by the colossal Iometh River is fertile and green. The weather is always warm and high temperatures are difficult to bear. Estigia has only four great cities in its entire principality, which extend along the tributaries of the Iometh. The population is normally crowded into these large cities, since there are few towns and villages that can survive in the great deserts. The only inhabitants of these lands are a few disintegrated nomadic tribes.

The nation's economy is based on trade, the result of its extraordinary gold deposits and the crafts produced from the precious metal. The skill of Estigian goldcrafters is legendary, and the most notable jewelry and ornaments in Gaïa come from there.

Estigia has always been guided by a lineage of King-Pharaohs who were ascribed divine origins. For Estigians, their monarchs descended from the Lord of Heaven Amenhotep and are the interpreters of fate. Consequently, the King-Pharaoh holds absolute power. Their wishes are considered the will of the gods, and their decisions represent the future of the country. Everything in Estigia belongs to him if that is his will, and he has the ability to appoint or dismiss the nobility as he desires.

Formerly in possession of a powerful army, now Estigia has lost some of its military superiority. Its troops have failed to modernize themselves as those of other principalities and they're only noted for their incredible resistance to the vagaries of the desert. Only the Pharaoh's guard is famous for their combat mastery, being composed of men with colossal and almost inhuman strength.

The last Pharaoh is Ahiyoreph, who for more than a decade had begun to sever ties with The Empire. His goal is to keep the country isolated from the affairs of the outside world, refusing any involvement in the current situation of Gaïa or in their intrigues. Estigia it is only related to Kushistan and Kashmir, with whom they maintain an unofficial alliance.

Culture and Society

Estigian culture is tied to the concepts of death and eternity, which for their citizens are part of the same principle. Even before the emergence of the Enneath doctrines, people were already very used to death, so they did not appreciate it as something tragic, focusing on it as a single period of transition to an eternal world. For Estigians, life is just the first stage of existence, during which everyone must earn what they will later have forever. Therefore, whatever you obtain from this world will be yours in the next one, which is why it's common to bury to people with many objects and treasures. A practical consequence of this idea is not to mention to the deceased after the funeral; that way, it's said that he has been taken the love of all those to those who mattered in life.

All this makes Estigians take on an orderly life, which for them is their Inara, or way of enlightenment. Interestingly, this concept of order has become a veritable obsession with symmetry that completely infuses every element of their culture. Jewelry, clothes, decorations... everything built in the country does is based on this principle; the standard of beauty is based on the perfect harmony of the facial factions. Where it is best seen in the architecture of the cities, which always enjoy perfect balance.

Its people dress in skimpy clothes with lots of gold ornaments that show their skin burnished by the sun. Depending on the adornments and jewelry worn, one indicates their membership to one social class or another. The high nobility is limited, being most of them chosen from relatives and close friends of the monarch. For this reason, whenever a Pharaoh dies, the nobility enters in panic because nobody knows for sure if they will keep their titles or possessions. Paradoxically, the bureaucrats, who control the proper functioning of the country and interpret the laws of The Pharaoh, hold the real power. In practice, it can be more dangerous to defy to a high bureaucrat than a nobleman. The clergy, on the other hand, is highly valued by the people, since most of the population is Mular that pay worship to Kalih.

Unlike Kushistan, women occupy positions of importance in society equivalent to those of men, acting as priestesses, scholars or even soldiers. In fact, except for the title of Pharaoh, there is no function forbidden to them.

As in the neighboring country, slavery is deeply ingrained. Slaves were a rare and valuable commodity during the years of Imperial occupation, usually staying locked up inside the property they belonged to. Now they have become a common commodity, and the upper class measures its wealth by the amount and extravagance of its servants.

Because trade with other principalities is frequent, Estigians do not resent foreigners in their cities, but cannot tolerate the slightest infraction of their traditions. People visiting the country must behave according to the customs of Estigia, or will have more problems than they would like.

Regarding the Supernatural

The supernatural has never been a problem for Estigian society. In the past, before the creation of The Sacred Holy Empire, most of the priests were wizards of some type and magic users were greatly respected. The abolition of the supernatural arts was a big change in customs, but people who ignored the Church doctrines never saw magic as the something evil; they simply grew unaccustomed to it.

Estigian society doesn't fear mystical forces, but after centuries of persecution and excessive secrecy, Estigians do not believe they're real. Currently, most of those endowed with special abilities are very careful when publicly revealing them, because people regard them with skepticism and caution.

The mystical arts related to the dead probably deserve special mention. Because of the obsession by the death in the kingdom, any necromantic power is seen as an unholy aberration that robs the soul of its natural course. Therefore, if some one discloses that they're able to influence spirits (whether this is true or not), they would be considered blasphemous and treated like a criminal.

Law and Punishment

Estigian law contains a number of formalities and rituals, the majority of which are completely incomprehensible to foreigners. Therefore, legal proceedings are exceptionally slow, and people just resort to the official authorities when it comes to serious matters. Two penalties deserve special mention:

Grave Robbers: In a culture where it's common to bury people with so many possessions, it is logical that one of the most common crimes is tomb looting. Consequently, Estigian laws punishes any infraction against the dead disproportionately, to thus deter thieves. If a robber is caught desecrating a grave, he is buried alive in a tomb full of bugs.

Eternal Punishment: In Estigia there is no greater punishment for a person than to be deprived of their eternal rest, so the most terrible ancient condemnation was always associated with the nonlife. In the past, it was customary for the Pharaoh to be accompanied by a high priest of the death (the only necromancer allowed in the kingdom), who transformed the worst criminals into undead monsters. The condemned were bound to their rotting immortal bodies to eternally suffer in pain. Sometimes they were imprisoned in such places as guardians, so they could pay for their crimes.

The History of Estigia

Estigia's roots date back to an ancient nomadic tribe based along the channels of the Iometh River approximately 3,000 years ago. Their people raised the city of Al Kairr, which over time became the most important metropolis in the Meskhenet Desert. Ruled by King-Pharaohs, considered descendants of the god Jaroh, they soon raised new cities, creating the Empire of Estigia, which dominated the region with absolute for over five centuries.

When the Enneath doctrines arrived here, Estigia was adapted to the new religious trends, making to the god Jaroh equal to the Lord of the Kalih Amenhotep. Consequently, the King-Pharaoh also became the "hand of destiny" and the highest religious authority of the new church.

After two centuries of splendor, the empire entered a period of regression, coinciding with the rise of power in southern Kushistan. For years the country remained stagnant, barely maintaining its power from continuous assaults from other lands and a slave rebellion that nearly toppled the nation. It was then when an unusual event changed the fate of Estigia. The climate in the Meskhenet suddenly changed, transforming the immense desert into a fertile and habitable zone in less than a decade. The population in the region increased exponentially, and less than a century had already been quintupled. This period of 300 years was called The Cycle of Glory, and was inarguably the greatest period of military and economic expansion in Estigia.

But near the end of The Age of Chaos, the Meskhenet returned to be a barren area, therefore causing the greatest catastrophe in the country's history. The massive exodus to the cities on the Iometh River unduly increased the population density, causing a crisis of famine and plagues. As a solution, the Pharaoh ordered the expulsion of several thousands of people and the tragic slaughter of many others. Plunged into countless issues and problems, the country tried joining Kushistan, but the religious differences between Mulares and Zafires, coupled with the power struggle between The Great Sultan and The Pharaoh, made this union impossible.

In the middle of that dark period, the coming of the Messiah temporarily reversed the country's direction. King-Pharaoh Akhematen converted to Christianity and began reforming the empire to unite it to The Holy Kingdoms. However, following the death of Abel, the King-Pharaoh's brother assassinated him and readopted the old traditions immediately.

Years before The War of God, Rah initiated contact with Estigia, gaining its support for the armies of the 12th kingdom of man. After the end of the war, Estigia's support of Judas left the country very weak, and fearing the retaliation by the newly established Sacred Holy Empire, Estigia joined Kushistan in its attacks on Argos. Finally, with the collapse of his ally against the Empire, the Pharaoh raised a desperate army, but was unable to stem the assault of the Imperial forces and had to grudgingly realize its submission to the throne.

These last few centuries haven't changed for Estigia. The country remains tied to the past trying to be as far as possible from The Empire, so its participation in the High Senate has always been minimal. Their only contact with other principalities took place through the gold trade and products manufactured thereof. In fact, Estigia has not participated in any significant war since its unification to the Sacred Holy Empire, one of the main reasons that its army has not had to modernize.

In just fifteen years, the current Pharaoh Ahiyoreph began a gradual separation from Abel, taking advantage of the death the previous Emperor to formally sever ties with the great power.

Illustrated by Salvador Espin



An Estigian priestess

Cats in Estigia

Though they are treated as little more than a simple house pet in the vast majority of the world, these felines are viewed very differently in Estigia. The Estigian priesthood and customs have elevated them to the role of sacred creatures, servants of the Kalih Ampune, whose sole function in the world is to guide the lost souls to their rightful place. The myth is that the cat is one of the few animals that have the natural ability to see the supernatural, so they can perceive the spirits of dead and feel the changes between the real world and The Wake.

Consequently, to harm a cat is a severely punishable offense, and killing one is so serious that it can even mean death to the offender.

Relevant Geographical Features

Estigia, located between the principalities of Salazar and Kushistan, and its northern coast bordered by The Inner Sea, is country made of deserts in which it is sometimes difficult to define its true boundaries.

Iometh River: The Iometh River, which is born in the Nasser Mountains of Kushistan and heads north before emptying into The Inner Sea, is so vital for Estigia that without it, the country wouldn't even exist. Throughout its journey the river nourishes the lands, making them fertile and suitable for cultivation.

The river is navigable, being employed by the Estigians like main communication channel between their cities. Since the winds of the region always blow south, the navigators need only to drift with the current to go down to the coast, or unfold their sails to ride upstream. Therefore, it's habitual to see many trade ships on it, like large commercial barges or simple transport boats.

Great Dunes of Hatifah: The Dunes of Hatifah, who according to legend was a demon who lived in the desert feeding off the travelers who came to his oasis, is a characteristic area within the Meskhenet. Here, the wind causes the sand to accumulate and form immense dunes that can sometimes reach over 160 feet high. On the positive side, a shaded hillside can be found somewhere away from the mid-day heat, but the trouble is that walking through this area is as difficult as it is exhausting. In addition, there is always the risk of slipping and rolling from the top of a dune; and falling from that height, even from sandy slopes, can have serious consequences.

One of the biggest problems of the region is because the dunes are not static and shake, undulate and move when the wing is strong. On more than one occasion, they have engulfed a whole camp in the middle of the night. In fact, when sand storms hit, going into Hatifah is a fatal mistake.

Meskhenet Desert: Meskhenet, the major natural feature of Estigia, is one of the greatest sandy deserts in Gaïa. It stretches throughout the eastern region of the country, east of the Iometh River. Despite its apparent uniformity, it's separated into three major depressions by a central plateau.

The temperature in the Meskhenet is really sultry throughout the year, making it a difficult place to live. Its few inhabitants are groups of nomads, mounted on dromedary camels, wandering the oasis. There are also many kinds of dangerous animals, like poisonous serpents, scorpions and massive swarms of nocturnal bats.

Centuries ago, a strange event caused a climate change across the entire desert, making it a place fit for human life. During that period (known as The Cycle of Glory), which lasted around 300 years, many small cities were built in the area. When the zone returned to its original nature all those cities had to be abandoned, giving rise to something called the Shadows of Meskhenet, a set of ghost towns partially covered by sand. Now there are only a few towns left, which rarely exceed 100 people, situated near some of the few oases.

Some people say that, apart from the Shadows, buried under the sand there are much older buildings. Some scholars of Lucrecio have proposed a hypothesis that, in the distant past, perhaps even millennia before Estigia was founded, the Meskhenet was a green and fertile place that suddenly changed its climate and buried the previous civilization. It is even possible that this is a cyclical event repeated itself multiple times throughout history.

Chasm of Oba: To the east of Kabalaika is the Chasm of Oba, the greatest quarry in Estigia. Not only are enormous blocks of granite and marble that are used in the construction of monuments and cities extracted from here, but also the gold deposits that characterize the country's economy.



Illustrated by Luis NCT

One of the slave districts of The Necropolis

Al-Quayan Mountains: This bulk of sharpened mountains are located in the western part of the country, forming a natural barrier with Kushistan. The Estigians also call them The Nine Peaks, since nine temples are built there dedicated to each one of the Kalih. History tells that Al-Quayan was once inhabited by a strange race of men with animal heads called Raks (considered demons by some Enlightened Enneath), who developed a highly advanced civilization for their time. They had a conflict with the Djinns from Kushistan, which sparked a war that lasted almost a century. According to legend, the Raks ended up imprisoning many Al-Djinn in what remained of their cities and fled beyond the seas, leaving stone sphinxes as guardians. Many of them still remain on the top of Al-Quayan, although it is unknown whether they really have magical powers or are nothing more than ancient inanimate giants.

Places of Interest

All the significant populations of Estigia gather around the Iometh River, but that does not mean that there aren't a lot of strange and flashy places lost in the desert.

The Necropolis

(Ghost Metropolis, Population 300+)

The Necropolis is definitely the most representative of the myth that "what you carry to the grave, are your possessions in the afterlife." It originated in the years of Estigia's greatest splendor when the King-Pharaohs decided to create immense palaces that served as burial vaults, lavish homes for the afterlife. Gradually, these tombs became more monumental and, to this day, they ended up small cities for dead. Finally, the pantheons grew so much that the tombs began to interconnect, giving rise to an immense metropolis dedicated solely to the deceased.

Now the Necropolis is almost as big as the capital, a monumental city of silence and oblivion of the past. Most of it consists of the magnificent tombs of the King-Pharaohs, the tallest and most impressive buildings, but there are many other "districts"; that are dedicated to the slaves (who their masters buried alive with them), as well as zones erected in honor of important priests and nobles. It's sometimes difficult to find where a cemetery ends and where another begins, since the custom of not naming the tombs has lost its origin in oblivion. Only the caretakers, a few men in charge of maintenance and monitoring, walk through its empty streets.

Naturally, there are stories of hidden treasures and all kinds of traps, promoting many looters to try and make a fortune breaking in. In the innermost chambers are numerous artifacts of power, guarded by undead beings that have been condemned for their sins to eternally protect these treasures.

The Halls of Kings

(Building, Population 200+)

The Halls of Kings are a group of colossal buildings extending several miles southeast of Al Kairr. Up until three decades ago the Estigian Pharaohs kept its location secret, but was publicly revealed by a group of explorers who stumbled upon them during their travels.

The reason for such extreme secrecy is that The Halls of Kings is the small city that the Pharaohs commissioned long ago to preserve their vast treasures. It is in its coffers where, over generations, they have hidden their most valuable possessions.

The Halls are composed of a network of maze-like tunnels, filled with traps and other protections, some of which have supernatural origins. The only people who dwell in The Halls of Kings are the Asim Bomani: a small army of loyal guardians who defend the chambers with their lives. The Asim are sent there when they are only children, and their foreheads are marked so that they can never leave the valley. If somebody with the mark is discovered outside The Halls, he is executed immediately.

The present King-Pharaoh Ahiyoreph has one of the greatest fortunes in the world, since the treasures and gifts of countless generations are stored in the chambers. Some even speculate that there's more gold in The Halls of Kings than in all the mines of Estigia. Naturally, this wealth is so legendary that there isn't a single thief in the world that has not dreamed of it.

Harekratia

(City, Population 48,000+)

This city of the Estigian culture is dedicated to the Kalih Harekrates. Most of its people are elderly nobles that, tired of supporting the Pharaoh and the problems of the court, retire to Harekratia to live a calm and peaceful life. While it once was comparable to Al Kairr in beauty, the city has aged badly. Most of its great buildings and monuments are beginning to show the pass of time, since their people lack the ability to repair or rebuild them properly.

There are no schools or libraries, but there are temples in the city where all the scrolls and writings of the past are gathered, which are the true bastions of knowledge.

Harekratia is an important focus of the Brotherhood of Seth, where many of their agents meet to make decisions and distribute them to all the kingdoms. Strangely, it's also one of the few Al-Enneth cities that still house a small number of Templars of Tol Rauko, which are supported by its traditional role of local tomb guardians.

Haji

(Metropolis, Population 61,000+)

This major port is the most accepting place of foreign nations in Estigia, because it's its main trade center for imports and exports. With Haji, the Estigians have a market for their gold crafts and can buy all kinds of products, mostly from The Coast of Commerce. Even their architecture is less marked by Estigian aesthetics, although symmetry is still a predominant element in most of its buildings.

Haji is divided in two by the Iometh, separating the eastern district, the wealthy part of town, and the western district, dedicated to the workers. In the middle of the river is a large barren island known as the Stone of Destiny, where all the temples of the city are.

The entrance to the harbor is very problematic because there are many cliffs and rocks at the opening of the Iometh. Therefore, Haji has an elaborated system of lighthouses; located on big islands, creating a well-lit path that guides boats even in the darkest hours. The largest of these, the Sparrowhawk Lighthouse, is so high that it can be seen very far from the coast. To control the traffic into Estigia, the port has enormous sluices that can close to bar access to any boat.

Haji hosts a huge slave market, as The Pirate Kings and other mercenaries bring prisoners from all over the world. However, the guard carefully controls the smuggling of illegal goods, and makes sure that no prohibited merchandise makes it through the port.

A different lord governs each one of Haji's districts. The Great Commander Thabit Sabon (Warrior Lv. 4, ♂) in the west, and Lady Mukamutara (Freelance Lv. 2, ♀) in the east. Although it tickles both to fight and argue, and everybody thinks that they hate each other, really the healthy competition between them is what makes the city so prosperous.

Kabalaika

(Metropolis, Population 117,000+)

Kabalaika, The City of Gold, is known for the great skill of its craftsmen in jewelry and gold craft. Within Estigia their crafts are the best, and people consider goldsmithing one of the most valuable and admired professions. Every year, coinciding with The Day of Infinite Heaven, the city organizes a competition for artists to make the most impressive gold art, which is then given to the Pharaoh as a gift. Kabalaika exhibits numerous statues as monuments, commemorating the great heroes of the past. Ever since slavery was legalized, the number of slaves has quintupled, because most are used as carriers or workers in the quarries of Oba.

The Lord of Kabalaika is the Great Commander Akenatten (Freelance Lv. 2, ♂), who is married to Ramila (Shadow Lv. 7, ♀), a former agent of Selene. Akenatten doesn't know about his wife's past, which threatens to become a problem for her, since some of her old clients have discovered her present status.

Al Kairr

(Metropolis, Population 321,000+)

If one were to define Al Kairr with a single word, it would undoubtedly be "monumental". As one of the oldest cities of the world and capital of a millenarian empire, everything gives off a sense of nostalgia. Built in marble, granite and gold, it's a fascinating sight.

The city has a unique architectural style, since the obsession with symmetry of the Estigian has here its maximum exponent. The buildings emanate not only an incredible sense of harmony, but even the districts themselves have been designed symmetrically. It's as if the city may be reflected in a mirror at any moment, regardless of the angle. The architects dare to adopt increasingly complex shapes, but never forgetting that principle.

Located at the intersection of the Iometh River, Al Kairr takes advantage of the water using an old irrigation system that evenly distributes it between the homes and the crop fields of the suburbs. The city is home to great monuments that still impress all visitors today. Of them excels the Path of Glory, an immense road lined with high geometric obelisks and surrounded by hundreds of artificial waterfalls on both sides, as well as the Observatory of Heaven, one of the highest towers in all of Gaïa.

The supreme lord of the city is Pharaoh Ahiyoreph himself (Dark Paladin Lv. 5, ♂), who governs with an iron hand using an intricate bureaucratic system. Ahiyoreph, who just turned 20, dreams about returning Estigia to its former splendor, although he is not a fool and it knows that that is virtually impossible at this stage, given the current conditions of the country. He lives in the palace of Amenhotep, protected by The Black Guard, a group of gigantic elite soldiers who would give their lives for their divine lord without thinking twice.



Illustrated by Luis NCT

The Passage of Gloria in Al Kairr

Several secret organizations coexist in the city, such as Samael, Yehudah or Black Sun. The latter have a vested interest in The Necropolis, and organize their expeditions for The Seekers here. Unfortunately, the last leader of The Black Sun in Al Kairr was discovered recently dealing with stolen material in an Imperial tomb, and executed for his sacrilege. Now, the organization awaits the arrival of a new leader.

Enuma Jannah

(City, Population 5,000+)

Despite being the most sultry and inaccessible area of the Meskhenet, Enuma Jannah stands in an actual garden, an inexplicable paradise full of trees and flowers. The climate is pleasant and sandstorms usually never come here.

This ancient city, lost in the middle of the desert, remains in absolute obscurity. There are very few are maps for it and there is no road that leads to Enuma. The people of Estigia consider it a sacred place and they are not accustomed to traveling there, just as its citizens never usually leave. Therefore, it remains separated from the world, unconcerned with what's happening with the rest of Gaïa.

Enuma Jannah was built along the ring of a lake with crystal blue waters. The houses, low and simple, use the trees as columns and brackets, which doesn't happen in any other place in the country.

The city's name comes from Jannah, which is what the giant pyramid in the middle of the oasis is called: a large building of glass and gray stone placed on the lake. In each of its faces it presents an opening where four cascading waterfalls fall gracefully to the ground in a continuous stream. The top of the pyramid is completely crystalline, and from outside it can be seen that it is occupied by large trees. The only way to get there is to take a boat and to sail up to the metal doors of its base; but it is forbidden to go inside. The restriction is so severe that even the Pharaohs are only allowed to visit it three times in their lives.

Some believe that Jannah is empty, whereas others say that it has seven immortal guards who have protected it for centuries. So far, nobody has been able to confirm or deny this story.

The inhabitants of the city are exceptionally long-lived thanks to the properties of the oasis water that not only prolongs youth but also eliminates almost every disease. Naturally, they keep this secret with the utmost discretion to keep their home from being invaded by undesirables.

Local laws do not permit slavery or expelling people forcefully, so for many slaves this place has become a promise of liberation and peace. Unfortunately, very few fugitives are able to traverse the long hot miles of desert to get there.

Other Settlements: *Ikwah*.

Lapis Lazuli

Sorceress for some, a goddess to others, Lapis Lazuli is a character of many myths and legends. For centuries she acted as an advisor to the Pharaohs of Estigia, who depended on her in moments of great need.

The most widespread tradition is that King-Pharaoh Atem found her after getting lost in a sandstorm and spending several days wandering aimlessly through the desert. The Pharaoh walked up to an old citadel of blue stone that had been unearthed by the strong winds. Inside he found the most beautiful woman that he had ever seen sleeping soundly. When he woke her up the storm stopped, and the Pharaoh both fascinated and shocked, asked what her name was. Given the strange response of "No longer have I", Atem decided to call her Lapis Lazuli, from the intense blue color of her eyes.

Withdrawn and lonely, Lapis always avoided crowds, preferring the tranquility of the silent citadel in which she was found. Though she never flaunted any great powers, she seemed to have extraordinary supernatural abilities, closer to a deity than a mere mortal. Inexplicably, during the three centuries since the blue-eyed lady was awoken, the Meskhenet Desert changed, becoming a fertile land full of life.

For reasons unknown, at the end of the Age of Chaos Lapis sunk into a deep coma from which she never woke up. As if her dream was a harbinger of misfortune, the Meskhenet Desert became as barren and desolate as before she came, and the citadel of blue stone was once again buried in the depths of the earth. The Pharaoh Shetos, who had studied under her tutelage during his childhood, was very saddened and ordered the construction of the Pyramid of Jannah, an appropriate place where she could rest as long as she needed.

Now Lapis sleeps under a glass ceiling in the Eternal Garden, the top of the pyramid. Flowers of all kinds (plus some that only exist here) are born around her and, from the tombstone where she rests, spring small streams. Even today, the Pharaohs consider Lapis a sacred symbol to protect. There is a myth that if she should die, the little life remaining in the Meskhenet would die with her.

The Water of Enuma Jannah

The waters surrounding the Pyramid of Enuma Jannah come from The Eternal Garden and, somehow, are imbued with the essence of Lapis Lazuli, which grants it strange healing abilities. First, the water increases the speed of recovery considerably: drinking it or bathing a wound in it adds two points to the character's Regeneration (to a maximum of 12). Second, it allows a subject to repeat any Disease Resistance Check applying +20 to the value. The water also acts like a generic antidote of Level 70 against any kind of poison, be it natural or mystical origin. Finally, one of the long-term properties is to slightly increase the person's lifespan. People who drink it regularly can live for about 150 years and in good health.

Most likely, the properties of the water that remain suspended in The Eternal Garden are even greater than those of the lake.

Adventures

Estigia is far from being tranquil. The Meskhenet Desert hides many secrets, not to mention each of the Estigian tombs may contain a reward and a frightening surprise. Perhaps the characters are forced to steal in The Halls of Kings, or perhaps they must escort the new Black Sun leader to Al Kairr.

The Plaguebearer: While crossing The Meskhenet Desert, the characters are caught in a powerful and unpredictable sandstorm. Fortunately, the storm uncovers the remains of an ancient citadel that can serve as a refuge. If used for shelter, they will soon realize that something stinks inside; a heavy odor so pervasive that it makes them sick. Soon, the apparent calm is broken when a group of rotting corpses unexpectedly attacks them with strange monsters composed of thousands of flies that try to penetrate their bodies. Little do they know, everything is being orchestrated by one of the original Karridor (See Web Supplement), which sleeps under the earth and needs bodies to create a new lineage. Trapped in because of the storm, if they want to survive the characters will have to discover the clues that the ancient instructions on the walls give them and re-seal the creature before it's too late.

God, Demon or Imposter?: In recent months, something strange is happening in the deserts and remote regions of Estigia. Some tribes are leaving everything behind to follow a man who claims to be the incarnation of the Kalih Ampune. At first, few believed his words, but this changed when they saw him transform into a cat before their very eyes. The man calls himself Isonaton (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 4, ♂) and so far has managed to gain almost 50 followers. Local authorities have informed the King-Pharaoh, who treats him as little more than a fake (or a Raks demon that has survived over the centuries), ordering to arrest the agitator immediately. The problem is that those responsible for his arrest are not entirely sure how to deal with him, because in the unlikely event that he's telling the truth, they would be condemning their soul in the eyes of Jihamath. So the soldiers try to recruit foreign mercenaries to infiltrate in his group of followers and discover who he really is.

Isonaton is neither a Raks nor the incarnation of a Kalih, but a Tuan Dalyr from the distant land of Alberia, capable of changing into a cat. If the characters discover this and they relay it to the authorities, their new orders will be to execute him for the crime of defiling a sacred tradition. But... what forces a Tuan Dalyr so far from his homeland, and what are his true intentions? And how will his followers react, who truly believe that he is the incarnation of an Enlightened?

The Water of Life: Ingel Youmarhy (Warrior Lv. 4, ♂) is a desperate father; his daughter Paoh is seriously ill and, according to the most reputed doctors, she will inevitably die in a few years. Looking for any option available, he has heard talk of a miraculous water in the city of Enuma Jannah in Estigia that can cure all diseases, and has traveled there in search of it. But after hearing every legend about the water, he fears that it won't be strong enough to save his daughter. Not wanting to risk having made the trip in vain, he seeks to enter the pyramid and take it directly from the spring where it flows, for which he will hire a group to escort him and make sure that everything goes as planned.

Ingel doesn't actually have an ill daughter; moreover, he doesn't even have daughters. He is a disgraced agent of Black Sun, who is trying to redeem himself by discovering what effects The Water of Life may have on the necromantic research of the organization. If all goes as planned, once he achieves his objective he will pay the characters and they needn't know anything else.

Common Characters of Estigia

Here are some common characters of Estigia. The following statistics have been composed without taking Creation Points into account.

Soldier of the Pharaoh

Class: Acrobatic Warrior; **Level** 2
Initiative 70/45/20; **LP** 130; **AT** Leather; **Attack** 95; **Dodge** 110; **Weapon** Scimitar/Long Bow; **Damage** 55/35
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 8 **STR:** 7 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 45, Ride 25, Notice 25, Search 15, Tracking 15, Composure 20, Feats of Strength 25, Resist Pain 20, Forging 15.
Special: Nomad Module
Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 35, PsR 35.

Asim Bomani

Class: Shadow; **Level** 4
Initiative 95/85/70/45; **LP** 115; **AT** Leather; **Attack** 130; **Dodge** 125; **Weapon** Katar/Scimitar/Long Bow; **Damage** 45/55/35
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 8 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 7 **PER:** 8 **INT:** 6 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Acrobatics 15, Athleticism 15, Ride 15, Jump 15, Climb 15, Hide 120, Stealth 75, Trap Lore 15, Poisons 15, Notice 80, Search 80, Tracking 20, Composure 5, Resist Pain 15.
Special: Nomad Module
Resistance: PhR 50, DR 50, VR 50, MR 45, PsR 45.

The Black Guard

Class: Weaponsmaster; **Level** 5
Initiative 75/50; **LP** 250; **AT** None; **Attack** 155; **Dodge** 155; **Weapon** Martial Arts/Scimitar; **Damage** 30/60
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 8 **STR:** 9 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 15, Ride 15, Intimidate 40, Notice 35, Search 35, Composure 40, Feats of Strength 135, Resist Pain 55.
Special: Nomad Module, Martial Arts - Krav Maga (Grappling)
Resistance: PhR 60, DR 60, VR 60, MR 50, PsR 50.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Middle-Class/Low-Class: Athleticism +10, Notice +15, Tracking +10, History (local) +10, Occult (Religion) +10, Appraisal +5, Art +5, Forging +15.

Bourgeois Bureaucrat/Nobility: Ride +10, Style +15, Intimidate +5, Persuasion +10, Notice +5, History (local) +15, Occult (Religion) +15, Art +5.

Table 22: Estigia

Value	Social class	Initial Equipment
1-30	Low-Class	Clothes, some food, several personal items of little value. 3 CC.
31-60	Middle-Class	Clothes, a small cheap gold ornament, food for a few days, some personal items. 50 SC.
61-75	Bourgeois	A couple of changes of clothes, a pair of simple gold ornaments, food for a week, a weapon, a horse or camel, some personal items. 15 GC.
76-90	Bureaucrat	Several changes of clothes, an abundance of gold ornaments, good food for more than a week, a weapon, a trunk with various equipment, some camels or slaves. 50 GC.
91-100	Nobility	A couple of good clothes, good food for a week, a couple of weapons, a horse or camel, some slaves, several trunks full of varied equipment and gold ornaments. 90 GC.

SALAZAR

Capital: None.
Population: 60,000+
Ethnic Groups: Tayahar (99%).
Government: None (Tribal government for the nomads).
Languages: Jashú (several dialects).
Religion: Enneath (following Mular), Aramense Faith.
Technology: 1.
Denomym: Salazari.
Flag: None.
Masculine Names: Agerzam, Aksim, Amaynu, Asafar, Aznag, Gayo, Idder, Masinissa, Maysar, Meddur, Saden, Tacfin, Udad, Ugwistan, Usem, Winitran, Ziri.
Feminine Names: Bahac, Damya, Ijju, Illi, Kella, Lemta, Lunja, Menna, Siniman, Taderfit, Takensust, Tifawt, Tiwul, Tlayt, Tufitri, Tzeddig, Ultafa.
Last Names: Abrika, Aknin, Assouline, Demsiri, Djaout, Hamuy, Hasnaoui, Mammeri, Massi, Megullet, Ohana, Qouaknin, Tanzir, Tabaamrant.

Most people in Gaïa have always doubted that Salazar should be considered a principality, kingdom, or even a simple country. In fact, the whole territory is nothing but a vast desert with few natural resources, where life is truly difficult. The only reason that it has remained an independent territory for so long is because nobody has ever had the slightest interest in it.

The only human population of Salazar is the twelve nomadic clans that must constantly travel its burning sands from one oasis to another. Without cities or towns, the tribes are constantly trying to grab the best areas of the desert. Still, that doesn't mean that the desolate sands are empty, but rather quite the opposite; the dunes of Salazar conceal some of the most dangerous animals and creatures in Gaïa.

Salazar has absolutely nothing akin to an economy or a market; their people simply have nothing to trade, in a place where water and food are more valuable than gold.

The clans are independent and each one just follows their own leader. However, when it was part of Abel, the principality was theoretically governed by an elected delegate chosen among the twelve tribes, who The Emperor himself personally aproved. Anyway, the power of this "prince" was negligible, since the people of the desert completely ignored his mandates. After the fall of Abel, little has changed: the clans completely ignore the previous government and they are dedicated to continue their lives as usual, struggling to get the best land and survive.

Culture and Society

Throughout the history of Salazar, the tribes of the desert have never been unified under one ruler. Alliances and confederations occasionally form, but only for a very limited amount of time and never lasting more than a generation. The power and importance of each clan is measured by the number of members it has, their livestock and how many oases it controls. Foreigners cannot differentiate one member of a clan from another one, but each carries a distinctive symbol, called ti-n-negel, which is his brand and his pride.

Each group has a very different culture because they keep their own traditions, customs and rituals. The main occupation of nomads is ranching, followed very closely by hunting. In most, women play a secondary role, relegated to little more than cooks and mothers who are forbidden to hunt or fight. In others, however, they fully equal the men and exercise their own leadership. The major religion is Enneath, but some tribes worship ancestral deities, like Ulrioka Yama, Lord of the Sands, or Devah, The Creator of Life.

The gold and currency has very little importance here, and the most common method of trading is simple exchange. Custom forces all nomads to trade if they meet in the middle of the desert and one side formally requests it. Since there are no permanent cities or establishments, life revolves around tents that are raised every night and taken down dawn.

Once a year, the tribes gather to trade and make major decisions concerning the desert in an event called The Week of Gifts.

Regarding the Supernatural

The concept of supernatural is something that usually escapes the nomads of the desert quite often. For them, who face the dunes and their frightening inhabitants every day, few things can be considered "abnormal." Still, taking into account the lack of contact with wizards, psychics or ki masters, any clan would certainly be surprised to encounter someone endowed with such powers, although that only imply that they would used extreme caution when dealing with such individuals. Detached from religious dogma or customs from the "outside," there is little that can disturb or surprise the tribes of Salazar.

The Thirteenth Clan

Although there is always talk of The Twelve Clans of Salazar, there's something akin to a 13th tribe to whom the others call, with a mixture of fear and revulsion, the Harumai. This is a sub-race of men living in the deepest part of the desert. The tribe was lost for centuries in the dunes, and when it reappeared, it had degenerated completely resulting in something almost inhuman.

Although very tall the Harumai walk hunched over, thus hiding their size, and their arms are slightly longer than those of a normal person. They're always covered by pieces of leather that are sewn directly into the skin, and always wear tattered cloaks with black turbines. They do not speak any known language and communicate by means of gestures.

The Harumai are cannibals; they feed off human flesh and drink blood to satisfy their depraved thirst. In fact, they emerge from the depths of the desert solely to hunt, and man is their favorite prey. When they move in small groups (no more than ten), the clan always act nocturnally, trying to hide their attacks in the darkness. In greater numbers (at times they leave with hunting parties numbering 50 or more), they do not mind being seen; they attack any living being no matter the time or place. Sometimes, in periods of famine, they kill each other to survive.

Cruel to unsuspected limits, they enjoy torturing their prey for days, and they even eat them alive to listen to their screams.

The History of Salazar

The history of Salazar has remained unchanged for centuries. To find evidence of other cultures in these lands it's necessary to go back thousands of years in the past, to ancestral civilizations of which very little or nothing is known. All that is proven of them is that they built the steps of the Sand Sea which are still preserved today.

Little is known about of how long the nomads of the twelve tribes have lived in Salazar, but their ancestors undoubtedly walked the burning sand dunes over 2,000 years ago. Most are members of a single tribe, broken up over time, although others came from the west driven from their lands by other clans.

Almost all Salazar's conflicts have taken place solely among members of clans that have fought constantly over the past few centuries for various reasons. Even The War of God completely bypassed these lands, because Judas never considered it necessary to control them. The first Emperor also ignored the great desert for many years, until he came to agreement with the tribes in which they nominally joined Abel in exchange for provisions of food, water and other basic goods. However, this union never really had much importance, since most of the tribes did not recognize the prince as lord of the desert.

The only significant event took place three decades ago, when the Saada Tribe tried to assassinate the eleven remaining leaders during The Week of Gifts, which started a real battle which resulted in more than 3,000 dead in just hours. From that moment on, the Saada are considered outlaws and their relationship with others has deteriorated greatly.

Now, the former prince Alkhurer of the Haggar Clan has lost all his prerogatives, and because they do not receive any help from Abel, he has decided to contact the Great Sultan of Kushistan to reach a similar agreement with him. So far, he has not received answer.

Relevant Geographical Features

Although the people of Gaïa only know Salazar's great desert, even this is divided into several different areas that only the nomads can differentiate. Among them stands the enigmatic Sand Sea, one of the most bizarre geographical features in the world.

The Salazar Desert: Comparable to the sands of Corinia, Salazar is the largest desert in Gaïa. It stretches throughout the entire country, to which gives its name, up to the Sharanya Mountain Range in the east. The vast sandy surface is uneven because small rocky protrusions occasionally break the monotony of the dunes, giving a greater visual aesthetic to the barren landscape. It is divided into two huge regions, The Western, prone to terrible sand storms that can last whole weeks, and The Mantle, sheltered from strong winds by The Sharanya Mountain Range.

There are very few places with a climate as extreme as Salazar. By day the sun is scorching hot, with temperatures so high that it's almost impossible to breathe, while during the night the cold is intense, often reaching values below zero. All this makes life there difficult and thankless, suitable only for those accustomed to it. Furthermore, although it has many oases, they are so far apart that it's necessary to travel for days to get from one to the other.

An enigmatic detail of Salazar is their unusual mirages. Unlike other deserts, Salazar's ones are sometimes doors to The Wake, which lead to strange and distorted reflections of ages past. However, they only remain "open" for short periods of time, since they gradually disappear, expelling its visitors to the real world. Each of them is always very chaotic and no two are alike. In addition to these specific sites, The Wake of the desert takes the shape of an immense crystalline wilderness where everything remains absolutely still.

The Sea of Sand: The Sea of Sand is probably the strangest place in Gaïa. Located in the depths of Salazar, it spreads for miles and miles forming a second desert that has nothing to do with the burning dunes that surround it. Its nature is as unique as it is inexplicable; since all its sand is watery, more like a liquid surface than something solid. Putting it that way, most people imagine quicksand, but nothing could be further from the truth; this place is a true ocean, where heavy bodies sink as fast as if it were water. These strange features are totally unexplainable.

To distinguish the beginning of this place from the rest of Salazar one must note but two simple details: its sand has a vague shimmering aspect from the sun and it rocks back and forth with the wind forming small waves. Thus, the name The Sea of Sand fits it like a glove.

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The Dwellers of Salazar

Undoubtedly, the the Salazar Desert is where the greatest number of strange creatures in Gaïa openly nest (some might say monstrous). The people of other principalities and kingdoms are unaware of such beings, thinking them merely scary stories, ignorant of what really roams the burning sands. Giant insects, wild reptiles and many other beasts make Salazar even more dangerous. Next is a brief listing of some of the most striking.

The Inkal

The Inkal, to which many nomads call red desert ants, are monstrous crimson insects of vaguely humanoid shape. Even taller than a person, they always wander the desert looking for food in groups of three. This number has a strange significance, since two of them act as soldiers, and the remaining Inkal is the queen, identical to the others except for the fact that she has wings. They are extremely territorial, and do not let anybody near their hunting grounds, not even other Inkal.

Worms of the Deep

These terrible predators are huge earthworms (they can measure between 30 and 50 feet long) that hide under the sand to wait for prey. This creates a large mass of land, where their victims slip and fall towards the center of the cavity. That's when it shows its mouth to kill its unfortunate victim. Sometimes they gather in herds, taking control of large areas of land which are called "The Depths of Worms."

Gurmah-Gharus

Without a doubt, the most dangerous and frightening denizen of Salazar is the gigantic Sand Wyrm, a being more typical of dark fairy tales than anything of the real world. The monster measures over a mile in length and its entire body is covered by a heavy Exoskeleton armor of onyx color. It moves across the sand as if it was swimming through it, causing a small sandstorm with each of its movements. Gurmah-Gharus (translated as "the calamity of the desert") slumbers for decades and wakes up for small intervals to drink. Therefore it travels to the nearest oasis, which it sometimes devours completely. The Sand Wyrm is terribly violent; destroying whatever surrounds the oasis at the time of quenching its thirst. The nomads fear it since countless members of their clan have died during its attacks over the centuries.

Some consider it a vengeful god, and believe that by making the appropriate sacrifices, it will remain asleep longer. Whether true or not, the fact remains that its attacks have never ceased, and now the time of its reawakening come closer.

Illustrated by Luis NCT



The Sand Sea

By its nature the Sea of Sand is absolutely impossible to walk across, and the density of its surface makes swimming equally as useless. However, The Sea of Sand has an unusual construction that almost completely runs through it. These are high metal columns, connected to each other via enormous bridges and archways forming an intricate network of paths suspended in air. At least in appearance, it's almost possible to cross the entire surface using these roads, but its structure is so chaotic that nobody knows its true distribution. Sometimes a bridge suddenly ends and comes to another column, which cannot be more than a few hundred feet; there are detours for many miles. Surprisingly, the metal resists the temperature very well, and the intense sun doesn't warm it up too much.

The origin of this construction is ancient, and probably erected by the previous civilization that populated the desert. For unknown reasons, the Empire of Solomon took over The Sea of Sand and decided to rebuild the place, making it the only public structure of The Lost Lodges. However, its operation remains a mystery.

Places of Interest

With no real cities or buildings, Salazar has few sites of particular relevance. The only real bright spots are the many oases and the odd ruin among the many dunes.

The Fortress of Nakhti

(Fortress, Population 50+)

This small fortification was built centuries ago, when the tribes of Salazar agreed with The Empire to become a principality in exchange for food and resources. This is a small enclave with a dozen mud houses and a large courtyard, surrounded by low, thin walls used for little more than resisting the whipping wind. Almost 500 Imperial soldiers settled here originally, although less than a decade later the dowry was reduced to little more than 100 men. Its sole function was to gather loads of supplies sent from Abel and redistribute them among the tribes. There are currently no shipments coming, and the fortress houses but a few former soldiers, as detached from The Empire as the tribes themselves. The fort is neglected, and most of buildings are as damaged as the walls.

Even so, the tribes are accustomed to coming here. It's not uncommon for some of the clans to establish a temporary campsite here in Nakhti from time to time and stay several days to rest or heal their wounded, before returning to their eternal wandering through the desert. On rare occasions it shelters more than one clan at a time, something they take advantage of to do some trading. They say that if somebody wants to contact the clans of Salazar, just camp in Nakhti and, in a month at most, some tribe will pass through the fortress. However, most of them regard this place as a rallying point and often feel uncomfortable seeing foreigners here.

Agihwan

(Temporary City, Population 30,000+)

Agihwan is not a true city, but a large hill in the northern part of the desert, that becomes a rallying point for the clans during The Week of Gifts. In those seven days, the desolate hill gets decorated with innumerable tents, temporary raising a city of canvas that fills the skyline. The tribes use this time to make all sorts of trades and exchanges of information. Merchants from other kingdoms gather here with the clans they deal with, although not very often.

During this time fighting or unmotivated bloodshed is prohibited. If for any reason there is a fight or argument that heats up, they must officiate a duel before at least 50 witnesses.

The central point of Agihwan is The Mountain of Lords, where the clan leaders meet to make the most important decisions regarding Salazar.

The Oasis of the Birds

(Place, Variable Population)

This oasis is the largest one in the Salazar Desert, even able to satisfy more than one tribe at a time. Being so popular among the nomads, it's always full of visitors. After countless struggles for its control, it was decided decades ago that each tribe would take control of the oasis for a short time.

The oasis, a lake surrounded by trees and vegetation, gets its name from the white birds that nest here. The feathers of these birds are extremely valuable in noble circles (especially in the hats Gabrielense ladies), and fetch large sums of money for them.

The Oasis of Mahjrabi

(Place, Unpopulated)

This small but fertile oasis has only a narrow lagoon, surrounded by dozens of trees. The cool shadows, water and plenty of fruit can be a great surprise to the occasional traveler, when noting that the place is always uninhabited and are no traces of temporary settlements or camps. The reason is because it's located between two small rocky outcrops that make it a perfect ambush spot. In fact, it's one of the preferred hunting grounds for the terrible Harumai. Often, the monstrous members of the thirteenth clan poison the waters, hoping that their preys are defenseless before falling on them. The clans crossing it stop just a few hours to resupply, and always putting numerous lookouts on rocks. The foreign travelers are unaware of this, and often pay for it with their lives.

The Forgotten City

(Ghost Metropolis, Population Uknown)

Lost in the middle of the Salazar Desert, even the name of this ancient city has been forgotten over time. More than 5,000 years ago, this metropolis was one of the greatest magical powers of the Age of Chaos, because it was located over one of the 17 magic nodes of that era. Some of the greatest archmages in history were among its people, and even avatars of various deities often descended to it. However, despite all their power, its people realized that the days of absolute happiness and celebration could not last forever. Sooner or later, even they would be doomed to disappear. Terrified by the idea, the leaders devised a plan as bold as it was impossible: to make the time that they lived in last forever.

First, their people closed the entire city, covering it with a vast dark metal dome that resembled an endless starry sky. They later created beautiful glass statues, one for each of its citizens, and dressed in their best clothes. Finally, in an act of absolute egocentrism, they consumed virtually all the power of the node to bring Ulrioka Yama, the god of time and death, into the world attempting to capture part of its essence in a large hourglass. This created a void within their souls, neither alive nor dead, remaining eternally frozen in time holding a great celebration that for them never ends.

Currently, the city is almost completely covered by sand, and only part of the impenetrable metal dome occasionally overlooks the dunes. However, where sandstorms are very strong, its base is exposed, allowing people to enter it through the holes of the sewer system. Naturally, visitors can only imagine what awaits them inside, because from the outside it's just a strange mass of half-buried metal.

Even today, the metropolis has a monumental grandeur. All the buildings are mansions, each of its squares is decorated with large fountains and within the houses are all kinds of treasures, from gold chandeliers to diamond studded plates. However, the most disturbing thing is that the city is full of silent glass statues that seem to celebrate an eternal feast. They eat from empty plates and play silent instruments, infusing everything with a melancholic and dark atmosphere.

A person can take as many treasures as they want without fearing any type of problem, but if they destroy or damage a statue, the consequences can be dire, because it's dangerous to alter the eternal celebration in any way. If this happened, several of the ancient spirits (maybe even all of them), would momentarily leave the loop of time to drag the visitors towards their eternal world or, if this is impossible, to end the annoyance they cause.

In the core of the city, an ancient node of magic lies in the depths of an enormous castle. Inside it, subdued by dozens of chains, is the large hourglass that contains part of the essence of the dead god Ulrioka Yama.

The Tower of Dreams

(Tower, Population Uknown)

For those unfamiliar with this region, it might seem extremely rare to find a tower out in the middle of the desert; and they wouldn't be wrong, because The Tower of Dreams is a very unusual place. Of four floors and built of stone bricks, this building has no windows except for a small hole on the top floor, which barely fits a fist through. Its interior is even more unique, because there are dozens of small rooms no bigger than two square meters, and in the last one, is a large square room with walls painted completely black. The tribes of Salazar barely approach the tower, which holds no interest for them, although this is also partially due to fear. There's an old story that says, many centuries ago, a wizard who yearned for the power to see people's dreams built the tower. During one of his experiments something must have gone wrong, because a powerful Djinn emerged from a nightmare and devoured him in body and soul. The truth is that most of people who have spent a night there, agree that their dreams were heavy and dark, one of which is frequently repeated: they see the tower, and inside the small rooms are dozens of prisoners, gnawing at their fingers trying to escape.

Adventures

The greatest adventure found in Salazar is simply trying to cross the desert. Filled with ancient perils and creatures that cannot be found in any other place in Gaïa, their burning dunes are a real challenge to the more experienced adventurers.

The Discovery: Yabir Fahliya (Ranger Lv. 2, ♂) is an independent Kushistaní merchant who attends The Week of Gifts in Agihwan every year. However, this year he did not arrive on time. A strong sandstorm made him lose his way somewhere along the borders and, almost on the verge of madness and death, took refuge under some rocks. His was pretty surprised when he discovered that some of the stones were carved with ancient engravings. After digging in the sand a little he found a small opening and, inside of it, an immense Estigian style temple.

Several months have past since then; and in this time, Yabir has been thoroughly researching to find the answers he sought. More than a thousand years ago there was a Pharaoh called Atmanhoteph, who was immensely rich and whose reign lasted less than two decades. The Pharaoh, a man who was terrified of death, feared that his tomb would be looted and he could lose everything he had obtained while still alive. So he ordered his tomb to be built in secret, far removed from The Necropolis, and buried himself with a part of the treasure that he extracted from The Halls of Kings.

If this were true, as Yabir imagines, he just found the lost tomb of Atmanhoteph, an underground citadel with several miles of rooms and corridors, which certainly contains fabulous treasures. Naturally, he is preparing an expedition to find the temple again, so he will need capable and trustworthy mercenaries.

Capricious Fate: Jacques Clairac (Ranger Lv. 3, ♂) is a rich and capricious Marquis of Gabriel. In its youth he was a great adventurer who loved to travel to the far corners of Gaïa (that is, protected by a healthy group of guards), to boast of his expeditions in the clubs of high society later. He thus came to be in the jungles of Nanwe and the deserts of Salazar, where he met Fathi, a beautiful woman he married after taking her back to Gabriel. Now, Jacques is a too old to travel, and recently his wife began to miss the land of her birth. Since the Marquis doesn't care at all how much money or effort he needs to please her, he has sent several of his servants to the deserts to complete an extremely rare mission: to travel to the deepest part of Salazar, where Jacques met his wife for the first time, and fill dozen of barrels with sand. Thus, the capricious nobleman tries to reproduce a small portion of the Salazar Desert for Fathi in his garden. At the moment, his servants are hiring guides and soldiers to help them, the characters being possible recruit. If they accept the assignment, they must face the desert and the dangers that it presents, both for its climate as well as its wildlife.

Unfortunately, without anybody knowing, one of the barrels contains more than just sand; inadvertently, a small egg from The Worm of the Depths has fallen inside. Normally this will not be a problem, but months later, once it's in the garden, the creature will develop unseen, until becoming big enough to devour Fathi while she plays in the sand. The heartbroken Jacques will immediately kill his servants, and will later put a high price on the head of all the expedition members, who were responsible for bringing the worm egg along that killed his wife. Without trying to, the characters will end up being chased by mercenaries and assassins worldwide.

Common Characters of Salazar

Here, a sample of The Harumai is shown. These statistics reflect a typical clan member, without the special deformations or abilities that these entail, as without Creation Points.

Harumai

Class: Shadow; **Level** 2
Initiative 60/35; **LP** 105; **AT** None; **Attack** 115; **Dodge** 90; **Weapon** Scimitar; **Damage** 55
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 7 STR: 7 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Intimidate 20, Hide 70, Stealth 70, Notice 55, Search 45, Tracking 25, Resist Pain 5.
Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 35, PsR 35.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

All Nomads: Athleticism +15, Ride +10, Notice +10, Search +10, Tracking +15, Animals +5, Hide +5, Stealth +10.

Table 23: Salazar

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-25	Poor Nomad	Poor clothes, an extra pair of sandals, rations for several days. 2 CC.
26-80	Nomadic Means	Clothes, an extra pair of sandals, a weapon, rations for a week, a camel, some personal items. 20 SC.
81-100	Rich Nomad	A couple changes of clothes, a weapon, a pair of camels, some personal items, a trunk with food and a water barrel. 10 GC.

THE INDEPENDENT STATES

The remaining states of The Old Continent are known by the name of The Independent States. The differences between each of them are enormous, both culturally as geographically and climatically, which makes it impossible to treat them as a whole. Most of these principalities separated from Abel, without a common front of opposition, unlike The Azur Alliance. They simply try to be independent states, since none of them ever felt too attached to Abel. Others, like Lucrecio or the islands of The Inner Sea, simply remain neutral, without participating in any side or officially separating from The Sacred Holy Empire.

NANWE

Capital: None.
Population: 1,700,000+
Ethnic Groups: Kwa (92%), Asher (7%).
Government: Variable (generally tribal).
Languages: Kannawa, Latin, multitude of minority languages.
Religion: Aramense Faith, Christianity (minority).
Technology: 1.
Denomym: Nanwano.
Flag: An archaic black panther jumping on a green background.
Masculine Names: Amhed, Ashon, Chane, Chui, Enzi, Haji, Hasani, Idi, Issa, Jaali, Jahi, Kanu, Kitwana, Rahidi, Rashid, Thimba.
Feminine Names: Adia, Ashanti, Chinika, Dashiki, Eshe, Hasina, Kamaria, Kapuki, Kesi, Neema, Nuru, Paka, Ramla, Raziya, Zahina, Zanta.
Last Names: Babu, Bayi, Bsiligitwa, Data, Gulagami, Gurnah, Jumbe, Karume, Kawawe, Nyererer, Salim, Semid, Sokoine, Suja, Wakil, Wanyka, Yomba.

As with Salazar, it's very hard to consider Nanwe a country. It's a vast jungle, full of flowing rivers and lush vegetation. The weather is as hot as it is humid, with temperatures that fluctuate between 85 and 105 degrees Fahrenheit. There is rainfall all year round, but during the rainy season, which lasts approximately three months, the downpours are so continuous that it's hard to even see the sun. The dense jungle is scarcely explored, since the natural hazards and the difficulty of the terrain have discouraged all the expeditions undertaken to map it.

Nanwe is populated by hundreds of tribes, as varied as they are different. They have never had the slightest connection, except for the chance encounters between the ones who share the same hunting grounds. Although the territory was never really unified to The Empire (although this is considered part of it), there are two large cities, Magburaka and Mabanu, raised on the southern shores by settlers from Abel. With the fall of The Empire, each one of them has been declared an independent kingdom with its own government, laws and armies.

The tribes lack something akin to a trade economy except for chance exchanges, but the two city-states traded with other countries and principalities by sea, thanks to the large quantity of precious stones extracted from its mines.

A few explorers venture into these places in search of legendary cities or ancient treasure, because there are countless stories that tell of incredible lost wealth in the jungle. Occasionally, organized expeditions also hunt exotic animals.

It is unknown as to what the future holds for this region, but judging by its nature, it's unlikely that anyone is interested in it.

The Tribes Of Nanwe

While there are countless tribes in Nanwe, many of which lie in obscurity, five of them deserve special attention, either for their relation with city-states or the legends about them.

Ngedere: This tribe is composed of very agile little men who live in the treetops. Their level of technology is quite rudimentary, merely using simple tools such as stone knives and spears. They worship the spirit of their parents (an ancient class of redwood that grows in their territory), surviving mainly on hunting and root gathering. Despite being quite peaceful, they can be quite ferocious in defending their domains.

Mafumbo: The people of the shadows, thus named because their members paint their bodies with dark pigments. Although the tribe is a smaller size, its territory is considered very dangerous because of its hunters: "The Ghosts of the Thicket." Experts in survival with a degree of technology that knows basic blacksmithing, they are authentic predators. They use poisons extracted from their surroundings and are extremely territorial. If anyone enters their hunting grounds, the visitor will die stuck with blowgun quills before they realize they're being attacked.

Kubwa Gku: Or the people of The Great Monkey. Strong and stout, these natives worship the mighty gorillas of their land. The test of manhood is to kill one of them using a knife; and those who pass wear the ape skin like a coat, becoming great warriors of the tribe. The leader carries an ancient white ape skin, awarded to the best warrior by the elders. The Kubwa are an aggressive and expansionist people, known for their attacks on the settlers of Mabanu to steal their provisions and obtain sacrifices for The Great Monkey, their guardian spirit.

Kimburu: The tribe of the Kimburu has the greatest degree of progress in Nanwe. They live inside Mount Haramu, deep in the jungle, where they found the remains of an old civilization centuries ago and learned to master its secrets. Still, despite its advanced culture, they maintain their ancestral traditions and even worship K´buru, the spirit of the forest primeval. At first glance it's easy to confuse them with savages, but if carefully approached, visitors may be surprised.

Rakushian: The Rakushian, the guardians of Nanwe whose legend is a myth among the jungles and greenery, deserve special mention. Some say that they are extinct or finished, but the mere reference to these warriors still causes terror and veneration among all the other tribes.

According to myth, they are an ancestral family who struck a pact with the major powers of ancient times, gaining the ability to control mythological beasts in exchange to become the guardians of the spirits. When a child turns 13, the tribal elders awaken the guardian who hides within his soul. In this complicated ritual, they summon a beast and bind it to the body of the child in the form of a white tattoo (which often represents an animal). That allows the Rakushian warriors to summon their "Adian", or spirit companion, a beast in the form of a great white animal.

Many Rakushian are usually solitary nomads that leave the group to wander the wilderness in search of events that deserve their attention. Sometimes they intervene in tribal confrontations, or help one of them kill some creature that violates the laws of the spirits. On rare occasions they travel to the cities of Magburaka and Mabanu, and when they do, they always hide their identity.

They are believed to be extinct after a harrowing battle that erupted in the jungle over a century ago, but occasionally you can still see some of their guardians swarming in the jungle. It is unknown where they based their tribe and the council of elders, although stories speak of a strange well in the heart of Nanwe.

Culture and Society

It is really hard to describe the customs of the Nanwe tribes, since most are so radically different from each other that they do not have the slightest resemblance. They're most often composed of groups between 50 and 100 individuals who move within a fixed territory, although there are also smaller nomadic groups. Most of them stay hidden inside of the jungle, ignorant even of the existence of a world beyond their green borders. Only a few of them have met with the settlers of Magburaka and Mabanu, opening themselves to western culture and becoming better known. Of course, they have their own religious beliefs, usually based on local spirits and other legends of the area. They also have different languages (it is estimated that in the territory the people may speak over 50 different dialects), although the most widespread is called kannawa.

The communities of Magburaka and Mabanu maintain a social structure similar to the one of western lands, although their people have adopted a few local customs (mainly due to the large number of native who live there).

Regarding the Supernatural

The city-state of Magburaka and Mabanu oppose the supernatural like any other western city of Christian beliefs. By contrast, the inland tribes of the jungle have longstanding traditions on inexplicable forces. Generally, all the natives believe in the supernatural; it's therefore common to find an occasional wizard with limited magical knowledge in each tribe. The most widespread practice reduces the number of users of the art to two, a teacher and an apprentice for each community. They venerate or fear magical creatures, considering them spirits of the jungle or vindictive demons that are there to either destroy or appease. Each tribe reacts differently to these powers, but those who are friendly to foreigners will be respectful to them (especially if they can take advantage of them and benefit somehow).

The History of Nanwe

Ever since its conception, Nanwe's history has always been a mystery wrapped in myths and legends. Its people say that there were great civilizations that proudly rose in the jungle long ago, as the ruins that still remain along the thicket seem to testify. Unfortunately, it is unknown to who belonged or what could have caused its downfall. The ancient legend speaks of a spirit of emptiness, a nameless specter of light and darkness that enveloped the world and was about to drag it into eternal nothingness. Although nobody can guarantee the veracity this story today, some engravings on the walls of the ruins seem to at least suggest that some terrible event happened in the past, a war in which many tribes leaded by the Rakushian alongside with powerful spirits fought against an unknown adversary.

Neither the War of God nor the subsequent formation of the Empire had much to do with Nanwe, since the tribes continued their way of life, ignoring such events. The only thing that affected them was the activation of the machine of Rah, because the momentary destruction and the consequent weakening of supernatural forces caused many of the spirits of the jungle to sleep or retreat to distant lands.

The Imperial troops tried to enter the jungle on several occasions, but the natural challenges of its density made it impossible. It wasn't until year 274 when a major military force sailed to the southern shores of Nanwe to establish the city of Magburaka, thus claiming the peninsula as a principality of the Empire. Over time they formed a second city, Mabanu, and many tribes began to realize presence of foreigners in their jungles, even though the inside hadn't changed.

Recent history seems to suggest that, barely a century ago, a powerful supernatural force awoke in the jungle, which the Rakushians faced alongside the other tribes. This secret war ended with the apparent destruction of both sides, but the threat to Nanwe, whatever it was, had also ended. The fragmentation of the Empire has made the cities of Magburaka and Mabanu independent, completely severing its relationship with Abel.

Relevant Geographic Features

The greater geographical feature of Nanwe is the jungle itself, which occupies more than 90 percent of the principality. There are also some mountain ranges located near the coast.

Nanwe Jungle: The Nanwe Jungle is one of the most vibrant places in Gaïa... and also one of most dangerous. This vast forest occupies virtually the entire peninsula, a dense green mass that extends as far as the eye can see. Although it's divided into many different areas (most of which even have their own names), it all has certain uniformity. There aren't many weeds, since the impenetrable curtain of vegetation in the canopy of the trees keeps out the sunlight. The thick tangles of vines and shrubs only grow in the open areas. There are many hills and mountains, but everything has been "devoured" by the jungle; very few peaks can be seen protruding from the canopy of the trees.

Hundreds of lost tribes live in Nanwe of whom outsiders have never heard of. They have their own customs, and respond very differently to visits from foreigners.

The forest is inhabited by all kinds of animals, from small insects to large mammals such as cougars, deer or even elephants. Reptiles are also very common, especially crocodiles and snakes. However, the jungle hides much more than simple beasts or predators. In the deepest and uncharted areas there are many monstrous creatures, such as carnivorous plants, giant insects or even dinosaurs.



Nanwanos of Kwa ethnicity

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li


Mwanatabu
Gwena River
Kashmir
Great Savanna
Kabalaika
Chasm of Oba
Estigia
Sharanya Mountain Range
Mesi Lake
Rodenia
Al Kairr
Necropolis
Minkah Pass
Agihwan
Meskhemet Desert
Halls of Kings
Tower of Dreams
Sawmathaba
Sariel River
Salazar Desert
Iometh River
Fortress of Nakhti
Tuwileh
Ghaggar
Great Dunes of Hatifah
Enuma Jannah
Forgotten City
Baho
Sand Sea
Vishe
Oasis of Mahjrabi
Thirghú
Oasis of Birds
Palm of Jihamath
Vishvakarman Mountains
Salazar
Nahime
Furrows of Ibb
Desert of Destiny
Lakhdar
Garmeh Farath
Gharb Plains
Nondo Mountain Range
Irinfahrat
Nanwe
Magburaka
Zarb Kiná
Almasi
Nanwe Jungle
Dahabu Mountains
Dun'u Gualai Abyss
Sauda Citadel
Zarb Nobat Cliffs
Mahanu
MAP KEY
Capital
Metropolis
City
Building
Fortress
Path
Road
0 250 500 750 Kilometers
0 250 500 Miles

As stories told, there are ruins of ancient times, citadels scattered throughout the bowels of the jungle. They are as strange as they are different, so it's impossible to determine what culture (or even what race) they belonged to. Strange creatures or guardians inhabit most of them, but they also conceal extraordinary wealth, which has attracted explorers and adventurers worldwide.

If the forest itself is already quite dangerous, its reflection in The Wake (Njozi Iliyopotea or "The Lost Dream" to the natives) is a truly frightening place. Except for specific locations where you can find almost anything, in the reflection of the forest it eternally rains and there are immense predators, each one more terrifying than the last, which stalk the jungle and hunt each other.

Dahabu Mountains: This place, whose name translates as The Gold Mountains, is perhaps the largest deposit of precious gemstones known in Gaïa. The local town of Almasi, which has three quarries, mines these hills regularly. The mine workers are not always safe, as the area serves as a hunting ground for enormous black panthers called Nya Leusi (the same species as Daaku, Lucanor's bodyguard), natural born assassins who strike from the shadows and vanish as quickly as they came.

The Dahabu is the only place in the world where Dove Blood are found, the most valuable rubies that exist and also the material with greatest natural presence. In addition to its incredible monetary value (a few of these stones can buy an entire city), any wizard or summoner would give anything to have one, for its prodigious ability as a container for pure supernatural power.

Zarb Nobat Cliffs: The eastern region of the Dahabu Mountains is a cliff directly overlooking the sea, almost 200 feet high. Its edge meanders for miles and miles before descending and smoothing itself out. In the reefs that lie at its base the waves hit hard, making the dangerous rocks foam up. Most of tribes living in the region believe that this it is the end of the world, after which there is nothing more than an eternal void.

Dun'u Gualai Abyss: Deep in the Nanwe Jungle is an immense abyss that the tribes call the Dun' or Gualai (or well to hell). It is a gaping hole roughly 1,000 feet in diameter that opens into unfathomable depths of the earth. Even when the sun is at its highest the bottom is unperceivable, and at least so far, nobody has been able to measure its depth. For the first ten feet, its inner walls are covered with vegetation, and many species of bird nest in these branches; but progressing down, a lifeless naked rock with sharp and jagged points reveals itself. Nobody knows what lies further down than this. The tribes and the people of the region tend to avoid the abyss, because as most agree (and is one of the few things they do agree on) that it's a hole drilled into the world by the gods, so that the "Ultimate Evil" that was thrown inside never crawls out.

The content of the abyss is truly a mystery. There are occultists that claim that the Aeon Apocalypse is chained to the bottom, whereas others speculate that it may be one of The Sleepers (either the Filisnogos or Götterdämmerung).

The Nondo Mountain Range: Located on the northern coast of the peninsula, bordering The Inner Sea, these rugged gray mountains protrude through the jungle, blocking passage to the coastline. They are home to the Sauda tribe, which live inside the hundreds of caves inside the mountain range. The Sauda are considered guardians of an ancient force that lives in the heart of the mountains, although its nature is unknown. There's also an ancient sealed temple, unrelated to the tribe, leading to a long path beneath The Inner Sea towards some sort of underground complex. Even the greatest entities have been unable to unlock it, and The Magus Order considers it a seal of divine magnitude.

Places of Interest

Although there are a large number of ancient ruins in the jungle, Nanwe only has two major cities in the entire principality, both built by settlers of The Empire for centuries now.

Mabanu

(City, Population 24,000+)

Mabanu is the second great city of Nanwe, built just over a half century ago by nobles who dreamed about a fortune similar to the one the lords of Magburaka have. The original objective of Mabanu was to create the infrastructure necessary to build a road through the jungle, but after years of failed attempts, the project was finally abandoned. Now has become an important transit port for trading exotic products and all kinds of animals.

The city took advantage of some old ruins in the shore to raise its current structure, so its center hails the glory of yesteryear. Curved marble capitals and palaces adorn the area where the upper class and the nobility live. All around there are thousands of small houses made from wood and stone, where hunters and farmers live.

Its rulers, Hasad and Ofelia, The Dukes of Harva, are not completely human, since the blood of ancient devouring demons runs through their veins. The siblings have inherited their taste for human flesh and they use anyone who breaches the laws of the city as an excuse to dine on succulent criminals. Despite their demonic nature, they are strictly legal in that aspect; they only devour criminals and delinquents. The rumors of the strange culinary tastes of The Dukes have spread to the streets, making the crime rate in Mabanu plummet drastically.

Almasi

(Town, Population 2,900+)

Almasi, a large town dependent on the city of Magburaka, stands in large a clearing near the Dahabu Mountains. Its settlers, mostly descendants of the local tribes, dedicate themselves to working and carving in the gem mines. They are accustomed to the attacks of wild animals and natives, so for protection, its people have raised an enormous fence and several guard towers around town.

Almasi is governed by a chief appointed by the council of nobles in Magburaka, that not only organizes the people, but that also leads the small contingent of soldiers (less than a hundred) that protect it. The most famous resident of the town is Norris Ulther (Freelance Lv. 4, ♂), possibly the best gem-cutting teacher in Gaïa.

Magburaka

(City, Population 37,000+)

Magburaka is the oldest inhabited city of Nanwe, because soldiers from Abel built it just over six centuries ago. Originally created as a simple military fortress, when the great natural wealth of the region was uncovered, a host of settlers looking for an easy fortune immigrated to the area. Its growth soon attracted the attention of many tribes, who were gradually nourishing the city with new citizens.

Magburaka may not have the same luxuries as the western metropolis, but the city is great and prosperous. Most of the homes are built in stone, and uptown has drains to avoid flooding in the rainy season. One of the most striking aspects is that the city is overrun with small marmoset monkeys, being both its most characteristic feature and its worst pest.

Certain social inequality exists, since the descendants of the settlers have never had much regard for the natives. However, increasingly frequent mixed weddings have lessened the tension regarding this over the years. The local nobility is exceptionally powerful, controlling the gems that come from Dahabu. Thanks to these, the city is so rich that it's allowed to trade with Gabriel, acquiring all kinds of luxurious products.

The Prince of Nanwe has always been considered the ruler of Magburaka, but this title just represents the government of the city. He chairs the city council, also composed of two representatives of the nobility, one of the bourgeoisie and a chieftain of the tribes. Now Magburaka has been declared an independent kingdom, and the city needn't report to any other authority other than its own.

Sauda Citadel

(Ghost Town, Population Unknown)

In the recesses of the jungle is Sauda, The Citadel of Nowhere, a place feared and avoided by the few tribes who still remember its name. According to many myths, Nanwe fall began here millennia ago, and going there can only bring more destruction. Currently, Sauda is just another one of many ruins devoured by the jungle. However, its surroundings are immersed in a deathly silence, as if even the forest was afraid to awaken what hides there. A little more than a century ago, a strange power was unleashed in the citadel, causing a secret war that was on the verge of plunging Nanwe back into chaos. Fortunately, the Rakushian used their control over the spirits of beasts to seal Sauda before being almost exterminated. Therefore, the outside of the ruins is guarded by dozens of Adian. Undoubtedly, much older and more dangerous latent forces are hiding within...

The lands of Sauda are filled with gray lotuses, an extremely dangerous plant, since they not only disorient and stun with their aroma, but that anyone who digests its nectar loses their memory and he becomes addicted to it.

Yaldabaoth Veda

Yaldabaoth Veda, or the child of nothingness, has the appearance of a girl about 13 years old, with shining black skin like tar and silver-plated hair. She is innocent, but perceives the world as something chaotic and painful, so her very nature drives her to suck everything into oblivion. Veda is in fact the daughter of The Bearer of Void, the only known mortal being who reached maximum synchronization with the Beryl Edamiel in the past, thus becoming her incarnation.

The girl's conscience recently awoke a little more than a century ago, summoning the armies of Etrien Nosos belonging to her mother. Fortunately, the union of several jungle tribes leaded by the Rakushian stopped Veda, though the confrontation almost killed all of them. Since she could not be destroyed, Veda was sealed in the Sauda Citadel. She now sleeps in the bowels of the ruins in a deep, dark well enclosed and protected by four Etrien Nosos that guard her dreams.

Zarb Kina

(Village, 150+ inhabitants)

Zarb Kina would be like the other tribal camps were it not built on the remains of some ancient ruins, where the Kinai have raised its cabins. Although they have never had any problems, the rest of the surrounding tribes usually avoid approaching their lands, since they are supposedly inhabited by iznaya, spirits of the night who defend the village. This is the reason a tribe as small as the Kinai is so respected by others. The truth is that these ruins are nothing but the remains of a temporary settlement of the Devas, which left many bound dark elementals there under the orders to obey those living in the citadel. Therefore, these creatures consider the Kinai their masters.

The leader of the tribe is Zaadun (Shadow Lv. 2, ♂), although to foreigners he is "Fred;" he is enough well known to be practically the only member of the tribe who has traveled to other principalities, so he knows Latin as well as various local dialects.

Other Settlements: *Sirakoro.*

Adventures

The main interest of adventurers traveling to Nanwe is entering the dense jungle in search of lost cities and their fabulous treasure, but that doesn't mean that there are scarce adventure opportunities for them here. Magburaka and Mabanu offer intense intrigue and problems that can surely be lots of fun.

The Historian and The Nothingness: Santos Shupronia (Freelance Lv. 3, ♂), a young scholar of Ilmora who has spent years obsessed with the religion and local myths of Nanwe, is planning a trip to the dense jungle to study its ruins. He wants to hire a group of bodyguards to accompany to him to the depths of the tropical forest, and go by boat to Magburaka, where they will pick up a ranger. This way he will visit many places, although the guide he has chosen is no more than a petty thief than will leave them in the jungle. However, there is something that torments Santos and compels him to move ahead. Upon reaching Nanwe, he will begin having recurrent dreams of a sensual woman with jet-black skin like tar that calls him continuously. Thus, following his instincts, he will end up coming to the ruins of The Citadel of Nowhere, where Outlaw Veda rests. Unaware of it, the blood of a family bound to Edamiel runs through Santos' veins, so if he reaches the child of nothingness, he would even be able to wake her up, causing a catastrophe of extraordinary proportions.

The Beast: A group of wealthy Gabrielense nobles has traveled to Mabanu to capture a legendary beast that supposedly lives in the jungle. The creature is a black tyrannosaur specifically, considered by many the greatest natural predator in existence. The nobles, despite being expert hunters, will want to guarantee their safety by hiring many mercenaries, explorers and adventurers, thus organizing not one, but three hunting parties. Each group competes with the others to see who locates to the beast first and can capture it alive. They intend to use a powerful drug, but will need to inflict several wounds to the beast to take effect. Naturally, there will be a great reward for the teammates of the winning nobleman.

In reality, the reason they want it captured alive is because they belong to an organization that prepares poaching in the I´Ark Forest (see Gabriel), and want to use it as "the greatest prey in history", forcing the participants to pay a fortune to compete. Unfortunately, to complicate the hunt, a jungle tribe worships the beast like a god, so they will do whatever they can to keep the immense predator from taking any damage.

Common Characters of Nanwe

Here, a sample of a native from the jungles of Nanwe is shown. The following statistics have been composed without taking Creation Points into account.

Native

Class: Ranger; **Level** 1
Initiative 60/45; **LP** 95; **AT** None; **Attack** 65; **Dodge** 60; **Weapon** Javelin; **Damage** 35
AGI: 8 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 6 **STR:** 5 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Acrobatics 30, Athleticism 30, Swim 30, Jump 20, Climb 50, Notice 45, Search 35, Tracking 55, Animals 30, Herbal Lore 15.
Special: Indigenous Module
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 30, PsR 30.

Cultural Roots and Social class

All members of local tribes: Athleticism +10, Climb +10, Notice +10, Tracking +10, Animals +10, Herbal Lore +10, Hide +10, Stealth +10.

Citizen Middle-Class/Bourgeois: Swim +10, Climb +5, Persuasion +10, Notice +15, Tracking +15, Animals +15, Hide +5, Stealth +5.

Table 24: Nanwe

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-20	Poor Native	Some clothes, a weapon and some food. No money.
21-60	Middle-Class Native	Some clothes, a weapon, rations for a week, some souvenirs and personal items. 10 SC.
61-85	Middle-Class Citizen	A couple of changes of clothes, food for a week, a backpack with personal items and other miscellaneous equipment. 70 SC.
86-100	Bourgeois	Several changes of clothes, good food for a week, a horse, a trunk full of travel equipment, including a small bag with some gemstones. 40 GC.

LUCRECIO

Capital: Du'Lucart.
Population: 3,100,000+
Ethnic Groups: Aion (39%), Asher (38%), Vildianos (11%), Tayahar (11%).
Government: Monarchy.
Languages: Latin.
Religion: Christianity, Children of Judas (minority).
Technology: 5+.
Denomym: Lucrense.
Flag: A tree in center with a wolf on its feet with the sun to the right and the moon to the left.
Masculine Names: Acke, Fredrick, Gerhard, Greger, Gustaf, Halsten, Jerjer, Klemens, Niklas, Patrik, Salomon, Sigfrid, Staffan, Tomas, Truls, Tyko.
Feminine Names: Agda, Annika, Britt, Britta, Charlotta, Emelie, Frida, Greta, Ingegärd, Lovisa, Marna, Mine, Pernilla, Sassa, Susasnn, Tufa, Viveka.
Last Names: Andersson, Bergqvist, Bergman, Dahl, Dhalberg, Hedlund, Holmberg, Ivarsson, Johansson, Karlsonn, Lindqvist, Lundberg, Nordin, Nyberg, Sandberg, Ström.

No country in the world has changed so much in such a short period of time as Lucrecio. In less than three decades the principality has gone from being a chaotic place, plunged into deep economic and political crisis, to becoming one of the most advanced and prosperous nations of Gaïa. All this is due solely to one person: the enigmatic Prince Lucanor Giovanni.

Lucrecio is now the principality with largest technical advances that exists, which is reflected in all the aspects of its citizen's life. Their irrigation systems, their medical infrastructure, the architecture of their cities, the newly built fleet of zeppelins... all these elements make it a unique place in Gaïa. Not surprisingly, some compare the growth of Lucrecio with Abel's in its best years of splendor.

The nation is warm, with plenty of rivers, green areas and small mountains. It is situated in the center four of the major powers: the Sacred Holy Empire, the Episcopal States, the Azur Alliance and the Lands of Al-Enneth. This strategic position is unmatched, since it allows it to use its neutrality to avoid any conflict that may affect them fully because, if one group attacked Lucrecio, they could just ally with any one of the others. Moreover, while their armies are not too numerous, thanks to the Wissenschaft organization the principality controls the greatest network of spies and influence in the world, granting Lucanor a power equivalent (sometimes, even greater) than any other authority in Gaïa.

The inhabitants of the region live in a wealthy environment, making them completely ignore outside events. Ranching, agriculture and the manufacturing are very prosperous, but its people are not obsessed with increasing productivity as in Gabriel. In addition, all walkways connecting their cities are paved, allowing high-speed travel among them. The governing laws are the same for everyone and people have a high sense of honor and duty, feeling proud to live where they do.

Lucanor has absolute superiority over the country. Since his arrival, he has replaced all the nobility by personally chosen individuals that follow each one of his directions and plans to the letter. So far, nobody knows exactly what the last descendant of Zhorne Giovanni intends to do, because neither has he declared independence from Abel nor sworn allegiance to the new throne or the Azur Alliance. Whether Lucrecio can conserve its apparent neutrality or not is something that remains to be seen in the future.

Culture and Society

Lucrenses can hardly believe how their lives have changed in such a short period of time. After corruption, chaos and poverty, the entire world has turned around for them in the past few decades. Now the cultural development of the principality is well above that any other country; its cities raise libraries and state schools that everyone can attend for free. Perhaps they are not as focused in the intellectual knowledge as Ilmora, but the skills provided in them are intended to be more practical for daily life. Most of the inhabitants of the country are still "old school", who simply strive to adapt to the changes afforded by the recent advances. However, the new generation has grown up in modern academia, having learned things their parents couldn't even imagine. These young, bold and enterprising students are the true strength of the country, because their ideas advance the course of things. Christianity is the official religion and most of its people remain entrenched in its beliefs, but more and more teens believe that going to church every week is nothing but a waste of time. Of course, this causes serious friction with their parents.

Actually, there is a difference between life in town and the capital, Du´Lucart. In rural environments are infused with tranquility and everything is immersed in a feeling of calm, as if the world revolved slowly and was in complete harmony. People are happy and have no complications or problems. By contrast, life in Du´Lucart is a truly hectic where nothing seems to stand still for more than a minute. When an outsider compares both lifestyles, they cannot help feeling like they've entered a different world.

Lucrecio no longer retains a feudal structure. There are few large independent castles and practically all the of the nobility meet in the large cities. Every city, from the smallest to the largest, are governed by a commander personally chosen by Lucanor, appointed as a local mayor and voted in by the citizens of each community.

Its geographical location among the four powers and the neutral character that it displays makes it visited by many travelers, but sometimes there is some tension among those belonging to different affiliations. Either way, people welcome anyone to Lucrecio, provided they cause no real problems.

Regarding the Supernatural

Apparently, the concept of supernatural powers in Lucrecio is no different from anything the people of Abel or other imperial principalities believe in, but it's true that the young people show a much more open mind to those subjects than their elders (although that doesn't mean that they don't fear or distrust them as well).

The principality has a group that specializes in dealing with cases of witchcraft, demonic possessions and other subjects of supernatural nature, called The Requiem, which replaces the function of the Inquisition in Lucrecio. The Church has sent some managers to supervise the work of this organization, but most of them have merged to it thanks to the influence of Lucanor in the high church circles. The Requiem is exceptionally selective with their inquiries, and rather than destroy the supernatural forces indiscriminately, they hide them from the public. They only destroy those that are dangerous to humanity.

Samael in Lucrecio

When he obtained full power over the country and Wissenschaft was operating, Lucanor reunited the Samael Archons of his principality (even kidnapping those who did not want to attend the meeting, who woke up confused in an unfamiliar place). Surprising all those present, Lucanor personally appeared in the room and assured them that they were welcome in the principality. In fact, as long as they remained hidden and didn't harm anybody, they would not have to worry about the Inquisition or Tol Rauko anymore. To him, they would be considered "official citizens." However, he also indicated that he would "repay each of their actions tenfold". Days later, a member of Samael fed on the soul of a human. When the assassin and nine other radical members the organization disappeared without a trace hours later, those attending the meeting understood the terrible seriousness of those cryptic words.

The Fallen Angels do not like the situation (so they always avoid visiting Lucrecio in person), but the ones that live in Lucrecio are pleased by the treatment they receive (which, to date, has been exemplary). Sometimes, the authorities secretly resort to Samael members to help them in investigations or cases related to supernatural forces, so it's not impossible to find Sylvain, Daimah, or even Duk´zarist among the forces of The Requiem. Of course, everything is completely anonymous.

The History of Lucrecio

Lucrecio became a nation after the Wars of the Cross, when The Apostle Joshua de Zed unified the locals who had fought under the banner of The Messiah. Unfortunately, Joshua's short life made The Holy Kingdom soon fall into continuous power struggles among the different noble houses, which were prolonged until the territories were conquered two and a half centuries later by the armies of Judas.

During the formation of Abel, three of the major surviving noble houses sought the support of the Emperor to take control of Lucrecio, but only wanted the power of the flourishing Empire to crush its enemies and become an independent nation. Since Zhorne hadn't supported any of them because he was focused on his northern crusade, the Order of Yehudah took advantage of the situation offering the nobility the power that they craved for. In year 231, months after Yehudah gained the control of Togarini and attacked Bellafonte, The Abendroth family appeared commanding a vast legion of monsters and dark angels, which also forced Abel to focus its attention on the area. After a series of bloody but sudden battles, Lucrecio was annexed to Imperial Crown in the year 235, under the supervision of Duke Arlo Hadley, who received the title and honor of prince.

However, against all odds, the following centuries were chaotic times for the principality, filled with constant power struggles among the nobility, large commercial endeavors that never got off the ground and murders in the ruling families that were continuously changing princes. All this debauchery and lawlessness reached its peak just 50 years ago, with the corrupt government of Prince Bruno Frey, brother of the Empress Lucretia Frey and uncle to Lucanor. Bruno was in the Imperial Court during the coup d'etat of Elias Barbados, losing his life during the commotion.

It was then when Lucanor, unable to ascend the throne of Abel, would inherit the title of Prince of Lucrecio by legacy of his deceased mother. With just 15 years old, the arrival of the young man was a true revolution. The last Giovanni demonstrated a talent for governing that was unmatched; he ousted almost all the noble families, disrupted the balance of power and led to the principality to an age of splendor as had never been seen before. That earned him many enemies, who disappeared under mysterious circumstances (but clear enough so that everybody knew that his power was undisputed). Therefore, in recent years the country has made a real turnaround, becoming a true power worthy of respect.

Recent developments of the Empire have had no impact in Lucrecio, because so far Lucanor has not shown an inclination to one side or the other. It will take some time to see where the country will go.

Relevant Geographical Features

Lucrecio, a green place of good climate, is characterized by uniting a large variety of natural features. Most of its borders they are delimited by forests, while the central part of the territory consist of large plains and hills.

The Fuchs Plains: Despite what its name suggests, The Fuchs Plains have an enormous amount of low hills scattered everywhere. This is a wide area located in the northern part of the principality, whose name is inspired by the great number of foxes living in the region. These animals are harmless to man but are a real nuisance to hundreds of farmers living in the peaceful villages. Legend says that some of the foxes are in fact intelligent spirits, something very similar to the eastern legends of the Kitsunes.

Glockner Mountains: East of The Fuchs Plains is a wide belt of hills and woods, a calm place infused with true peace. Most characteristic of the area are strong winds coming off The Inner Sea, which sometimes reach very high speeds. Fortunately, the hills protect travelers using the roads traveling to Kushistan.

Schaefer Forest: In northern Lucrecio is the largest forest of the principality and one of its most dangerous areas. Schaefer is a tall forest of oaks, cypresses and other less common trees. The place is swarming with wild animals and frightful predators, of which stand out the terrible Yoürgoulat, a species of wild brown bears of enormous proportions. These beasts are so brutal that a single one of them can kill a whole hunting party, so the local authorities have put a good reward on their heads (excluding the market value of the furs).

Sometimes, many people in Americh who have problems in the city hide deep in the woods until tempers simmer down, since few persecutors like to take their grudges to Lucrecio.

Metzger Forest: The Metzger is an ancient spruce forest frequented by hunters and trappers. It's so dense and convoluted that only experts can venture into it without fear of getting lost in the thicket.

Zeppelin Airlines

Just two months after the strange disappearance of The Lady, the first commercial airship in Gaïa, Prince Lucanor surprised the entire world creating four business lines of zeppelins. Its emergence has been a real surprise and a new way to think about voyages, allowing travel to various corners of Gaïa in record time.

Each zeppelin has two stops in the capitals of different principalities, with a layover of approximately two hours each before returning to Du´Lucart, where it stops a whole day so the technicians can check the equipment.

There are two rates, one normal and the other luxury depending on which wing of the zeppelin you are seated. There really isn't much of a difference, since both passages are equally sumptuous, but the rooms in the luxury wing are singles (unlike the others, where four people stay to a room) and the food is much better. The regulars of Lucrecio get a 20% discount in price, and children under 13 pay half price. Infants are free of charge.

To prevent similar events to those of The Lady, elite soldiers of the principality protect zeppelins, but each flight additionally has a Wissenschaft Crow mixed in among the passengers to get information and ensure that no unpleasant incident occurs.

The Angel Line

Zeppelin: Engelrazzer

This line is without a doubt the most used so far because it unites Du´Lucart with the capital of the Sacred Holy Empire and with Hausser in Ilmora. Many Ilmorenses scholars use it to travel to Lucrecio and to visit the Great University, and Imperial nobles that want to travel south and avoid the potential threat of landing near the Alliance use it as well. The line must avoid the Mountain Range of Tol Jaegren, since it causes strange magnetic disturbances that make it difficult to fly.

Du´Lucart - Archangel	48 Hours	*150 / 700 GC*
Archangel - Hausser	22 Hours	*80 / 300 GC*
Du´Lucart - Hausser	72 Hours	*200 / 800 GC*

The Gold Line

Zepelín: The Sky Eagle

The Gold Line is named for communicating with the capitals of The Coast of Commerce. The Zeppelin of Du´Lucart flies over The Inner Sea avoiding flying over the Island of Tol Rauko (by express request of the Templars) to arrive at Chaville. Then after a brief pause, it heads eastbound towards Markushias.

Du´Lucart - Chaville	56 Hours	*150 / 800 GC*
Chaville - Markushias	16 Hours	*100 / 400 GC*
Du´Lucart - Markushias	74 Hours	*220 / 1.000 GC*

The Alliance Line

Zepelín: Eisenber

The Alliance Line has so far been quite problematic, since Matthew Gaul himself has expressed his distrust in having an airship flying over the cities of Azur (even though he has personally used it on a few occasions). This route is the shortest, because it takes just a single day to arrive in Ascani and somewhat less to fly to Kaine.

Du´Lucart – Ascani	24 Hours	*80 / 300 GC*
Ascani - Kaine	16 Hours	*80 / 300 GC*
Du´Lucart - Kaine	32 Hours	*150 / 500 GC*

The White Line

Zepelín: Valeriah

The White Line is most bold of the four airlines of Lucrecio, since it connects to the New Continent. It travels in a straight line to the Cape of Bellafonte and then crosses The White Sea towards Port Verau, the capital of Arabal. Then, it takes a southern course to Magda, the capital of Manterra.

Du´Lucart - Port Verau	96 Hours	*220 / 1.000 GC*
Port Verau - Magda	22 Hours	*100 / 350 GC*
Du´Lucart - Magda	114 Hours	*300 / 1.200 GC*

Less than a year ago some mysterious disappearances started in Metzger, and the bodies of many hunters, horribly butchered without a drop of blood, are sometimes discovered deep in the forest. The authorities blame a lost yoürgoulat, but many master trappers say that those wounds have nothing to do with simple animal cuts. However, anyone that asks too many questions or investigates also disappears, so the rumor has spread among some of the elderly (teenagers refuse to believe in superstitions) that perhaps it's a curse.

The truth behind these events is that, recently, Wissenschaft has installed one of its research laboratories in Metzger, and the organization has released three terrifying artificial monsters to scare people. Most of the forest is safe, but those approaching too close to the laboratory always meet a tragic and painful end.

Creix Mountains: The Creix is a narrow mountain range in the southern sector of the principality. For less than a decade, a terrible earthquake altered the firmness of the area, making some peaks crack and even crumble. That revealed significant mineral veins but, at the same time, left the mass terribly unstable, and now the risk of landslides is very high.

The Order of Yehudah, who still considers Lucrecio as one of their possessions, had to withdraw its forces in Lucrecio to Creix, after most of its agents were massacred by an unknown force (actually, Wissenschaft Crows). They have nested in a complex system of caves and hidden their presence using their supernatural abilities.

River Turin: This large river begins in the Creix Mountains and flows towards The Inner Sea through the principality. Lucanor ordered up several dams and sluices all along its route, allowing him to take better advantage of the water to nearby settlements. Besides the dams, one long detour was built to bring the water to the city of Du´Lucart. The Water Trail, it was thus named, took more than 15 years to finish.

Places of Interest

Most cities and towns of Lucrecio are peaceful, but the principality has landmarks such as the extraordinary city of Du´Lucart or the famous Great University.


Berke
†Bendeck
Green Lake
Kanon
†Kassia
Land of Ashes
†Ferrant
Palias Island
Trias
Khora
Terhel
Forneo Archipelago
†Americh
Schaefer Forest
Meadow of the Fallen
Veria
†Raverna
Korin
†Malakai
Lenard
†Hirsch
Glockner Mountains
Fuchs Plains
†Holzburg
†Keltia
Lucrecio
†The Great University
†Elisio
Metzger Forest
†Du'Lucart
†Haruma
†Krause
White Mountain Ranges
Turin River
Quarry of Lavin
Creix Mountains
Ribera
Creixburg
Reitz Mountain Range
†Port Misrech
Wideann River
†Medina del Monte
†Pylaia
Argos
Sierpe River
Caves of Sália
Llanoverde
†Bastionblanco
Lake of Canto del Gallo
†Santa Clara
Valentia
†Serrano
Serra Mountain Range
†Celes Basilica
Forest of the Cross
Veracruz Passage
MAP KEY
Capital
Metropolis
City
Building
Fortress
Path
Road
0 250 500 750 Kilometers
0 250 500 Miles

Keltia

(City, Population 12,000+)

Keltia, which rises in a large valley between the Glockner Mountains, is one of the most idyllic and melancholic places in the principality. This beautiful community takes the name of The City of Windmills, because windmills overwhelm many of its streets as well as the surroundings. Thus, hundreds of them can be seen on nearby hills for miles around, with their blades always in continuous motion. Most of them have no apparent use, and to most people they are just decorations of the dream-like landscape.

The city is peaceful, famous for its delicious breads and pastries. Nothing significant has happened here in years, and its people have grown accustomed to living in complete harmony, apart from the bustle of other large cities. Its mayor is Beltren Caprid (Freelance Lv. 1, ♂), an elderly good-natured and calm man that everybody trusts.

Among this supposed serenity, Keltia hides Wissenschaft's research and development laboratory. It is a mile long complex, built deep in the earth using huge natural caves. There, hundreds of people perform all kinds of experiments daily, including those so dangerous that the organization isn't allowed to test them in the facilities of Du´Lucard or The Great University. They specialize in weapon development and similar studies based on The Lost Lodges. Its greatest achievement has been the recent creation of the first techno magical exoskeleton based on the science of Solomon, The Gears, which are in the testing phase at this very moment. The laboratory has the most sophisticated technical security systems in Gaïa, and is protected by a whole squad of crows. Ironically, the complex is powered by the energy of the city's windmills.

Reist Ebersbacher (Freelance Lv. 9, ♂), a leading developer of Wissenschaft, is the true power in the city. Before joining the organization, Reist was a brilliant and bold scientist whose studies were considered witchcraft among The Church, who ordered the Inquisition to kill him. Lucanor managed to save to him from the stake, and since then Reist feels true devotion to him and everything he represents. Unfortunately, he suffered terrible burns, which forces to him to cover his body and face with bandages. Reist is always accompanied by a young Sylvain girl called Valis Ul Del Vilfain (Warrior Summoner Lv. 7, ♀, Sylvain), a former agent of Samael that acts as his lover and protector.

The Great University

(Building, Population 800+)

The Great University of Lucrecio is famous for being the most important research center in Gaïa. It's a monumental six-story mansion, designed and built by Lucanor himself, being an academy for young talent all over the world. It is located in the middle of the Fuchs Plains, a few miles west of the capital. The university has several wings; one for the classrooms, another one for the experiments, dormitories, and finally, a recreation room. It also contains the largest library in Gaïa (around half a million volumes), which includes countless books considered heretical or pernicious by the Inquisition.

There are two kinds of students: the children of wealthy nobles and bourgeois, who their parents send there by paying significant sums of money, and those receiving an official scholarship sponsored by the principality itself. The screening is very rigorous, and only those with some talent are admitted, regardless of power or family status. Naturally, the professors never fall short of expectations: only the best teachers are hired. Visits are rare, even for the families of the students, but with special permission from the Dean it is possible to have limited access to the library. The building is also the main secret base of operations for Wissenschaft, where the organization conducts its most important experiments. These are held in a large secret underground facility to which students and visitors can't access. It's also the ideal place to recruit new talents, as several members of this society also work as teachers and keep a close eye on the students who are especially prominent.

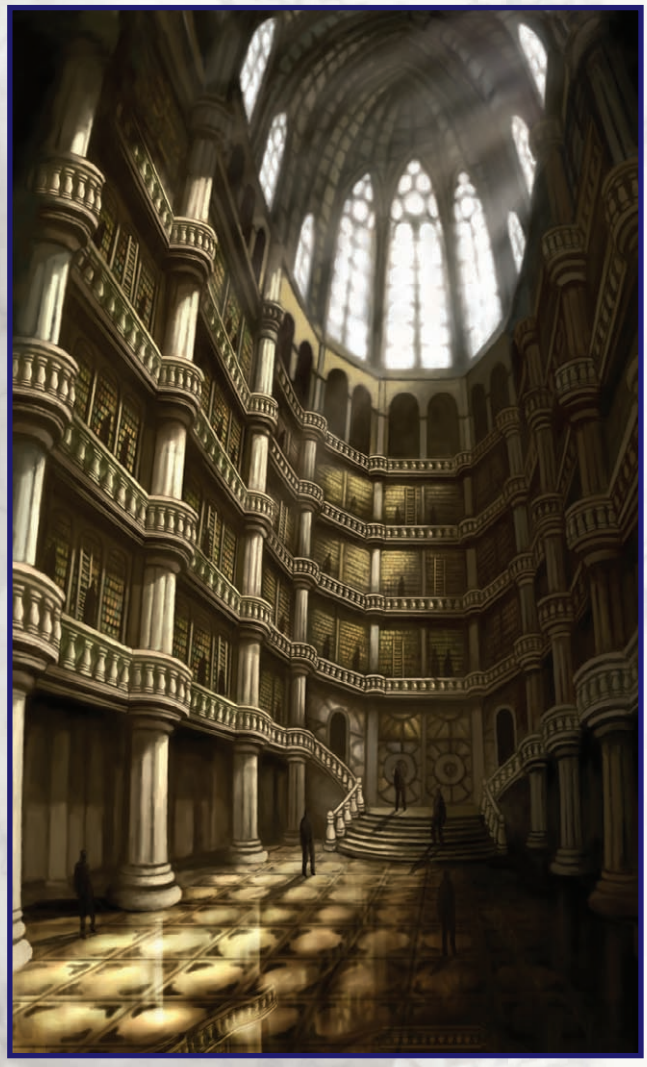
The Great University is protected by a small patrol of guards, mostly Crows that make sure that nothing unexpected happens or keep intruders from infiltrating the labs. The lower secret facilities are far better protected, especially when Prince Lucanor (who has given some occasional lectures) visits them.

The Dean of The University is Meridian Kappel (Freelance Lv. 7, ♀), a Nephilim Sylvain who has managed to recover some of the knowledge and memories of her previous life, in which she was also a scholar. She idolizes Lucanor, and has long been enamored with him and with science (in that order).

Krause

(Town, Population 4,000+)

Krause is the perfect example of peace and tranquility that permeates the people of the principality. It is a large rural and ranching community, which provides natural products to Du´Lucart using the River Turin as transportation. Its people have gone over a century without the slightest connection to occult organizations, supernatural forces or anything but the daily routine of their lives. Surprisingly, it may be one of the only places in the world that can make such a claim.



Illustrated by Raúl Rosell

Port Misrech

(City, Population 34,000+)

Misrech is an important commercial port of Lucrecio, which takes up for most transactions and goods from The Calistis Ocean coming from The New Continent. The architecture of the city is very old, but most buildings of the harbor have been rebuilt in the style of Du´Lucart, and therefore are more modern. Being the most valuable commercial center of the principality, Misrech is always on the move, and nearly a hundred ships enter and leave their wharves daily. Black Sun division

Prince Lucanor Giovanni

Lucanor, the enigmatic prince of Lucrecio and last heir to the Giovanni lineage, is without a doubt one of the most controversial figures in Gaïa.

He is the son of the Sacred Holy Emperor Lascar, who strangled his own wife to keep her from giving birth to the Imperial first-born. Luckily the baby survived and, against all odds, began to grow strong and healthy. Given that not even the Emperor could spill the blood of his descendants, he ordered the construction of a strange complex where boy was locked up in upon turning five. It was a labyrinth where the child would remain captive and in complete isolation for the rest of his life. Still, when he was just nine years old, Lucanor managed to escape from the prison, solving all the puzzles and protections that the top minds of the Empire had created.

At that time, he had spent four years of his life without seeing or hearing any other human being.

Calmed and quiet, he walked half-naked in the middle of the Imperial castle, observing everything very closely before many surprised looks. Not a single person knew what to do or dared to stop him. When meeting his father, Lascar looked on him with contempt and said to the child: "The blood gets better with time. You took a lot less than I expected."

A year later, when the Lord of War Elias initiated his coup d'etat to end the depravations of Lascar and put Lucanor in power, the Emperor forced his son to impale him with Zhorne's Lawgiver. And so, the boy was convicted of spilling Imperial blood, thus losing his right to the throne. Unable to act against the child, Elias granted him the title of Prince of Lucrecio, sending him away while he tried to instill order in the Empire. Therefore, Lucanor was transferred to Ilmora, where in just three years he earned his doctorate in Philosophy and Science, far exceeding any of his teachers. Just when he thought that he had nothing left to learn, he met professor Loctus Khan Schwarzwald, who became his private tutor. After spending time developing multitude of research and projects, he traveled to Lucrecio with Schwarzwald, where the prince initiated major changes. He didn't hesitate to destroy everything that threatened or impeded his decision of gaining absolute power in the principality. From that moment on, his story plunges into shadows and mystery. During the following decades Lucanor took many trips to different places in Gaïa, founded Wissenschaft and subtly spread his power throughout the world. He also met the woman who would become Supreme Archbishop years later, Eljared, from who obtained one of the 30 black metal pieces of Solomon with which he could complete The Process, a project that began a decade ago with Schwarzwald.

Lucanor Giovanni (Freelance Lv. 16?, ♂ human) it is an enigma to everybody. Cold, calculating, methodical... but at the same time absolutely unpredictable. He appears to be young, with short black hair and a carefully groomed goatee, although as all members of the Giovanni lineage age at a particularly slow rate; though he just turned 42, he doesn't even seem 30. There is something unusual in his presence, a strange aura that causes absolute terror and a deep fascination in everyone that looks at him. He is calm, even pleasant, and talks in a relaxed way, creating with his phrases as many questions as he answers. Nothing makes Lucanor lose composure, irritates or torments him; he can speak of the death of thousands of people with the same apparent indifference with which he takes tea. So there are some who write him off as immoral, or even evil. However, he is moved by his personal code of ethics, a morality that conventional people seems incapable of understanding. To classify him as good or bad depends only on which of his facets you want to see.

Lucanor is gifted with abilities beyond logic and comprehension. Quite possibly, he is the most brilliant mind of his age; maybe even all of history. He is able to predict the unpredictable, to draw accurate deductions solely based on his intuition and exploit any results or events in his favor. Sometimes, when something seems like a bad outcome for him, his subordinates are amazed to discover that it was all just an elaborate plan perfectly orchestrated by his mind. Perhaps his most inhuman feature is his ability to adapt to any circumstance and to master any subject in minutes or hours, which allows him to surpass to the best teachers with only minimal attention on his part. So much so, that even disliking fencing and personal combat (he has practiced two or three times in his entire life), he is one of the best swordmasters in the world.

His objectives are truly a mystery, perhaps even to him. Anyone who is close to Lucanor and bold enough to ask to him what he plans to do has always gotten the same cryptic answer: "I once had a dream... and that dream is worth all the blood I've left behind and the thousands of corpses that will get in my way in the future."



Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Although most people think that he is a fanatic of science, Lucanor doesn't lend technology more importance than it's due. For the Prince, knowledge is not a goal in itself, but a means to an end. In that respect he is a very pragmatic man; he does not conceive knowledge per se, so if something does not have an utility or purpose, it has no reason to exist.

Lucanor is possibly one of the only people in Gaïa that seems to be aware of the presence of the powers in the shadow, whose mere existence is to him, at best, annoying. Knowing full well that neither he nor his organization is a match for them in their current state, he would not mind absorbing other secret societies like Black Sun or Samael, before initiating something that isn't reversible. In reality, he thinks that even with those he would lacks the power to face them, and that if he wants to achieve his goals, he will have to go further than any man or mortal being has gone before.

Despite his apparent passivity in recent years, Lucanor has not stopped moving or acting. He has launched numerous projects, many of which remain active one way or another. He has become a fundamental pillar to the destiny of Gaïa and, although his true objectives remain a mystery, each of his actions often brings changes that may represent a historical revolution.

Daaku

During one of its trips to Nanwe, Lucanor found a female black panther cub that had just lost its parents. Before the astonished eyes of the hunters, who didn't know how to react, the dark man approached it and picked it up. If he just wanted to use it for his experiments or it really felt her pain, no one knows. Whatever it was, Lucanor named her Daaku and personally took care of her, growing accustomed to carrying her everywhere.

While performing the second stage of The Process, Lucanor subjected Daaku to the experiment in its highest degree. The result was the creation of the most powerful Processed so far, with the exception of Schwarzwald himself. In fact, his success was such that even he has never been able to recreate it.

Completely reborn, Daaku has frightful abilities, more characteristic of a demigod than a mortal creature. To measure its powers, Lucanor made her fight ten Hecatondies; the panther destroyed them all in a matter of seconds. Not only does she has incomparable speed and power, but her powers also increase when she's injured. At least in appearance, this ability makes her virtually immortal, since whenever she dies, she evolves into an increasingly powerful form, committed to destroying any threat.

Daaku is incredibly intelligent, as smart as any human being. She loves her master over all the things and would do anything for him. Never separated from his side, she has become the most frightening and effective guardian for the Prince of Lucrecio.

in Lucrecio organizes its transactions from this port, although the commander of the city, Baron Akërman (Dark Paladin Lv. 6, ♂) tracks all their movements.

For the large number of visitors from The Episcopal States that it receives from its proximity to The Dominion, people are more religious here than elsewhere in Lucrecio, which causes tension with teenagers, to whom their parents brand as lacking any true faith.

Holzburg

(Ghost Town, Unpopulated)

Located on the outskirts of the Metzger Forest, Holzburg was a lone town of about 500 people until recently.

Barely a few weeks ago the village was attacked by fugitive Processed called 13, a violent and extremely powerful creature that destroyed the town without leaving a single survivor. 13 was severely damaged when it escaped from Wissenschaft, so it temporarily rests in Holzburg to replenish its strength and look for other Processed to feed from. Besides having frightening physical abilities, one of its experimental powers is create small parasites that nest in dead bodies, so it uses its victims to create a small horde of mutant monsters that protect him.

So far, all travelers reaching Holzburg have found the town empty, to suffer the same fate as the rest of its people. Wissenschaft has organized a search party, but thanks to the subterfuge skills of 13, they have not yet managed to locate it.

Malakai

(Metropolis, Population 67,000+)

The second largest city of the principality, Malakai, is considered like a smaller version of the capital. It has a central core of large blocks of buildings (erected on the former ancient town), surrounded in turn by thousands of low houses built in the traditional style. Malakai is in center of the Fuchs Plains, from where it controls most of its transactions and shipments going to the Alliance and the Empire. It's common to find people of both factions in its streets, which have produced more than one serious confrontation.

Malakai houses a small fortress belonging to Tol Rauko (the only one in the principality), as evidence of the will of Lucanor to maintain a close relationship with The Templars.

Hirsch

(Town, Population 2,200+)

Hirsch is a small town on the Fuchs Plains, located at the foot of a large hill. The village is built along the elevation of the mountain, causing a huge gap between each house. At the top of the hill there is a large mansion, theoretically empty for over two decades, since the nobleman who lived there disappeared after conspiring in the murder of Lucanor. However, for some time now, it appears that some class of unknown spirit has settled down there. Villagers speak of a ghost, but whatever it is, the existential power that it emanates is too high to be a mere specter. As proof of this, there has been a great disruption between the real world and The Wake. Most likely, the house is the only gateway to the reflection of Hirsch, but so far no occultist has gone there to find out.

Recently, the village was severely damaged by a confrontation between a group of High Inquisitors and The Brotherhood, who burnt a large portion of the houses. At the moment, it's in the process of reconstruction.



A market in Du´Lucart

Du´Lucart

(Metropolis, Population 824,000+)

Du´Lucart is the symbol of change in the principality. The capital, formerly called Neustadt, has evolved so much over the last twenty years that its people barely recognize it. Since Lucanor came to power, he made huge developments in the architecture and the urban infrastructure that have transformed it into the most modern city in Gaïa. In just two decades the population has increased tenfold, due both to the high birth rate (the principality offers great support for large families) and the high number of immigrants arriving from other cities or countries. Only Archangel, during the years the Empire was solidifying, has experienced similar growth.

The city keeps its old structure intact (now called "the suburbs of Neustadt" or old town, the darkest areas of the actual city), but the rest of Du´Lucart has undergone a visible change. Every one of its streets are paved, hospitals, schools, sewer systems, artificial lighting and its greatest architectural advancement: the inclusion of blocks of multi-story housing. These buildings are nothing new in Gaïa (Archangel and Kaine have had them for over a century), but the number and importance that they acquire here is unequaled. Most are not too high (commonly between four and six stories), although some of them in the new city center break this rule, rising more than ten stories high. Du´Lucard gives the impression of being very high, since there are streets from where only a small strip of sky can be seen. The city has no great monuments, but has large and representative buildings, such as The Palace of Commerce, a gigantic building full of bazaars and shops, or the airport, from where Lucrecio's zeppelins leave the principality.

Prince Lucanor Giovanni personally leads the city from the castle of Larcs, that he himself designed, but spends little time there. The fortress, erected in center of a large natural park on the outskirts of Du´Lucart, is a calm and quiet place where the bustle of the urban center is undetectable. An entire wing of Larcs is devoted to Wissenschaft, where the prince has personally carried out numerous experiments.

In the past, Neustadt contained a small magic node, which attracts a multitude of supernatural beings to the city. Many of them belong to Samael and they hide among the people without causing any damage or problems, but others are monsters that feed on the life essence of people, causing a considerable number of deaths. With enormous population growth these murders usually go unnoticed, but The Requiem is dedicated to destroying these supernatural assassins with the same alacrity with which they hide their existence.

Other Settlements: *Lenard, Korin, Creixburg.*

Adventures

As one of the most modern places in Gaïa, Lucrecio is a very interesting principality to stage a game. For starters, Du´Lucart is an ideal place for investigative intrigue, and the characters could easily work for The Requiem solving cases related to supernatural forces. Nor should we forget that Wissenschaft's experiments are a great source of ideas, from creatures that have escaped from their laboratories to the most varied field tests.

Illustrated by Salvador Espin

Missing: Hanna Syl (Freelance Lv. 1, ♀) is the daughter of one of the most prestigious doctors of Du´Lucart. A few weeks ago her father went missing, and since then, she has incessantly tried to find him. The trouble is that every time she discovers a clue, some unfortunate incident happens (a house burns down, files get lost, somebody has an accident...) and she loses all trace of him. The authorities have already closed the case by officially proclaiming the doctor deceased, but Hanna is not going to give up so easily. She could hire the characters to help her look for her father (she does not plan to stay passive) and find out what happened to him.

The truth is that Wissenschaft has kidnapped the doctor, because his recent studies and discoveries on blood circulation could help in the development of The Process. Thus he is collaborating with them, but only in exchange for the promise that nothing happens to his daughter (which is why the strange events happen around the young girl, but never directly affecting her). In principle, Wissenschaft has no intention of harming anyone or causing other problems, but if the characters are brought together to discover something important, they will not hesitate to make them disappear forever.

Shadows in the Alley: One night, while walking down a lone street in Du´Lucart, the characters will see a group of dark creatures attacking a young woman who, to their surprise, defends herself using magic. Since the girl is apparently losing, they may try and help her defeat the shadows, in which case, once destroyed, they will perceive how a dark insubstantial form wearing a raincoat disappears into the darkness. Then, a large group of soldiers will approach the area, so the woman asks them to go with her towards the alleyways without offering any more information other than they are in danger. Once safe she will thank them, introducing herself as Talia Ul Del Valiel (Illusionist Lv. 4, ♀, Sylvain), and will say that she belongs to The Requiem, the supernatural investigation team of Lucrecio. Of course, she will try to hide the fact that she's Sylvain, unless they themselves have used magical powers in combat. After asking forgiveness for getting them involved, she will explain that her pursuer is in the same organization, accusing her of a crime she has not committed. She suspects it's all a plan by a Samael member, an organization to which she also belongs, but does not have any evidence of it. She begs for their help, because even with her power, it's too much for her to handle.

Talia is partly right; some agents of Samael are actually involved, because they seek to break her relationship that their organization has with The Requiem.

Any Time Past: During the past year there has been a peculiar community in the principality. They call themselves The Traditionalists of Reeja, and advocate the return to the values and customs of traditional lifestyles from the corruption of science. They reject any type of progress, either technological, like gunpowder weaponry or the new zeppelin lines, or scientific, such as the treatment and synthesis of medicinal plants. They started out as nothing more than a dozen followers of Larco Reeja, its leader, but currently exceed 200 members.

In the beginning they were limited to protesting in the square, where they advocated freshly grown food stalls and hand-woven clothes free of dyes; but in recent months there have been problems between The Traditionalists and some students. It never went beyond a few shouts or insults before, but two weeks ago several illustrious scientists have been coming up dead. The authorities suspect The Traditionalists, but they will not take any action without conclusive evidence, while the members totally deny any connection with the crimes, because they claim to be complete pacifists. A spokesman for Reeja, since she never makes public appearances in person, dumps all the blame on some crazy person who hates their ideals enough to turn society against them.

The family of one of the deceased thinks that the authorities are being too soft with this case, and will hire the characters as private investigators to handle its resolution. Early indications suggest that, as everybody suspected, the followers of Reeja are indeed guilty, but everything takes an unexpected turn when the characters discover that the city guard aren't the ones responsible for solving the case, but a team of The Requiem.

Common Characters of Lucrecio

Here, a sample of a university student of Lucrecio is shown. The following statistics have been composed without taking Creation Points into account.

University Graduate

Class: Freelance; **Level** 2
Initiative 50; **LP** 80; **AT** None; **Attack** 10; **Dodge** 30; **Weapon** None; **Damage** 10
AGI: 5 **DEX:** 5 **CON:** 5 **STR:** 5 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 8 **WIL:** 6 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Swim 10, Style 25, Persuasion 55, Poisons 30, Notice 35, Search 55, Animals 50, Science 80, Herbal Lore 50, History 50, Medicine 30, Memorize 50.
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 35, PsR 40.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Middle-Class/Low Class: Athleticism +10, Ride +10, Notice +10, Science +10, History +10, Memorize +10. Herbal Lore +10, Animals +10.

High Class/High Bourgeoisie: Athleticism +10, Ride +10, Persuasion +10, Notice +10, Science +10, History +10, Memorize +10, Art or Music +10.

Table 25: Lucrecio

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-15	Low-Class	Clothes, food for several days, some personal items. 5 CC.
16-80	Middle-Class	A couple changes of clothes, food for a week, some personal items and complete travel equipment. 1 GC.
81-100	High Class	Several changes of clothes, good food for over a week, a weapon and a light armor, most personal items and common traveling equipment. 15 GC.
Priv.	*High Bourgeoisie*	*Abundant clothes varied and of high quality, excellent food for over a week, a thoroughbred horse or equivalent, a pair of tickets for one of the zeppelin lines, a good weapon and a light or medium armor, various equipment both common and rare (which can include some technical or scientific elements of the last generation). 700 GC.*

KASHMIR

Capital: Khon Thani.
Population: 1,200,000+
Ethnic Groups: Kwa (93%), Asher (4%), Daevar (3%).
Government: In dispute.
Languages: Sheeham, Latin (only in the capital).
Religion: No dominant one (mostly different tribal customs).
Technology: 1.
Denomym: Kashmita.
Flag: The savannah with a setting sun and a starry sky.
Masculine Names: Ajuma, Bokhani, Chalis, Chuma, Jadili, Kalume, Kinara, Kipchumba, Kokaji, Mwai, Nelion, Oginga, Osano, Salif, Wambua, Waweru.
Feminine Names: Chanya, Eddah, Fodeba, Jebet, Kaaria, Kalititi, Loiyan, Bellwether, Meja, Modiba, Muthoni, Nigesa, Njoki, Soila, Sundiata, Tekla.
Last Names: Akii-Bua, Baiya, Gupta, Karai, Ketter, Kosgei, Maina, Muhavi, Ngotho, Nyugi, Odoyo, Rono, Shah, Sheikh, Theuri, Wekessa, Zaman.

Beyond the Salazar Desert is Kashmir, a wild place that is free from intrigue or political problems. It consists of mountains, stony lands and barren zones, which gradually become large tall grass savannah. Five colossal rivers cross the land dividing to the region into different areas called The Six Plains.

Kashmir is not a rich country. While it hoards vast resources of iron ore and silver, to date they have never truly been mined. Simply, its people have no interest in doing so. The only economic center has always been its capital, the port of Khon Thani, which trades various products with The Inner Sea. Dispersed in small villages throughout The Six Plains, the country has never had more of an army than the hunters and warriors of each tribe. The only military presence comes from the troops of the Lord of War Matthew Gaul and his fortresses on the shore.

Until recently, Kashmir has been governed by the Lord of The Plains, a governor elected by the six high chiefs from each of the great savannahs, which The Emperor granted the prince's title. His real power consisted of mediating the decisions of the other lords, and his judgment was absolute.

The previous Lord of the Plains was the young woman Kaoni Ulyana who, just weeks after declaring her independence from the Empire, was demoted by Dandalion, an Azur Arbiter, who took advantage of the presence his troops in the principality. That has plunged the country into an unexpected conflict, leading the formerly peaceful land into the shadow of war.

Culture and Society

Kashmir is a wild land to which western civilization has just arrived. Its people live among the high grass of the savannah as hunters, ranchers and fishermen, unaware of anything else but their daily routine. People are separated into numerous tribes, differentiated from each other by their cultural oddities, but united by a common tradition. The clearest division that lies in the principality is The Six Towns, as they unite the villagers of each plain.

The people of Kashmir do not have schools or teachers beyond their own parents, from whom children learn everything they need to live. They grow up imitating them, and when they reach maturity (commonly at 13), they are devoted to their parents' profession. Its people have demonstrated a strong sense of group and a great desire for freedom, and are not afraid to fight or die for it. They lack entrenched religious beliefs, and no matter how hard traveling priests try to Christianize them, few have actually been affiliated with The Church. Most speak the old language of the region, Sheeham, but thanks to the influence of Khon Thani, where Latin reigns as the main language, this idiom has also spread among most of the tribes.

The hunting is the fundamental element of Kashmitan lifestyle. Everybody, regardless of age or gender, must learn to deal with the dangerous animals of the savannah. This skill is highly valued, and the best hunters tend to be champions of their people. It is an ancient tradition to paint the face and the body before the great hunts, marking themselves with the symbols of former conquests.

Until recently, Kashmir was a place plagued by nobles from other principalities that were drawn into the savannah in search of exciting hunts.

Regarding the Supernatural

If a native of Kashmir comes face to face with someone who has supernatural powers, they will probably be scared not because their beliefs say so, but simply because they aren't accustomed to seeing them. Usually, all hunters have heard talk of supernatural spirits, forces and mythological animals, although they are just legends or tales that have never had the ability to confront. That way, people will respond with some apprehension initially, but would have no problem accepting "special" people once they get to know them.

Only those living in Khon Thani would behave like any other citizen of the Empire.

The History of Kashmir

Kashmir was never considered a country before the foundation of the Empire. In ancient times, its people lived in a way very similar to how they live today: hunting in the vast and dangerous lands of the savannah. Isolated from everything, they ignored the Wars of the Cross, the creation of the Holy Kingdoms and later the War of God. The Empire only entered the area some years after the unification of the Lands of Al-Enneth, and they stayed in Khon Thani for a while. Thus, Kashmir was named in honor of the first Lord of The Plains, also considered its first prince.

Around of year 420 the area underwent a momentary loss of control, because a tribe of Jayan hunters who wandered the Great Savannah since ancient times (and that went unnoticed among the plains) attacked Khon Thani, causing severe damage to the city. After sending a strong contingent of troops to end the threat, the Empire constructed a series of small fortresses along the shore. Thus, centuries went by without anything altering the lives of the people of the savannah.

Just four years ago, a woman named Kaoni Ulyana became the current Lord of The Plains, an unprecedented fact motivated solely by her popularity among the chiefs. She soon proved to be an extraordinary leader, gaining recognition for all the tribes for her wisdom. Unlike her predecessors, Kaoni actively participated in the political lifestyle of the Empire, and was known for opposing the Supreme Archbishop Eljared. She therefore decided to sever ties with Abel, convinced that Kashmir could work much better on its own. Unfortunately, after the fracture of the Empire, the Azur Arbiter Dandalion executed a coup d'etat, taking Kaoni prisoner and trying to merge the principality into the Alliance.

Now Kashmir is at war, although contrary to what Matthew Gaul expected, it's very likely that the conflict will not be as quick and clean as he imagined.

Relevant Geographical Features

The geography of Kashmir is known for the differentiation between its southwestern fringe, that borders the Sharanya Mountain Range with the burning dunes of Salazar, and the Great Savannah that covers the rest of its land. It's also known for having the largest number of major rivers in The Old Continent.

Sharanya Mountain Range: Also known as "The Mountains of Kashmir's Water," this torrid mountain range serves as a border with the Salazar Desert, preventing its scorching winds and strong sand storms from entering the savannah. The range is very high and steep, making not only its ascent very difficult, but also the mere fact of trying to cross it. The rainfall in this mountainous area is constant, which added to the masses of snow covering the peaks, gives birth to many streams that later converge to form the five great rivers of Kashmir.

The War of Kashmir

A little over two months ago, the Azur Arbiter Dandalion (Warrior Mentalist Lv. 9, ♂), who leads the armies of Matthew Gaul in Kashmir and Baho, initiated a military campaign to gain control of the principality. He acts on behalf of the Alliance by express orders from Gaul, since if he gained control of both countries and their natural resources, the power and influence of Azur would increase exponentially. After executing a lightening strike against Khon Thani and subduing it without any problems, Dandalion has begun a slow but relentless descent to the south, with the objective of taking the mines from the Sharanya Mountain Range. To cover the large territory of Kashmir with a limited number of men, while simultaneously ensuring control of the capital, he had to divide his forces into small groups. Still, the poor union of the tribes and towns has made them incapable of putting up any true resistance before the advance of trained troops.

At this time the Arbiter's attention is focused on Kashmir, though Dandalion already has begun to organize attacks on the borders of Baho to prepare for further advancement to east.

The Empire is aware of this danger, but Elisabetta cannot openly intervene. Sending troops would only endanger the stability of its borders, and what's worse, it could trigger a war with the Alliance that the young girl doesn't want. She has therefore left the matter in the hands of Tadeus Van Horsman, who has unofficially launched an offensive using mercenaries and free agents who will not bloody the hands of the Empire. Three Fifth Heaven Knights of the highest confidence of the Empress lead the attack, who were stripped of their titles with dishonor and freed from all ties with Abel. They hire particularly exceptional mercenaries, preferring to move in small groups rather than large armies. So far, they organize, advise and support the offensives of the free people of Kashmir, trying to act like a shadow on the battlefield.

Just last week, Dandalion's forces met with an organized resistance, and not being prepared for it experienced their first defeat. The conflicts have so far taken place on a small scale; skirmishes not exceeding 100 men. This causes great tension in the area because the escalation of war and the brutality of the fighting grow each day.

However, there is another problem; Gaul is considering using the war to secretly test the effectiveness of some of new Lost Logias weapons. Of course, the tests are limited to very specific moments, always making sure there are no survivors or witnesses left. If Abel discovered this and did their own thing with The Lodges or sent agents with supernatural powers, the conflict could reach titanic proportions.

It was recently discovered that Sharanya has huge streaks of high quality iron and silver, but due to the lack of manpower and low interest in them, only two small quarries have been built to get it.

The Cursed by the Moon

Like any place, the mountain range has its own dark legend, but in the case of Sharanya, all the stories told about it are true. In ancient times, these mountains were inhabited by savage beasts that were condemned to lose their body and wander the world in the form of spirits. To be able to hunt and satisfy their predatory instincts they possessed mortal bodies, transforming them with the influence of the moon, the only time when they enjoyed some freedom again. Thus the first shape shifters were born here, which scattered throughout the world carrying their curse around Gaïa. However, most of these spirits are still here, trapped inside of the mountain range because of the silver veins that run through it, waiting for the opportunity to steal a body. If someone ventures too far into the mountains and receives an animal bite, it's possible that some of those spirits will seize the opportunity to sneak inside him through its blood, thus impregnating him or her with its curse.

The people with the ability to see spirits, sometimes see dark shadows with vaguely animal shapes among the hills, but they always disappear without a trace.

Minkah Pass: Located in heart of the Sharanya Mountain Range, this high mountain pass is the only easily accessible road that connects the savannah to the desert. Sometimes, local hunters and nomads of Salazar come here to trade all kinds of products.

The Great Savannah: The central part of Kashmir is the largest savannah in Gaïa, a vast plain of tall grass dotted with semi-arid areas and occasional trees. Because of its unusual geography, this place has developed separately from other environments with its own ecosystem, so it has unique plants and species of wildlife. It is divided into six major areas by several rivers, each of which has different characteristics. This is where the most tribes and villages of Kashmir live, but are too small to appear on maps.

The Savannah is one of the greatest hunting grounds in Gaïa, where hunters and prey participate in a dangerous game that risks their lives daily. Sometimes it's hard to tell who's hunting whom.

Jwahir Mountains: Located on the second plain, Jawir is a set of low hills that share the same ecosystem as the savannah. They are full of caves where the most diverse animals of Kashmir live. The mountains are sacred to the natives, who believe that it should not be a hunting zone. Curiously, nobody remembers how this tradition began, but all they respect it, believing that if the hand of man spills the blood of an animal, a true disaster would erupt.

Mesi Lake: The third plain has a very popular lake because of the great number of fish that it houses. In addition to its wildlife, it draws attention to the aquatic flowers there, which look like water lilies spread over its entire surface. These plants are unique to Mesi Lake (they are unable to survive in any other ecosystem), and apparently have rare analgesic properties like a rare alchemical compound. Once a year during the spring equinox, all the flowers open at dusk, emitting a soft and beautiful light.

The Rock of the Father: The Rock of the Father is one of the places venerated by the tribes of Kashmir. It's a great mountain that stands alone in the middle of the savannah, so tall and imposing that it can be seen from many miles around. Despite its high elevation, the real reason this place is unique is because the tip of the rock has numerous shapes of animal heads, and its peak is crowned by a huge rock that looks like the face of an old man (which is how it gets its name). It is difficult to ascertain whether the figures formed naturally (as claimed by most of the tribes) or if somebody (or some thing) carved them in the distant past.

In the vicinity of the rocks are some of the most dangerous animals in the savannah, and those who want to prove themselves as the best hunters usually go there. Unfortunately, few can leave such an extremely dangerous area alive.

There is a myth according to which all the animals of the zone, both large and small, herbivores and carnivores, meet to one night every ten years at the top of the rock to talk like men.



The Rock of The Father

Places of Interest

Although they have spread throughout the entire savannah, most towns in Kashmir are tiny and rarely exceed 100 people. Consequently, only the great city of Khon Thani and some of the fortresses of the coast are really worth mentioning.

Illustrated by Luis NCT


†Kianlung
†Subutai
Yun River
Ehuang River
Hulijing Forest
Nanmiaozui
Daoji Plains
†Shan Lu
Kwa Lubilo
Anansi River
Jwahir Mountains
Wuppertal
Rock of the Father
†Khon Thami
Shagua River
†Goredema
Ikwah
†Mwanatabu
Kashmir
Gwena River
Chasm of Oba
Great Savannah
†Tian
Magdala
Mesi Lake
Rodenia
Sharanya Mountain Range
Minkah Pass
†Agihwan
†Sherena
Daitya Mountain
Sarici River
†Tower of Dreams
†Sawmathaba
Korna Lake
Salazar Desert
†Fortress of Nakhti
†Forgotten City
†Tuwileh
†Ghaggar
†Temple of Storms
Baho
Sand Sea
†Vishe
Ashvins Valley
†Oasis of Mahjrabi
†Oasis of Birds
Vishvakarman Mountains
†Thirghú
†Tiz
Parsa
Salazar
Furrows of Ibb
Desert of Destiny
Sea of Guren
†Garmeh Farath
Gharb Plains
Nondo Mountain Range
†Magburaka
MAP KEY
Capital
Metropolis
City
Building
Fortress
Path
Road
0 250 500 750 Kilometers
0 250 500 Miles

Khon Thami

(Metropolis, Population 74,000+)

Khon Thani is the only major city in Kashmir and also its main port. A tribe who in ancient times tried unsuccessfully to control the savannah founded it, but it wasn't until the arrival of the Imperial troops when the place would gain true relevance. The city soon grew, as members of the tribes combined with many settlers from Abel. After suffering a terrible attack by the last Jayans of the prairies in the year 440, it was rebuilt using the architectural styles of the west, which resulted in an unusual mixture of traditional elements of the savannah with the designs of Abel. Consequently, Khon Thani mixes stone and wood, asphalt and mud, and the modern with the ancient.

It is situated at the mouth of the Gwena River in The Inner Sea, and is considered a relatively important port because it deals with many exotic products, like animal hides, statues or its more valuable commodity, ivory. Not many foreigners are interested in it, except for the Gabrielenses traveling up here, either to trade (many have important companies in Thani) or in search of excitement. Even in wartime, it's common to see young nobles from Gabriel preparing to go hunting.

Just two months ago, Khon Thani was taken by the Azur armies, commanded by Arbiter Dandalion. The city was subdued without any resistance, since a large number of soldiers were already inside when the attack began. Consequently, the buildings have not suffered any damage and the daily life has changed little for its people. Only difference is the numerous soldiers that now circulate around the streets of the large populated city.

The pyramid that acted as the temple for the ancient city still stands at its center, but has undergone many renovations to become palace of the Lord of The Plains. Until recently it was home to Kaoni Ulyana (Ranger Lv. 6, ♀), princess of Kashmir, but after its capture by Arbiter Dandalion, no one knows her whereabouts. Some people say she's a prisoner in the temple, while others believe that she has been secretly moved to the fortress of Goredema. Now, the Arbiter himself or general Christian Rewick (Paladin Lv. 5, ♂) uses the pyramid as a base of operations.

Laria Bounds (Assassin Lv. 6, ♀), one of the three Fifth Heaven Knights sent to Kashmir, hides in the city organizing a clandestine resistance. With the help of many individuals who oppose Dandalion, they so far have been focused on spying on the movements of The Arbiter and attacking the provision warehouses for the war front. However, her true objective is to discover the exact location of Princess Kaoni and to prepare her rescue. So far, all their attempts in the matter have been unsuccessful.

Goredema

(Fortress, Population 7,000+)

The fortress of Goredema is the largest and oldest stronghold in Kashmir. Built in the middle of the third century as the heart of the armies of the Lord of War in the southeast, it sits on the coast as the main military port of the Alliance on The Inner Sea. Despite its age, Goredema (whose name means "Dragon" in Sheeham), has been continuously renovated over the years, so not only is it perfectly preserved, but also has many modern defenses. Protected behind its double walls, the people of the principality believe it's an unconquerable stronghold.

Arbiter Dandalion is the lord of the fortress, although lately he spends much time in Khon Thani organizing the city. Kaoni Ulyana, the Lady of the Plains, is hidden in the dungeons of the fortress, although she is handled with distinction, more like a guest than a prisoner, since Dandalion expects that she will publicly accept the union of Kashmir to the Alliance.

Just weeks ago, the Arbiter has received new weapons based on the Lost Logias, which so far are inactive in the basement of Goredema awaiting the chance to test their effectiveness in combat.

Tuwileh

(Location, Population Unknown)

Halfway between legend and reality, Tuwileh is a natural cemetery where large animals go when they feel like they are going to die. Its location, hidden behind a flap of the Sharanya Mountain Range, is a well-kept secret among a few chiefs and scholars, fearing that if the merchants of the capital discovered it they would desecrate the remains looking for ivory. However, there is much more in Tuwileh than elephant bones or great predators. The cemetery was born around the bodies of some ancient dragons that came to die in this peculiar place. Therefore, in the center of vast field of white bones are large amounts of Malebolgia (a substance that forms from the bones of the great dragons).

Paradoxically, during the War of God, a great Estigian necromancer in the service of Judas tried to animate the remains of one of the most ancient dragons to put into his service, but the natural power of the creature was uncontrollable for him and he ended up being killed by the beast. Tired and unwilling to do anything, the undead dragon still stands next to its fallen comrades, and will remain so unless somebody tries to desecrate the bones of those of its kind.

Mwanatabu

(Town, Population 1,500+)

Being the largest town in the entire savannah, Mwanatabu has become the temporary control center of the counter-offensive made by the tribes of Kashmir. While still remaining very disjointed, thanks to Chief Danuwa (Ranger Lv. 4, ♂) and the newcomer Knight of The Fifth Heaven Order Phyre Klemesh (Paladin Lv. 7, ♂), the tribes have begun to form a common front against Arbiter Dandelion's advancing armies. Mwanatabu is too small to accommodate such a large number of people, and with the sudden arrival of many western mercenaries, so they have large canvas tents erected around the houses of straw and mud.

Sawmathaba

(Ruins, Population Unknown)

In the southeastern part of the Sharanya Mountain Range, hidden by nooks at the foot of the mountains, are small stone buildings that are the entrance to the ancient ruins of Sawmathaba. It is not entirely clear whether it were some kind of temple or underground city, but the truth is that the time has not been kind to these old remains. There are miles and miles of rooms and corridors under the earth, most of them collapsed and in a terrible state.

People believe that entering Sawmathaba is mortally dangerous; not because of what it may contain, but because the state of the ruins is so deplorable that it is easy to get buried by rocks at any time. So this is why the ruins have never been properly explored.

Other Settlements: *Rodenia, Kwa Lubilo, Wuppertal.*

Adventures

Two are the main elements that Kashmir provides to the characters; they can be attracted by the great hunting grounds of the savannah and its dangers, or participate in the terrible war that has gripped the principality, either as agents of The Alliance or elite mercenaries hired by the Fifth Heaven Knights. While both are undoubtedly the most recurrent patterns, there are still other gaming possibilities available, such as those offered by the captive spirits in the Sharanya Mountain Range or the ruins that are scattered throughout the savannah.

The Hunter and the Prey: Gunju (Ranger Lv. 6, ♂) is one of the best hunters in all Kashmir. Throughout his life he has chased all kinds of animals without letting his prey escape even once. But his talent is also a curse. He has long lost the thrill of the hunt, since he cannot find a rival worthy of him. However, his life has taken a radical turn after carrying out a bloodthirsty hunting expedition in the Sharanya Mountain Range. After killing three lions, Gunju unwittingly woke up one of the spirits of the beasts, which found a kindled soul in the hunter. The creature possessed him, seducing him with ideas that he could not resist; if animals no longer represented an incentive for him, he would just have to look for new "more difficult prey."

Since then, Gunju is dedicated to hunting human beings who prove worthy of his skill. When the characters are crossing the savannah, Gunju will instinctively feel their presence and will recognize them as the prey he craves. From that moment on he will chase them, but avoid attacking them directly. He will put all his skills into play and harass them a little, taking them to the limits of desperation and enjoying all the excitement that it brings.

Common Characters of Kashmir

Here, a series of the most common characters of the savannah of Kashmir is shown. The following statistics have been composed without taking Creation Points into account.

Nomad

Class: Ranger; **Level** 1
Initiative 55/40; **LP** 95; **AT** None; **Attack** 60; **Dodge** 60; **Weapon** Lance; **Damage** 40
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 6 **STR:** 5 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 25, Climb 25, Poisons 10, Trap Lore 25, Stealth 15, Hide 15, Notice 35, Search 35, Tracking 40, Animals 45, Herbal Lore 25.
Special: Nomad Module
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 30, PsR 30.

Hunter of the Savannah

Class: Ranger; **Level** 2
Initiative 60/35; **LP** 105; **AT** Fur; **Attack** 100; **Dodge** 90; **Weapon** Lance; **Damage** 45
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 6 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 30, Swim 15, Jump 15, Climb 15, Trap Lore 30, Notice 65, Search 55, Tracking 100, Animals 30, Herbal Lore 20.
Special: Nomad Module
Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 35, PsR 35.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

All the inhabitants of The Savannah: Athleticism +20, Swim +5, Notice +10, Tracking +15, Animals +10, Herbal Lore +5, Hide +5, Stealth +10.

Table 26: Kashmir

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-40	Poor Inhabitants of the Savannah	Clothes, food for a couple of days and a weapon of poor quality. 2 CC.
41-90	Average Inhabitants of the Savannah	Clothes, food for a week, a weapon, a pair of traps or a small fishing net and some personal items. 15 SC.
91-100	Rich Inhabitants of the Savannah	A couple changes of clothes, food for a week, a weapon, some traps or a fishing net, a bag of basic travel equipment, a farm animal (like a cow, a pair of pigs or a dozen hens). 10 GC.

Baho

Capital: Sherena and Thirghu.
Population: 1,800,000+
Ethnic Groups: Tayahar (95%), Kwa (4%).
Government: Dual oligarchy; their two governors are chosen between the most capable and scholars of the country.
Languages: Kola, Irula, Latin (minority).
Religion: No dominant one, Christianity and The Children of Judas to a lesser degree.
Technology: 3.
Denomym: Bahense.
Flag: Split down the middle with an owl on a golden background on the right, and a tiger on a red background on the left.
Masculine Names: Abhidipa, Ahannatha, Ahuka, Angosin, Bhavesh, Bhim, Bhumisvara, Citaka, Dharmistha, Gyaneshwar, Jai, Jenya, Krsihan, Raja, Shyamal, Vasantha.
Feminine Names: Abha, Ahi, Asmaki, Bharani, Darpanika, Gamati, Gesna, Hemaksi, Ipsa, Jabala, Kailash, Karsna, Makara, Prema, Shanta, Sumantra, Urmila, Zubeida.
Last Names: Ankola, Chandak, Chapal, Dwijen, Gajraj, Gorantla, Kalpak, Khanderia, Lokesh, Mandhatri, Muddiah, Namasri, Priyanka, Sangawar, Sethi, Sreenivasa, Umakanta, Yelsangikar.

Baho, the easternmost country in The Old Continent, is a place as beautiful as it is melancholic. Steep mountain ranges, deep valleys and some isolated lakes compose their dreamy landscapes. The territory experiences extreme climate changes, and may well have long hot dry periods or cold rainy months. There are many animals, including rare wildlife such as elephants, tigers and monkeys. Being one of the oldest nations of man, Baho has notable individuality, with ancient and rooted customs unique in Gaïa. Even after being conquered by the Sacred Holy Empire, the land never it lost its uniqueness or exposed itself to the rest of the world. The country is separated into large opposing blocks: on one hand, soldiers and scholars, and on the other, men and women. It's also completely self-sufficient, able to obtain food for its people or produce any product that they may need. Consequently, its market is closed and they rarely trade with other principalities, except to export some handicrafts.

Baho has few towns or villages, since their two major cities, Sherena and Thirghu, built inside mountains, house almost all of the people in the territory. Its army is composed of all the members of the warrior caste. It is large and well prepared, though lacking quality equipment and not very accustomed to the modern military tactics.

The unusual system of government in Baho is one of its strangest features. They have two leaders; chosen every ten years among the wisest and strongest people in the country through a difficult competition that only the very best overcome. Both make all the decisions and define the course of future events. The principality has always had trouble with the Empire, since it was never too comfortable with the ecclesiastical impositions; their ideas and customs were simply too different to coexist happily with The Church. Therefore, the country has allied with Kushistan against possible attacks from Argos, which would force them to send troops if the fighting began.

This is easier said than done, because at the moment Baho is going through many problems. Perhaps, more than it can afford. First, the country is taking small-scale attacks from the armies of the Azur Arbiter Dandalion, who is trying to gauge the defensive capabilities of the principality. Although they are only skirmishes at the moment, the lords of Baho see very clearly that this is just a prelude to a major offensive after the Kashmir resistance is gone. Moreover, the settlers of the city of Tian are very active and have made some assaults on caravans and towns on the coast, creating uncertainty about whether or not a plan is being orchestrated by the Emperor of Shivat. And if these problems weren't enough, there's internal conflict between the current leaders, Dinesh Surajprasad and Indivar Pradesh, since both have very different ideas about how things should be settled.

Culture and Society

The Baho culture is unique. Its society is structured in a manner so unusual that no other nation in Gaïa fully understands its operation. To avoid the major problems that they faced in the past, the community has split into two main groups: the warriors and the scholars, who live in different cities and follow very different customs. Contrary to what many foreigners believe, the warriors are not engaged in combat all day, and neither all the scholars are pensive philosophers; more than just archetypes, they are communities with different ways of coping with life. The scholars completely reject violence, preferring to use understanding and knowledge. They reward intelligence, ideas and innovation. The warrior caste enjoys being tested in combat, making great feats of strength and following a strict code of honor. However, despite the stark contrast between both groups, there's a great mutual respect, because each know that they need the other and that Baho's duality is what makes the country so stable. Naturally, nobody is forced to remain in either community. When a child turns ten, it's customary travel to another city and stays a few months to experience their way of life. Thus, they can freely choose where they wants to live. Each group has its own language: Irula for scholars and Kola for the warrior caste, although both people speak either of them as well as Latin.

Another great feature of Baho society is that men and women live in separate neighborhoods within cities, generally avoiding contact between the sexes. The only places where they don't are the communal areas, made for foreigners and the few families who spurn the customs, and the District of the Union, where they gather during the spring to have children. Although there is a theoretical equality between men and women, the last few centuries have shown a clear predominance of male governors, which has produced certain tendency to favor them. Only after the recent ascent to power of Dinesh Surajprasad as The Lady of Knowledge, have women regained the same status of old.

Its people are reluctant to cultivate religious ideas, and have always disagreed with Christian principles. Only small community groups follow the major doctrines of The Church, while others are atheist or follow the Children of Judas. In either case, they are never fanatical in their beliefs.

Regarding the Supernatural

Small-scale supernatural powers have never been frowned upon in Baho. People with the ability to move objects, make inhuman leaps or even execute special battle techniques were exceptionally rare, but could occasionally be seen in the cities without causing more than a surprise ovation. Typically, citizens were very cautious about using such gifts in front of foreigners, fearing they could have some connection to The Inquisition. However, when these abilities reach higher levels of power, admiration turns into fear, and people do not feel comfortable being around such individuals. The study of magic deserves special mention, because it was abolished years ago, even before the arrival of The Empire, following the old conflict of the Devas that nearly wiped out all life in Baho. Magic has therefore been considered something dangerous, a terribly destructive force that is better left untouched.

The History of Baho

The Baho history is around 1,800 years old, when the tribes of Sherena, Thirghu and Tiz left Salazar through the Minkah Pass in search of more fertile lands. After crossing the Great Savannah they found these lands, which belonged to the Deva at this point. The migrants were accepted with some skepticism, provided they didn't mingle in the affairs of the Deva too much and stayed to their lands under Deva supervision. With no place to return to, the nomads of Salazar had no choice but to accept.

After spending several decades seated in the area, during which time they reached prodigal advancements in many fields, The Great War of The Devas erupted and the three tribes were caught in the titanic conflict. When Aeons, Arcana and Great Beasts devastated the land, the former nomads were forced to take refuge inside the mountains, where they discovered vast chambers in which to hide. Each of the tribes formed its own underground city and remained there for over 100 years. Paradoxically, the last of the Devas had already been destroyed or fled beyond the oceans long ago, but the forces they unleashed on the world continued to fight even after their disappearance. It was during this period when the city of Tiz was completely annihilated by two Aeons, which accidentally found their location during a confrontation. Their fate remains unknown even today.

Eager to see the sunlight again, the tribes regularly sent expeditions abroad with the intention of discovering whether or not they could leave the caves. Finally, after more than a century and a half, they could return. Without the presence of the Devas, the people of Sherena and Thirghu became the lords of the region, but they didn't abandon the great stone cities that they had taken so long to build. Furthermore, the new generations had grown accustomed to the artificial sky and rocks.

But during the time they remained hidden, the customs of the tribes had distanced themselves dramatically, so when the new people of Sherena and Thirghu reunited, tensions rose, which led them to war. Naturally, the peaceful citizens of Sherena were unable to cope with the well-trained soldiers of Thirghu, but when the fight was drawing to a climax, something completely unexpected happened. A terrible disease ravaged the territory, against which all their people, having spent so many years hidden underground, had not developed antibodies for. Before Sherena scientists found a remedy and immediately shared it with the Thirghu people, hundreds of thousands had died. This made the warriors understand that not everything could be solved with brute force, just as it showed the people of Sherena that it was necessary to have enough defensive power. Indebted to their neighbors for life, both peoples were united, giving rise to the complex and unusual social structure that remains today.

The years progressed with great prosperity until around two centuries later when the Golden Emperor of Shivat began a timid skirmish against the coast that quickly became a full-scale invasion. After a series of epic battles between both forces, everything came to an abrupt end with the awakening of the Aeon Parvati, one of the remnants of The Great War of the Devas, which annihilated both armies and disappeared into the sea. The nation then experienced some long period of peace and others of political instability, and for a short period of time even underwent problems with one of Duk´zarist citadels investigating the remains left behind by the Devas. After almost 400 years of alternating hardship and peace came the War of God and the consequent formation of the Sacred Holy Empire. Although the people of Baho barely felt the effects of the great devastation initiated by Rah, it was severely harmed by the activation of his machine, which devastated the coastline and collapsed many mountains. When the first Emperor contacted the lords of Sherena and Thirghu, who were still was in period of reconstruction, they flatly rejected to join Abel. As they refused, Zhorne initiated a full offensive so overwhelming that the leaders of Baho were forced to establish an alliance with him.

From that time on to now, Baho has been a largely inactive member of the Empire. In its seven centuries as a principality, the men have had a clear political dominance that forced women to adopt a secondary role in society. Only with the recent arrival of Dinesh Surajprasad, the first Lady of Knowledge in last 100 years has the feminine population managed to regain greater respect.

The country, which officially separated from Abel following the death of Emperor Elias, is now mired in a multitude of problems. Its borders are threatened by foreign powers, while the lords of Sherena and Thirghu maintain strong disagreements. People wonder if they will be able to resolve them before they reach greater proportions.

Relevant Geographical Features

Baho is a land as beautiful as it is rough. Situated between two large mountain masses, that compose more than half of its length, amid both mountain ranges lay great valleys, deep lakes and thick forests.

Vishvakarman Mountains: In the southern part of Baho are the Vishvakarman Mountains, which foreigners often refer to as "the mountains light." This unusual nickname comes from the fact that the massive bulk houses enormous veins of lampyridae, and because of large underground water inflows, there are nights when the mountains themselves shine. The mountain range of Vishvakarman contains great caves and tunnels that criss-cross it. In one of the bigger ones lies the city of Thirghu.

Daitya Mountain Range: The enormous mountain range that occupies the eastern coast of Baho was named for the ancient Devas that lived there. It is an enormous and steep mass, hardly crossable much less scalable, whose summits are devoid of snow because the rocks give off heat. It's suspected that the southern area should contain large veins of magnetite, since there are strong magnetic fields and it's very complicated to carry metallic devices across the region.

Even sharper than in the Vishvakarman, there are hundreds of caves running through all the mountains, forming a small labyrinth "underworld" separated from the outside. In the largest chamber is a dome beneath which the city of Sherena stands.

Apparently, there are still some ruined constructions of the Deva on the peaks, but the difficulty of the climb has made it hard for anyone to assert this information. Tol Rauko undertook an important expedition to the area a few years ago and what they found seemed to worry them enough.

Ashvins Valleys: The Ashvins or the Twin Valleys is the name given to the area between the Daitya Mountain Range and the Vishvakarman Mountains. It is a land full of depressions, split in two by a strip of small mountains. In the valleys there are numerous villages, populated by farmers and ranchers who prefer to live outdoors rather than under the stone roofs of Sherena and Thirghu. The horses of Ashvins, which run in great herds by the plains, are highly valued by the experts. In fact, some people consider them the best in the world after the legendary Ilona steeds.

Korna Lake: Located in one of northern valleys, near the Daitya Mountain Range, Korna is the largest lake in Baho. Its most interesting characteristic is the fact that giant turtles live in its waters (their shells can reach between two and three meters long), which the villagers of the area use as a boat to travel across the lake. The animals are very docile, but they seem to react violently toward other boats, ramming against the hulls and demolishing them, so the turtle's shells seem to be the only safe way to cross Korna.

The center of the lake has two small islands; the larger one is home to a community of fishermen, whereas in the second one has the remains of a Deva temple, destroyed during The Great War.

Places of Interest

Pese a que Baho sólo tiene dos grandes ciudades, las características de estas son tan únicas que hacen de ellas lugares muy llamativos. También hay viejas ruinas de eras pasadas, pertenecientes a los antiguos pobladores de Baho.

Sherena

(Metropolis, Population 283,000+)

Sherena is known as the capital of knowledge, the largest city in Baho. It was founded 1,700 years ago, when The Great War of The Devas forced the humans to take shelter inside the Daitya Mountain Range.

Thirghu is a city located within a great rocky cavity under a hollow mountain. Sherena does not use lampyridae for illumination, but instead uses something much more surprising; its domed ceiling has a translucent crystalline structure that sits on Lake Lokprakash, which takes up the entire ceiling of the mountain. The water and the crystal let the light through, giving the impression that Sherena is submerged under a sea bed. Additionally, large fish populate the lake, and their shadows project on the city creating a beautiful and dreamy effect. One of them is enormous (like a whale), and has been alive so many centuries that many consider it the spirit guardian of Sherena, which they call Lakshmi.

Lake water leakage occurs both in the ceiling vault as well as some walls, creating beautiful greenish waterfalls that fall into pools scattered everywhere. Fearing the weight of the lake may someday break the dome; the great sages of Sherena built five large columns to reinforce it. Since they have spiral staircases and are lined with torches, it is possible to climb them and get a fantastic view of great the metropolis. But the beauty of Sherena is not limited to its natural wonders. The city has been built in marbles and stone, displaying a bright and Romanesque architecture, decorated with statues and monuments. The buildings tend to be tall and dark, with silver embellishments.

Like Thirghu, it's separated in districts for men and women, with a communal zone in center for the visits from foreigners. There is also a fourth district, commonly called "The Enlightened," where you can find every library in the city. To avoid mixing the sexes, the men visit on the even days and the women take the odd days.

One of the rules of the city is not to bring weapons inside, and anyone disrespecting this tradition is immediately expelled from it. The guards are even prohibited from carrying swords or spears, but in consequence receive an intense martial training that allows them to handle any problem with their bare hands. Next to The Gate of Knowledge, the only entrance into the city, stands a large building where all the confiscated weapons must be held for the duration visitors remain in Sherena.

The Lady of Knowledge Dinesh Surajprasad (Freelance Lv. 6, ♀) governs the city according to custom, the first woman in a century to rise to this position. Dinesh is peaceful and meditative, and believes that acting calmly and rational can avoid any kind of conflict. Her words are always comforting, and wherever she goes she creates an atmosphere of peace and relaxation. Although Dinesh is unaware of it, she and her entire family have always been a lineage very close to the Beryl Gabriel, and her behavior has given her numerous powerful gifts.

Sherena is a city where many Samael members live, especially D´Anjayni, because of how much they traditionally like to be underground.

Thirghu

(Metropolis, Population 267,000+)

This city of power is one of the two capitals of Baho, governed by the warriors of the country. It's built inside Ahovira, the largest cave in the Vishvakarman Mountains, being a huge cavernous room a few miles in diameter. Despite being under the rocks, the entire ceiling of the great cave is made of lampyridae, which combined with the underground currents makes dome emit a faintly bluish glow, illuminating the entire city like an enormous artificial sky. Since lampyridae doesn't differentiate between night and day, some archaic clocks mark the periods of sleep and activity. Rare plant species sprout from the rocks, which while not exactly edible, purify the air and make it possible to breathe in such an enclosed space. As for water, they have a small internal pond, created by the currents that filter through the rock. There are always people responsible for maintaining it, making sure it doesn't mix with water that has been contaminated with lampyridae.

Thirghu's architecture is simple and quite monochromatic, as all the buildings are built using the rocks inside the mountain. Sometimes, they are no more than large blocks of gray stone and black metal, the two predominant colors of the city. However, most modern buildings already enjoy some of Sherena's influence, and have a much more elegant design. Since the surface of the city was not completely flat, the lords of Thirghu built large metal plates and grilles to cover the floor openings. This means that many of the streets have a metal grille surface, and sometimes show deep caves underneath the walkways. The parents usually scare the children with stories about the alleged horrors lurking in the depths... though they themselves have also occasionally peered into the intense darkness nervously.

Access to the city is achieved through The Ogre Gates, an opening on the west side of the mountain descending just almost a mile down to the central cave. There are huge metal doors that can be used to block entry and exit, and even a device to sink the cave entrance if necessary, but since the end of The Great War of Devas, it's never have been used.

Following Baho customs, the city is divided into three major areas: one for the men, another for the women and an enormous central district for the foreigners, directly connecting to The Ogre Gates. Generally, visitors are forbidden to leave that district, incurring severe penalties for the men and women who enter a district that isn't theirs.

The Lord of Thirghu is Indivar Pradesh (Warrior Lv. 8, ♂), recognized as the best fighter of the country after winning the competition as The Lord of Power for two years running. As its title suggests, Pradesh is a man of action and few words, and believes the best way to solve Baho's problems is by attacking its enemies before they have the chance to attack it. His antagonism toward Dinesh Surajprasad, the Lord of Sherena is widely known, because he believes that her idealism will only plunge the country he loves into chaos. Although he's unaware of it, he has a high synchronization with the Shajad Noah.

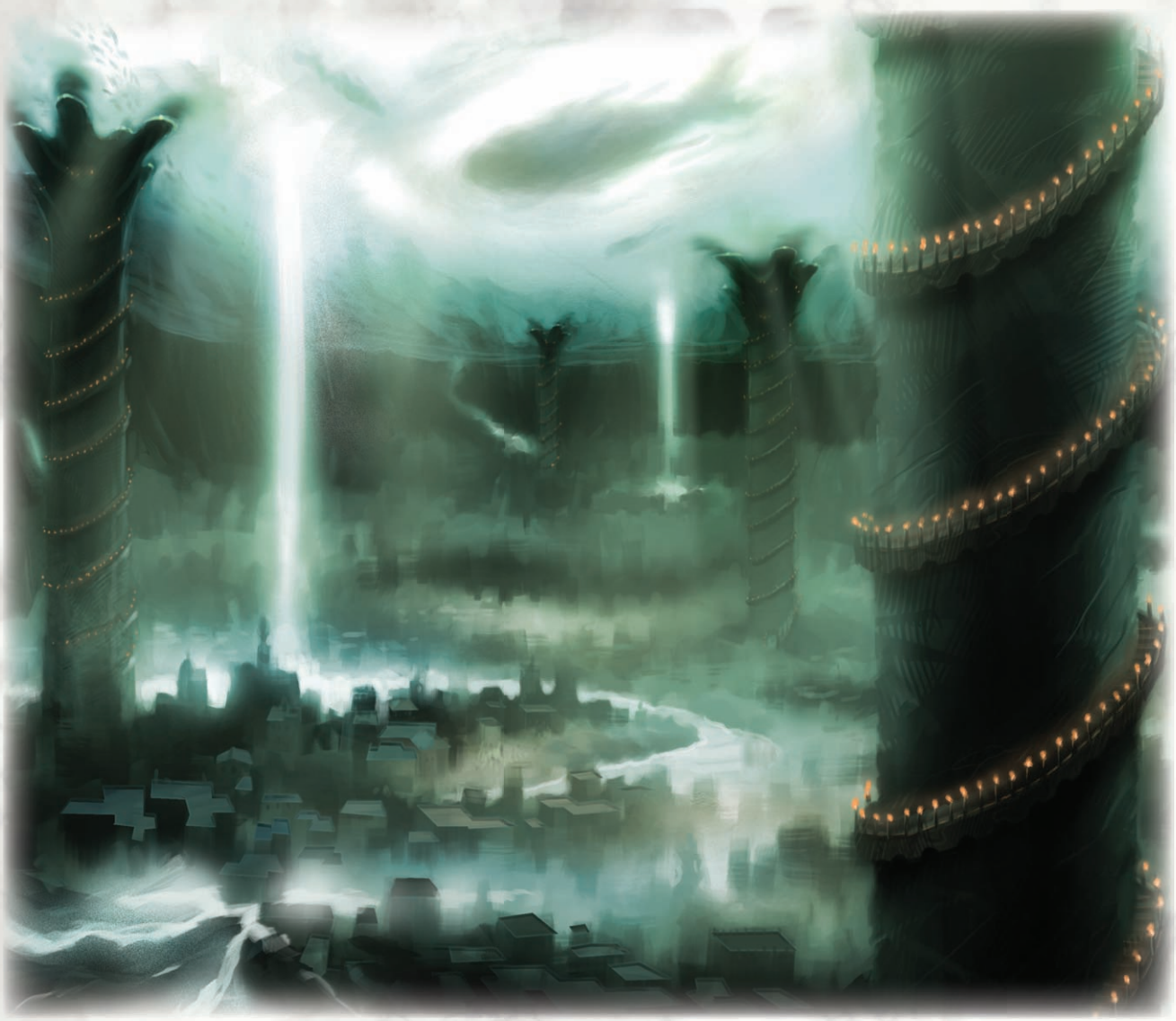
Ghaggar

(Fortress, Population 4,000+)

Ghaggar is the city-fortress of the Ashvins Valleys, bordering Kashmir. It's the largest defensive stronghold in Baho, created years ago to serve as an outpost against any attack on the villages in the valleys. This has proven to be very useful in the country's current situation, because Ghaggar has stopped the advance of the Arbiter Dandelion's armies and saved many towns in the vicinity.

Naresh Kerala (Technician Lv. 6, ♀) is the leader of the fortress, one of the few women of Thirghu that has gained recognition as a soldier thanks to her mastery over the Ki Dominion. Kerala is very belligerent, and occasionally has led a counterstrike unit against the advancing armies of Dandalion in the savannah.

Illustrated by Luis NCT



The incredible city of Sherena

The Temple of Storms

(Building, Population Unknown)

Located at the top of the Daitya Mountain Range is The Temple of Storms, one of the few nonhuman constructions that survived The Great War. It is a tall metal building surrounded by stones that slowly hover around it because of the electromagnetic currents. Lightning strikes it constantly, strong discharges that periodically brushes the surrounding rocks. The Devas created the temple in antiquity, in order to channel enough power to summon the Aeon Rudraksha. Surely there must have been similar constructions for each of the Aeons summoned, but if these are still standing or were destroyed, no one knows. Today, the Temple of Storms is the only one on record.

The strong electromagnetic charge that the building produces makes carrying metallic artifacts near the temple (or inside of it) very problematic, since not only do they attract electricity, but that they pull to the ground so hard that it's almost impossible to carry them.

Deep down in the mountain, in an unfathomable dream, the Aeon Rudraksha slumbers. Those wanting to sign a pact with him as a Great Beast must stand before him and prove their worth. The temple is filled with powerful electricity elementals, attracted or formed by the presence of the sleeping Aeon. By its nature, the center of the temple increases summoning abilities enormously, especially when summoning elementals.

Tiz

(Metropolis, Population Unknown)

Tiz is the legendary lost city of Baho, built by the members of the third tribe that came to the principality from Salazar. As the story told, the city became the scene of confrontation between two Aeons and ended up completely demolished, but some claim that there were survivors left, who managed to rebuild it from the ruins. Barely two years ago, some Thirghu explorers found what might be the entrance to Tiz, located in the southern corner of the Daitya Mountain Range. So far, the immense door is immovable and is partially embedded in rock, but a small expedition has been organized to hopefully find an entrance into the depths of the mountain.

The only thing that they've discovered is an enormous symbol that appears inscribed on the metal door that reads as "Shura." Its meaning is unknown.

Either way, many people have protested against this action, because they believe that Baho already has enough problems from digging up the past. Even in the highly unlikely case that there are survivors, nobody wants to even imagine how they would act after living more than 1,500 years buried underground.

Vishe

(Village, Population 350+)

Vishe is the small village located within the glowing Vishvakarman Mountains, half-hidden behind a large waterfall near the source of the Sariel River. It is a quiet place with peaceful people living pleasant lives, isolated from any problems thanks to the privacy that the mountains provide. But despite its apparent simplicity, Vishe is the home to some of the best doctors and healers in Gaïa. Every one of its people has high medicinal knowledge, which combine traditional science with magical rituals. It's extremely likely that among all the villagers they know a remedy for any disease or ailment in the world, be it natural or of mystical origin.

Although it is very difficult to get to the village, it occasionally tends to some visitor looking for treatment or a remedy for some ailment. So far, the people of Vishe have not refused anyone asking for help.

Tian

(City, Population 13,000+)

Tian is a port city founded by settlers from Shivat over three decades ago. It was created when a Shivatense boat shipwrecked on the Aryen Cape, and the survivors decided to live there as fishermen. Much time passed until the people of Sherena realized Tian was even there, but when they discovered that the town already had more than 100 settlers they decided to ignore it.

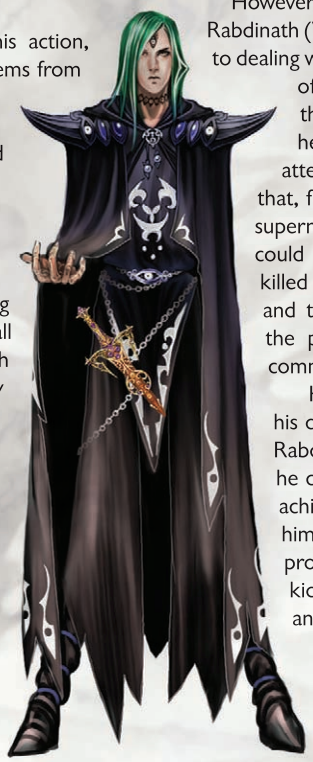
In last the ten years, a countless number of Shivatense settlers have moved to Tian, making the city grow in virtually no time. They have raised houses, some temples, a large port and even small palace for a noble supervisor sent by the Emperor of Shivat. This growth has greatly worried the lords of Baho, but no matter how hard they have tried to establish conversations with them, they have not gained any straight answers on their intentions. Recently, armed troops coming from Tian have attacked Baho's caravans and have taken nearby towns. Considering the fluid activity of Shivatense boats in the zone, the rulers of Sherena and Thirghu have no doubt that this could be the beginning of an invasion from Varja.

Other Settlements: *Magdala, Parsa.*

Adventures

The problems of Baho can be a wonderful starting point for any kind of adventure. Perhaps they are employed as agents to investigate what's bubbling in Tian, since foreigners will have more freedom to move around the city. They also can be attracted to the ruins the Devas and their knowledge, or what is even more mysterious, the strange discovery of the lost city of Tiz and the consequences of its opening.

Deep Dreams: Zhirbat (Freelance Lv. 0, ♂) is a boy who has been having premonitory dreams for years. He recently dreamed that a cave wall in the city (this could be Thirghu or Sherena) collapsed. Hysterical he tried to warn people, becoming very convincing when describing his dream, so full of details that he eventually spread panic. Fortunately the cave did not collapse and everything just seemed like Zhirbat's poor taste in humor.



However, among those who heard the story of his dream was Rabdinath (Warlock Lv. 4, ♂), a mysterious stranger accustomed to dealing with the supernatural. Rabdinath, who was a member of The Magus Order in the past, identified many of the details of the story with mythological descriptions he had read about a small community of Daimah that attempted to hide under the caves in the past. It's said that, finding no caves large enough, they developed some supernatural apparatuses to undermine the mountain; but could not support the weight of the rock and a landslide killed them all. Rabdinath believes the child is a Nephilim and that his dreams do not pertain to the future, but the past; Zhirbat's visions are the fall of his ancient community.

He therefore intends to kidnap the child, and following his dreams, find the site of the former site of the ruins. Rabdinath very is interested in the ancient relics that he could find among the remains and will not rest until achieving his objective. The characters can encounter him by chance, or be hired by Zhirbat's mother to protect him. They will have to keep Rabdinath from kidnapping him, or on the other hand, help him find and explore the buried city.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li



Illustrated by Sergio Melero

Common Characters of Baho

Here, two samples of the most relevant castes of Baho are shown. The following statistics have been composed without taking Creation Points into account.

Relevant Members of the Warrior Caste

Class: Warrior; **Level** 2
Initiative 60/40; **LP** 125; **AT** Studded Leather; **Attack** 95; **Dodge** 90; **Weapon** Long Sword; **Damage** 55
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 8 **PER:** 5 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 10, Swim 10 (20), Jump 15, Climb 25, Intimidate 40, Leadership 20, Notice 20, Search 10, Composure 10, Feats of Strength 50, Resist Pain 10.
Special: Nomad Module
Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 35, PsR 35.

Relevant Members of the Scholar Caste

Class: Freelance; **Level** 2
Initiative 55; **LP** 80; **AT** None; **Attack** 15; **Dodge** 15; **Weapon** None; **Damage** 10
AGI: 5 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 5 **STR:** 5 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 8 **WIL:** 6 **POW:** 7
Abilities: Swim 20, Jump 10, Climb 10, Style 15, Leadership 15, Persuasion 80, Notice 45, Search 25, Animals 30, Science 60, Herbal Lore 60, History 20, Medicine 30, Memorize 35, Occult 40, Taxation 20, Art 15, Forge 35.
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 40, PsR 40.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

The Scholar Caste: Swim +10, Persuasion +10, Notice +10, Animals +5, Science +15, History +5, Memorize +10, Art +15.

The Warrior Caste: Athleticism +10, Swim +10, Climb +10, Intimidate +15, Notice +5, Composure +10, Feats of Strength +10, Resist Pain +10.

Table 27: Baho

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-30	Scholar or Poor Warrior	Clothes, food for a few days, a weapon or a backpack with some personal items. 3 CC.
31-80	Scholar or Middle-Class Warrior	Clothes, food for a week, a backpack with traveling equipment, a weapon or a small collection of handcrafted art objects. 20 SC.
81-100	Scholar or Rich Warrior	A couple changes of clothes, food for a week, various travel equipment, a mount, and a couple of weapons or a bag full of handcrafted art objects. 20 GC.

THE EASTERN LANDS

The Eastern Lands consist of the old empires of Lannet and Shivat, both located on the enormous island of Varja, which many call The Eastern Continent because of its considerable size. These two principalities have a long history in common, which have always stayed very isolated from western culture and beliefs. They are endowed with unique and ancient traditions, mostly related to the existence of ancient forces and powers that have always accompanied man. Despising the principles of The Church, the principalities have carried out the greatest number of failed attempts to separate from the Empire, all in vain. With the fall of Elias, they have found the ideal moment time to do so, declaring free from any attachment with Abel.

Curiously, though they have much in common, Lannet and Shivat have opposed each other almost from their beginnings. However, despite this ancestral hatred, their mutual desire to avoid subjugation by any other authority prevents conflict from erupting between the nations, because both of them want to retain the complete power of their armies. Moreover, they are separated by a steep mountain range that requires whole weeks to cross, which prevents troop movement between them.

The histories of Lannet and Shivat both have the same origin, since both powers descended from one of the largest and most powerful empires in The Age of Chaos: Kuon Teikoku.

The Legend of Varja and Kuon Teikoku

Without a doubt Kuon Teikoku, or The Eternal Empire, is the oldest power in which man has been directly involved. Although its origins are still narrated as countless myths and legends, all have one common basis, originating from the birth of the Kami and Amaterasu no Mikoto himself.

It is speculated that over 10,000 years, the island of Varja was a chaotic and lawless land, populated by Daimah, humans and multitudes of creatures, who constantly fought for control and survival. The Daimah were the only ones that had an advanced civilization, but even so, they achieved a lasting dominance. It was then, at an unknown time in history, when the Kami came to the world. They were 1,087 spirits of all that existed, living representations of each of the relevant things in Varja. From the moment they appeared, they became the absolute lords of the island, although lacking common goals, they acted independently and even fought amongst themselves.

But one Kami was different from the others, an entity that had such immeasurable power that he dwarfed all the others put together: Varja, the incarnated spirit of the island itself. Solitary and pensive, the great power observed everything with interest, perceiving that meanwhile his brothers and sisters played like children, without concern for mortals, a large shadow looming over all them. He understood that the arrival of the Kami had fragmented the structure of reality on the island, causing an existential void that threatened to devour everything. Sensing the enormous danger that was approaching, Varja tore off half his soul, creating the five major Magatamas. After placing them in each one of the borders of his domain, he managed to stabilize the void and restore order. According to some stories, the stones were not created directly by him, but by the five most powerful Kami (also called Kotoamatsukami), who Varja ordered to build the Magatamas by giving them a fragment of his spirit as raw material.

Happened one way or another, the work left Varja tired and weakened, so he decided to sleep for several centuries, protected by the Kami Umetsuki. During that time, his younger siblings continued fighting, and many began to use the mortals as pawns in their battles. Some achieved their objectives, thus creating the 39 original kingdoms, which were known for being involved in constant war and intrigue.

When Varja woke up centuries later, he returned to watching the island, but found nothing that interested him. Feeling empty inside, he tried the same things that his younger siblings did, but none of them managed to satisfy him. Even with only half his power, he remained the most powerful Kami, and his higher nature prevented him from feeling the same emotions that the other spirits had. Seeing him looking so forlorn, Umetsuki, who had fallen in love with him while she was guarding his dreams, said to him that the reason why he felt this way was because he had not loved or created anything. Thinking that she could be right, both of them shared a night of passion together, after which Umetsuki gave birth to Yagarema, a large island that broke away from Varja. However, the great Kami was not still satisfied. It was then, when seeing some children laughing, he had a strange idea; if humans were able to feel joy and sadness, all he had to do was become the same as them. In order to do this he chose a priestess, the purest and most perfect woman in his domain, and impregnated her with his entire essence. Thus, Varja disappeared, and later reappeared in nine months as both a mortal and a divine being. That child was different from its father in all respects, because though he retained most of his powers, his conscience and personality was completely human.

From that moment, he would be given a new name.

Amaterasu no Mikoto.

During his adolescence, Amaterasu traveled throughout Varja, seeing how the mortals worshiped the Kami or were subjugated by them. After years of adventures and learning, his human side was moved by the fate of man and his kin, until the moment arrived in which he felt forced to intervene. It's said that it started when he witnessed a how a Kami was hunting a human girl, and the child crossed his path and cried for help. That Kami, unaware that he was really Amaterasu, ordered him to leave the girl alone, but the lord of Varja ignored his warnings and proceeded to teach the hunter a lesson.

That moment would make Amaterasu decide to lead a rebellion, rising in arms alongside mortals and leading them against the other Kami. Despite his youth, the power and talent of the young man was much higher than any of his siblings, and soon most of the gods stood beside him, respectfully acknowledging their lord. In just over a decade, Amaterasu no Mikoto raised an empire the likes of which Varja had never seen before, unifying the entire island and bringing stability and prosperity to all.

Taking the title of The Eternal Emperor, he called his new domain "Kuon Teikoku," with the intention of making it last forever. Varja was divided into various provinces, supervised by Kami and spiritually governed by a high priest Daimah (in fact, the current term "Daimyo" is a derivative of this period). He also introduced the concepts of honor, decency and kindness that always characterized his empire, creating a caste of samurai warriors and guardians of the island. For centuries, the power of Kuon Teikoku was unmatched, fending off any danger that threatened Varja.

The Arrival of Yagarema

Almost thousand years later, a mysterious warrior, as skilled as he was beautiful appeared in The Eternal Court, and after easily defeating all the Imperial guards he requested a hearing before Amaterasu. The Emperor was so impressed with the skill of the enigmatic fighter, somebody capable of defeating the Kami with a simple lunge, and so taken by his intoxicating beauty (nobody could be sure whether it was a beautiful man or woman), he immediately accepted. Once before him, the mysterious samurai introduced himself as Yagarema no Mikoto, his son and brother, born centuries ago by the union of Varja and Umetsuki. Amaterasu felt ecstatic to receive such notice and welcomed him with due honors, giving him a prime position in the court at his side. Yagarema soon proved to have talent and power eclipsed only by that of his brother, and became an important figure in The Eternal Court, exerting the functions of both an ambassador as well as those of a general.

However, Yagarema's heart began feeling great envy for always being in the shadow of Amaterasu, and the darkness ate away at him until it became an obsession. He began pitting the Kami against each other behind his brother's back, secretly causing war, conflict and death. Finally he plotted a rebellion, but The Emperor discovered his treachery in time, and very sadly, as punishment he ordered him banished to his island for 1,000 years. Enraged, instead of accepting its exile, Yagarema challenged Amaterasu in combat, and for the first time in his life, he experienced bitter defeat. Consumed by hatred, he retreated to his domain, where he slowly sank into darkness.

Kuon Teikoku continued unchanged until three centuries later, when Yagarema no Mikoto returned to Varja leading an immense army under his command. Although he knew that his forces were insufficient to destroy The Eternal Empire, the insidious god had a very different objective. Since he and his father-brother shared the same essence, he thought that if he obtained the Magatamas he could gain the power Varja breathed into the soul stones long ago, making himself an entity

superior to Amaterasu. In his eagerness, he cared little about the fate of the island or the consequences of his actions. However, no Kami could approach the location of the Magatamas while placed in their temples, and he was no exception, so Yagarema no Mikoto needed a deadly army to steal them. Thus he organized the Urayamashii War, or The War of Envy, which endangered not only Kuon Teikoku, but also the very existence of Varja. The dark Kami had the power of two of the stones at his fingertips, but the valiant intervention of the family guardians achieved, at the expense of thousands of lives, enough time for the armies of the Eternal Emperor to arrive and exterminating the followers of Yagarema no Mikoto. Since then, the attacks coming from the island of Yagarema were repeated cyclically throughout the centuries, but the armies of the insidious god were always defeated. Sometimes, Amaterasu organized an assault against his brother, but since the island was outside the influence of the Magatamas, he never could establish a permanent force there. Over time, the inhabitants of Kuon Teikoku called those attacks The Eternal Shadow War, and learned to live with them.

The End Of Eternity

They say that everything has an end, even eternity. After nearly 5,000 years of prosperity, and having created one of the most stable civilizations in the history of Gaïa, Kuon Teikoku was about to plunge back into chaos. What Yagarema had not achieved in thousands of years, was done by a single mortal woman.

It all started with the great Shogun Hideyuki, descendant from one of the Kotoamatsukami. Hideyuki was a close friend of the Eternal Emperor, and had such courage and skill in combat that even the most powerful Kami feared him. On two occasions he led the armies of Kuon Teikoku victoriously into The Eternal Shadow War, and he even advanced to the island of Yagarema pushing the insidious god back. His name was mentioned with admiration, and even among the people he earned the nickname of "The God of War."

One day, while hunting in the woods, one of Hideyuki's arrows got lost in the thicket. When going to look for it, he discovered with horror that he had severely injured a young woman; more beautiful than any he had ever known. Falling in love with her at first sight, he ordered the spirits of the wind to immediately carry her to the court, where she was treated with the utmost care.

The girl, whose name was Nadeshiko, turned out to be the third princess of a small district. She was quite surprised when she awoke in the imperial palace being treated with such care. Hideyuki soon appeared before her and, ashamed of his mistake, he was unable to confess his feelings to her. Instead, he invited the princess to stay in the palace for a while to repay her for the damage he had caused. One afternoon, while walking through the long corridors in awe, Nadeshiko found Amaterasu, who happened to walk alone and angry, without wearing his Imperial robes. Unaware of whom he was, the young woman and the Emperor discussed and talked for hours. Fascinated by her personality and beauty, Amaterasu began to see her in secret without revealing his true identity to her, and an emotion he had never felt held his heart captive. He had had hundreds of concubines and companions throughout history, but for the first time the immortal Amaterasu no Mikoto, the supreme spirit of Varja, had truly fallen in love. Similarly, Nadeshiko fell in love with her mysterious companion, and when he asked her to be his wife, the young woman accepted without hesitation.

Nobody was more surprised than her when Amaterasu publicly announced his wedding, thus revealing his true identity.

No one, except for Hideyuki.

The Shogun was deeply shocked by the news, although his loyalty to the Emperor prevented him from saying or doing anything. In silence, he was present at the ceremony, the grandest one ever done in Kuon Teikoku, after which Nadeshiko adopted the last name of Mikoto and became the Eternal Empress. But Hideyuki, whose feelings for her remained equally strong, felt uncomfortable in her presence and began to go to the battlefield more often. While his character darkened, he began enjoying slaughter, finding combat and death quite liberating. Finally, when he could no longer resist his desire for Nadeshiko, he persuaded the Emperor to organize an attack against The Old Continent, since their informers had assured to him that they were prepared to ally with Yagarema. Given the refusal of Amaterasu, the Shogun organized a fictitious attack against Nadeshiko, who at that time awaited her first-born son. This act sparked the anger of the Emperor, who ordered to crush all those who dared threaten his wife.

For the first time throughout his existence, anger blinded the reason of Amaterasu, who left Hideyuki in charge of organizing the attack. Wisely, the Shogun sent all the faithful divisions and Kamis of the Emperor into the continent, keeping in Varja only those that followed him. When it was too late for Amaterasu to do anything, Hideyuki began a rebellion, attacking all the vital points of Kuon Teikoku with deadly precision. With such threat over his empire and fearing that the conflict would reach the court and endanger his beloved, the Lord of Varja left his palace to face the rebel armies, accompanied only by his personal guard.

A few hundreds warriors against over 100,000 soldiers led by gods.

However, even that was anticipated in Hideyuki's plans, which took advantage of the Emperor's brief absence to enter the court and capture Nadeshiko, the same night that she was in labor. Not even the powerful Kami Ohoyamatsumi, who Amaterasu had left as guardian for his wife, could defeat the fallen Shogun. Between the chaos and the storm, Nadeshiko gave birth to twins, begging the spirits of the wind to take them far away, safely from Hideyuki. Amaterasu realized his mistake too late and, although he quickly flew to the court, he couldn't arrive in time to avoid the tragedy. When the furious god descended into the Eternal Palace courtyard, there waiting for him was his old friend while two of the rebel Kami held Nadeshiko at swordpoint with the divine katana Tenshin no Ryu. Hideyuki challenged the Emperor to a duel, but he explaining that if he dared to raise his sword against him, his wife's blood would be the one that would spill.

Twelve mortal wounds suffered the Eternal Emperor before falling down to one knee for the first time in his life and, with each one of them, the island of Varja broke more and more.

Fearing that her beloved would die for her, in a last act of desperation Nadeshiko impaled herself on the divine sword, giving her husband a sweet farewell smile. The legend told that in that moment of pure rage, sorrow and pain, the piercing cry of Amaterasu no Mikoto formed the Crack in Len Peng. Under the stormy sky illuminated by lightning, both swordmasters clashed blades for the last time, destroying the entire court in their fight. Everyone in the vicinity, both man and god, ended up blown by the gusts that their blows generated. But, even injured and on the brink of madness and death, Amaterasu's power and skill had no equal. Finally, his mastery defeated Hideyuki's, and his old friend fell beneath his sword with a victorious smile. The Shogun's last words would resonate throughout history:

"Now I'll go wherever she is. The only place you can never get her."

The Birth of Lannet And Shivat

Following those events, Amaterasu would never be the same. His domain desolate and ruined, he looked for his children while trying to rebuild Kuon Teikoku. When he first met the twins, a boy and a girl, he named them Lannet and Shivat, which in the ancient language of the Kami meant Sun and Moon.

While both were raised with love and discipline, not even his love for his children filled the emptiness that Nadeshiko had created for Amaterasu. His public appearances became increasingly infrequent, being absent for long periods, sometimes for months. He left most of the administration in the hands of the Kami who had remained loyal to him and dedicated himself to observing the stars or spending time with the twins. Finally, when Lannet and Shivat became teenagers, Amaterasu no Mikoto mysteriously disappeared without a trace, and although they searched, nobody knew where he was.

During the first two years, the Daimyo believed it was nothing more than a long pilgrimage and didn't worry too much about it, but when it lasted a third, he thought it was necessary to approach a subject that had been ignored until then: the succession of the Eternal Emperor. After lengthy discussions and problems, they reached the conclusion that Varja should be separated into two great kingdoms, each one of them responsible for the children of Amaterasu. Thus the empires of Lannet and Shivat were born, to govern the history of Varja for the next millennia.

The fate of the Eternal Emperor is still a subject of legend. Some say that he was already dead from the moment his wife died, and his time spent in the world was only to ensure that his children were fine. Others believe that he sought Nadeshiko through all planes of existence, and is still looking for her today. However, the most widespread story is that he plunged into a deep sleep somewhere in Varja, waiting for the soul of his wife to be reborn somewhere in the world.

Varja and the Supernatural

Supernatural powers do not work normally in Varja. Since the arrival of The Kami and the subsequent creation of the Magatamas, the structure of the mystical forces and the supernatural world has undergone profound changes in the island. Consequently, both Lannet and Shivat apply various special rules when executing magic and summons, which are reflected in the respective chapters.

The Kami

The Kami were born when the reflections of The Wake in Varja merged with their respective concepts or spirits in the flow of souls, making each and every one of the significant things on the island gain sentience and existence. For that reason, they are both the substance that they consist of (a river, a mountain, a forest...) and a spiritual form, manifestations of essence through which they intervene in the world. It was first assumed that their number was almost infinite, but the vast majority of lesser spirits were absorbed or subjugated by other Kami, bringing them to 1,087.

What gave them birth is still a subject of much speculation.

The power of a Kami does not depend on its worshippers or their temples, but on the presence or importance of what created it. The more significant, great and monumental thing it represents, the greater its power. Therefore, the most powerful Kami usually personify immense things, most notably great mountains and rivers. According to its spiritual level, they are divided into four groups; some have power so great they can only be considered gods. Seven of them stand out as great forces of existence, called Kotoamatsukami, or lords of heaven.

While it's virtually impossible to completely eliminate the spirit form of a Kami, it is possible to weaken them, or even kill one, by damaging or destroying its conceptual element. Thus, the Kami of a river loses strength in times of drought, or a forest Kami can die if its forest is completely cleared.

The activation of Rah's machine forced the Kami to retreat to the Ten-Gati, one of the planes of The Samsara where they now dwell peacefully. Their intervention in the world has almost completely disappeared, as they can only appear for short periods of time near their material representations, and only if its name is spoken there.



Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

A Kami of War

The Samsara or the Fragments of the Wake

During the birth of The Kami, the existence of The Wake on the island of Varja was severely fragmented when all its form and content was lost. Empty and with nothing to bring it meaning, the reflection of the world threatened to engulf the whole island, until the creation of The Magatamas managed to break the void and stabilize it, forming what occultists and priests call The Layers of Samsara, or levels of existence.

The current structure of The Wake is held in Varja solely through The Magatamas that have managed to end the chaos and limit their number to only five fragments or levels. When a person dies, his spirit is called by the flow of souls, but very often their past life casts a shadow on some of The Layers of Samsara, creating a distorted reflection of when they were still alive. Like other Wake Specters, they are not souls per se, but strong emotions that take shape and vague sentience thanks to the distortion from the island.

人道

Manusya-gati *(the human reality)*

Manusya is the name that the priests give to the real world, the existence known as Gaïa. It is the most important, fundamental world, from which all the reflections of The Samsara are created. For the people of Varja, the whole island is the Manusya-Gati.

阿修羅道

Ashura-gati *(the reality of war)*

Ashura is the reality of eternal war, the world where the reflection of all violent beings that have lived consumed by anger and the desire to fight go. It's a land of fire and blood, clotted with corpses, broken swords and arrows. All beings that dwell there want no more than to struggle and fight against increasingly stronger enemies, longing to manifest their powers in the real world. For many priests, this is another face of Hell.

It contains Kami who have been consumed by the desire to fight, called Ashuras, which are considered equivalent to gods.

畜生道

Tiryagyoni-gati *(the reality of animals and beasts)*

This is the world of animals, where the reflections of the most powerful beasts go. It is a field of eternal hunting, an eternal dark prairie where predators and prey follow a cycle of eternal persecution. For the samurai, it is the plane of existence that slaves and servants are confined to, those who have spent their lives in eternal servitude. Sometimes, the largest predators can return to the real world for a while, becoming legendary monsters.

餓鬼道

Preta-gati *(the reality of hungry spirits)*

Preta is the world of hungry spirits, the reality of beings that have been consumed by envy, jealousy and uncontrollable desire. This is a gray existence, made of ash and mist, where all things have been swallowed by the void. Its inhabitants are specters formed by their anxieties, creatures driven by an irresistible hunger that compels them to consume everything in existence to satiate themselves. It is considered a hell, and sometimes much more terrifying than Naraku itself.

地獄道

Naraku-gati *(hell)*

Known as hell or purgatory, this is the lowest and worst of all fragments of The Wake, the place where the reflections of those who have been carried away by evil. Naraku is a dark world of fear, pain and eternal suffering, a clear image of the creatures forming it. It manifests two kinds of beings: those who believe they are sinners deserving punishment, thus appearing as tortured victims, and those whose evil was so overwhelming in life, that they are reborn as dark demons.

Here, the supreme queen is Tsukiyomi, The Goddess of the Black Moon, one of the most powerful Nightmare Lords of The Wake, comparable only to The Prince of Crows. Some believe that she is a dark and sinister Kami, corrupted by the emotions of her kingdom, while others believe she is the union of hundreds of tenebrous reflections that have become sentient.

天道

Ten-gati *(the kingdom of heaven)*

Ten-Gati is the world of the gods, the fragment of The Wake the Kami use to temporarily move away from the real world. Upon the activation of the machine, most of them were forced to take refuge here to survive, where they have formed their own community. It is the only place in The Wake of Varja that is not affected by changes in the real world, since the existential power of its citizens is high enough to keep it stable, closed to unwanted visitors.

Ten-Gati has taken the form of a luxurious city of wonders, where the Kami live comfortably, served by powerful spirits. The only supernatural entities that can enter the city are those that possess a very high Gnosis, and only if The Kami allow them to.

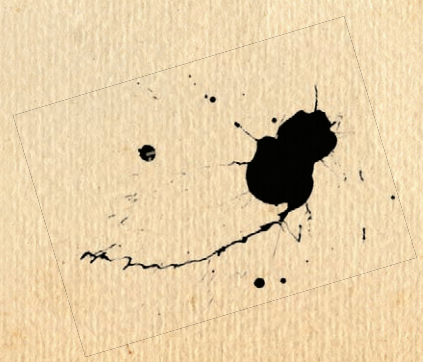
Sometimes, if a breach forms in this reality for any reason, there are Kami who usually seal it, but not before sending to some of its servants to recriminate (or even punish) the negligence or insult.

Those who See Beyond

The fragmentation of The Samsara in Varja has made spirits and phantoms of The Wake very common. However, most of these creatures are lost, wandering in the mists of Manusya without the ability to see human beings walking beside them. They often can sense living things, but they can't touch them. Unfortunately, this leads to a terrifying additional consequence for those who see spirits.

People who have the supernatural ability to see spirits are called Saniwa and suffer a terrible curse. In the same way they can see the spirits, these spirits can see them too. Thus, they live surrounded by specters, being prisoners and victims to forces that remain invisible to everyone else.

The Saniwa are said to have the ability to summon The Kami, if they speak its name while contemplating its material forms.



LANNET

Capital: Tsukikage.
Population: 3,800,000+
Ethnic Groups: Ryuan (99%).
Government: Theocratic Autocracy.
Languages: Yamato.
Religion: Shukyokami.
Technology: 4.
Denomym: Lanneten.
Flag: A white flag with the five Magatama in the center and the sun in the background.
Masculine Names: Akahito, Ashihei, Danjuro, Goro, Hajime, Heiji, Hidetora, Ichiro, Kazuhiro, Ken, Kumanosuke, Minoru, Ryoma, Senzo, Sosuke, Takeru, Yuichi.
Feminine Names: Ayame, Eriko, Hanae, Hisako, Inoue, Kazumi, Madoka, Mizuki, Narumi, Rei, Sayuri, Tamaki, Tsukiyama, Yayoi, Yoriko, Yukiko, Yuya.
Last Names: Adachi, Asanuma, Chikanatsu, Goto, Harada, Ichigawa, Inukai, Kanada, Kawamura, Komine, Kunikida, Moriguchi, Nagasawa, Nakamoto, Onoe, Takenouchi, Yoemon.

Reality and legend are intertwined in the ancient Empire of Lannet, one of the oldest countries in Gaïa. Ever a proud and mighty land, its culture, determination and isolation have projected an aura of romanticism in western principalities.

Despite its power, Lannet occupies only a small fraction of the island of Varja, an area full of mountains, valleys and forests. It is a green region where heavy rains alternate with long sunny periods. The country is densely populated, and even with its small acreage, it has more people than many principalities of the Empire. It features two large cities, many smaller ones and innumerable towns scattered (most of them lost) between the valleys and mountains.

Lannet's economy is based on agriculture and fishing, but thanks to the contacts of some families, it also maintains prosperous trade with the west, where their quirky handicrafts are highly sought after. Lannet's law has never respected Imperial principles, always following the ancient traditions inherited from Kuon Teikoku. Therefore, there are two completely different systems, one for the upper class and another very strict one for the peasantry.

Lannet's system of government is terribly classist, where everything is structured around a rigid stratum principle. The Emperor, heir of the ancient Mikoto lineage, occupies the peak of power, collecting absolute authority in his person. His decisions are not only irrefutable, but merely contradicting them is dishonorable and an insult to Lannet. On the next rung down are the five great families, responsible for ensuring the security of the country and its people. Each of them controls and supervises a host of minor Daimyos, the equivalent to feudal lords who dominate various regions of the country. Their armies are extremely powerful, consisting of thousands and thousands of samurai warriors that serve their masters with devotion. Bred for battle, each of them is exceptionally trained in the arts of war.

After carrying out three armed uprisings with the objective of gaining independence from Abel, a yoke that its people consider the worse of insults, Lannet obtained its desired sovereignty after the fragmentation of the Empire. The country has no allies or wishes to have any. Currently, detached from everyone, it enjoys a time of peace since Shivat has not launched any offensive against its borders. However, all great families know that it is an inevitable fact that The Golden Emperor will issue the order to attack sooner or later, once they are sure that Abel poses no true threat to their autonomy. But that's not the only problem the nation suffers. Its well known that antagonism has emerged in recent years between the Emperor and the Shogun, supreme lord of the army, and a similar thing happens among the five great families.

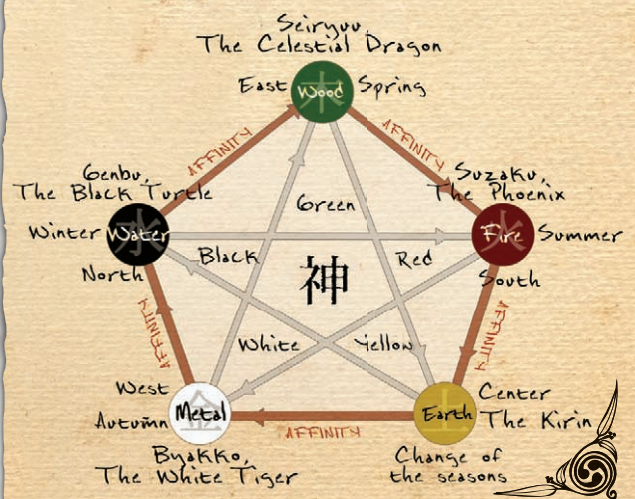
Lannet has been quick to declare valid their old calendar system, which places them in the year 6.985 of the eternal calendar.

The Magatamas

From time immemorial, the five Magatamas (or soul stones) have been considered the greatest treasure of Lannet. The legends say that their mere presence brings peace and stability to these lands, without which would lead to a great catastrophe where nothing could prevent the destruction of Varja.

Each stones is aligned with one of the primary elements of the Samsara: fire, earth, water, wood and metal. For its power to activate, it's necessary to have them on various parts of the island, forming a pentagram. They must also be inside special temples, known as Wuxing Shrines, which must be related to the element they represent.

In ancient times, their ownership was shared with Shivat, which guarded two of them; but more than a millennium ago the Emperor of Lannet took control of all the Magatamas and placed all five in his lands, therefore shrinking the area of protection that they offered. Such theft has brought about the main reason for conflict between both nations, whose antagonism still remains today. Each of the five great families of Lannet has been assigned the task of protecting one of the Magatamas as a sacred duty. If any of them were to fail in their mission, they would be stripped of all power and regarded as traitors to the throne. Over the years they have had to defend them with sweat and blood against Shivat's armies and attacks from the island of Yagarema. Of course, whenever necessary, they receive the support of the Imperial armies.



Culture and Society

Lannet is a closed culture, with old traditions and formalities that have remained unchanged for many thousands of years. The Lannetens are divided in two different strata: serfs and the gentry. The latter are split into two categories as well: samurai, or warrior caste, and the noble families, the lords of the samurai. Only members of the gentry are allowed to carry weapons, considered a symbol of their superior status. Peasants, living under the whims of their lords, can only use bows, sticks and knives to hunt or defend themselves; and moreover, it is a punishable crime to even touch a weapon they are banned from wielding. Each establishment is unalterable, and it is impossible to ascend if not by the express wish of the Emperor.

The Lannetens code of honor is sometimes confusing for westerners, like many of its customs. They have a strict code of ethics, especially inflexible for samurai, whom are required to have valor, honesty and loyalty to their masters. When somebody behaves dishonorably or violates the rules, he is separated from society and treated like a pariah by his own people. Followers of their own religious doctrines, they openly reject Christianity, which has caused more then one confrontation with The Church.

The existence of farmers and fishermen is simple and monotonous, since they are only dedicated to cultivating the land or fishing generation after generation, without caring about anything else other than having calm and happy lives with their families. On the contrary, that of a samurai is much more complicated since he must always behave in accordance to his position, which is usually linked with duels, family rivalries and meeting the desires of their masters. Thirdly is the palace life, where there are thousands of court intrigues and influence between different families or power is much sharper than the blade of any sword.

For barely a hundred years have the first major retailers in the cities begun to arise without a direct link to the nobility. Though it is still early to call them bourgeois, it's true that they hold a more favorable and open position than of other servants.

The families, regardless of the couple's feelings, arrange almost every wedding among the samurai or nobles. It is also strictly prohibited to marry between members of different social status. Under no circumstance could a samurai marry a peasant girl, but nothing prevents him from taking as many concubines as he wishes (or can afford).

Although the great Takashi family is well known for its trade with westerners (especially Phaion Eien Seimon), the Lannetens are very racist towards them, only allowing outsiders into their port cities, provided they have express permission.

The Imperial guard, the Teikoku Ryu, deserves special mention. They are a division of samurai in direct service of the Mikoto family performing the roles of guardians of order in the cities. In a way, they act like bodyguards to ensure samurai of various Daimyo do not fail to comply the laws of the Emperor.



Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Lannetenses of Ryuan ethnicity

Supernatural Powers in Lannet

Since the advent of the Kami, supernatural forces have always acted very chaotically in Lannet because of the fragmentation of The Wake. Only the existence of The Magatamas can stop this destructive process, although even then is it just merely stabilized. While the use of the magic does not directly produce negative consequences in Lannet (unlike in Shivat), summoning powers act much differently. Although it is extremely easy to call beings and spirits into the world, to bind or control them are incredibly complex tasks, regardless of their power level. Accordingly, the following special rules apply.

While in Lannet or its vicinity, any character can apply a special bonus of +40 to all Summoning rolls (both creatures as well as Invocations), though it is limited to calling beings that exist within The Samsara or levels of existence in The Wake (except in the case of the Arcana). On the other hand, he suffers a penalty of -40 to all his Bind, Control or Banish rolls with any kind of creature. This penalty is not applied to Banish if they are located near an area of black butterflies, because it means that there is a "gate" or existential opening nearby.

Regarding the Supernatural

The traditions of Lannet make the people's mentality incredibly open to paranormal forces. They sincerely believe that spirits, gods and supernatural powers surround them.

Naturally, given the terrible monsters that inhabit the planes of Samsara, the Lannetens are afraid of non-human creatures, and even the bravest samurai fear what they cannot slice with the blades of their swords. For them, one should not disturb the spirits of the dead or make deals with either The Oni or The Kami, because what belongs to the past should stay there. The only creatures still considered benign are the Daimah, that were members of the Empire of Lannet in their own right for centuries, even ruling some of the most important families. Unfortunately, they all disappeared long ago to avoid being massacred by The Inquisition and the few that survived were forced to flee, scattering everywhere or hiding as members in organizations like Samael. Currently, those still remaining in Lannet hide from man through subterfuge and supernatural powers.

Wizards are called sohei or shugenja, and are considered people endowed with incredible powers. People generally fear and respect them, because their powers are seen as divine abilities. However, Summoners are seen in a negative light, since they meddle with powers that should not be disturbed. The only exception is the Priestesses of the Mirror, and only when they visit the Hellgates that lay in the Temples of Twilight (see Shukyokami in the Religions and Beliefs Chapter of this book).

Both the Emperor and the great houses know perfectly well that magic exists, and try to exploit it. However, perfectly aware of the danger it entails, they have explicitly prohibited its use except for those that obtain an official recognition and a permit. These individuals are the Onmyoji, or Imperial wizards, who will come whenever the Emperor, or the family on whom he depends on, calls them into service. They have been secretly active for years now, since The Inquisition and The Empire could act against them, but now its presence has been made completely official.

The Five Great Houses

Although there are thirty-two noble families in Lannet, only five of them are considered major houses, those that enjoy the direct favor of the Emperor and supervise the others. To represent the confidence placed in them, each are entrusted with the task of protecting the Magatamas. Each of the great houses maintains a great rivalry with the others, trying at all times to gain maximum favor in the Imperial Court.

House Takashi

The Takashi family is one of most important and influential of the five great houses of Lannet. After falling from grace long ago for its failure to conquer Phaion Eien Seimon, it regained the favor of the Emperor due to the enormous revenue that its trade operations with the west create for Lannet. House Takashi is known not only for its great wealth and its fine instinct for business, but also for being the most permissive with regard to the presence of westerners in its territories. They run a significant army, and they control the largest navy in the country. They maintain bad relationships with House Oda and House Kurokami, with whom they suffer a patent animosity.

The Takashi family is the one responsible for protecting the Magatama of water, and its area of influence is northwestern Lannet. Its current leader is Eisaku Takashi.

House Kurokami

Most likely, the Kurokami family is the most powerful of the five great houses that serve the Emperor. Although they have lost some importance in recent centuries since they have not had to face any attacks in a long time, they maintaining their supremacy as the greatest guardians of Lannet Empire.

House Kurokami bears the shame of being heirs to the Shogun Hideyuki, who betrayed Emperor Amaterasu millennia ago causing the fall of Kuon Teikoku. Even today, this fact weighs terribly on its behalf, which is why all its members put their lives in danger to try and erase this disgrace. For ages, its warriors have been the guardians of Lannet in The Eternal Shadow War, defeating the armies of Yagarema one after another. The Kurokami samurai usually wear demon masks when entering combat, to represent their abandoned humanity when fighting. Some of them are known for their mastery in the dominion of strange fighting techniques, and are capable of inhuman feats.

The Kurokami are responsible for protecting the Magatama of fire, and its area of influence is northeastern Lannet. Its current leader is Yuu Kurokami.

House Karasuma

There are so many legends and stories about this family that few can differentiate between myth and reality. Karasuma is the only great house that has retained its position even before the fall of Kuon Teikoku. The house is divided into two branches, the central house and a subordinate house. The latter focuses on large estates and a considerable economic power because it controls a portion of the trade with other towns. By contrast, the leaders usually never go public, and stay separated from most courtly and political affairs. It is said to be the most spiritual family, which is directly related to the elements. It is a well-known fact that many members of the main clan are high monks and ascetics, rumored to communicate with spirits and work miracles. The Karasuma samurai are respected not only for their skill in combat, but also because it is said that some of them can summon spirits to act on their behalf. Of all the major houses, the Karasuma are the ones who use the greatest number of Onmyoji recognized by the Emperor.

The family also controls many ninja clans that they use to assassinate and spy on those who threaten their clan. Fortunately, the Karasuma have no major enemies, but their secrecy and spies entail that sometimes they maintain disputes with House Asakura.

They are the ones responsible for protecting the Magatama of wood, and its area of influence is northern Lannet. The current leader is Shiki Karasuma.

House Asakura

The Asakura family was a former lesser clan that obtained Imperial favor after the enormous service granted during the appropriation of the Magatamas. While not the owners of a great army, their power and influence in the Imperial Court and with the other families is enormous. The skill of its spies and courtiers is unsurpassed, destroying or elevating the reputation of individuals according to its own interests. It is said that the lords of the Asakura family know all the secrets of Lannet Empire, and that they even have contacts in Shivat.

Asakura is the only major house in which women hold important functions, instead of merely being courtesans. If they wish, they can be trained as samurai, allowing them to use not only naginatas and long bows, but also katanas. In fact, its war maidens enjoy great popularity, because it is said that they are as beautiful as they are skilled in combat.

The Asakura are the ones responsible for protecting the Magatama of earth, and its area of influence is southeastern Lannet. The present leader of the family is Tatsuya Asakura, but since she is only six years old, her aunt Katsumi Asakura makes decisions on her behalf.

Houses Konoe and Oda

The families Konoe and Oda are usually recognized as one, since both were unified after the wedding of the crown princes of both clans long ago. If each one previously had enormous power separately, their union has made them the most powerful military clan of Lannet, matched only by House Kurokami.

House Oda and Konoe have been the ones responsible for controlling southwestern Lannet, which includes part of the border with Shivat. For centuries, they have defended their territory with unmatched ferocity, gaining not only the respect of its enemies, but also awakening true terror within them. Its legend began when both families devastated a portion of the Shivaten armies during the appropriation of the Magatamas, spreading the myth that their samurai had unparalleled talent with the sword. They are also famous as the domain of master blacksmiths, who are said to forge weapons capable of splitting both armor and a metal anvil with equivalent ease.

Of all the great houses, Konoe and Oda are the two that keep the ancient traditions most alive. They reject all contact with the west and they consider themselves heirs to the purest spirit of Kuon Teikoku. That brings them in opposition with House Takashi, although they also feel a great rivalry towards the Kurokami for its reputation as warriors.

House Konoe and Oda are the ones responsible for protecting the Magatama of metal, and its current leader is Isamu Oda.



The Black Butterflies

There is a strange event relating to the planes of The Samsara. Whenever there is a distortion in The Wake of any kind, either because the portal between worlds is weakened or because it is on the verge of revealing a creature from another plane of existence, the environment begins to fill with black butterflies. Most people do not know the true meaning of this phenomenon, but they consider it a harbinger of misfortune, calling them "the butterflies of death" or "the eyes of Tsukiyomi" (from the myth where The Goddess of the Black Moon is always surrounded by dark-winged butterflies). This occurs all over Lannet, but it's also common occurrence in some areas of Shivat where the membrane between worlds is weak.

The butterflies remain in the real world for the duration of the distortion, and disappear without a trace shortly after it has stopped. However, if a supernatural being that has entered through these fractured remains of man's reality, it is possible that one or two of them stay present.

Illustrated by Salvador Espin

The History of Lannet

The history of Lannet was born 1,200 years before Christ with the division of Kuon Teikoku into the great empires of Lannet and Shivat, the two children of the Eternal Emperor Amaterasu. Lannet no Mikoto, the male twin, became the lord of the northern territories, those that were beyond the Sen Monogatari Mountain Range. From the very creation of the new empire, problems soon arose. Yagarema no Mikoto, the Insidious God, claimed his throne as his "father" disappeared, naming himself the true heir of Kuon. For the first time in history, Lannet and Shivat fought together in the greatest battles of The Eternal Shadow War, which was about to destroy the newborn empires. Only thanks to the skill of the twins and their ability to direct The Kami, could the armies of Yagarema be completely crushed once again.

After that first conflict, The Empire enjoyed a long period of splendor, because Lannet no Mikoto kept the same traditions and customs that his father had applied for more than 5,000 years. He made sure The Kami did not hurt man, and maintained a relationship of trust and harmony with his sister's empire.

Unfortunately, two generations later, the grandsons of the first emperors would not maintain the same camaraderie. When Yagarema resumed The Eternal Shadow War, he focused his efforts on attacking Shivat, considering it the weaker of the two countries. However, The Golden Emperor did not request the help of its neighbor, and lost control of one of the Magatamas in its territory. Seeing the entire island in danger, the Empire of Lannet intervened in the war, succeeding in preventing the soul stone from being taken to the shadow island. However, that did nothing but increase the distance between the two empires and the people of Lannet gradually began to whisper that perhaps Varja was not safe while two of the Magatamas remained in territory of Shivat.

More then a century later, Emperor Hisao no Mikoto, great-great-grandson of Lannet no Mikoto, organized a sudden strike against Shivat, taking advantage of the battles held there to steal the two soul stones which were in the neighboring country. Feeling insulted and betrayed, the Lords of Shivat organized an immense counterattack with which they managed to regain their lost regions, but their troops were halted and defeated by the Lanneten armies in the Sen Monogatari Mountain Range. With the stones in his possession, and fearing that the impending cataclysm disrupted the elemental pentagram, Hisao built two new temples for the stolen Magatamas and focused their protection on Lannet. That bolstered the supernatural defenses of the Lanneten territory and increased the power of its Kami intervention. Thus, Lannet's history continued unchanging, facing two major cyclical enemies; the attacks motivated by The Eternal Shadow War, and the forces of Shivat which continuously attempt to recover the Magatamas.



The second uprising, headed by House Asakura

The following centuries were a time of splendor for Lannet. Despite being mired in constant war and terrible internal conflicts between the great houses (often leading to pitched battles), the Emperor's power did nothing but increase. Lannet enjoyed a long period of absolute dominance, ending any problems that might threaten it. The only real danger that the country experienced was when the Shogun rose against the Mikoto lineage with the support of many lesser houses 100 years before the Messiah. The coup d'etat ended in a draw, with recognition of more prerogatives for the Shogun, but the Mikoto ancestry maintained its power.

When the War of God erupted, the armies of Rah attacked Lannet, but the two first waves were easily detained by Imperial troops. After those losses, The Lord of Judas ordered several members of The Conclave to intervene in Varja, led by Yukari Nozuel. Thanks to his enormous power, Yukari was capable of destroying the physical forms of hundreds of Kami, turning the tide and putting Lannet in real danger. However, the course of the war had turned against Rah in the west, so he ordered his forces in Varja to relocate so he could concentrate on other fronts. Seeing this opportunity, the Emperor of Lannet ordered the attack on the island of Tol Rauko, and a great naval force left for The Inner Sea. Unfortunately, Rah personally intervened, destroying the fleet altogether.

When Rah's machine activated, it produced such disruption among supernatural energy that all Kami were forced to retreat from reality forever. Their departure caused an unprecedented cataclysm in Lannet, much worse than the one caused by the war itself, since without the Kami the entire feudal system faltered. Many lesser houses rebelled, the country entered a panic thinking that their gods had abandoned them and the Emperor himself, descended from Amaterasu no Mikoto himself, became terribly ill.

In order to mitigate the effects of the chaos, the Shogun assumed temporary command, trying to prove that Lannet still had power left. He gathered the armies of the great houses and organized an attack against Phaion Eien Seimon, easily taking the chaotic territory that, despite the attempts of Abel to liberate it, submitted to Lannet for over two decades. Finally, Zhorne Giovanni gathered the bulk of his troops and reclaimed the principality, after which he immediately organized the largest military force since the War of God with the intent to conquer all of Varja. The conflict was monumental, and for over five years, Lannet and Shivat managed to contain the armies of the Sacred Holy Empire. Finally, Abel managed to prevail, forcing the Emperor of Lannet to surrender it as a principality of the crown.

However, a land as proud as Lannet would always consider this submission as an intolerable humiliation, and over the following centuries it carried out several attempts of independence in one way or another. In addition to numerous efforts to solve it through political means in The High Senate, Lannet would carry out three armed revolts (always coinciding with the rebellions of Shivat), which had to be quelled by the Sacred Holy Empire not without some effort. In fact, during the second rebellion in the year 460, they succeeded in separating from Abel for over a decade, until the forces of The Lords of War forced them to submit again.

But not everything went against the interests of Lannet. In the year 347, its armies managed to permanently conquer the island of Yagarema and stop The Eternal Shadow War indefinitely, since the activation of the machine had forced the Insidious God to retreat from the real world, like the rest of the Kami. Ironically, Shivat had the same idea, and both countries began to fight constantly for control of it. In recent centuries, the island of Yagarema has changed ownership nine times.

Currently, Emperor Akira Tachibana no Mikoto has finally declared the end of the ties that Lannet suffered under the Sacred Holy Empire, thus regaining absolute control of its lands. This has reinforced its position, threatened by the growing power of the Shogun and his influence on many of the great houses. The country is stable for now, but the rumor has emerged that The Eternal Shadow War could possibly resume.

Relevant Geographical Features

Despite its territory not being very extensive, Lannet has many remarkable features, notably mountains and valleys covered with dense forests. Since it is located in an area of great volcanic activity, there are frequent earthquakes of low intensity. Its major geographical feature is the Sen Monogatari Mountain Range, which limits its border with Shivat.

The Sealed Forest: Located on an area of large hills on the eastern coast, this bright forest is rarely visited by travelers, because for the people it constitutes a sacred place populated by spirits. Rumor has it that it's last place the Kami visited before disappearing from the world, probably using some kind of portal located in one of the abandoned temples in the brush. The forest harbors a few independent towns inside, but the villagers prefer to enter into the woods as little as possible. As they believe, there are a large number of paranormal forces wandering from place to another, and many can be dangerous.

In one of its more recondite corners, hidden behind a powerful illusion, is a small Daimah town, whose inhabitants have lived for centuries separated from society and its problems. Even now with Lannet once again independent from Abel, its people prefer to stay unknown.

Karasu Forest: The famous forest of crows is the greatest feud of House Karasuma, one of the five great clans of Lannet. It is a dark place, because the density of the trees often shuts out the light and is full of crows, elements that make the forest quite a gloomy area. Its abundant temples, many of which are abandoned, as well as the hundreds of statues located on all its roads to appease the spirits of the dead, also characterize it. Although there is no known town, the village of Yogarasugakure, headquarters of one of the last seven ninja clans, is hidden in Karasu.

It's also where the Temple of Qing-Long, guardian of the Magatama of wood, is located.

The Tori Forest: Also called The Forest of Birds, Tori is the largest forest of Lannet, which extends west of Tsukikage. Since it was built in a mountainous area, Tori contains numerous valleys, clearings and occasional small lakes. It is also the most populated forest in Lannet, since several dozens of towns and villages of all sizes can be found inside. Wolves and other wild animals still teem freely inside Tori, just as many bandits use various nooks to hide and organize attacks on the helpless travelers.

Kumoyama: The Kumoyama Mountains have some of the highest and sharpest peaks of all of Lannet; so much that sometimes clouds surround its summits. Due to its height towns are rare, but its landscape, with abundant waterfalls, are exceptionally beautiful. It is told that many shugenja hermits live in various solitary places, and people often travel here searching for their advice. An old legend says that on the tops of the five highest mountains, there are five Tengu masters unmatched in the most powerful combat techniques. Although many samurai who have undertaken a pilgrimage to search for them, none have managed to find the creatures, so for now the story is little more than an unfounded tale.

Because of its height, it is almost impossible to cross the bulk of it, which makes its only two mountain passages very journeyed (also known for the quality of its inns).

Kusa Plains: Surrounded by lesser mountains and forests, The Kusa Plains are the largest plains of Lannet. Green and rich, it was the place where the Eternal Court of Kuon Teikoku was established long ago, before it was completely destroyed by the final showdown of Amaterasu and Hideyuki. It currently houses the Imperial capital of Tsukikage, but the roads are dangerous, as many attackers and ronin wander the vast plains in search of some treasure.

Sen Monogatari Mountain Range: Sen Monogatari literally means "A Thousand Stories", an extremely appropriate name for this vast mountain range. This place is certainly one of most well known in Varja, having witnessed so many events, battles and legends that few places in the world can overshadow. Over the centuries it has changed ownerships on numerous occasions, because neither Lannet nor Shivat have been able to keep hold of it for any significant amount of time.

As expected from a territory so vast, towns and temples abound on the mountain range, although there are simultaneously large uninhabited areas. According to travelers and the locals, anything can happen in Sen Monogatari, no matter how unusual and strange it may seem. Although usually a quiet area, once you think that nothing strange will happen there you can easily encounter the inexplicable. If it is true that there are many spirits, beings and mysteries teeming in there, no one can say for certain so far.

Since the mountains are often high and cannot easily be traversed, it has always been very difficult for the armies of the eastern empires to pass through them. So, many battles have been fought in its valleys, and some remains of the past still lie there.

Sen Monogatari is home to two Magatama temples: The Temple of Byakko, guardian of metal, dominating the peak of the iron mountain of Tetsu, and The Temple of Kirin, whose location is hidden deep in the earth.

Today, a part of The Sen Monogatari belongs to Shivat, but the frontier is not very well enclosed.

Kajiyama: With summits known as The Fire Mountains, this small mountain range has countless volcanoes. Many of them are active, and produce dangerous fumes of scorching steam that the villagers call "The Breath of the Dragon." Kajijama is filled with a reddish tint and the mountains, which are not very high, give rise to countless valleys and plains of sparse vegetation. In the past, these valleys were scene of many battles of The Eternal Shadow War.

Alongside the city of Koga, the best-known place in Kajiyama is the Temple of Zhu-que, the location of the fire Magatama. Zhu-que is inside the crater of a volcano, supported by a large stone pillar, and the only way to reach it is to use the large chain bridge that descends from the cliff.

The Island of Yagarema: According to the myths, the dark island was part of ancient Varja, but separated from it thousands of years ago, when Umetsuki gave birth to the son of the supreme Kami. The island is the worldly manifestation of Yagarema no Mikoto himself, and has always been affected by the Insidious God, subtly influencing all the people and things that are on it. Therefore, while Yagarema no Mikoto was active, it was impossible for Lannet and Shivat to build anything there, since earthquakes, windstorms or the sudden insanity of its settlers managed to destroy everything. This changed with the activation of Rah's machine, since the presence of Yagarema disappeared from the world and with it, his influence on the island.

Even today the island of Yagarema is a dark and twisted place. Its western portion has abundant vegetation, but the further east one travels, the more withered and sinister the land becomes. There are rivers of lava and mutated forests with animals that are prey to a murderous rage that drives them to attack anything that crosses their path. There are even rumors of human tribes living there, the last bastions of those who served the Insidious God in the past. For the past few decades, natural disasters have become increasingly frequent; as many believe that the influence of Yagarema is slowly resurging.

Given that the dark island is not found within the security zone of the Magatamas, they follow the same rules as Shivat with respect to the implementation of supernatural powers.

Places of Interest

Lannet is full of temples and castles everywhere. Almost each valley, forest or mountain has at least one temple dedicated to its local deity, just as each one of the seventeen provinces in which the country is divided has at least one or two big castles. Currently many sites can be found abandoned, for since the departure of the Kami, many of them were completely vacated. There are also many large cities that are undoubtedly the jewels of Varja.

Hanamura

(City, Population 8,500+)

Hanamura, the town of flowers, isn't considered a real city, although its size is not that of a normal town either. It's a beautiful and ancient place located in one of valleys near the mountains of Kumoyama, whose most striking feature is to be filled with beautiful cherry trees.

Although sited in House Takashi's area of influence, the city is completely independent, and belongs to the Haneda clan. Its leader, Yuichi Haneda (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 5, ♂), lives in a large castle almost two miles away from the city.

The town of flowers is popular in Lannet for its magnificent Spring Festival, where for a week everyone celebrates the most famous festivities. Thousands of people flock there to enjoy its attractions, like the kite tournament, where the best craftsmen come to show their creations (which range from the most exotic kites to the most gigantic ones), or the evening of Kabuki Theater, which has little to envy from those of the capital. However, the most prestigious of all them is the Ikebana Festival, which literally covers the city with flower art. The festivities end with the Night of Sakura, where all visitors drink sake under the branches of the cherry trees. The winners of the various tournaments all sit under the Ippon Sakura, the legendary first cherry tree, and it is considered that the blessing of the stations will rain over the lucky people drinking there. Inexplicably, the myth seems to be true, because those that do usually enjoy an entire year of prosperity.

In the last decades the crime rate in Hanamura has increased considerably, since the yakuza of Tsukikage have been drawn there by the profits generated during the festivals.

Setsu

(Metropolis, Population 231,000+)

Setsu, the largest port of Lannet, is an unparalleled source of income for the empire due to the large amount of goods passing through its docks. The large city is the great bastion of House Takashi that uses its control over trade to become the greatest economic power of all the clans. Located in a vast bay, Setsu is built using the classic Lanneten architectural styles, with brick and wooden houses decorated with oriental motifs. Even if as a city its buildings are quite low, the presence of huge towers and temples overlooking the roofs gives it a varied and beautiful appearance.

Setsu has also obtained the nickname of "The City of Water", and not just for being located next to the sea. The city is placed on an area of springs, underground spas and rivers that emerge from different places, forming streams and lakes. Thus, although there is no nearby river, dozens of channels run through the neighborhoods. The wealthiest families use the small islands in the pools to build castles and temples, and the most remarkable of them is the Palace of Mizu, the headquarters of House Takashi. Eisaku Takashi (Freelance Lv. 6, ♂), the current patriarch of the clan and governor of Setsu, lives there.

Of all the cities in the country, Setsu is the one where foreigners are most welcomed, and can walk the streets with complete normality without arousing rejection or hatred. To the citizens, they are only temporary tenants bringing great economic benefits.

Because of its size and the great amount of interest invested in it, Setsu is a very active city, where all kinds of events happen daily.

The Gate to the West

(Town, Population 1,100+)

The Gate to the West is an ancient construction from the time of Kuon Teikoku, built 2,000 years ago to create a junction between the eastern islands and the mainland. They are two gigantic red columns over 300 feet high, joined at the top by a great metal slab. Supposedly, it is a monumental mystical portal, facing an identical door in Phaion.

Considering it a place of good omen, more than two centuries ago a small village was built around The Gate that today has grown to more than 1,000 people. It is devoted to livestock and agriculture, since although it is on the coast; the ridges and cliffs there make fishing impracticable.

The Gate to the West has become a popular arena for samurai duels, who usually face-off between the columns.

Tsukikage

(Metropolis, Population 983,000+)

The immense Tsukikage is the Imperial capital of Lannet, undeniably the most important and monumental city in all Varja. Nearly a million soul live there, of which a third belong to samurai families. The metropolis is situated on what was once the Eternal Court of Kuon Teikoku, and that today remains the hub of the Lannet Empire. All the great Houses assure their presence in it, as they seek to spread their influence and power in the court.

Tsukikage is very beautiful. It's full of trees, splendid palaces, temples and castles that give it a sublime appearance. The city is the birthplace of the Lanneten architectural style, which has barely changed since the days of Kuon Teikoku. There are plenty of mansions with gardens and lakes, over 200 temples (dedicated to countless Kami that supposedly watch over them), and great Kabuki theaters. In the center is a gigantic orchard called Kishi Sarewa Niwa, The Forbidden Garden, which surrounds the Eternal Palace of the Emperor. Kishi Sarewa Niwa is separated from the rest of the city by an artificial lake and large walls, and protected by the best Imperial soldiers.

The first thing that calls attention to Tsukikage is the enormous daily activity of its citizens. The streets are flooded at dawn with people going back and forth with hundreds of tasks, and nobody, except for children or the elderly, seems to have any free time.

Although there are dozens of leading figures in the city, the most important is Emperor Akira Tachibana no Mikoto (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 7, ♂), the supreme lord of the country. Akira is a strange and thoughtful man, whom few truly know and even less understand. He is extremely intelligent and his lineage has endowed him with strange and unusual special abilities. For some time, nightmares have been warning him that something terrible is about to happen, and the nature of his dreams grows darker every day. The Shogun Shin Kagutsuchi also spends a lot of time in the city, although this is not his official residence.

Sensou-jo

(Fortress, Population 16,000+)

The Castle of War is a fortification that serves as residence for the Shogun of Lannet, the highest military authority in the country and governor of many regions. Countless warriors meet and train at Sensou-Jo, who will theoretically be prepared to leave for any conflict to which their lord sends them to.

The current Shogun is Shin Kagutsuchi (Technician Lv. 9, ♂), who despite his age (he's about to turn 30) has proven his talent on dozens of occasions. Shin despises Emperor Akira, whom he maintained a close friendship with before, and wants to relegate him to a secondary role in the country, snatching all his power away from him. The reason why they fell out of favor is a mystery, but the tense situation is apparent. Each has begun a series of plans to discredit the other, trying to gain favor with the most powerful houses.

Unfortunately for him, Shin has fallen madly in love with Kikyo Takahime, one of the most important Priestesses of the Mirror, in a completely forbidden relationship. He visits her in secret, but if his affair is discovered, it could mean his death.

Aimi

(City, Population 46,000+)

Aimi is one of the most popular and visited cities of Lannet. Intended to be a vacation spot, travelers from all the corners of Varja go there to try their luck in the gambling rooms or to pass time with the beautiful geisha. People travel for miles and miles to spend their money and enjoy a brief but pleasant rest. The lamp districts, where thousands of women work as geishas, are famous for being the largest in the country.

Illustrated by Raúl Rosell



A beautiful sunset in Tsukikage

The Yakuza have enormous power in Aimi, and pay large sums to the corrupt guards so that they can act with complete impunity. The farmers remember, with sadness, the times in which the city was only a village of fishermen and seaweed farmers. The Asakura clan uses its influence here to learn countless secrets, since many of the geisha are their servants and inform of all the secrets that their lovers reveal to them.

The Lady of Aimi is the young widow Kaoru Shigeko (Freelance Lv. 5, ♀), one of the greatest beauties of the country. After the death of her husband, countless men court her, but she plays all of them without giving any of them her heart.

Kagami Jiin

(Building, Population 100+)

The Shrine of the Mirror is one of the most important independent temples of Lannet. It is located on the largest known Hellgate: the well in which the victims of the war with Abel were buried centuries ago. There are always at least seven Priestesses of the Mirror controlling these spirits and keeping them calm. In Kagami Jiin there are also numerous artifacts and treasures kept from when the Kami were still in the world. They were hidden in sealed chambers to prevent Tol Rauko from taking them.

The temple is reserved for women only, and except for the Emperor or the Shogun, no man can set foot inside. It is therefore protected by a garrison of Maidens of the Sword, whose skill rivals that of the best samurai.

The current high priestess is Arishu Hasegawa (Summoner Lv. 7, ♀), an old and wise woman whom the Emperor himself resorts to when he needs advice about the world of the dead. The youngest and most promising is priestesses Kikyo Takahime (Summoner Lv. 6, ♀), who is hopelessly in love with the Shogun Kagutsuchi.

Koga

(Metropolis, Population 102,000+)

This metropolis is the most important city to House Kurokami, a large fortified bastion located in an area next to the Kajiyama Mountains. Koga uses its large slopes as a natural barrier among the different districts, which also breaks down the various social echelons of its citizens. The higher the houses sit, the higher status of its inhabitants. The lower class lives under great pressure, since the local lords are exceptionally strict and force them to carry out very arduous tasks.

The city is famous for its great fighting schools, and the intense rivalry maintained among the practitioners of various fighting styles. The bloodshed among the samurai of the different dojos is tragically common, seeking to prove the effectiveness of their skills in duels.

The Lord of Koga is Hiumeji Kurokami (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 7, ♂), the son of the patriarch Yuu Kurokami, who has gained the name of "The Sword of the Devil" because of his great skill. He is one of the few men who directly accepts personal challenges without resorting to bodyguards, since fighting is something that he is passionate about.

Kuromitsu-Jo

(Fortress, Population 4,000+)

The fortress of Kuromitsu, located on the eastern coast of Lannet, has been the country's main defense against Yagarema no Mikoto during the long years of The Eternal Shadow War. Now, with no apparent danger, the impregnable castle has become the official residence of the Kurokami family and its current patriarch, the elderly Yuu Kurokami (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 5, ♂). The fortress is guarded by the best Demon-Warriors of his clan, and it is here where they are intensely trained to develop their incredible fighting skills.

Kuromitsu is also an important node of supernatural power, since deep in the fortress the petrified remains of the Brothers of the Storm are hidden; three ancient Kami that volunteered in the service of the Insidious God and served him as generals.

Kurai Hanko

(City, Population 41,000+)

A few centuries ago, during the time when they were under the supervision of Abel, the armies of Lannet made a final assault against the island of Yagarema to finish off the remains of the Insidious God's scattered army. Without the presence of the dark Kami, Lannet was able to create a stable settlement with the cooperation of the five Great Houses and many smaller clans, raising the great city of Kurai Hanko, "The Defiance to the Darkness."

The large city, located on the west coast of the island, is completely fortified. It has a large port occupied by commercial ships and war frigates, prepared to face any Shivaten navy that dares approach the coasts of Lannet at any time. Each of the Great Houses, competing for the control of the city, has a large mansion at different points of Hanko, each protected by a considerable number of samurai. A little more than a century ago, the city experienced tremendous growth, because countless ronin, yakuza and farmers who sought to improve their lives traveled there. Today, Hanko is the most chaotic city of Lannet, because riots and crime constantly plague its streets.

Presently, there is no clear lord, and a council made up of the representatives of the five Great Houses governs the city. Without their knowing it, a considerable number of Yogoreta have managed to infiltrate strategic points of the city, planning to cause chaos just waiting for Sho Ravengale's decision to attack Kurai Hanko.

Yogoreta, the Devotees of the Shadow

Yogoreta, The Stained, is the name given to the followers and devoted of Yagarema no Mikoto, the Insidious God.

They formed a portion of his dark followers in the past, a huge army of men and demons whom continuously leveled Varja.

Centuries ago, without anyone to organize them, the Devotees of Shadow practically disappeared, reduced to little more than a few scattered followers throughout Varja and the macabre survivors of Yagarema´s armies, hidden in the confines of the dark island. But all this changed radically just a few years ago when Sho Ravengale came to Varja.

Although his origins are still a mystery, Sho Ravengale (Warlock Lv. 11, ♂), the self-proclaimed Shogun of Shadows, is imbued with the unholy power of the Insidious God in all his glory, being indisputably the most powerful Yagarema general since the first wars of the Kami. When he appeared, Sho secretly gathered the remaining followers of his lord and seduced hundreds more through promises and dreams. He is currently hidden on the dark island, peppering his agents throughout Lannet and Shivat meanwhile a mighty army gathers around him. He plans to get enough power to resume The Eternal Shadow War and finally subjugate Varja on behalf of his master. His first target is the city of Kurai Hanko, with the intent of making it the dark capital of his new empire.

Currently, most of the Yogoreta are dark shugenja or ronin seduced by the power that the Insidious God offers, although there are also many supernatural creatures in its ranks, like spirits or Oni. A large number of them have managed to infiltrate the society of Lannet and Shivat, pulling the strings to weaken both empires and facilitate the objectives of their lord.

Other Settlements: *Urashiro.*

Adventures

The adventure possibilities in a land like Lannet are almost infinite. The characters can meddle in the disputes of the clans (if they do not belong to one themselves), to defend a smaller family against another, to incur the wrath of The Yakuza, to face dark shugenja or encounter some of the hundreds of abandoned ruins in the vicinity where the Kami disappeared. And of course, we must not forget the fragmented supernatural structure of the island that allows the characters to face all kinds of spirits wandering between reality and the beyond.

The Secret: While the characters meet in Aimi, one of them is attracted to a beautiful and pleasant geisha named Mariko, who seems to find him likeable. While both are having a pleasant time, a group of people burst into the room and attack them without a word. More than just thugs, the attackers appear to be real professionals focused on killing the young girl. If she manages to survive she will explain terrified that a samurai with whom she was with days ago told her that his companions had been hired to kidnap a member of an important house, with the purpose of requesting a sword that his clan has owned for generations as ransom. Mariko would have taken it as a joke if not for the following day, when the person whom he spoke of disappeared, while that samurai and his companions were found dead very nearby.

Unknowingly, Mariko has entered a dangerous affair, involving everyone who accompanied her at the time of the attack. Everything is due to a minor samurai clan, House Tamotsu, which is trying to steal an ancient sword owned by a rival clan. They contracted a group of ronin to kidnap the heir of their enemies and force them to give them the artifact but, after having completed the mission, they have erased their tracks by having the hostage assassinated. Nevertheless, the story is even more complicated, since the Tamotsu are actually working for an incredibly powerful elderly shugenja, Arata Kamyu (Wizard Lv 7, ♂), who has promised to return the glory of their House in exchange for the sword.

The Invisible Enemy: For whatever reason, a samurai will get offended by a character and challenges him to a duel. The next morning, he does not appear at the agreed location, instead sending several of his brothers in his place. They will accuse the characters of having poisoned the samurai in dishonorable and traitorous form, to avoid fighting the duel. If they have the sufficient tact and loquacity, they could arrange to see the corpse of the deceased and verify that he is indeed dead with no apparent wound. Between the fold of his kimono they will find a strange mosquito, which has had its wings removed. The insect is very poisonous and comes from the marshes of Qing in Shivat, being obvious that it didn't fly hundreds of miles from its home to here.

But... was the attack really directed against the samurai, or them? Because they will soon begin finding (far too often) small insects similar to this in their rooms, closets, armor...

Who is behind all this, and risks using such complex methods?

And above all, how can they fight against an enemy who they've barely seen?

Generic archetypes of Lannet

Following a series of archetypes of relevant members of the clans of Lannet are presented. The following files have been put together without taking into account their Creation Points.

Samurai Warrior

Class: Acrobatic Warrior; **Level** 2
Initiative 70/50; **LP** 115; **AT** None; **Attack** 85; **Dodge** 85; **Weapon** Katana; **Damage** 60
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 7 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Acrobatics 35, Athleticism 45, Ride 45, Swim 15, Jump 35, Climb 15, Intimidate 10, Notice 25, Search 25, Composure 30, Feats of Strength 30, Resist Pain 20.
Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 35, PsR 35.

Kurokami Demon-Warrior

Class: Technician; **Level** 3
Initiative 70/50; **LP** 110; **AT** None; **Attack** 100; **Dodge** 90; **Weapon** Katana; **Damage** 70
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 8 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 7 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 6 **POW:** 6
Abilities: Acrobatics 15, Athleticism 15, Ride 15, Swim 15, Jump 15, Climb 10, Style 15, Intimidate 60, Leadership 10, Notice 25, Search 15, Composure 15, Resist Pain 15.
Accumulations: Agi 3, Dex 3, Con 4, Str 1, Wil 1, Pow 1.
Ki: Agi 26, Dex 26, Con 37, Str 25, Wil 6, Pow 6.
MK: 150
Special: Use of Ki, Ki Control, Presence Extrusion, Aura Extension, Ki Technique "The Claws of the Dragon" (see p. 109 of the core book).
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 45, PsR 45.

Imperial Onmyoji

Class: Wizard; **Level** 3
Initiative 55; **LP** 100; **AT** None; **Magic Projection**: 105
AGI: 5 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 6 **STR:** 5 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 10 **WIL:** 6 **POW:** 9
Abilities: Abilities: Persuasion 35, Notice 25, Search 25, Herbal Lore 35, History 35, Medicine 25, Memorize 35, Occult 95, Magic Appraisal 50.
MA: 40 **Zeon:** 1070
Level on Path: 40
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 50, PsR 45.

Asakura Maiden Warriors

Class: Acrobatic Warrior; **Level** 3
Initiative 85/50/35/65; **LP** 115; **AT** None; **Attack** 105; **Dodge** 110; **Weapon** Naginata (Halberd)/Long Bow/Katana; **Damage** 65/45/55
AGI: 8 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 6 **STR:** 6 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Acrobatics 70, Athleticism 60, Ride 30, Swim 25, Jump 50, Style 70, Notice 35, Search 35, Slight of Hand 65.
Special: Use of Long Bow, Martial Arts (Aikido).
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 40, PsR 40.

Table 28: Lannet

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-60	Lower Class	Clothes you have on, food for a week, some personal objects. 5 CC.
60-80	Bourgeois	A couple changes of clothes, food for a week, a mount, a weapon appropriate to rank, some personal items. 15 GC.
81-90	Samurai Courtesan	Several styles of quality clothes, rations for a week, a weapon (katana), some personal items of quality, light or medium armor. 40 GC.
91-100	Samurai Warrior	Several styles of quality clothes, rations for a week, two weapons (a katana and a wakizashi), any kind of armor. 40 GC.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Lower-Class: Athleticism +15, Swim +10, Climb +10, Notice +10, Animals +5, Herbalism +10, Occult (religion) +10, Feats of Strength +10.

Bourgeois/Samurai (courtesan): Athleticism +10, Swim +10, Style +20, Persuasion +10, History (local) +10, Art +10, Music +10.

Samurai (warrior): Athleticism +10, Ride +10, Swim +10, Style +10, Intimidate +10, Notice +10, History (local) +10, Composure +10.

SHIVAT

Capital: Shan Lu.
Population: 7,200,000+
Ethnic Groups: Ryuan (98%), Asher (1%).
Government: Theocratic Autocracy.
Languages: Yamato Shu.
Religion: Shukyokami.
Technology: 3.
Denomym: Shivatense.
Flag: An elaborate moon.
Masculine Names: Bai-luo, Bi-jun, Chang-yong, Dan-zu, Decheng, Fai, Gong-sun, Hi-yuan, Hwen-thiang, Jiang-gang, Kang, Kol-in-sen, Lan-fang, Ming-jiang, Qian-fu, Wei-hong, Xian-yao.
Feminine Names: An, Beam-yu, Chin-chiao, Chun-hwa, Er-hong, Fei, Jing-mei, Kit ling, Li-jun, Mei-lin, Ming-zing, Rou-wan, Szu, Tsao-lin, Xiu-lan, Yi, Yue, Zhen-li.
Last Names: Bai, Cheung, Chou, Dai, Eng, Fong, Hong, Jianbua, Jung, Kin, Lai, Lang, Li, Liao, Ning, Pei, Qian, Thien, Zhao, Zou.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Shivat is the Empire of the Eastern Moon, an ancient land of wonders and, like Lannet, one of the inheriting nations of the legendary Kuon Teikoku. From its origins it has always been a country as powerful as chaotic because of continuous wars and disputes. In times past they have fought with Lannet, the armies of Yagarema and those of The Sacred Holy Empire, not counting several internal rebellions.

With an area three times larger than Lannet, Shivat occupies most of Varja. It consists of a wide of geographic zones, with high plateaus and mountains in the north or vast plains in the south. Mighty rivers and dense forests adorn its beautiful landscapes, as well as rice fields, soybean and spices everywhere. The climate is quite humid and rain is normal during all four seasons.

The Empire of the Eastern Moon has large cities, but most of its people live in thousands of small towns that are scattered throughout the entire region. They trade their products regularly with other countries just like Lannet, but generally are self-sufficient, able to supply themselves and meet their main needs. Enjoying many natural resources, there isn't much that they're forced to import from the west.

The country is governed by the figure of The Golden Emperor, who holds absolute power over the country and its twenty-seven provinces. Each one of these regions is in practice an independent kingdom, with its own laws, systems of government and lords. There have been countless disputes for power in the past and over the last 2,000 years, and five different dynasties have acceded to the Throne of the Moon, all directly descended from Shivat no Mikoto. The absolute power of the Wu Dynasty, the current leader of Shivat, is due to the fact that it has managed to control the most powerful army ever assembled in the country, thanks to a long period of stability, and the prohibition to the lords of the twenty-seven provinces to have armies over 1,000 men.

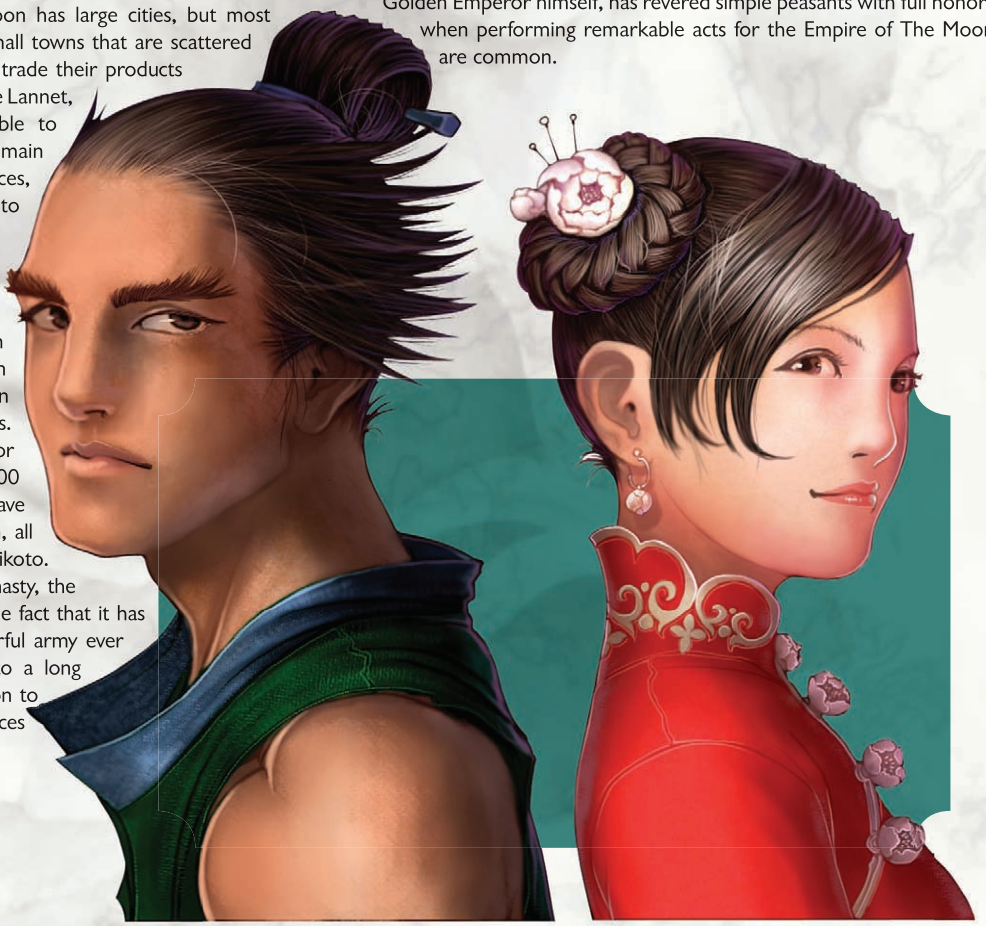
Unsatisfied with its submission to the Sacred Holy Empire, Shivat carried out three unsuccessful rebellions, and until just a few months ago it could not openly declare their independence. Now, the country faces its desired freedom, although there are still a few problems that lie ahead. Without the control of Abel, the tension with Lannet has once again risen, while several provincial lords have launched an offensive against Baho with the objective of increasing their economic power. Moreover, the children of The Golden Emperor are in odds with one another, both trying to grab more influence to succeed their father in the near future. And as always, the flimsy structure of reality causes serious problems for its people, as spirits and fabled creatures easily filter into the world, wrecking havoc from time to time.

Shivat has proclaimed its old calendar, which places the country in the year 6,985.

Culture and Society

Like Lannet, Shivat's culture derives from the ancient traditions of Kuon Teikoku, although unlike its neighbor, these have undergone considerable reform throughout history. Life in the Golden Empire is usually quiet. Most of its people are mere farmers and ranchers, who spend their days calmly cultivating the earth and taking care of the livestock. Although they maintain two different estates, social inequality is not high. The rights and prerogatives of the samurai families have been abolished for centuries; people are free to travel from one place to another without the permission of their lords and anyone with the desire or talent to wield a weapon can become a warrior. There is a real bourgeois class, wealthy people who have accumulated just as much or more economic power than the nobles.

Honor is held as something fundamental, and is precisely what marks status. A family, however humble its origins are, can be honorable and be well considered if its members behave suitably and have proven their talent. In fact, the cases in which some provincial lord, or even The Golden Emperor himself, has revered simple peasants with full honors when performing remarkable acts for the Empire of The Moon are common.



Shivatenses of Ryuan ethnicity

The Rifts in Reality

As in Lannet, the supernatural forces in Shivat act very chaotically because of the fragmentation of The Wake. However, since they do not enjoy the protection of the Magatamas, the existential void which The Kami left behind with their arrival make the membrane that separates the worlds exceptionally fragile, such that it can even be broken even simply casting a spell. But the real problem is much worse; without the soul stones, the rips in reality cannot be repaired, and when a gate to some of the layers of The Samsara is opened, it remains thus irreparably, allowing the dark inhabitants of these planes of existence to slip through into the real world.

Every time one of these events occurs, it is necessary to construct a temple of The Five Elements around the opening. While this might not repair the broken membrane, it at least seals the vortex, thus preventing anything else from slipping into the real world. It is a governmental function of The Golden Emperor agents to locate these openings and build a temple there to minimize the danger. To date, there are 21 of them scattered throughout Shivat.

Summoning and the Samsara

Using summoning skills in Shivat is extremely risky, since summoning a creature or spirit into the real world tears the membrane of reality, creating a rift that doesn't close behind it. A summoner in the Golden Empire applies the same special rules as if he were in Lannet; that is to say, he gains a bonus of +40 to all his summoning rolls and a negative of -40 to Bind, Control or Banish. Also, he is limited to summoning beings that can exist within The Samsara or levels of existence of Varja's Wake (except in the case of The Arcana). Additionally, because of the fragility between worlds, the amount of energy required to invest in the process is much smaller. Therefore, any invocation or summoning made inside Shivat, costs only half the Zeon points.

However, every time a supernatural being is attracted to the real world, the portal that it came through doesn't disappear; in fact, it remains open for several centuries. The creatures do not have to enter it immediately, but may do so at any time; it is a unidirectional portal from another reality, able to be used by any entity later. The level of the original invocation is what determines the maximum spiritual strength of the portal. That is to say, if a 6th level creature is summoned, entities passing through it could not be 7th level or greater.

Nobody knows exactly what plane of existence the rift will lead to once it has been opened, even if it was originally intended to do it with a particular one. Therefore, whenever a summoning is performed, a check must be rolled on **Table 29** to find out what reality the opening will end up going to.

Table 29

Samsara	Result
1-20	Ashura
21-40	Tiryagyoni
41-60	Preta
61-80	Naraku
81-100	Ten

Magic and the Samsara

Without the protection of the Magatamas, the use of magic produces a huge impact on the fragmented Wake of Shivat, resulting in strong alterations in existence. Whenever a wizard makes a significant expenditure of Zeon, he runs the risk of breaking the veils of reality and of attracting some creature of Samsara. It is a completely involuntary action, arising from the triggered power. It does not always happen, although it is true that the more energy that's released, the greater the possibility of it happening.

Whenever a wizard casts a spell of any kind, he must make a roll (no open rolls admited) on **Table 31** to know if his magic produces some additional consequence on reality. That roll gets a modifier depending on the amount of Zeon used, as shown on **Table 30**. The only way to somewhat mitigate these effects is for the wizard to places himself inside a pentagram of the five elements, drawn or carved in the ground when he casts his spell, in which case he can subtract 10 points from the result on **Table 31**. If some effect takes place, the Game Master must decide at what level of The Samsara he connects to, depending on the environment and the situation. If no determining factor exists, he can use **Table 29** as a reference.

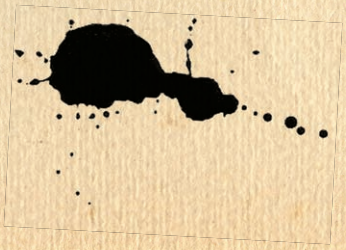
However, The Samsara is also a powerful source of power. The possibility exists that the essence of a wizard can be directly tied to one of the planes of The Samsara, and feeding him power from it while in Shivat. In this case, he obtains some special bonuses, innate abilities originating from the synchronization with the layer's energies where his essence is linked.

Table 30

Used Zeon	Modifier
-50	+0
55 to 100	+10
105 to 150	+20
155 to 200	+30
205 to 300	+40
+300	+50

Table 31

Result	Effects
0 to 99	No effect or distortion is produced.
100 to 109	A small distortion forms, so some lesser spirit inhabitant of the planes of Samsara filters through.
110 to 119	The distortion is higher, so the amount of lesser spirits that filter through is larger.
120 to 129	The size of the opening is considerable, manifesting a spirit of higher power.
130 to 139	As above, but the number of creatures or spirits entering reality is much higher.
140 to 149	The opening is huge. An entity of high spiritual power (or many) comes through it.
150	The open portal is continuous, which manifests the full power of the piece of reality that you have connected with (i.e.: an Ashura Kami, one of the nine great beasts of Tiryagyoni, an avatar of Tsukiyomi herself...). While the rift remains open, said creature remains active in the real world.



A character cannot choose which of the five levels his essence belongs to, rather he must determine this by making a roll on Table 29 during character creation. Outside of Varja (or in an area under the protection of the Magatamas) these effects have no power, since not direct connection with The Samsara exist. Of course, if the essence of a wizard is bound to a particular reality, all creatures that he attracts with his spells belong to that layer. Unfortunately, the aura of the wizard will attract them with hunger; The Preta will try and devour him, The Ashura will want to fight, and the demons will try and take his soul...

Depending on his affinity, a character gains the following advantages:

- **Ashura:** Increases the base damage of offensive spells by 10 points.
- **Tiryagyoni:** Increases the value of innate magic by 10 points.
- **Preta:** Increases Zeon regeneration by 10 points.
- **Naraku:** Increases the MR difficulty of his spells by 10 points.
- **Ten:** Increases the MR of the character by 10 points.

The people of Shivat are not very religious, so they profess no special devotion to any creed. Most practice the Shukyo of the Kami, but few show as much fervor as they do in Lannet. Only a very small minority consider themselves Christians, and of course they are not regarded very well by others.

The Shivatens do not show much tolerance towards foreigners, whom they consider dishonorable, but they do not bar them entry to their lands. Although it is unusual, it's possible to see visitors from other countries in Shivat. Inherited from some western principalities, the Wu Dynasty has introduced an elaborate bureaucracy, both in law enforcement as well as property entitlement. Imperial agents are usually called bureaucrats, who work for the feudal lords and supervise their actions.

Regarding the Supernatural

The Shivatens are truly terrified of magical forces, knowing that they usually trigger horrors in the world. Normal people do not understand what the Samsara is or what dwell there, but simply feel that magic and witchcraft are synonymous with death, terror and chaos. One way or another, there are few that do not believe in its existence. People can differentiate between magic and Ki techniques very well, since many practitioners of martial arts are also Ki masters. Unlike with mystical powers, those knowledgeable in Ki are admired for their abilities.

The government and The Golden Emperor are aware of the terrible threat that magic poses for Shivat, so they have created an elite unit that specializes in hunting and neutralizing wizards and summoners that trigger threatening forces for the Golden Empire. The name of this unit is Feng Shui, or those that seek the harmony of nature. In many ways they act just like The Inquisition, but their targets are purely those who put the stability of the Samsara in danger.

The organization is divided into two groups; the Ying Feng Shui, that is dedicated to hunting wizards and dangerous spirits, and the Yang Feng Shui, monks responsible for repairing the fabric of reality through the temples of The Five Elements. Normally, their members are martial artists who have mastered the use of Ki, or wizards attuned to the Ten-gati who care for the balance of the Samsara.

The History of Shivat

Shivat emerged after Kuon Teikoku divided into two different empires, corresponding to the territory of the daughter of Amaterasu no Mikoto. Just months after its creation, the newborn country had to face a war against Yagarema, since the Insidious God claimed the throne after his "missing" father vanished. Along with Lannet, the armies of Shivat managed to completely destroy the forces of her uncle, forcing him to retreat and abandon his claim for over a century. With the nation at peace, the young empress could dedicate herself to fixing the damages and reforming the customs with which she didn't agree. Her reign was unusually long, and she had four children, thus beginning the early Imperial dynasties that would dispute for power centuries later.

After her death, Shivat no Mikoto's grandson inherited the Empire of the Moon, giving it the name of Shivat in honor of his grandmother. The country, though collected under a single ruler, was divided into several independent lordships, whose armies lacked unity. This was when Yagarema would resume the Eternal Shadow War, focusing his efforts in taking the territories of the Empire of the Moon ignoring those of Lannet. Proud, the Lords of Shivat refused to ask the neighboring nation for help, which cost them control of their Magatamas, which were about to be claimed by the Insidious God. The Emperor of Lannet felt that the stability of Varja was endangered, so he sent a large contingent of troops on his behalf, which defeated Yagarema once again. In return, the lord of Lannet demanded various privileges over the two Magatamas of the Empire of the Moon, which The Golden Emperor refused to accept.

These developments thinned the relationship of both empires, and around 150 years later, Lannet launched an attack on Shivat, taking control of the two soul stones and several provinces. The Lords of Shivat and the Kami who supported them initiated a quick and sudden counterattack, thus reclaiming the lost territories; but because of the lack of unity in its armies, they were defeated on the Sen Monogatari Mountain Range.

Before they could regroup, the loss of the Magatamas greatly weakened the barrier of the Samsara, causing an invasion of spirits and creatures from other planes of existence. During this chaotic period The Golden Emperor was assassinated by an Ashura, and one of his cousins, also descended from Shivat no Mikoto, took control of the nation to repel the attack.

The following centuries were an age of unrest. The new Golden Emperors attempted to unsuccessfully recover the Magatamas on several occasions and built the first temples of the Five Elements to contain the spirits of the Samsara. Meanwhile, numerous rebellions from different dynasties rose up to take control of the country, causing chaos and confusion.

Around 800 years before the birth of the Messiah, Shivat went through an unprecedented crisis. The Golden Emperor died without an heir and four great lords, all descended from Shivat no Mikoto, proclaimed their right to the throne. A period of three centuries of succession wars began then, in which the Empire of the Moon was divided into four different kingdoms. Finally, after more than 300 years of disputes and battles, a fifth power stepped in to take control of Shivat, the young warlord Ling Qi, who began a long and stable dynasty.

During the War of God, the Lord of Judas, knowledgeable in the special features of The Empire of the Moon, put little interest in Shivat. However, Rah ordered Lemunia, a member of The Conclave, to assassinate The Golden Emperor and everyone in his dynasty, well aware that their death would cause a new war of succession that would weaken the nation. Several Houses began the dispute, but the activation of Rah's machine forced the Kami to withdraw from the real world, originating an unusual turn of events. Thus Jinghai, a minor dynasty that barely had the support of the Kami, managed to take control of the Empire in a sudden and devastating way.

Around year 258 the Sacred Holy Empire of Abel entered Varja with an immense army, intending to annex Shivat to the Holy Throne. Thus began a long four-year war (two more than what it took Lannet to fall), until The Golden Emperor conceded defeat and submission.


Eastern Sea
Silmor River
†Port Rue
†Eastern Gate
†Setsu
Karasu Forest
Saru River
Shin River
Kajiyama
Lannet
†Koga
†Kuromitsu-jo
†Gate of the West
Kumoyama
†Tsukikage
Sealed Forest
†Hanamura
Kusa Plains
†Kagami Jiin
Nao River
Tori Forest
†Sensou-jo
Urashiro
†Aimi
†Yokai
Sen Monogatari Mountain Range
†Kurai Hanko
Island of Yagarema
†Maisen
†Xaohuan
Yuanyu Mountain Range
Hung Whan
†Peng Wang
†Siyu
Lan River
Cracks of Len Peng Sihsien
Zhu Plains
†Huan Zhou
Qianfu
Fusang Plateau
Rio Shaoqing
Liang Peaks
†Qianfeng
†Temple of Ning Shi
Shivat
†Baoling
Qing Marshes
Nuqi'ng River
Yang River
†Kianlung
†Subutai
Yun River
Hulijing Forest
Ehuang River
Daoji Plains
Nanmiaozui
†Shan Lu
MAP KEY
Capital
Metropolis
City
Building
Fortress
Path
Road
0 250 500 750 Kilometers
0 250 500 Miles

The Martial Arts

Shivat is the birthplace of martial arts, and different styles of unarmed combat have a long tradition among the people of the nation. It is common for every important city or town to have at least one or two fighting academies, and always take pride in being better than others. Being a student of one school or another impacts on the status of the person, for those belonging to one of the most prestigious academies carry the name of their master with them, and are forced to live up to what's expected of them.

If a fighter from a school does not behave according to what is expected of him or he dishonors its name, it is the responsibility of his companions to properly punish him.

The seven centuries that Shivat has spent under the Sacred Holy Empire have also been very intense. The country carried out three attempts to separate from Abel and, during the second one, the Wu dynasty became the rulers of the land. Nowadays, Shivat has finally managed to separate from The Sacred Holy Empire, and the elderly Emperor Gen Wu hopes that his children can set aside their differences to maintain the stability of the nation.

Relevant Geographical Features

Shivat encompasses a wide variety of geographic features. With high mountains and plateaus in the north, and large forested plains in the south, it presents a considerable variety of scenery.

Fusang Plateau: The Fusang Plateau stretches across the entire northern portion of the country, occupying almost half of its territory. It contains small forests, innumerable mountains and many lakes. It is said that, even today, there remain many unexplored places, that haven't been visited since the Kami disappeared several centuries ago.

Zhu Plains: This area extends west of Fusang, creating something like a huge valley between the plateau and the Liang Peaks. Being a great plain with lush vegetation and teeming life, the grass grows so high that it reaches the waistline. Many people settle in these lands, taking advantage of the local fauna and the wealth of the area.

During the time that the Magatamas were stolen, the powerful supernatural energies unleashed in the Zhu Plains caused numerous rifts in reality, and even today many of them remain open. Consequently, throughout Zhu there are numerous temples of The Five Elements, created to close the portals of The Samsara and prevent the arrival of spirits and other dangerous creatures.

Qing Marshes: The dark marshes of Qing are considered one of the most inhospitable and dangerous places in Shivat. It is a foul smelling swamp, plagued with noxious gases and quicksand. The best-known dangers are the frightful insects and mosquitoes that live there, since their sting is not only very painful, but can sometimes be fatal. Not a single village lies inside of Qing, and people avoid going into it.

There has been a large rift to the Tiryagyoni-gati deep in the forest for some time now, which has already filtered numerous spirits and predatory beasts into the world. However, nobody knows about them, so the Feng Shui have not yet managed to properly seal it.

The Cracks of Len Peng: Known by the populace as "The Gaps of Grief," the legend says that those deep cracks in the earth were formed by the cry of Amaterasu no Mikoto when he saw his wife die before his very eyes. It's a bottomless chasm submerged in darkness, which seems to have no end. On some nights shouts of pain and mourning can be heard from deep inside, which has generated many frightening legends about them. People consider the cracks a gateway to hell, and the truth is that they are not entirely mistaken. The terrible event that created the cracks also caused a tear in reality itself, creating an open connection to Naraku. Although the demons cannot cross it with impunity, the gate opens for a moment if a dead body is hurled inside the abyss, releasing some dark demon.

Daoji Plains: Also called Lower Shivat (as opposed to the Fusang Plateau, which is Upper Shivat), this great plain occupies the whole southern portion of the Empire of the Moon. The Plains are the most populated part of the country since they not only contain numerous cities, but also countless numbers of tiny towns and villages. Daoji provides all sorts of cultivating fields, particularly wet rice fields.

Liang Peaks: The divine mountains of Liang, or White Peaks, are a place revered by the people of Shivat. They integrate a formidable mountain range characterized by its thin and high mountains, such that most of them rise above the clouds. On its slopes, many towns kept the old traditions and worship the local Kami. People say that there are legendary beasts living in some of the peaks, in ancient abandoned palaces, and that the Aeon Phoenix is found dormant on the highest part of its cusps.

Yuanyu Mountain Range: In Yamato Yu, Yuanyu is a word that is used interchangeably to talk about the jade and rain, which both are elements representative of this long mountain range located on the eastern strip of Shivat, where precipitation and storms are common. The area is extremely wooded; dense forests populate most of the mountains.

The jade deposits are numerous, exploited by several mining villages at the service of local lords or the Emperor. According to tradition, jade drives away bad spirits, so the mountain range is considered a relatively safe place and free of dark influences. While not entirely accurate, the truth is that the number of apparitions is much smaller in Yuanyu than in other places of Shivat. The interior of the range is one of the lesser-known areas of the country, with a large number of independent villages and buildings that have been abandoned for several centuries.

Hulijing Forest: The Forest of Foxes, one of the most enigmatic places in Shivat, it is a wooded area that unfolds to the west of the Yang river, popular for being one of most beautiful in the country. As the stories say, the place is really haunted by spirits (especially Kitsune), although most are benign and do not wish to harm humans. However, that does not stop them from having some fun at the expense of mortals, playing practical jokes or possessing them to travel thus to the cities of man. The spirits have been dormant for centuries, but they have once again been completely active for over a hundred years now.

It is said that in the heart of Hulijing, protected by powerful guardians, there is a terrifying force of destruction sealed by the Kami centuries ago. Some think that it is one of Orochi's heads (or even the heart of the dark Aeon), although it could well be something totally different.

At least two temples of The Five Elements are known to be in the vicinity of the forest.

Places of Interest

While there are nearly a thousand tiny villages throughout Shivat, it is also true that the Empire of the Moon has large significant cities, where enormous amounts of people coalesce. However, beyond these large cities, there are dozens of hidden and abandoned places since the disappearance of the Kami, many of them containing wonders and dangers with which the people of Shivat can only dream of.

Siyu

(City, Population 35,000+)

Located in northern Shivat, near the Sen Monogatari Mountain Range, Siyu is a city known for the exceptional aesthetic sense of its citizens. Its gardens and buildings are conceived with a delicate style having followed an artistic pattern; those buildings that spoil the setting are demolished immediately.

The best artists and calligraphy masters come here to compare their works to those of the Seven Siyu: Ikebana Fu (Master of Ikebana), Shogaku Jinhai (Calligraphy Master), Go Gen (Master of The Game of Go), Origami Qianfan (Origami Master), Haiku Wei (Master Poet) and Sumi-e Lan (Master Painter). He that can win a competition against one of these masters strips him of his title, which allows him to use the name of his art as a last name and enjoy the mansion and the comforts appropriate to his rank. Anyone who can prove his worth can challenge one of the Seven, but those who are defeated must leave the city and not return for at least three years.

Siyu is governed by Chao Yuan (Freelance Lv. 3, ♂), the last descendant of a family of patrons and a renowned poet, player of go and a calligraphist. The security of the city is guaranteed by The Flowers of Siyu, a squad of martial artists whose main attraction is the beauty and flashiness of its combat moves.

Qianfeng

(City, Population 8,000+)

Qianfeng, or "city of the wind", is located in the east, very close to the Yuanyu Mountain Range. Its geographic location between two areas of different pressures makes it so that the wind blows continuously. It is therefore normal to see lots of kites flying in the sky during any time of the year. More than a city, Qianfeng is a huge town with thousands of people, since it does not exhibit luxurious palaces or large buildings like other nearby metropolises. Most of the houses are just low wood cabins, and with the exception of two high towers and some guesthouses, none of them reaches two stories high.

The citizens of Qianfeng are working people with very little interest in war or conflicts. Their pacifistic sentiments are such that, there isn't a single martial art school in the city, and only a handful of guards wander through its calm streets. This collective philosophy has made many enlightened and scholars visit it, interested in the quiet and relaxing atmosphere infused in it.

The lord of the city is the sage Fu Wong (Wizard Lv. 8, ♂), also called the Master of The Howling Tower, the place where he lives. Although he appears to be a simple and friendly old man of good feelings, under his charming facade he hides a black and malignant soul. Fu Wong has acted as the teacher for the children of the city for years, but his goal is to find children with the Gift and steal their hearts. When he gathers 111 of them, he will perform an unholy ceremony to awaken Xing Zang Chi´Lung, The Dragon of The Crimson Heart, a beast that sleeps in Tiryagyoni and is prophesied to bring the destruction of the Imperial family.

Kianlung

(City, Population 27,000+)

Kianlung is the main port city on the west coast of Shivat, a well-known trading hub with the west. Foreigners, especially travelers from Phaion who come looking for good business, frequent it. Pirates have often attacked the large city, so its people built four lighthouses, now known as the Kianlung Sentinels. A complex system of mirrors is installed in them that project the reflected light of great bonfires at night, thus keeping watch for the appearance of undesirable navigators on the water. It is very difficult, if not impossible, for a boat to approach the port without being discovered. If a problem occurs, the guards of the city trigger the wrath of the Five-Headed Dragon, an enormous five-barreled canon installed at the top of the palace of Kianlung, whose destructive power can blow through any ship.

Both towers and many other inventions in the city have been designed by the governor Lo Pai (Freelance Lv. 4, ♂), a mature, impatient and curious man. His genius has given birth to great ideas like The Sentinels and The Dragon, and nobody knows what he will create next with his original mind.

Besides trade, Kianlung has an important paper industry and all its derivatives.

Subutai

(City-Fortress, Population 83,000+)

The city-fortress of Subutai is the fief of the supreme general of Shivat's armies, a title that according to tradition is reserved for a blood relative of The Golden Emperor himself. Being the greatest fortification of the Empire of the Moon, it finds itself surrounded by tall walls of stone, as well as by a series of towers carved in the form of a dragon's head, from which the soldiers launch incendiary projectiles on their enemies. The interior is an immense bunker, designed to divide and weaken the advance of potential invaders through the use of sliding walls. The labyrinth has many rooms so that archers can shoot at will. Finally, in its center rises The Dragon Palace of Heaven, where general Kwai Wu (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 7, ♂) currently resides, the young cousin of The Golden Emperor.

An abyss surrounds the palace, known as The Wailing Hells, wherein the most dangerous criminals and traitors are thrown, so that they can spend the rest of their lives in caves full of voracious crabs called Fire Tails. The fumes from inside the caves of The Wailing Hells change the lungs of those who breathe them for prolonged periods making people incapable of living on the surface. These gases are both the last obstacle and the ultimate protection of Subutai. If their enemies were to threaten the palace, its archers would use incendiary arrows to ignite the gases trapped in the cracks, creating an immense wall of flames that would kill anyone that dared approach to try and cross them.

Subutai is surrounded by small villages of farmers and ranchers, whose purpose is to provide supplies to the granaries of the great city-fortress.

Baoling

(City, Population 7,000+)

The ancient city of Baoling is well known for an unusual characteristic: ditches with garlic plantations surround all its streets, and the local gastronomy uses this vegetable for almost everything. According legend, when it was built centuries ago, the villagers incurred the wrath of the Kami of the Qing marshes who sent a terrible plague of mosquitoes to devastate the village. Whether the story was true or not, the fact is that the poisonous insects of the marsh posed a real problem for the people of Baoling, until a scholar found a solution, almost accidentally, upon realizing that the garlic fields were free of the annoying plague. Because of that they began to grow garlic in the streets, since the strong scent makes the insects flee.

The annoying fumes that flood the city surprise travelers, but its people, accustomed to it since childhood, do not even seem to notice. In center of Baoling the plague is even greater, since the silos where they keep the harvest are there.

Xaohuan

(Town, Population 900+)

Although Xaohuan does not seem to differ much from the hundreds of villages scattered throughout Shivat, it is quite a special town. It is built around a large holy stone, and according to tradition, it is the petrified form of an ancient benign Kami called Xao, which governs the forces of the land. The ashes of the dead are thrown all over it, in a funeral rite that seeks the renewal of life.

Perhaps due to the blessing of its protective spirit, the surrounding areas of the village are very rich in fauna and flora, perceiving an aura of calm that envelops everything. The locals work with fervor and devote much time to taking care of the environment, just as their ancestors did for generations. Each and every one of them is a practitioner of Tai Chi, but they only use it defensively. The elderly, the true rulers of the village, live in a small pagoda in the central area, near the stone. Tradition says that they receive visions from Xao, in which the god warn them of possible future dangers.

Recently, the village has begun to experience certain problems with the Lord of the province, Peng Fei (Freelance Lv. 2, ♂), who wishes to take the rock of Xao to his castle and present it as a gift to The Golden Emperor.

Huan Zhou

(Metropolis, Population 315,000+)

Huan Zhou is the main commercial port in Shivat, with the possible exception of Yokai. It is a large coastal city that keeps strong ties with The Old Continent. Their merchants and navigators compete with the Lanneten city of Setsu daily for control of the trade between the west and the island of Varja. Of all the cities of the nation, this is the one that welcomes the highest number of foreigners, whether they are merchants or wealthy nobles traveling here attracted to the romanticism of Varja's myths. Contact with foreigners has slightly westernized Huan Zhou, and although its architecture is mainly oriental, one can see occasional mansions of Gabriel's style in its streets.

Huan Zhou is also remarkable for the great number of martial arts schools that it houses, and the overwhelming rivalry between practitioners of different styles. Street fighting is very common; insomuch that the disputes have even been banned in certain places to prevent the continuous destruction of properties. Every year, during the festival of spring, a tournament among the different schools is held where each of them must choose its five best students to publicly prove which one is the best. Besides the prestige, this confrontation has great economic importance, since the richest bourgeois contract the services of the schools considering the results of their fighters.

The city is governed by a council of merchants, led by the provincial governor Lo Pao (Freelance Lv. 2, ♂). At the moment, they maintain contact with the Arch-Chancellor Joshua Fardelys, with whom they intend to reach an important agreement to the benefit of both countries.

Black Sun enjoys a strong presence here, and they use the city to lead their Seekers in Shivat.

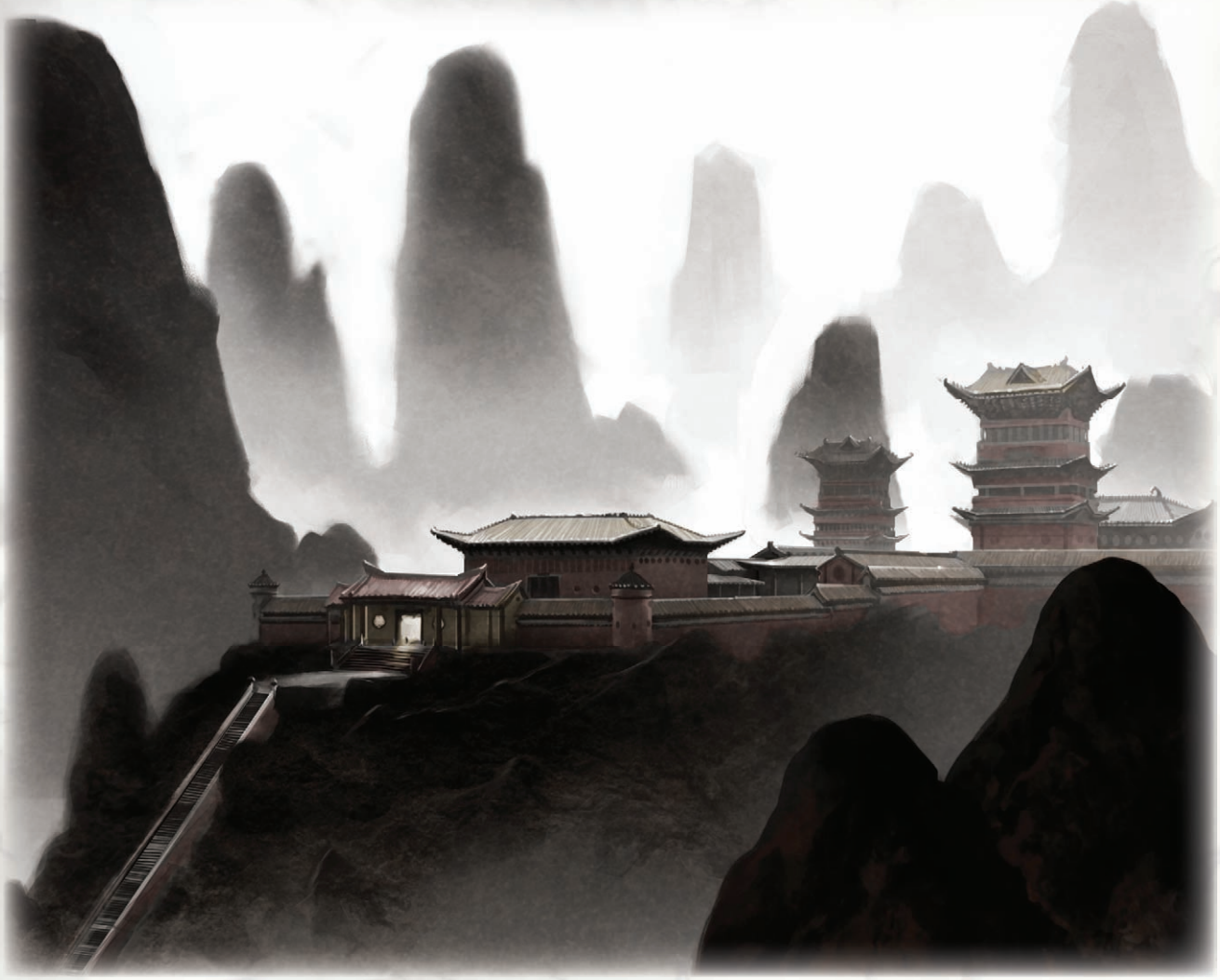
The Temple of Maisen

(Building, Population 250+)

Lost in the Sen Monogatari Mountain Range, Maisen is a legendary temple dedicated to all styles of unarmed combat. Considered the best fighting school in Gaïa, many martial artists look to be trained there. However, only a few can climb the inaccessible peaks, and even less who prove to be worthy of admission. There are always 20 teachers and each one of them is an unparalleled master in a particular martial style. The number of students whom they train varies by year, but usually exceeds one hundred. When somebody is ready to return to the outside world, a legendary beast is tattooed on one of his arms (the kind of creature depends on the style that has been mastered) as proof of his mastery.

Every five years, the Temple of Maisen organizes a tournament, sending out invitations to the best martial artists in the world. They typically select people with the best reputations, or those that have proven their exceptional combat prowess in some way. Although only those with an official invitation can participate, anyone who appears with one is accepted, which means that if somebody steals it by force or mugs one of the fighters, he automatically earns the right to enter. Each participant can take up to five companions with him so that they can witness his fights. The tournament rules are simple; any kind of unarmed fighting style or special ability is allowed, as long as it is not magical. Mental powers or Ki techniques are very common among the participants. The match continues until a fighter falls unconscious, dies or publicly surrenders.

Illustrated by Luis NCT



The Great Temple of Maisen

The Temple of Ning Shi

(Building, Population 300+)

Founded over five centuries ago by the warrior monk Shen, this temple is dedicated to the Kami Ning Shi and its maximum precepts are the mercy and compassion. It is located on the southern slope of the Qiao Mountains, composed of several interconnected buildings. Ning Shi is one of the more practiced religious beliefs in Shivat, and its priests are revered by the people because of their mercy and of the support they offer to everybody in times of difficulty. The monks of the temple are true masters of many combat styles, but only use their teachings to protect the weak and to keep the peace.

Their leader is Master Po (Tao Lv. 10, ♂), an enigmatic but pleasant old man who has lived for over 200 years thanks to his perfect mastery of body and mind. In the past he was one of the best fighters in the entire world (they say that he won the Maisen tournament several times), and even despite his advanced age, he still retains his unmatched talent.

A few months ago, coinciding with the separation of Shivat from the Sacred Holy Empire, a renegade member of the temple named Shang (Tao Lv. 7, ♂) has attempted to take the life of one of the Golden Emperor's children. This event has prompted that the monks are now seen with skepticism by the government. Many of them have left the temple to hunt Shang, but his whereabouts or motivations are completely unknown.

Peng Wang

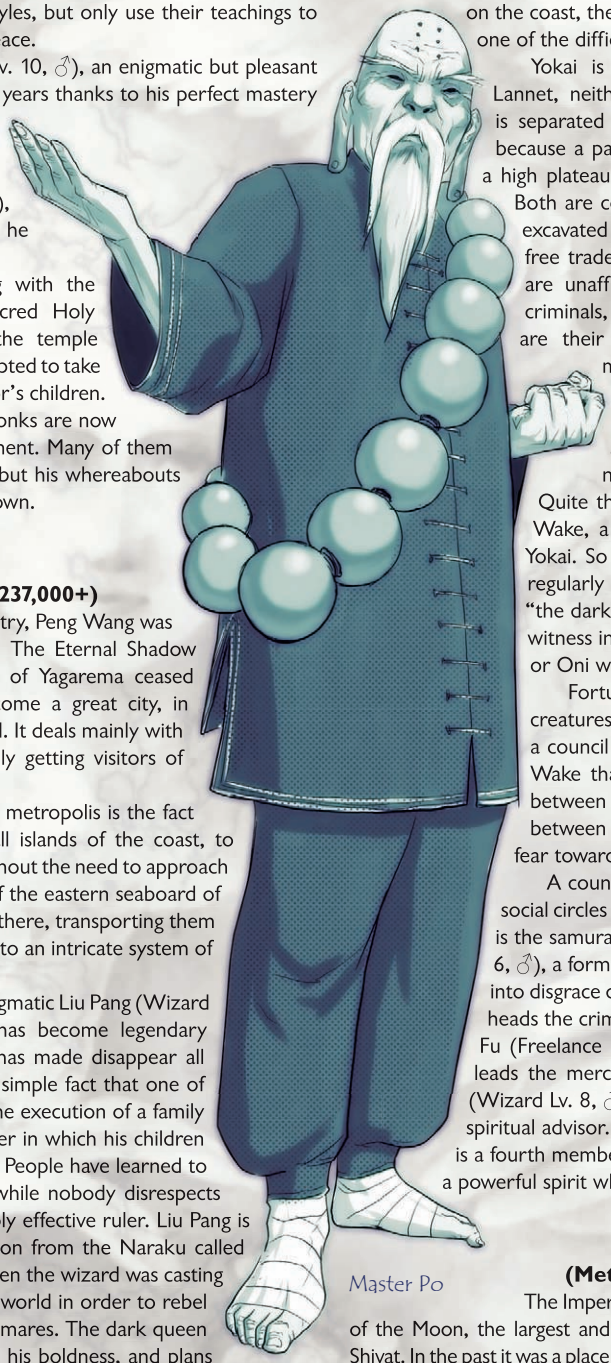
(Metropolis, Population 237,000+)

The third largest city of the country, Peng Wang was the main defensive line of Shivat in The Eternal Shadow War in the past. When the island of Yagarema ceased being a problem, it started to become a great city, in which thousands of farmers gathered. It deals mainly with Dafne, Elcia and Espheria, commonly getting visitors of these countries among its streets.

The most striking feature of the metropolis is the fact that it is built using numerous small islands of the coast, to facilitate the dockage of the boats without the need to approach the dangerous and steep rock wall of the eastern seaboard of Shivat. The ships unload their goods there, transporting them later to the center of the city thanks to an intricate system of bridges and ferries.

The Lord of Peng Wang is the enigmatic Liu Pang (Wizard Lv. 6, ♂), a man whose cruelty has become legendary throughout the province. Liu Pang has made disappear all women from a nearly village by the simple fact that one of them insulted him, or has ordered the execution of a family forcing the father to choose the order in which his children were to be executed in front of him. People have learned to fear and obey his orders, because while nobody disrespects or disobeys, he proves to be a terribly effective ruler. Liu Pang is really possessed by a powerful demon from the Naraku called Utpala (who slipped inside a gate when the wizard was casting a spell), and has escaped to the real world in order to rebel against Tsukiyomi, The Lady of Nightmares. The dark queen wants to make him return to punish his boldness, and plans to send in several of her demonic agents for him. Utpala is aware of this fact and it is prepared for whatever happens, bringing powerful fighters to his side.

Oblivious to these events, a great group of Devotees of Shadow, in the service of Sho Ravengale, has entered the city and is preparing for a future attack by the armies of The Insidious God.



Master Po

Yokai

(Metropolis, Population 189,000+)

Yokai is one of the four cities of free trade, which means that no government or country influences it. Among the people of Varja it's customary to call it "The City of Ghosts," a quite appropriate name since it's one of the populations with greatest number of supernatural elements in Gaïa. The city itself is nested in a huge bay on the western coast of the island, right in the middle of a steep rock wall of the Sen Monogatari Mountain Range. Since it is completely surrounded by mountains except on the coast, the only way to get there is by sea or by using one of the difficult mountain passes.

Yokai is an architectural mixture of Shivat and Lannet, neither of these prevailing over the other. It is separated into two zones, uptown and downtown, because a part of it is on the coast, and another is on a high plateau about 300 hundred feet above sea level. Both are connected by large stone stairways, directly excavated from the rocky wall. As in other cities of free trade, thousands of people meet in Yokai who are unaffiliated with any nation. Fugitive samurai, criminals, rogue traders and free wheeling peasants are their main population. However, it is much more than it seems. The city is built on an enormous rift in the reality, but because of its construction forms an immense mystical seal and is close to the Magatamas, it does not connect with any layer of The Samsara. Quite the contrary, it is an enclosed space of The Wake, a kind of pocket reality that only exists in Yokai. So it's full of spirits and demons that appear regularly in the real world, which normal people call "the dark half" of Yokai. Sometimes, it is possible to witness inexplicable things on the street, like Kitsune or Oni walking calmly by.

Fortunately, there's a treaty between these creatures and the mortals, signed centuries ago by a council of 12 shugenja and the local Lords of The Wake that prevents open hostilities from erupting between them. This has granted some understanding between both worlds, although there's still a great fear towards spirits.

A council of three people who represent different social circles of Yokai theoretically rules the city. The first is the samurai Daisuke Kurokami (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 6, ♂), a former member of the Kurokami family who fell into disgrace due to his contacts with the yakuza and now heads the crime families in the city. The second is Mei Lin Fu (Freelance Lv. 4, ♀), nicknamed "The Flower", who leads the merchant's guild. Finally, is the mysterious Kai (Wizard Lv. 8, ♂? ♀?), a masked person who serves as the spiritual advisor. In addition to the three visible lords, there is a fourth member that represents "the dark half" of Yokai, a powerful spirit who responds to the name of Yami.

Illustrated by Salvador Espin

Shan Lu

(Metropolis, Population 735,000+)

The Imperial city of Shan Lu is the capital of the Empire of the Moon, the largest and most important of all the metropolises of Shivat. In the past it was a place reserved solely for The Golden Emperor and his court, because it had been built for the use, protection and enjoyment of His Highness. That changed with the coming to power of the Jinghai Dynasty, which allowed the nobility and bourgeois to raise buildings around The Golden Palace. At the present time it is the second most important city of Varja, surpassed only by Tsukikage. It is located on the Daoji Plains, near the coast, although not directly connected to the sea.

The Heirs

The Golden Emperor Gene Wu has two twin children, Seien and Seiran, the heirs to the Imperial dynasty. After many complications in childbirth, which claimed the life of the Emperor's wife, all the doctors thought that the children were going to be stillborn, although surprisingly managed to get ahead and grow up healthy and strong.

Just turned 21, Seien and Seiran are so physically similar that nobody, not even their father and tutors, seem to be able to tell them apart. Unfortunately, despite their outward similarity, the brothers have deeply hated each other since they were only children. Ironically, both are Nephilim; one is Duk´zarist and the other Sylvain, which produces a natural antagonism between them. However, this atrocious hatred is much deeper; they were enemies in their previous lives and they killed one another (so both souls have returned to the world together). They are unable to remember anything from their previous existence, but each of them dreams about assassinating his twin, and have always presumed their visions were of a possible future, without realizing that they are part of the past.

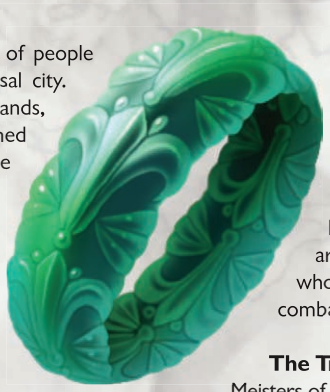
Since the issue of succession has not yet been decided, both have begun an active pursuit of power, trying to gain control of various armies and provincial lords. Naturally, the unity of the country prevents them from openly facing each other, but their close friends and agents have already been acting in the shadows for some time. Their father fears that upon his death, both will start a harrowing war for succession not seen since the Empire of the Moon was divided in four kingdoms. However, his love for both of them renders him incapable of making a decision.

Seien (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 6, ♂), the Nephilim Sylvain, is popular for his open nature and his gift with people, which allow him to connect with some sectors of the town very well. He is intelligent and manipulative, and has convinced some feudal lords that attacking Baho would be a good way to increase the economic benefits of Shivat.

By contrast, Seiran (Tao Lv. 6, ♂), heir to a Duk´zarist soul, is quiet and reserved, although his seriousness has fascinated many provincial lords. Seiran prefers to focus his plans on the control of supernatural forces, but is careful not to endanger the land he loves.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

The first impression that assaults the minds of people when they glimpse Shan Lu is that it is a colossal city. While not the most populated of the eastern islands, the large size of its palaces and gardens, combined with the spacing of some of its streets, make it one of the biggest cities in the entire world in area.



Even today, Shan Lu is divided in half; a portion is the metropolitan area, and the other is the city-residence of The Emperor, known as The Golden Palace. The metropolitan area is broken down into many districts, from the wealthy noble districts, with its large pagodas and gardens, to the flea markets and poor areas, where thousands of people live in small houses of wood and reed. This is where large-scale handcrafts are made, because most people work here making all types of utensils. The merchants use many ports scattered near Shan Lu to trade with other cities by the sea, so it's very common to see endless caravans of merchandise coming and going from it.

The most famous monument of the metropolitan area is The Temple of the Moon Clock, an immense clock tower that contains several Magatamas artificially constructed by lesser Kami, located in a complex geared machine. Through studying it, the Feng Shui agents can tell when some significant rift in the Samsara is opened.

The Golden Palace occupies almost a third part of the city, and is an immense Imperial citadel built of marble and decorated entirely with gold and jade. Only guests and servants of the old Emperor Gene Wu (Tao Lv. 7, ♂) can get access inside, where nearly 50,000 people live solely to satisfy every need of their master. Naturally, containing such wealth, many thieves constantly try to infiltrate it with the hope of taking a very small piece of it, but few survive the encounters with the Storm Knights, the Imperial praetorians.

Shan Lu is one of the few cities of Shivat where there is a large presence of Samael and Black Sun members.

Other Settlements: *Hung Whan, Qianfu, Nanmiaozui, Sihsien.*

Adventures

The vast territory of Shivat and its particular nature lead to many adventures in The Empire of the Moon. The characters could be members of the Feng Shui, and travel through various places in Shivat sealing the rifts in reality, or be a part of the intrigues taking place between the provincial lords and the heirs to the throne. Nevertheless, serious issues are not necessarily best; perhaps they are simply warriors, whose goal is just to search for the thrill of testing their abilities in combat against the masters of different cities.

The Treaty: Wong Ransfield and Orland Kalahand, two of the fifteen Meisters of The Association of Merchants of Phaion, believe that the treaty being drafted between the city of Huan Zhou and Gabriel could jeopardize the monopoly that its country has on the eastern market in The Old Continent. Therefore, without the support of the other Meisters, they are planning to intervene to keep the negotiations from completing. Its objective is to kill two birds with one stone: to get some westerners to assassinate the son of governor Pao, while one of the martial artists of the city kills Duke Ferrel, the ambassador of The Arch-Chancellor Fardelys. These events would undoubtedly lead to the immediate rupture of the treaty and possibly also to a serious enmity between nations. The characters could participate in these events several ways, as agents of Phaion who help carry out the murders, or conversely, have to protect the security of the treaty.

Common Characters of Shivat

The following is a series of archetypes of relevant individuals of Shivat. The following statistics have been composed without taking Creation Points into account.

Dojo Master

Class: Tao; **Level** 3
Initiative 70; **LP** 125; **AT** None; **Attack** 110/90; **Dodge** 85; **Weapon** Martial Arts; **Damage** 40
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 8 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 8 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 6 **POW:** 6
Abilities: Acrobatics 50, Athleticism 10, Swim 15, Jump 15, Style 25, Notice 25, Search 25, Feats of Strength 50, Resist Pain 15, Slight of Hand 60.
Special: Martial Arts (Kung Fu, Shotokan, Tae Kwon Do).
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 45, PsR 45.

Farmer
Class: Freelance; **Level** 0
Initiative 50; **LP** 70; **AT** None; **Attack** 50; **Dodge** 40; **Weapon** Martial Arts; **Damage** 30
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 5 **STR:** 5 **PER:** 5 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Swim 10, Climb 10, Notice 30, Search 20, Herbal Lore 5, Feats of Strength 15, Forging 15, Slight of Hand 15.
Special: Martial Arts (Shotokan).
Resistance: PhR 20, DR 20, VR 20, MR 20, PsR 20.

Bourgeois
Class: Freelance; **Level** 1
Initiative 55; **LP** 90; **AT** None; **Attack** 70; **Dodge** 55; **Weapon** Martial Arts; **Damage** 25
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 6 **STR:** 6 **PER:** 7 INT: 8 **WIL:** 6 **POW:** 7
Abilities: Acrobatics 40, Style 20, Persuasion 35, Notice 20, Search 10, Science 30, History 20, Memorize 20, Appraisal 50, Slight of Hand 40.
Special: Martial Arts (Kung Fu, Kempo).
Resistance: PhR 35, DR 35, VR 35, MR 35, PsR 35.

Nobleman
Class: Freelance; **Level** 3
Initiative 65; **LP** 100; **AT** None; **Attack** 80; **Dodge** 90; **Weapon** Martial Arts; **Damage** 35
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 6 **STR:** 6 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 8 **WIL:** 6 **POW:** 8
Abilities: Acrobatics 15, Ride 20, Swim 15, Style 40, Intimidate 15, Leadership 70, Persuasion 60, Notice 35, Search 25, History 70, Appraisal 80, Slight of Hand 50.
Special: Martial Arts (Kung Fu, Kempo).
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 50, PsR 45.

Table 32: Shivat

Value	Social Class	Initial Equipment
1-30	Low-Class	Clothes, food a few days, some personal objects. 3 CC.
31-55	Middle-Class	A couple changes of clothes, food for a week, a weapon or a mount, basic traveling equipment and some personal items. 70 SC.
56-75	Bourgeois	A couple of changes of clothes, good food for a week, a weapon, a mount, complete traveling equipment. 15 GC.
76-90	Bureaucrat	Several changes of clothes, good food for a week, a weapon, a full trunk of miscellaneous equipment and personal possessions of quality. 30 GC.
91-100	Nobility	Several changes of clothes, good food for a week, a couple weapons, light armor, complete travel equipment and a bunch of miscellaneous equipment. 60 GC.

Cultural Roots and Social Class

Middle-Class/Low-Class: Acrobatics +10, Athleticism +10, Swim +10, Climb +10, Style +10, Notice +10, Animals +10, Herbal Lore +10.
Nobility /Bourgeoisie/Bureaucrat: Ride +10, Style +15, Persuasion +20, Notice +10, History +10, Occult +5, Dances +5, Art or Music +5.

The Inner Sea

Capital: Variable.
Population: 1,400,000+
Ethnic Groups: Asher (19%), Aion (17%), Tayahar (15%), Vildianos (13%), Ryuan (11%), Zinner (9%), Kwa (8%), Daevar (4%), Norne (3%).
Government: Variable.
Languages: Variable (mainly Latin).
Religion: Variable.
Technology: Variable.
Denomym: None.
Flag: Variable.
Masculine Names: Depends on the area of influence.
Feminine Names: Depends on the area of influence.
Last Names: Depends on the area of influence.

In the center of the Old Continent is The Inner Sea, one of the most chaotic parts of Gaïa. It's comprised of hundreds of islands of varying sizes and significance across the coastline. There are 24 main islands, the only ones that have real significance, whereas the others are just big rocks that are rarely more than a mile in diameter.

It is almost impossible to determine a common weather pattern for the islands, because each has its own characteristics. Some of them are very rainy and humid, while others are warmer. The same applies to the vegetation, but they often share the same kind of plants along the coast where they are located.

The government of the islands is highly debated, since in many instances the coastal countries have claimed their right to take those lands for themselves. After numerous problems and disagreements, the Sacred Holy Empire determined that the islands were free to have their own government, forming the so-called Coalition of The Inner Sea with Tol Rauko as its representative. There has never actually been the slightest union among them, and a large number of them have reached agreements with coastal principalities to become their provinces.

At the present time, the existence of the central islands has undergone little change, although several have now been absorbed by coastal nations.

The Pride of the Sea

This boat, property of Captain Colwyn Reilly (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 4, ♂), is the most well-known and admired ship around The Inner Sea. Not only is it the fastest and most maneuverable, but also its crew is composed of the most seasoned sailors in the area, facing the greatest challenges and always emerging victorious. Few boast daring to cross the waters near Tol Rauko in the middle of a storm, or of ever having been boarded by pirate ships lurking offshore. The Pride of the Sea is one of the few Sy´luen constructed for somebody other than The Empire, but the captain's grandfather, the late Joss Reilly, won the Tao Zan years ago and requested it as a gift from the Emperor who granted him permission to have one.

Its captain is young, handsome and daring. Such are stories told about him that he makes many young women sigh and yearn to steal his heart. Unfortunately for them, the only thing this captain truly loves is his ship. Anyone can hire Reilly and The Pride to carry him anywhere if the price is right. Although the fees are very high (they vary from trip to trip), it's certainly fair to recruit the best.

Culture and Society

The same way it's impossible to find some sort of unity among the islands of The Inner Sea, it is also impossible to find a common culture or society. Each island has its own traditions, society and cultural level. It is possible to mention very primitive places like Vasago, simple towns like Corvinus or urban nucleus as advanced as Paradis Paradis. Seeking greater influence in the islands, The Church has been sending priests to secure the faith its people for years; so the majority religion is Christianity, although people do tend to be fanatically devoted.

One of the few problems common to all the islands is piracy. Because of The Eye of the Hurricane, pirates frequently assault boats and coastal cities. In recent years, attacks have increased dramatically, and although they tend not to be worrisome, they pose the greatest calamity of The Inner Sea.

Regarding the Supernatural

The same disparity prevailing in the islands makes the people's reaction to the unexplainable very different from one place to another. Generally, due to the limited presence of The Church in these lands, many usually see the supernatural as a frightening, evil and wicked force. Nevertheless, most people simply ignore its existence, thinking that such things are nothing but nonsensical products of an unbridled imagination. Therefore, the two most common responses people have are skepticism or fear. The presence of inquisitors in the area is low given that the proximity with Tol Rauko deters many of them. Paradoxically, given that most of the islands are formed from territories that did not previously belong to man, there are many non-human buildings scattered everywhere.

However, when talking about supernatural powers in The Inner Sea there is another important element to consider. The activation of the machine of Rah produced similar disturbances in the forces of the zone that even now are not yet fully recovered. This implies the use of any power, whether magical, psychic, or Ki, has varying and less potent effects.

While under the influence of The Inner Sea, mentalists and wizards apply a penalty between -10 to -30 to their Psychic Potential and MA respectively, similarly Ki users have between one and two points deducted from all their accumulations. Moreover, there's the possibility that fumbling increases by one to three points during execution, and any mistake could result in a large potential to indirectly produce extreme and unexpected effects.

These rules do not work in a concrete manner, or the same in all places. It's possible that the magical effects are changed or only diminish on some islands, without affecting psychic powers or Ki techniques, while in others the opposite occurs.



Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

The History of The Inner Sea

The majority of the islands of The Inner Sea were formed during the cataclysm triggered after the activation of Upnapistim, the machine of Rah. The first brutal wave of power that was released reached the inner coast of The Old Continent, breaking and devastating the land. Much of the coastline sank into the water, while others separated from it, forming nearly a hundred new islands. Large cities plunged into the depths, and even whole civilizations were devoured in an instant.

After the chaos that ensued, the absence of magic in the area soon forced most supernatural beings to quickly escape, leaving everything behind without turning back. The humans living there spent the following years completely isolated, since the relentless storms did not stop lashing The Inner Sea. There were many that thought that the world had come to an end. Just over a decade later, when the area subsided and the first Emperor created the organization of Tol Rauko, some of these islands were discovered, being immediately incorporated into The Sacred Holy Empire.

From that point on, each island's history has experienced multiple changes. Some have joined nearby coastal nations, and others have tried to maintain complete independence.

The Islands of The Inner Sea

Originating so diversely, each island of The Inner Sea is completely different from the others, having its own history and nature. Below are the most popular or relevant.

Corvinus

(Small Island, Population 200+)

The island of Corvinus depends on the principality of Gabriel. It's not too big; having only a small town, also called Corvinus (Village, Population 150+), and a few scattered farms. Now it's a peaceful place, but its recent history has been very chaotic. For a decade it was the prison of the Lady of Nightmares Seline Luna, who ended up trapped in an abandoned Duk´zarist cathedral by Galael, a renegade disciple of Malekith, The Prince of Crows. The creature, after taking human form, governed the island as the Marquis of Cavalcanti, while trying to steal his prisoner's powers and plunge his new kingdom into The Wake. Just over two months ago, Galael was destroyed by a group of survivors from the shipwrecked Gabrielense zeppelin The Lady, thus releasing the people of from his influence.

Although Seline could leave her prison and finally move freely about the world, she has decided to make Corvinus her temporary home, so she returns to the cathedral after each trip to The Wake. For no apparent reason, the dark lady has grown quite fond of the locals, especially a young wizard named Catherine Absolom (Wizard Lv. 3, ♀), who assisted in her release. Thus, she has become the dark guardian of Corvinus, and with her covert support, the town is beginning to flourish by leaps and bounds.

Vasago

(Large Island, Population 9,000+)

The island of Vasago is one of the most culturally backward places of The Old Continent; a wild land populated by barbarian tribes who do nothing more than fight for no reason. The island itself is a barren land with little vegetation; which is why its people have many problems when farming. Since it was formed artificially when it separated from The Mountain Range of Eras in Helenia, its coastline is extremely rugged, and it does not allow ships to easily dock. By this lack of interest as a transit port, most people have forgotten its existence entirely. The only ones that visit it with any regularity are the priests, although they usually find it difficult to preach because of the savagery of its people. It is said that The Church sends problematic ecclesiastics to Vasago as punishment if they don't want them around.

Almost all Vasagianos, men and women, are expert warriors, and one of the most common occupations when not busy fighting each other is to go out into the world and work as mercenaries in other countries. Despite of their savagery, their skills are appreciated by the fact that they never back down once they accept a job, even if they go to their death. This means that it's often not necessary to even pay them.

There has recently been another surprising discovery: one of the mountains of Vasago has an immense vein of gold, which has finally called some attention to the island, especially from a company in Gabriel. However, the barbarians prefer that this place isn't disturbed, since they speak of an "invisible tribe" that lives there. Actually, this myth refers to a large group of Grendels that has made the mountains their home, and the creatures have spent centuries hiding their existence underground thanks to the massive caves and rooms inside them.

In addition to the mountain, there are vestiges of nonhuman buildings in the area, but Tol Rauko has already properly sealed all of them for many years now.


Forad Forest
Bretoleau River
Val du Genevrier
Lucille Mountains
Saulxerotte
Schlotterstein
Trivium
Inanimate Forest
Eustace
Swamp of Agamemmon
Lenci
Veenhuigen
Great Lakes
La Roche
Heverville
Bellegarde
Astria Academy
Ourges
Ilmora
Helenia
Calysta
Deep Lake
Gabriel
Hausser
Farna
Cathedral of Saint Helena
Arklo
Dupois
Beaufort Citadel
Carignan River
Voillemont
L'Ark Forest
Grebar River
Busselton
Conservatory of the Arts
Lacan
Lands of the Calm
Spring Leap
Terra Umbra
Ree Field
Fathia
Neria
Deimos
Le Drac
Monastery of Salvation
Mountain Range of Eras
Corvinus Island
Corvinus
Straits of Ribeau
Chateau de Justine
Chaville
Paradis Paradis
Ile des Mouttes
Fevgue River
Mountain Range of Tol Jaegren
Nameless Island
Vasago
Ile du Hirondelle
Selene
Ovens
Port of Eien
Coast of Grief
Yura
Arias
Tol Rauko
Inner Sea
Tol Rauko
Alba
Adam
Port of Eburah
Coast of Yearnings
Presta
Kirdan
Reisz
Brudge
White Forest
Morin
Church of Saint Bernabe
Adlia
Alanis
Zanibar
Kwa Lubilo
Green Lake
Ferrant
Trias
Black Port
Ikwah
Bendeck
Palias Island
Kanon
Kassia
Land of Ashes
Eye of the Hurricane
Khora
Kabalatka
Haji
Chasm of Oba
Terhel
Harekratia
Americh
Schaefer Forest
Forneo Archipelago
Estigia
Meadow of the Fallen
Al Kairr
Necropolis
Veria
Nisi
Al-Quayan Mountains
Korin
Halls of Kings
Meskhemet Desert
Malakai
Lenard
Hirsch
Glockner Mountains
Tahar Port
Iometh River
Fuchs Plains
Keltia
Karjah
Fortress of Nakhti
Lucrecio
Great Dunes of Hatifah
Enuma Jannah
Haruma
Senna Desert
Temple of Ka
Nasser Mountains
Du'Lucart
Krause
MAP KEY
Capital
Metropolis
City
Building
Fortress
Path
Road
0 250 500 750 Kilometers
0 250 500 Miles

Zanibar

(Large Island, Population Unknown)

Zanibar, the Island of Hell, is one of the places that was most affected by the activation of Upnapistim. Centuries ago it was a land full of supernatural energy inhabited by Devas, where they built an artificial paradise thanks to their skills. However, since the life of the garden depended solely on magic, when this disappeared everything was immediately and irrevocably consumed, turning the island into a withered and desolate place.

Now Zanibar is a siphon of death. Its need for life gradually consumes anything that walks on the island, like a vampiric land that feeds on the vital energy of all that touches it. The effect is not immediate, but within hours of arrival, people begin to feel weak, one or two days later they won't be able to move, and finally the land steals their souls from them. So it has never been colonized, and sailors do not want to approach it under any circumstance.

What was once a beautiful land has turned into a rocky area of mountains and lava rivers. The sky is usually covered with black clouds because of the volcanic ash, and the heat gives the horizon a reddish tinge. All that remains on the island are a few scattered remnants of works of The Deva, but even these are nothing more than sad ruins, a relic of their former glory. However, there is still something more terrifying in center of Zanibar. In an enclosed valley accessible only by a mountain narrow passage, there is a monumental church surrounded by lava, protected by five ancient dragons that inexplicably seem to have managed to survive in this unholy land. Why they guard the building or what it is hidden inside, is a mystery. No one knows whether the intention is to prevent anyone from entering the church... or to make sure that something doesn't leave.

Illustrated by Raúl Rosell



The barren land of Zanibar

Presta and Adlia, The Twin Islands

(Islas grandes, 76.000+ habitantes)

Presta and Adlia are called The Twin Islands not only because both have almost identical plant life and buildings, but also because there is little space between them. These are fertile territories, especially suitable for the agriculture and the ranching of exotic animals. In fact, some of the best steaks served in Abel at the tables of the nobility come from here. Each is packed with small towns that usually do not have more than 100 or 200 people, but so numerous that they make them the most populated islands of The Inner Sea. They only have two large cities respectively, the port of Morin (City, Population 26,000+) in Presta and Alanis (City, Population 32,000+) of Adlia.

Although separated by almost a mile of water, an immense bridge called the Marine Crossing, a masterpiece of Imperial architecture that took more than 50 years to complete, connects both islands. Thanks to this, it's possible to easily go from one island to the other, while commercial vessels pass underneath without problems.

While both islands have acted as one for years, in the last decade there have been numerous disagreements among its people, because of an exclusive commercial concession obtained by Presta. To solve the problem, the each island's rulers have decided to arrange the wedding of their first-born children, but the future Count of Adlia, a man well known for his fondness for women, publicly rejected his fiancée, ridiculing her shamelessly. This has not only aggravated the relationship between the two islands, but has also made them to start commercial hostilities with the purpose of plunging the other one.

Some remains of the Lost Logias have been recently discovered in Presta, although the Empire not yet has been able to determine its nature or scope. It is unknown whether Adlia has similar remains or not.

The Eye of the Hurricane

(Medium Island, Population 27,000+)

Eye of the Hurricane is the infamous pirate island of The Inner Sea. It does not belong to nor is it associated with any country or principality, so there are people who call it "The Island of Free Commerce" even if it has never been officially proclaimed as the fifth city. The island is large, although most of its land is full of forests and deep fissures. Its real core is Black Port (City, Population 27,000+), a city almost exclusively run by pirates and criminals. The first rule of this dark place is anarchy; people living here can do whatever they want whenever they want. The port has no law, and theft and murder are commonplace every day.

The city is dirty and dark; the buildings are made from the remains of shipwrecked boats, and mud floods the streets making it difficult to walk. Obviously, the largest and more important place is the port itself, where countless vessels (most of them pirate) dock daily. The area is full of taverns and brothels, where the worst dregs of society meet. In center of town is a statue of Kristoff, the first Pirate King of The Inner Sea, beneath which lies a chest where, at least allegedly, his most valuable possessions are hidden. It's one of the few traditions of the island that the chest never be opened or pilfered, since it represents the pride that rules the pirates.

The government of the island falls to Pirate Kings, a title received by the most important privateers who control a small flotilla of boats. Their numbers vary from year in year, but there are currently four of them: Amadeus Bergion (Weaponsmaster Lv. 4, ♂), the psychotic renegade priest Jeremiah Ezekiel (Technician Lv. 6, ♂), Lizza "The Grand Lady" (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 5, ♀) and Jonathan Razzor (Dark Paladin Lv. 7, ♂). Besides the great Pirate Kings, another notable figure in the city is Bren Lapyridion (Mentalist Lv. 4, ♂), an agent of Alystaire Fardelys that has spent time on the island sponsoring privateers so that they can attack Imperial coastlines. He has become quite notorious, and most people erroneously believe that he works for the Azur Alliance.

Because of the special characteristics of the city, there are many members Samael here, and Black Sun also uses it on some occasions as a transit point, when they must hide from Tol Rauko in The Inner Sea. Recently, wizards and summoners of the Order of Yehudah have begun to operate openly here, selling their special abilities to the highest bidder.

Tol Rauko

(Enormous Island, 15,000+ inhabitants)

In the center of The Inner Sea is the greatest and most important of all the islands of Gaïa; Tol Rauko. In the past it was the heart of the Empire of Judas, the twelfth kingdom of man, from where Rah declared war on the entire world and was on the brink of winning. Now it has become the sanctuary of the Templars of Tol Rauko, one of the most powerful organizations in Gaïa, dedicated to the preservation of supernatural forces.

There is probably no place in the world more secure than Tol Rauko. Guarded by the best Templars and possessing the highest supernatural security systems, the entire island, and especially its central fortress, is virtually unconquerable.

Before of the activation of Upnapistim it was much larger, but many of its coasts were sunk during the cataclysm. Therefore, all its shores are composed of steep rocky walls, and surrounded by dangerous reefs. The only way to dock there is to use The Labyrinth, a complex channel that is winds between tall rocks to come to the walled port of Dawn (city-fortress, Population 3,000+), the entrance to the island. Only those that know the secrets The Labyrinth sail through it safely, regardless of which is also equipped with mystical runes which detect and weaken any supernatural force entering it.

The interior of the island is populated solely by Templars of Tol Rauko, warriors of the organization and their families. Most of them live in a small city called Adam (City, Population 8,000+), in memory to its first Marshal. Despite its size, it is a beautiful city that enjoys the same advancements as Archangel; a just reward for the families of its agents.

But undoubtedly, the most important place on the island is The Fortress of Tol Rauko, the heart of the organization, where the Templars have compiled the information of ancient times and all the artifacts that have been recovered since its inception. The castle itself uses the few remains left from the original fortress of Rah, constructed with the most advanced technomagical knowledge of the world, surpassed only by the science of the Powers in the Shadow. This grants it absolute protection against any kind of force: no spell or psychic ability seems to damage or penetrate its walls. Although very little remains of its origins, the citadel retains some of its high black metal towers, decorated with strange gargoyles representing creatures never before see on the face of Gaïa. The inner chambers have immense warehouses, packed with relics, books and other items of power. Deep beneath even of The Ark of Noah, are the airtight doors of The Seven Seals, closed by Rah at the time of his death. Nothing and nobody has ever been able to open them, nor seems to exist something in Gaïa with enough power to do it.

The influence of Upnapistim on Tol Rauko is most intense around The Inner Sea, so all kinds of supernatural power are drastically lessened in its vicinity. This is the perfect protection against any possible mystical attack, since whoever tries to use their powers on the island will see a drastic decrease in all of them.

Selene

(Small Island, Population 200+)

Selene is the headquarters of the sect of assassins that takes its name. The island is in a hidden area practically inaccessible from The Inner Sea, and its location does not appear on any known map. Some time ago, the organization managed to obtain a powerful supernatural concealment system from Black Sun that allows them to hide the island behind an illusion that appears as nothing more than an impassable area full of sea cliffs.

It is a beautiful and paradisiacal place, where the younger agents of Selene and the children who live there are trained. The whole island has only a couple of buildings which serve either as guard posts or as residences for the students and their teachers. The only relevant construction is The Temple of the Moon, built atop a great hill in the middle of the island. The shrine serves both as an academy and a control center for the organization, because is there were they coordinate the agents' missions and monitor that no sister breaks the society's laws. It is a very secure place, because in addition to the agents of the organization, it has many magical protections.

The lady of the island is Alaxa, who guards the security of Selene protected by four of the most competent sisters.

Paradis Paradis

(Small Island, Population 1,000+)

Very probably, Paradis Paradis is the more bizarre place in The Inner Sea (there are even those who claim in all Gaïa), as well as one of the most fun. It is a resort island established for one purpose: to be the greatest amusement park in the world. Consequently, the entire place is a huge recreational complex, created for the entertainment and delight of its guests.

Paradis Paradis is relatively new, not more than three years old. The island, formerly known as Belkiane, was bought for an exorbitant sum of money to its inhabitants, who happened to become first builders and later workers of the park. Despite of its short existence, from the moment of its inauguration the popularity of the complex has spread worldwide and thousands of people go there every year. There are several boats called "The Road to Paradise" that serve as transportation to travelers from all corners of the inner coastline. The most common visitors are from wealthy families of Gabriel, Phaion or Abel, although the center gives free tickets to thousands of poor people of the coastal cities every year.

Paradis Paradis has attractions like never seen before in Gaïa and it's no wonder, since its designer is none other than Schwarzwald himself. Most of them are based on the technology of the Lost Logias, so not only are they the most modern in the known world, but also provide incredible entertainment. Although no one is aware of the origin of such wonders, they have raised the suspicion of the Empire and The Church, but Elisabetta herself, who visited the complex personally in the past, thinks that it does not deserve to be closed.

The island not only offers entertainment, but it also has many luxurious hotels so visitors can stay and enjoy a long period of relaxation. The price of the stay is varies widely, but spending a day feasting with the attractions only costs 2 gold crowns per person for adults, and 50 silver for children.

The owner of Paradis Paradis is a funny and chubby man named Gold Collins (Freelance Lv. 3, ♂, Ancient Blood), who likes to stroll along the park, give extravagant gifts and make sure that everybody is having fun. The fact that he hands out a large number of free tickets to the poor people of Gaïa is not motivated by any commercial strategy; he simply wants everybody to enjoy his island. Collins usually wears outlandish costumes, so it's not unusual to see him dressed as a chicken, a cow or some other oddity. His eccentricities drive mad Laura Saye (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 7, ♀), the female head of security of Paradis Paradis, a former agent of Selene that decided to settle down after marrying and having her daughter Korin.

The history of such a park is, at best, original. A long time ago, Gold Collins was one of the richest men of Gabriel, and yet also one of most unfortunate. He was so desperate that he even tried to commit suicide. It was then that he encountered professor Schwarzwald, who immediately felt drawn to his case. When he asked to him why he was so despaired, Collins said that he only wanted to be happy and be surrounded by joyful people. Consequently, Schwarzwald designed and collaborated in the creation of Paradis Paradis, a place where Collins would find the joy that he wished for. Although he doesn't know it, the owner of the park is an Ancient One (a characteristic which Schwarzwald identified at first sight) and is connected to all the attractions, which makes him as happy as the people who use them.

The Nameless Island

(Tiny Island, Population 150+)

The Nameless Island, a small barren rock a few miles south of the coast of Helenia, secretly houses an Imperial maximum-security prison. This place is one of the few buildings in which Abel uses Lost Logias as containment system, turning it an impenetrable bastion that is impossible to escape. What from the outside appears as no more than an old castle, inside hides an incredible tecnomagical complex, in which every room has a suppression system for supernatural powers and a gravity control that crushes any violent prisoner against the ground.

Wonderland

Like all inventions that emerged from the mad genius Schwarzwald, Paradis Paradis also has a dark side. In the depths of the island, under the amusement park, a second complex with a much more macabre purpose was created: Wonderland. It is an immense completely automated theme park, which traps people inside and forces them to participate in a terrifying game. In order to escape, a person must accumulate 100 points ("Super Happy Points," as their psychotic creator likes to call them) from several attractions. Unfortunately, despite having a remote resemblance to real rides like the Ferris wheel, the maze of mirrors, or the haunted house, each and every one of them is a deadly trap, each more terrible than the last.

At first glance, Wonderland looks a lot like Paradis Paradis, but each one of the attractions has an ill-fated and sinister touch. There are many posters and advertisements urging the players to stay alive, explaining how when somebody gains the necessary points, they will win their freedom. There is nothing really alive inside of Wonderland, although there are many genetic and tecnomagical creations that shamble down the desolate hallways of several attractions. Some of them are creatures of extreme power, like The Clown (a fat disgusting creature dressed like a mime, apparently immortal, that assassinates the players when they go too long without points), while other beings are simply terrifying but harmless monsters.

Getting there is easier than it sounds, because sometimes, while somebody is in an attraction at Paradis Paradis, one or several people can be separated from the others and ends up in Wonderland without realizing it.

Schwarzwald created this place with a single purpose: to rekindle the desire to live in people who are bored or sad, facing certain death that tests his will to live. Ironically, it fulfills its purpose to perfection; whoever miraculously escapes will undoubtedly be thankful to be alive.

Since very few people disappear every year, the existence of Wonderland has not been discovered. Gold Collins knows nothing about it, and no matter how hard somebody could try to convince him, it's doubtful that he'd believed it, since it's virtually impossible to enter the complex voluntarily or prove its existence.

Illustrated by Luis NCT



The shores of Tol Rauko

The Nameless Island is directed by the wizard Souma (Wizard Lv. 6, ♂), a former imperial advisor of supernatural matters that commands an elite body of guards responsible for protecting the facilities. The prison is only used for exceptionally dangerous prisoners whom, either because of their importance, knowledge or connections, cannot just be executed. There are also many homicidal wizards of important noble families, which used their contacts to be imprisoned in the island instead of being executed by the Inquisition. Some of the most troublesome people in Gaïa end up here, like the Azaroth Phineas Zoid (Wizard Lv. 8, ♂) or the Demon Anthrax, who has possessed the body of the innocent Duchess of Marcelus. Nevertheless, among them all stands a man that the Empire considers the most dangerous person in the world; Killrayne, the Knight of the Seventh Heaven.

The Forneo Archipelago

(Archipelago, Population 32,000+)

The Forneo Archipelago is a grouping of five islands located near the coasts of Lucrecio and Kushistan. It's primarily a commercial area and also declared enemy of The Eye of the Hurricane. Because of its location, many merchant ships pass through its area of influence, commonly stopping for a few hours at one of their many ports to re-supply or make repairs. Because ships from everywhere use its services from time to time, it is easy to find cheap, second-hand material from far away places in the markets on the islands. The archipelago has always suffered numerous attacks from pirates, which is why it's common for them to hire mercenaries to protect their ports and boats.

Killrayne

The man known only as Killrayne was the former supreme Lord of the Heaven Order, the personal praetorian of the Sacred Holy Emperor Elias Barbados. He stayed loyal to him in good times and in bad, serving Elias with devotion that had no bounds. Killrayne had unmatched combat skills, being able to single-handedly kill whole regiments without even soiling himself with the blood of his victims. The few that saw him fight thought that he wasn't even human...

Cold and ruthless with enemies in the Empire, like an angel of the death during the moments of his lord's madness Killrayne executed everyone that questioned the word of the Emperor without hesitation. However, in the final hours of the Breach of Heaven he faced Kisidan, being defeated for the first time in his life. Fatally wounded, Kyllrayne ended up in a deep coma that the praetorian didn't seem like he would ever wake up from. However, knowing the tremendous danger that such man represented to his protégée, days later Kisidan tried to finish the job he had begun, fearing that he would at some point come out of his coma. But as if she guessed his intentions, Elisabetta intervened begging him not to, since after all, Killrayne was the man who had protected her father for all those years. Finally, he was sent to The Nameless Island, where after four months he awoke.

After the fallen knight discovered what had happened, he was overtaken by an uncontrollable rage, a cold murderous wrath that stole what little humanity he had left. He does not feel resentment towards Kisidan for killing Elias; no, he hates Eliasabetta, considering that she has brought with her the destruction of the Empire with her ascent to the throne, and hates himself for having failed to prevent it. His hatred is the only thing that keeps him alive, the same one that drives him to escape The Nameless Island and kill the Empress with his own hands. It does not matter how long he must wait. He knows that his opportunity will arrive someday.

Today, Killrayne (Technician Lv. 12, ♂) is a middle-aged man of around 40 years old, although retains every last one of his physical abilities. He fights using seven different weapons that it carries on his back, and combines them differently to design his battle style.

The society of Forneo very is open to everyone and does not show to prejudice based on race or religion. In fact, they have been coexisting with Christianity and Enneath in perfect harmony for years on the islands, without the slightest problem or friction.

Wissenschaft keeps a secret base of operations on the smallest island, where experiments are carried out relating to aquatic creatures as well as the suppression of supernatural powers, analyzing the effects of Upnapistim on The Inner Sea.

Palias Island

(Medium Island, Apparent Population 300+)

For many years ago, a powerful wizard named Origal, former Magus Rex of the Magus Order, decided to leave Gabriel to explore the lands to the south. With the company of its young daughter Alice, embarked on a schooner that unfortunately was shipwrecked when crashing against reefs. Origal, asleep at the time of the accident, woke up shortly after on the beach of the island of Palias next to the lifeless body of his daughter. Terrified by the prospect of losing Alice, he tried to use his knowledge to save to the small girl, but the influence of the machine of Rah interfered in his spells. Completely desperate, Origal saw the wooden marionette with which Alice played with sticking out of the sand, and instinctively transmigrated her soul into the doll.

Unfortunately, his magic only was partially successful, since the essence of the little girl was inextricably bound to the one of the doll. Realizing that his daughter could never be a normal girl again, the wizard's mind became unhinged. Overwhelmed by guilt, Origal devoted himself to creating playmates for Alice, making puppets to subsequently transmigrate the soul of all the animals and people that he met on the island. His first attempts were quite crude, but over the years he has learned to make dolls almost human, practically indistinguishable from real people. Gradually he replaced all the living creatures on Palias Island, creating a society in which every last one of the creatures was like his daughter. When he had mastered the art of the making dolls, Origal made a body identical to Alice's and placed the doll that contained his daughter's soul into its heart. Finally, he created other two especially powerful puppets; he confined his own soul in the first and used the second, called "Momo," as companion and bodyguard for Alice.

The only large city of Palias is the tiny port of Ferrant (Village, 250+ apparent population), where the "more human-like" dolls live as if it was a normal community. When they receive visitors from boats they kindly invite the travelers to spend the night, and later destroy the boat and capture the strangers (who, inevitably, will become new Origal puppets). Sometimes they let go the important boats or those whose disappearance could be troublesome, to therefore maintain the appearance of complete normality.

As for Origal and Alice, both of them live in a tower in center on Palias called The Lighthouse of Wonders. It's surrounded by a dense forest that covers almost the entire island, inhabited by the most dangerous creations of the wizard, all monstrous puppets, as protection.

Kirdan

(Medium Island, Population 1,800+)

The most of the people of The Inner Sea usually forget the existence of Kirdan, one of the lesser-visited islands of these waters. It is far away from trade routes and difficult to access, where there are only three towns and the immense castle of its lord. The island in itself is rather dry, but has unusual vegetation which is quite sparse, that doesn't correspond with any of the nearby coasts.

A little over a year and a half ago, Count Augustus Reig, governor of Kirdan, discovered the existence of a strange system of natural tunnels under his castle and, after personally leading a more a detailed inspection, he found the remains of one of The Mothers of The Machine (See Those Who Walked Along With Us) deep beneath the earth. It was still dormant, but all around, half-buried between rocks, there were hundreds of larvae waiting to hatch. Thinking that it was a sign that fate was showing him, Augustus, who had studied science in The Great University of Lucrecio, began to experiment using the villagers as guinea pigs. Even without understanding what the consequences of his actions were very well, he began to develop a brood of drones, and even some

technocrites, among which he included himself. Now, the whole island and its people are under the influence of Augustus, who uses the remaining larvae to develop new creations. Because The Mother not yet awoken, the Count has become the temporary master of the brood, since his will is the strongest and he is infused with a praetorian. All the people have not been properly merged (in fact, less than one tenth of the population is), but Augustus has made them swallow crystals larvae, turning them into mindless servants.

Because of all the events that have happened to the Empire lately, nobody has noticed what's happening in Kirdan yet, and the few visitors who have come to the island have only found empty towns... until it was too late for them to escape.

OTHER SETTLEMENTS: *Khora, Trias, Veria, Yid, Nisi, Arias, Yura, Ovens.*

Adventures

Each island of The Inner Sea is an adventure in itself. The merely going to Palias Island or having some fun in Paradis Paradis (which could end up as a visit to the dark Wonderland), allow for plenty of exciting situations as enjoyable as they are interesting.

The Chest: The myth that the chest of Pirate King Kristoff has never been robbed is an enormous lie. In fact, its contents have long since disappeared (and frankly, it wasn't too much), but nobody has wanted to admit it. From time to time, some wise guy plots to cash in the legendary treasures of Kristoff and tries to steal it, but after discovering that it's empty always ends up leaving the chest in its location to avoid retaliation for stealing a wooden chest. Ironically, the truly valuable thing is the chest itself, since the senseless legend about what's inside is nothing but a carved map that shows where his vast fortune was hidden (in reality, Kristoff was a romantic, tied to the old tradition of burying things in remote places). Recently, the old retired pirate Skerlinton (Thief Lv. 2, ♂) has discovered some notes that have uncovered the secret, and is looking for partners to steal the chest, take it to a master decoder that lives on the Island of Presta and then travel wherever necessary to gain the alleged fortune. Of course, knowing how the pirates operate, he prefers to look for more "legitimate" partners to carry out his adventure.

Unfortunately, just hours after he seizes of the chest of Kristoff, Pirate King Jeremias Ezekiel will discover the mystery of the chest thanks to a "friend" of Skerlinton (because the former thief has the annoying habit of talking in his sleep), and will take up the chase.

Is that... a bathing suit??: The eccentric Gold Collins, proprietor of Paradis Paradis, has come up with another one of his eccentric ideas; he wants to organize a contest called "Beauties on Water," in which the most beautiful women in Gaïa compete wearing only sexy bathing suits. Needless to say, without a doubt the show will attract hoards of men. Any woman beautiful enough can register for free, although she will have to design her own swimsuit and participates in a series aquatic events for three consecutive days.

Unfortunately, a semi-religious organization called "The Moral Order" thinks that the competition is simply an obscenity that insults the word of God, and before the passivity of the authorities, has decided to take justice into its own hands to end the contest by any means. Many of their members will infiltrate Paradis Paradis as simple spectators, planning to provoke incidents of all types and kidnap some of the contestants.

Whether hired as extra security, or because one the females in the group decides to participate in "Beauties on Water" (whose first prize is the considerable sum of 10,000 gold crowns), undoubtedly the intervention of The Moral Order could be a real headache for the characters.



Kali, Cenette and Celia in Paradis Paradis

Illustrated by Salvador Espin

Rah stopped and began to examine the air, unsure of what he had felt. Suddenly, reality deformed behind him; a gigantic scythe appeared out of nowhere and swung towards his head inhumanly fast. However, as if he sensed the attack at the last moment, The Lord of Judas flinched from the blade's trajectory, harmlessly grazing the right side of his face. Rah instantly turned, but there was no sign of his unknown assailant. He very calmly traced his fingers along the open wound on his cheek and looked at the blood with some disdain.

"A surprise attack... how futile," he commented somewhat indifferently. "This is all that you could come up with to kill me?"

In one fluid movement, he drew his huge sword and dragged it along the ground with sparks jumping all around him.

"Show yourselves! I do not have all day for games."

In response to these words, the tiles of the hall began to form bright red runes preceded by heart wrenching screams; it was as if all reality began to cry. One after another, three strange creatures manifested loudly in the room, while all the candles lit up with a bluish hue. The first of these beings was a proud-looking angel with six ash-colored wings stained with blood and an enormous black scythe in his hands. The second was an obese and deformed imitation of a man whose huge mouth full of sharpened teeth could even be seen in pitch-black darkness. Lastly, undoubtedly the most frightening of the trio, was a beast whose body was made up of flesh, metal and fire.

"Pride, Gluttony and Wrath; The Three Demon Princes. To send lap dogs rather than act directly... So concerned are they in remaining hidden that they do not even send their own agents? I cannot say that I am very impressed with the choices. You are not even gods."

"But we are, 'O King of Men,'" responded the gray angel with a melodic voice and certain irony. "I no longer remember the last time a human survived one of my attacks."

"WHY WASTE TIME WITH EXPLANATIONS, PRIDE? HE IS NOTHING MORE THAN FLESH... FLESH!" Roared the incandescent beast rushing towards Rah.

The Lord of Judas was prepared for the onslaught, but still found it difficult not to be overwhelmed by the monstrous speed of Wrath. Gathering his energies, he managed to distance himself from the path of the mass of metal and fire while at the same time lashing it with his sword. The Demonic Prince, confused by his enemy's maneuvering and the pain he felt because of the thrust, was unable to stop his momentum and went through the wall behind Rah destroying it.

"All seven of you should have come," Rah declared. "You might have stood a chance."

Pride's expression became gloomy.

"Too much arrogance for a mere mortal, be he a pauper or a king." The praise had ended.

As soon as those words left his lips, he rushed him hoisting up the dark scythe. With equally surprising speed, Rah raised his own sword and blocked the gray angel's attack, creating a powerful gale the moment that both blades met. After a few moments of silence where the contestants tried to measure each other's strength, a cruel grin spread across the face of Pride as he began to attack his rival. His movements were so fast that his body split leaving a trail behind himself, which gradually forced Rah to retreat while the columns of the room flew past them. Suddenly, two powerful bolts of supernatural energy flew towards The Lord of Judas, who could see from the corner of his eye how Gluttony was gesturing arcane symbols with longing expressions. Making an incredible display of martial prowess, Rah disengaged Pride with a two handed thrust and prepared for both hits. Surprisingly, the power of the spell was less than what he had assumed, although the resulting explosion sent him flying towards one of the walls of the room after hitting his weapon. Without wasting a moment, he raised his head waiting for the next attack of Pride and Gluttony, but to his surprise neither of them launched themselves after him; they remained quietly in opposite corners of the great hall.

By the time he understood what was happening, it was already too late.

The wall behind him exploded as the burning metallic mass of Wrath broke through it. Just as he did before, Rah tried to distance himself from the impact of the beast, but this time he didn't have time and was attacked from the side. His body went through one wall after another, crushed by the demon that never stopped laughing. Even for somebody of Rah's fortitude, the punishment was more than he could bear. His ribs cracked and blood began to drip from the corner of his mouth. Seeing his prey severely damaged, Wrath stopped cold and used his momentum to throw him back towards the great hall, where Gluttony caught him in mid-flight. Those strong arms held him fast as if he were merely a toy. The pressure was so intense that, had it not been for his armor and the energy instilled in him, he would have been snapped in two like a twig. Slowly, Gluttony began to pull him towards his enormous open maw, and even The Lord of Judas felt a chill when looking into the endless void in there.

"You look... so... tas... tasty..." The obese demon stuttered with some anxiety.

As if those words had broken him from a trance, Rah gathered his remaining energy and raised the blade that he still had in his hands slicing the arms off his captor. The moment his feet hit the ground, he spun around making an enormous arc with his sword and striking the monster with all the power that he could muster. The impact would have cleaved a mountain in half. Gluttony's head rolled cleanly across the ground, but Rah had faced too many higher entities to think that this would be enough to kill a creature whose power was equal to that of a fallen god. Without giving him time to recover, he looked for the spiritual core in the greasy body that stood before him and pierced it with his hand. The sensation was repulsive, even through the heavy metal gloves, but he continued pushing until he felt the creature's essence between his fingers. Realizing the danger he was in, Gluttony became truly frightened and tried to escape to another plane, but before he could The Lord of Judas squashed his soul, completely destroying the demon lord. Very slowly, turning back to the remaining princes, Rah removed his bloody hand and raised it high.

"One," he said with his usual flat tone.

"I WILL DEVOUR YOUR SOUL FOR THAT!" The heart wrenching voice of the flaming beast resonated as it ran back towards the great hall. "YOU WILL SCREAM!"

With unusual composure, Rah faced Wrath holding his Lawgiver with both hands. His whole body tightened while accumulating his Ki, letting it flow outward. For a moment, the energy emanating from him was so intense that powerful bluish lightning began to surge and crackle through the air around him. The demon

carefully observed him, bewildered by such power in a mortal being, but this confusion only intensified the burning rage boiling inside of him. Without pause, it pounced a third time waiting to see which way the little human would dodge, prepared to change his trajectory on the fly and dismember him.

But this time Rah had no intention of distancing himself. His feet were deeply nailed to the ground producing cracks below them, and met the beast mid- flight with his sword. He put all his skill into that attack; power and soul.

It was enough.

The blade cleanly cleaved the body and essence of the Demonic Prince. The remains of Wrath fell heavily to both sides of Rah and shattered like broken glass. This time he didn't bother finding his spiritual core; there was nothing left.

"Two," he declared.

But the fight was far from over. Rah knew that Pride was by far the most dangerous of the three, and he was very concerned that he did not openly participate in the fight. The possibility that he had fled hadn't even crossed his mind; it would be foolish to think that of an entity that embodied men's pride. But no matter how hard he looked for him, he found no sign of his presence. Suddenly, Rah felt a queasy sensation, something that impelled him to look upwards when it was already too late. Pride was suspended above the vault of the great hall, with his blood-covered wings splayed open and his arms stretched over a sphere of crackling energy. His two companions had given him more than enough time to prepare the final spell and, with it, the absolute destruction of Rah.

"Go to heaven or hell. Whatever most pleases you."

The arcane spell was completely unleashed in center of the room and the entire fortress began to shake. Any other place without the incredible technomagical protections of Judas would have been completely destroyed for dozens of miles around, but even so, many rooms of the fortress were eventually blow up. The floor caved in; rubble and debris peppered the ground floors. Pride looked down amused while he waited for the smoke to dissipate. And then, for the first time in his almost eternal existence, the demon felt something similar to surprise. Maybe even fear.

Among the cloud of ash a figure stood quietly, shaking off the dust and blood that almost completely covered him.

"Impossible! You cannot still be standing... nothing could still be standing!"

Mastering the strange emotions that overcame him, the Demonic Prince raised his scythe and without losing a moment launched headfirst towards his opponent. Rah was still wobbly, but hoisted his sword up and silently countered the savage blows one after another.

"Fall! Fall! Fall!" The demon shouted time and time again, moving back and forth at the speed of thought splitting existence with his dark scythe.

Actually, Pride was much faster and stronger than Rah. Not because he had more skill or experience, but because it simply had always been so. When he wanted to attack somebody he didn't waste time looking for openings in his rival's defense or was bother studying his style; he only thought about killing him and his scythe was already splitting him in two. Pride, who had even crushed the souls of gods, knew that breaking his adversary was just a matter of time. After all, to the Demonic Prince, Rah was nothing more than a man.

That would be his doom.

At the moment in which Pride dealt what should have been the killing blow, The Lord of Judas caught the scythe between his fingers and, with a simple thrust, returned the attack. The Demonic Prince wanted to block the sword, but somehow the blade managed to sneak past his guard clipping one of his arms. As if part of the same movement, Rah began dealing countless blows throughout his entire body alternating from one side to another with Pride watching helplessly. More than just attacking, the coordination and passion of his blows gave the strange impression that he was doing some kind of dance. Finally, he drew a circle in the air with his arms and placed the palm of his hand on the demon's chest.

For one eternal second in time, both contenders looked into each other's eyes.

"Three."

Then, without Rah's hand moving an inch, Pride's body was launched through the entire room crashing through one column after another until finally imbedded on the opposite wall. Then The Lord of Judas' sword flew through the air, pinning Pride even closer to the wall.

But to the demon's surprise, he still lived. Rah had deliberately avoided hitting his spiritual core and the creature, not yet realizing why, became aware of it.

Slowly, with remarkable calm, Rah began crossing the room while his impotent adversary writhed on the wall trying to get free. When they were face to face, in a final flourish of who he was, he arrogantly raised his head with the bearing of a sovereign, waiting for what should have been the fatal blow. Rah simply pulled his sword out of the wall, letting his impaled body fall to the ground. The Lord of Judas, covered completely in blood, watched the arrogant creature crawl to his feet with chilling serenity. He turned his back to the demon and walked towards the stairs but, upon reaching the threshold, he stopped for a moment without turning around.

"Run demon. Run as far as you can and tell this to your masters: 'Today a new age begins.'"

Those words were not laden with irony or anger. Neither joy nor pain.

They were simply the truth.



Chapter 4
Religions and Beliefs

Why do we believe? Because we need to.
It is natural for man, as necessary as breathing.
If not, everything we are and everything we do would be our responsibility.
And that... is too cruel.

Donoban

Religion is one of the most important elements in Gaïa's lifestyle. The vast majority of people profess some kind of faith or belief associated with higher powers beyond the control of mere mortals. It is an inherently social phenomenon, rooted in the customs of each society. To deny its role in history is impossible; over the centuries, nothing has caused more disputes and wars than religion.

The existence of gods is a debatable issue. They rarely give any sign of their presence in the world, and the few miracles of their clerics and priests can be explained by the use of various supernatural abilities. However, throughout the ages there has been plenty of evidence that natural entities that far exceed mortal beings have interfered or acted directly in the world.

What is listed below is not a reference of deities, but of religions and creeds that are professed in Gaïa today. Nobody can say for sure if such gods are real entities or just a product of the faith of their followers.



Illustrated by Sergio Melero

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

For seven centuries, the Christian faith has been most important pillar of the religious world. It takes its name and is based on the Messiah Abel, the Son of God who came to the world in an age of terror and darkness to save men from themselves and show them the way. Abel led humanity, teaching the word of God, whom everyone had forgotten long ago. Taking his precepts as divine law, a series of traditions and rites formed around his figure that constitutes the Christian faith today as a whole.

It is a strongly monotheistic religion, based on the concept that there is only one God, who watches over humanity and tries to guide us down the correct path. His premises are love, justice, and the protection of man, ensuring that even those who have nothing can find a place in heaven.

Throughout history, Christianity has absorbed traditions and principles of other religions, unifying them under a single Church. Many lesser gods have been converted into God's angels, like the heroes of other cultures were often sanctified as ardent devotees. With such a wide diversity of sources and over fifty million devotees throughout Gaïa, there are a variety of beliefs and religious principles that differ considerably from one place to another. Even so, they all stand on three basic foundations that form the backbone of The Church:

One God

There is only one God, a supreme being, almighty and eternal who exists simultaneously as three different facets; The Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All three are a unit, but at the same time, different entities. He is the creator of the universe and of man, who was made in his own image and likeness.

Faith and Salvation

The sacrifice and salvation of The Messiah are a reflection of the love that God professes for humanity, to whom he has granted the greatest of gifts: free will. Man must love one another and find salvation and a place in heaven with his actions and faith. Mercy, kindness and forgiveness are the ways they should follow.

The Chosen Ones

God's chosen is man, and his duty is to fight against those who threaten Him or his faith. He must fight against injustice and, if necessary, even purge himself of it.

The Christian religion is rich in symbolism, since each branch or aspect has a different distinguishing emblem. However, its universal symbol is undoubtedly the cross; a representation of the sacrifice that Christ made for man, guiding us towards salvation. Another essential element is the Bible, the sacred book written by some of the Apostles, which narrate the events of The Messiah and stories told by him.

The Christian Church

The Church of Abel or The Christian Church has been the only official religious organization in the entire Empire over the last seven centuries, so people refer to it simply as The Church. Its goal is to promote faith in the Messiah, as well as make sure that His word reaches all corners of the world. While this is its main function, it also addresses many other important tasks related to charity and benevolence. Usually, The Church is the one in charge of creating hospitals and orphanages, assisting the poor and needy.

The Messiah founded the Church, but it wasn't until the birth of The Sacred Holy Empire that it would gain true strength and relevance in Gaïa. Since then, its power and influences have grown to become not only the most important religious organization, but also one of the most important forces in the world. It has a great presence in most nations, and can even destabilize the power of any country. Its economy is mainly based on the tithes of devotees from all corners of Gaïa, although it also has valuable properties and businesses, which provide it with enormous economic power.

Religious Titles

The Church has a complex power structure developed over its seven centuries of absolute dominance. The most common titles within its midst are:

Sacred Summum Pontifex: This is the title received by the head of The Church globally, which always equates to The Sacred Holy Emperor. Until just over thirty years ago it has always been associated with the Giovanni family, but now lies with the young Elisabetta Barbados. A large sector of The Church still not yet recognized her as such.

The Supreme Archbishop: The Supreme Archbishop is the delegate of the Emperor in church affairs and, in practice, the true lord of The Church. His word has the same weight as that of The Sacred Summum Pontifex himself in spiritual matters, considered the maximum interpreter of the word of God. His appointment was sponsored by The Council of Cardinals and ratified by The Emperor. At present, the title of Supreme Archbishop falls on a man named Magnus, but Elisabetta has not officially confirmed his appointment.

The 13th Cardinal: Also called The Cardinal in the Shadows, his power is equal to the other twelve, except for the fact that he controls The Inquisition and resolves internal conflicts within The Church itself. His identity usually remains anonymous to ensure his proper performance.

The 12 Cardinals: The Cardinals are the most important bishops, on whom falls the task of controlling the territories that once belonged to The Eleven Holy Kingdoms and The New Continent. They report only to The Supreme Archbishop and meet to form The Council of Cardinals. Their number is limited to twelve, representing the Apostles of Christ.

The Bishops: The church leaders of the principalities. There is one for each nation of Gaïa though and, since the dissolution of The Empire, their number has been reduced to twenty-three. Women cannot accede to this title.

The Inquisitors: A body of special Church agents ordered to hunt down and destroy demons and witches. The Inquisitors only report to The 13th Cardinal, but they are below Bishops in the power structure of The Church. Unlike other priests, they are not bound by vows of chastity, but are forbidden from starting families. Some of them hold the titles of High Inquisitors because of their great abilities, and have dominance over the others.

Prelates: Episcopal delegates whose role is to ensure that the nobility doesn't act against the interests of The Church. They only exist in some countries.

Deacons: They are in charge of the various dioceses in the principalities. Their numbers usually fluctuate between ten and thirty depending on the size and importance of each nation. Nuns can accede to the title of deacon, adopting the title of Sacred Mother.

Priests: Those responsible for holding mass and directly overseeing the faith in each community. Each has a church under his care (although larger churches can have up to two or three simultaneously). Gaïa has around ten thousand priests ordained by The Church. Women cannot accede to this title.

Friars / Nuns: These are the consecrated members of The Church that have not received the sacrament of holding masses. They are in charge of taking care of monasteries and other important tasks. There are around fifteen thousand friars and nuns in Gaïa.

Seminarians: Aspiring monks or priests, seminarians are students who have not yet completed their vows, but are now part of Church structure.

The Twelve Apostles

The Twelve Apostles of Christ were his closest disciples, who continued with his dream and united the world under the word of God after the death of The Messiah. Traditionally, it is believed that The Twelve, as they are also known, were some of the most powerful individuals of their age, and all of them had abilities far beyond human comprehension. Many historians seriously contrast this fact with some of the first doctrines of Christ, but The Church has always justified this by saying that they had divine gifts granted to them by The Messiah. Each one rules a sign of The Zodiac.

Pietro Giovanni **The Crown of the Church**

The most important of The Twelve has always been Pietro Giovanni, one of the first followers of Christ. Pietro was only a captain of a small regiment that ran into The Messiah when he was just a child. Captivated by his words, Pietro decided to follow him as his guardian, and he left everything he had behind for that child's dream. Along with Abel, Pietro grew as a person and many claim that part of The Messiah was imbued in him and his descendants.

He is known for being the Apostle closest to Abel and became the unofficial leader of the group after his death. He conquered the largest Holy Kingdom and died at the age of 157.

Traditionally, Pietro is known as The Crown and is the patron of The Church. His Zodiac sign is Aries.

Felix Of Magda **The Smile of God**

Felix was an important aristocrat who used his entire fortune to help the needy. His passion for others was so great that he eventually lost everything he had except his joy. Thus, he traveled to and fro as a simple pauper, doing everything he could for others. One day Abel approached him and said with a pleasant smile: "I have been looking for you. I need you to help me". Touched, he followed him everywhere bringing hope to those who had none.

His Holy Kingdom would not be one of the most important but certainly was one of the most beloved monarchs of the people. When he died at 83 years old, he did as he always had lived, with a smile.

He is the patron saint of the paupers and the poor, although he also ascribes to any act of mercy and pity. His Zodiac sign is Sagittarius.

Nathaniel **The Illuminated**

It is commonly said that Nathaniel was one of the most powerful wizards known in ages past before finding Abel. Although initially staunchly opposed to the principles of The Messiah, after facing him opened his eyes and understood all the evil that he had caused so far. Repentant, he dropped down to one knee awaiting his proper punishment, but Christ, seeing how sorry he was, took him by the hand and absolved him of his sins. Nathaniel accompanied The Messiah from then on, becoming an Apostle.

Upon being named Holy King, Nathaniel showed great wisdom, making it clear that in exchange for leaving the wrong path, God had granted him great gifts with which to help his people. He outlived all the other Apostles, reaching 293 years old before being assassinated by Rah himself.

The broadest section of The Church claims that prior to his conversion, Nathaniel committed horrible acts motivated by the thirst for power that magic induces, while some others claim that he was always a pious man. These latter maintain that he continued using his extraordinary powers to support the cause of The Messiah even after his conversion.

He is also known as "The Sinner" and represents repentance and forgiveness. His Zodiac sign is Pisces.

Adrian Magdalus **The Monarch**

Adrian was an important king of his age; not only a tenacious follower of the doctrines of Abel, but he also left everything behind to personally accompany him. Illustrious and wise, Adrian soon became a shining figure who was always near his teacher and even dared to advise him.

When Abel passed away, he returned to his kingdom and continued the legacy that The Messiah had given him, in a fair and impartial manner for all.

He is the patron saint of monarchs and aristocrats. His Zodiac sign is Libra.

Saul **The Name Giver**

Saul is the last of The Twelve Apostles, but is better known for being the one who gave Abel the name of Christ and proclaimed him the Son of God. He was originally the high priest of Anzus, the great deity of False Idols, but became one of the closest followers of The Messiah after he killed Fenrisulf, The Bearer of Destruction. Saul had always been seen as an enigmatic figure among the Apostles, whose thoughts and motivations have been mired in the deepest mystery.

With the founding of The Holy Kingdoms, Saul became completely immersed in his responsibilities. He was a great king, loved by many of his people and despised by those who still kept the old faith. At the age of 82, realizing that he was approaching death, he climbed The Tip of the World all by himself, where he disappeared.

He is the patron saint of priests. His Zodiac sign is Aquarius.

Judiel Of Dafne **The Rose**

Judiel is the only woman among The Twelve, a figure certainly problematic for the clergy. Originally from Dafne, Judiel was a paladin from the Isle of the Roses that came to talk with The Messiah on a diplomatic mission. Stubborn and irritable, she spent days debating with Abel and it is said that she was the only person able to drive him mad. Finally, she decided to stay beside him and fight becoming another one of his Apostles. After the death of Christ, Judiel lost her cheerful spirit and returned to Dafne as its first Holy Queen. She died very early and with no descendants, so her younger sister succeeded her.

There is a myth that Judiel was secretly in love with The Messiah and that Abel reciprocated, but given both their situations, neither of them could confess their feelings to another. Naturally, The Church formally rejects this theory.

Judiel is the patron saint of women, and many feminist groups identify with her. Her Zodiac sign is Virgo.

Thanos Shetep **The Weapon of God**

Thanos is called "The Weapon of God" and is known as the most belligerent of all The Apostles. He was the only one of The Twelve who fought in personal combat against The Messiah. They say that Thanos was an unbeatable wandering mercenary who traveled from one place to another in pursuit of increasingly daunting adversaries. One day, he heard tales of Abel and tried to confront him. The Messiah accepted the challenge and defeated Thanos, who fascinated, gave him his weapon and swore that he would only use it in his favor from then on. After the death of Abel he devoted himself to finding Iscariot and was constantly absent from his Holy Kingdom. He disappeared during his seventh trip, and his fate is unknown even today. Some conjecture that, after finding Iscariot, both of them were mutually killed, whereas others (mainly the most radical sector of The Dominion) say followers of Jihamath assassinated him.

It is the patron saint of warriors and soldiers. His Zodiac sign is Leo.

Joachim Thurston **The Treasurer**

Similar to King Adrian, Joachim was an important aristocrat who followed Christ to become one of his closest followers. Possessing an enormous fortune thanks to his own talent, he was responsible for administering Church funds and to boost the economy of The Holy Kingdoms. He passed away at 64 in a terrible shipwreck.

He is patron saint of merchants, farmers and fishermen, although also, by extension, of all workers in general. His Zodiac sign is Capricorn.

Jared **The Executor of Solomon**

Jared began opposing Abel, but soon became a member of The Twelve. When the doctrines of The Messiah got to be too dangerous for some empires, Solomon sent him as assassin to kill Abel. Nevertheless, when Jared met Christ, he was incapable of harming him and laid down arms, later becoming one of his Apostles. He is remembered as one of the more strict and severe Holy Kings. He died in unknown circumstances when he was just 50 years old.

Jared has always been considered the darkest of all the Apostles. He is the patron saint of The Inquisition, and represents divine punishment. His Zodiac sign is Scorpio.

Joshua of Zed **The Prophet**

Joshua of Zed is one of the most revered Apostles. Joshua and his brother Julian were two slaves under the oppression of magocracy of Yehudah, whose parents were assassinated for opposing the organization of magicians. It's said that Joshua could see into the future and that he announced the arrival of The Messiah to everyone. He was terribly tortured for this and his cruel masters pulled out his eyes. Before his execution, Abel took the wizard's capital and released Joshua. Since then, the young man and his brother became Apostles and followed The Savior everywhere. Many monks regard Joshua as one of the leading advocates against the supernatural powers, by the darkness and corruption that he brings. Unfortunately, he was fragile and sickly, dying at the age of 26, just three after the death of Abel.

He is known as The Eyes God and is the patron saint of martyrs and artists. His Zodiac sign is Gemini.

Julian of Zed **Joshua's Brother**

Julian always has been one of the less relevant Apostles. He followed his brother when he joined Christ and only lived to spread the word of The Messiah and to protect Joshua from all evil. He was a military man, and many stories speak of his great prowess in combat fighting at the front of his armies. When The Holy Kingdoms rose, Julian did not wish to separate from his brother, but was forced into it by express desire of him, because he prophesied that they would never be together again. Once alone, he proved to be one of the most fair and capable monarchs of The Twelve. He died at the age of 72 of natural causes.

He is the patron saint of the steadfastness, loyalty and the fidelity. There are several orders of Holy Templars who take his name. His Zodiac sign is Taurus.

Iscariote Sith **The Traitor**

"The Evil Serpent" and "Renegade" are some of the names by which Iscariot is known, the Apostle who betrayed The Messiah and caused his death. They are many who even refuse to recognize him as one of The Twelve, saying that he does not deserve such treatment.

Iscariot's origins are a mystery that causes great speculation among The Church. Some historians claim that one of his ascendants had been seduced by one of the False Idols and that, consequently, demonic blood ran in his veins (or divine blood according to others). Tradition portrays him as a scholar who had mastered every field of knowledge, combat and witchcraft. In his ceaseless thirst for knowledge, he approached Abel to learn from him and thanks to his talent succeeded in becoming one of his Apostles. They say that, in his ambition to find the lost knowledge of Solomon, he betrayed The Messiah in exchange for thirty pieces of black metal that Emperor Andromalius hid years ago. Later, he used what he learned from them to open a portal to the beyond, where he hid.

The popular belief is that he died facing Thanos Shetep, but not before leaving his legacy in the hands of his son Amon, Rah's father.

Iscariot isn't a patron of anything, except for maybe treason and lies. His Zodiac sign is Cancer.

The Religious Branches

For three centuries there have been some discrepancies in the interpretation of the Christian doctrines, creating divisions within the faith. All of them are still part of The Church, which support various aspects of God's word. Besides the orthodox conception, which is practiced more by Christians, there are three major religious branches.

The Liberus (popularly known as liberals) think that while Christianity is the only true religion, The Church has no right to impose their beliefs on people, since it inhibits the free will that God gave us. Instead, everyone is free to profess whatever he or she prefers; it is the Church's job to make them see the correct path, not to impose it. Of course, those in favor of this are delighted with imperial edict on religious freedom, and support Elisabetta as an illuminated reformist.

Next is the faction called The Savior, which is based on the conception that the return of Christ is near and man must make great changes for his arrival. As long as there is even a single infidel or anybody that doesn't completely satisfy the word of The Lord, The Messiah will not return to us. Consistent with these requirements, it is the most radical branch of The Church, and the main driving force for going to war with separatist states like Kushistan.

Finally, there are The Animists, who believe that pure faith is the only path towards salvation. While a person has true faith, no matter what they do, provided it doesn't oppose the fundamental principles of God, their faith will lead them to salvation. It is a very common concept in The Coast of Commerce, where the bourgeois find it liberating.

The Separation

After the fall of the Empire, The Church is facing the greatest crisis of its history as its own ranks have been divided into two sectors. While both are still considered part of the same organization, it's undeniable that there is an obvious separation. As parts of The Church have not openly accepted the appointment of Elisabetta Barbados as the lady of the Empire, others do not think that The Council of Cardinals has sufficient power to choose a Supreme Archbishop by themselves. Thus, The Church has two headings at the present time: The Empress and those who favor her on one hand, and The Supreme Archbishop Magnus on the other.

Most of the priests simply avoid the subject, preferring to ignore it while waiting to see which sector finds a peaceful solution first. Unfortunately, there haven't been any favorable developments towards the unification so far, which is becoming increasingly troublesome.

Christian Ceremonies

The basis of Christian ceremonies is mass. All believers are required to attend the nearest church weekly or whenever possible, to hear the word of God and to atone for any sins that they may have committed. However, there are also many other traditions and festivities, which vary considerably from place to place. The most famous celebrations are The Night of Blessing, the days in which Abel appeared to the world for the first time, and Sanctus, which recalls how he died on the cross to save man.

The Church and the Supernatural

For the Christian religion, supernatural powers are the roots of evil, dark powers that the devil gives to man to pervert his heart and drag him to hell. According to The Church, it is a noticeably malevolent force that penetrates the soul and depraves it, turning mortals into demons. By definition, any individual with supernatural powers is a diabolic monstrosity that has fallen into temptation having lost his soul in exchange for power. The wizards and summoners are especially evil, since magic is an art that requires intensive study; it implies a stronger desire for power.

The origins of these powers come from demons that try to plunge man into darkness and seize his soul. Since God has granted us free will, is up to us whether we succumb to them or not. It was Lucifer who granted us the gift of witchcraft, first to Lilith, who would become his wife, and later to Eva. Hence the use of supernatural abilities is often called "The Original Sin".

The real deception of these forces is that a person does not necessarily want them to commit evil, but will inevitably end up doing it. No matter what objective he tries to achieve with this power, it will gradually corrupt his soul. Sooner or later he will use the supernatural to harm someone, subjugating those without such special gifts or unleashing destruction. Certainly, most scholars of the occult arts disagree on this, but history speaks against them. Without supernatural powers, an individual will not cause massive destruction, rob the souls of innocents or raise armies of undead to destroy the world. After so many bad experiences and frightening events, it's not surprising that common people agree with this fundamental principle of religion. Therefore, Christians fear and reject supernatural powers, so The Inquisition, a special branch of The Church imbued with similar abilities, is used to hunt these evil forces down, fighting fire with fire.

The only kind of supernatural power allowed by the church are the gifts that God, on very rare occasions, grants to man. They're called "miracles" and those who can perform them are the chosen ones of The Lord. Conceptually, the only difference between the powers of the devil and divine gifts is that, while with former will inevitably lead to complete darkness, the gifts granted by God allow followers to stay pure, without falling into corruption. Naturally, it is absolutely impossible to tell the difference beyond what the high priests or The Inquisition dictate. Therefore, whenever somebody comes along performing "miracles", The Church makes a careful and thorough investigation on The Chosen. There is the rare occasion where they are given official recognition, and must always initially be individual supervised by The Church. These people all have the title of "Saints", allowing them to use their special abilities. These divine gifts are the justification for powers that have The High Inquisitors and many of agents of The Empire possess.



Gabriel

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Satanism

For The Church, the principle of evil is a dark and malicious entity responding to many names. Satan, Lucifer, Beelzebub or simply The Devil are only some of the titles granted to The Prince of Lies. Lucifer is the enemy, The Lord of Hell who tries to be the Shadow of God. Originally the most beautiful angel in Creation, in his pride and arrogance he wished to surpass his Creator, being thrown from the heavens as punishment. Full of wrath, he proclaimed himself lord of shadow, gathering the angels who accompanied him in his rebellion and other evil spirits to his side. Since he cannot steal God's souls, he tries to use the free will that He granted mankind to cause its own fall. Therefore he tempts us, whispering sweet words into our ears and granting us dark powers with which to plunge us into the shadows.

Generally, all wizards, psychics and people gifted with supernatural abilities are automatically deemed Satanists or demons by The Church because their powers come from The Fallen Angel. However, the number of true devil worshippers is considerably low.

The Church has associated many pagan deities with The Devil, considering them as little more than aspects of Lucifer or his greater demons. Gaira, Zemial, Jedah, Fenrisulf or Skule are most common (though a radical sector of The Church insists on putting Jihamath on this list). Their worship, more than paganism, is always considered Satanic.

The Inquisition has permission to hunt devil worshippers and to punish them publicly, as they would with any wizard. Typically, this means burning them at the stake.

The False Idols

The Christian Church does not acknowledge any divinity other than God himself. However, this doesn't necessarily include all the other gods and beliefs as "The Demons" described in the previous section. Generally, the cults and religions in Gaïa are commonly referred to as False Idols; man's imaginary creations developed in times of ignorance and darkness. The Church forbids their worship, but contrary what happens with the "demonic" deities, the Inquisition has no power over its followers and can never punish them. Simply, it's a pagan act of faithless people that deserve little more than warnings and reprimands.

During the period of Christian expansionism, most of the religious customs of other faiths that did not conflict with the traditions of The Church were absorbed. Thus, many ancient gods and heroes were transformed into angels and saints.

LILLIUM

The Lillium religion is a set of myths and beliefs centered on nature, magic and the spiritual world. It originated in Alberia, although there are many versions and ramifications elsewhere in Gaïa, like Galgados, Kanon or even in the distant Pristina. It is difficult to pinpoint its exact origin, but it is likely that it was born from the relationship that the people of the Kingdom of Eternal Rains maintained with other ancient cultures and the spirits of the great forests.

Its practitioners have an animistic conception of nature and the world itself; gods and demons are everywhere, and places of great importance often have life. Accordingly, there are many sacred sites in their belief such as mountains, lakes or rivers. By their direct contact with the nature, trees have a fundamental importance. They are holy spirits, linked to the very life essence of the people. Thus, each tree has a different significance, embodying a fundamental principle in the Lillium's culture and religion.

While there are plenty of divine creatures, for the Lillium there is only one true God: The Mother. She is an absolute deity who represents life and nature, from whose womb all things are born. She requires no worship nor requests it, she lays no rules or demands tribute; she simply loves all her children, among whom man is without a doubt her favorite. Their believers pay honor to her, but always indirectly as not to offend her. There are some who believe that The Mother is Gaïa, convinced that is her true name.

The symbol of the Lillium is most often a large tree.

The Sacred Trees

The so-called Sacred Trees are the greater spirits of the Lillium stories. They are based on the idea that, although each tree has a unique soul, simultaneously is also a part of a larger whole, an almost divine presence composed of all the trees of a given species. There are hundreds of great spirits (in fact, as many as every kind of tree that exists), but eight of them hold greater importance and relate more directly to Alberia's culture.

The Oak: For many it is the sacred tree of greatest importance because it controls the dominion of war. The oak symbolizes power, strength, courage and sovereignty. Therefore, kings and the great generals claim it.

The Hazel: The tree of beauty and wisdom, because of its beautiful flowers and delicate fruit. It symbolizes intelligence, evolution and change.

The Holly: The Holly is extremely important to the Lillium because it represents the tree of heroes and legend.

The Apple Tree: The tree that separates the living and the dead, several regenerative and healing powers are attributed to it.

The Yew: The tree of death and funerals, it allows communication with the beyond. All pyres in which the dead are burned are always of yew wood.

The Birch: Traditionally, birch branches were used to frighten demons and for flogging offenders for lesser crimes. It's regarded as a tree with a benevolent primeval power, whose essence is noticeably feminine, so only women can have a birch as their sacred tree. Some circles of the occult establish a deep relationship between the birches and the incarnations of the Beryl Azrael.

The Willow: Considered the tree of witches and poets, its gifts vary noticeably depending on whether attributed to a man or woman. It is the tree of magic and creativity.

The White Hawthorn: The White Hawthorn is an evil tree, whose inside is as dark and poisonous as the souls of those whom it is associated with.

The Sidhe

The Sidhe is an ancient Lillium myth. These are supposedly the first settlers of Alberia, who reached an alliance with the ancient spirits of the forest. It is believed that from the moment a Sidhe is born, it is devoted to a specific tree, which springs from the ground at that precise moment to reflect its mortal soul. A special bond forms between them, connecting their essences forever. They grow and evolve together until the moment the Sidhe dies, where the tree rots and breaks.

The greatest heroes of the Lillium (and some of their worst enemies) have always been considered Sidhe, since they possessed superhuman powers conferred by the great spirits. Sometimes, when they achieve a certain historical importance, the powers of the great spirits claim their soul at the time of death, removing it from The Flow of Souls to transform them into a Lim Sidhe (who for the Lillium were a kind of demigod). Even today, some still pay them reverence, singing hymns or requesting their aid before an important battle.

The Priesthood and The Church

Lillium priests are seen as mediators between men and spirits, interpreters of the afterlife. Traditionally they hold the role of magicians and diviners, although they are currently no more than distributors of knowledge and religious custom. Their work resembles that of spiritual advisors, being revered as wise people. Most of them live in Alberia, although a few may be found in the deepest valleys of Galgados or in the forests of Pristina (though nobody can say how they got there).

Unlike other religions, Lillium priests do not hold mass before crowds; what's more, most of their practices can only be celebrated between priests. Outside intervention during the rites of the clergy is normally forbidden because it is considered dangerous by possibly altering the harmony of the spirits. The Lillium has no cult temples, preferring to perform their rites in the forests near springs or wells. The Forest of Glenda is the heart of its Church and the place where they meet annually to celebrate the changing of the seasons.

The priests do not have different ranks; once the apprentices achieve their teachers' levels, everyone is equal. The women can also be priestesses, having the same privileges as the men; in fact, since they are fertile and can give birth, their views are often the most valued. The spiritual leader of The Church is the Great Priest, a title that has a life term and is chosen by every priest in a great celebration called "The Arrival".



A Lim Sidhe is claimed by the great spirits

Lillium Rituals

Two elements are always present in The Lillium rituals: nature and music. The first is usually the purest way to approach the spirits, but the secrets of these rites only are reserved for the priests. The ceremonies based on nature usually include animal sacrifices or the preparation of complex potions that can briefly unite men with the awareness of the great spirits. Music, by contrast, is much more common in the religious celebrations of the people. For those who are not priests, the only way to commune with the spirits or the Lim Sidhe is by means of musical songs or instruments, which are equivalent to prayers. The songs are a staple of every celebration, and it is believed that those with the best voices have a special talent communicating with the great powers.

Life, Death and Reincarnation

Despite the apparent passivity of their beliefs, the Lillium see life and death as an endless cycle. For them, the struggle and the conquest are intrinsically tied to man's nature, being elements as important as protecting what each person holds dear. In consequence, their followers do not see conflict or war as something bad, as long as certain lines are not crossed. The same applies to nature; if necessary, a whole forest can be cut down to build houses, boats or anything. After all, this is the logical cycle of everything. By contrast, the Lillium is completely opposed to senseless destruction, unnecessary battles or the indiscriminate devastation of nature. These things upset the balance of the world and harm The Mother.

In a manner similar to Christian myth, the Lillium believe that the souls of the dead go to The Land of Mist, a continent beyond the ocean. There they wait many years until The Mother needs them in the world of man again where they reappear as children without any recollection of their previous lives. Only in death do people recover their lost memories.

The Lillium have no need for cemeteries since their burial practices usually consist of burning the bodies using great bonfires of yew wood, the tree of souls. Another possibility, reserved only for important people, is to construct a boat and float the body down to the ocean, hoping to arrive alone in The Land of Mist.

SHUKYOKAMI

Shukyokami is the term used to embrace the cult of the Kami, the deities on the island of Varja. According to its conception, the Kami are creatures on a higher level of existence, spiritual representations of the most important things in the world. Centuries ago, these entities were tightly bound to the people of Varja and thus formed the basis of its present culture. Although the Kami that initially arrived in the world were countless, after the first few chaotic years they dropped to just over a thousand.

It is impossible to systematize the entire Shukyokami religion because there are so many deity variations. If there were a common foundation, it would be the absolute veneration and respect of the Kami. But like men, the spirits are very different from one another. Some are benign, others violent, and still others are simply capricious.

Its practitioners do not usually consider Shukyokami a religion, but a set of practices or popular festivities. The people of the provinces usually only entrust their local gods, following the usual customs with which they've lived with their whole lives. Those who reside in large cities are less traditional, but do not forget to occasionally visit the temples to request that the benevolent spirits smile upon them, or to appease the wrath of those most vindictive.

Illustrated by Salvador Espin

The religion has a rich and varied symbolism, since practically every well-known Kami has its own unique sigil. The only things they have in common are the red doors, which are on all the temples representing the Shukyokami.

Cosmogony

The Creation is an issue not usually addressed by the Shukyokami religion. In fact, most of the priests say that the world as it is existed long ago before the arrival of The Kami, and that its relationship with the birth of Gaïa is scarce. The Kami themselves were not even very strict to sticking to a universal principle, but the widespread belief is that the cosmos was created by the four primary forces opposing each other: Light, Dark, Infinity and Void. Apparently, all were in perfect balance until the weight of infinity upset balance and swallowed up the other three. The result of such event made Gaïa the center of all things, and around it the sun and the moon were born, celestial bodies that represented the darkness and light of old. In contrast to this theory there are who speak of other fundamental powers, briefly referred to as Shizukana Sozosha (or silent creators), three or four high Kami (the doctrines do not agree with the number) that at the beginning of time began Creation with their strength of will.

The reason why the Kami only arrived later in Varja is very debated, but the generalized belief is that the great island was the origin of all the life on Gaïa and, consequently, everything else that exists there is no more than mere copies of what's there.

Kotoamatsukami

Although The Kami are usually represented as the spirits of the terrestrial elements of Varja, there are six of them whose powers embody greater concepts of Creation. These superior beings are known as Great Kami or Kotoamatsukami. Some conjecture that the insidious God Yagarema might be the seventh by its power, but many believers on the island refuse to recognize it as so.

Varja: The spirit of the large island and supreme lord of everything in it. Originally considered greatest of all The Kami, his power knows no equal. He was reincarnated in his own son and became mortal going by the name of Amaterasu Mikoto, becoming later the first Emperor of the ancient Kuon Teikoku. He is the guardian of the imperial dynasties of Lannet and Shivat.

Michinokami: Goddess of the roads, stones and good fortune, they say that Michinokami is the most beautiful of the gods and who now sits on highest throne of the Ten-Gati next to her husband, Yamato no Shura. She is the guardian of the Asakura family, and many of their leading ladies claim to be her descendants throughout history. Naturally, they are unable to prove it.

Karasu no Yoru: Karasu no Yoru is the lord of the moon and darkness, but is also called "The Wizard" for being the one who taught the secrets of the supernatural to mortals. He is most enigmatic of all the Kotoamatsukami, ordered to guard the souls of the dead, to which he watch through the eyes of ravens. Guardian of the Karasuma family, according to some stories was the creator of the Magatama of the wood.

Umetsuki: The lady of the ocean and the sea, Umetsuki is better known as the mother of Yagarema. She is very fickle (hence the expression "the fickle tides of Umetsuki") and has had numerous lovers throughout history, both mortal and divine. She is the guardian of the Takashi family. Although theoretically the Kami cannot die, her daughter Yukari supposedly destroyed her for seven centuries. Since the oceans still exist, it can be assumed that she either still lives or that her daughter absorbed her powers and sigil.

Yamato no Shura: Supreme God of war and storms, valued as one of the most skilled fighters of all the Kami after Amaterasu. He is represented by a demon mask and is the guardian of the Kurokami family. They say that he is the general of the Ten-Gati forces and is married to Michinokami. Yamato was the grandfather of the dark Shogun Hideyuki, who caused the destruction of Kuon Teikoku.

Taiyonohikari: The incarnation of sun and light, Taiyonohikari is an ambiguously gendered God, sometimes appearing as a sturdy man and sometimes as a beautiful woman. He is the older brother of Karasu no Yoru, and guardian of the Konoe family.

The Shrines

Each shrine is dedicated to a specific Kami, usually a local deity of a river, mountain, or nearby forest. Sometimes two or more temples are in the same area, but they're always devoted to different gods governing the same territory. The people of the communities usually bring them presents to please them or to appease their wrath, depending on the nature of the God. These deities are generally local in nature, using their power and influences only within the areas they cover. Theoretically, the power of the deities is exaggerated in each of their temples, and it increases with the number of gifts they receive. Only Kotoamatsukami shrines are slightly different, since the Great Kami are worshiped in all parts equally and, consequently, are enshrined in many temples throughout Varja.

All shrines have huge red doors called Tori, which draw a line between the real world and the one of the gods. When a person goes through them, they take an intermediate step towards the Ten-Gati, or the divine plane, allowing the deities to hear their pleas and grant them their gifts.



Tori

Eastern Religious Titles

Although it isn't formally structured as a single Church, the Shukyokami religion provides many clerical titles common in Lannet and Shivat.

Shinsou/Miko - Local Priests: The priests, or Shinsou, are the representatives of the Kami in the world, and each one typically depends on a specific deity. The priesthood is a profession like any other in Varja, although this entails high prestige if the work is done correctly. As representatives of the Kami, the priests live off the donations and gifts that visitors leave in the temples. There are sometimes whole families dedicated to the priesthood, and are the owners of the very temples they build. Women can also be priestesses and have their own role in the temple, receiving the generic title of Miko. This normally requires that they maintain their chastity, refusing relationships with any man.

Although uncommon, many priests and priestesses are not devoted to any temple in particular, and wander from place to place interpreting the word of unknown Kami or calming the wrath of divine messengers.

Shoten/Nai Shoten - Imperial Priests: Shoten is the term given to priests with official recognition from the governments of Lannet or Shivat to work in the service of imperial temples. Unlike the local Shinsou, they are a part of the administration, and the shrines where they exert their functions are unrelated to them. Typically, Shoten are chosen from the most prestigious priest, normally working in the large metropolises or temples of the Kotoamatsukami. A Miko that reaches this honor is denominated Nai Shoten.

Illustrated by Luis NCT

Tasogare no Shinsou - Priests of Twilight: These priests bear no relation to the Kami; but are responsible for dealing with everything related to the spirits of the dead. They're recognizable by their black clothing and symbols usually tattooed on their foreheads. The Tasogare no Shinsou generally direct burials and help the dying, but also have the power to delay death. People feel a certain respect towards them, halfway between admiration and fear, by the forces that they allegedly combat and control. The organization of the Priests of Twilight is completely separated from the local priests. They act of individually, without ever being interacting with their peers. They only meet at the capital when the Great Priest of Twilight dies and the Emperor must name his successor.

Bukkoshamori - Guardians of the Dead: The Guardians of the Dead are responsible for taking care of and preserving The Gates of Hell at each location until the celebration of the Festival of Ayakashi. Some are just dark and smelly gravediggers who live around the dead, whereas others are men who encounter the spirits daily and keep them at bay. They are subordinate to the Priests of Twilight, but in the smaller towns the Tasogare usually also enforces the role of the Guardian of the Dead. There is a rumor about guardians who travel from one place to another in search of wandering spirits to send back to the beyond.

Kagami no Miko - Priestesses of The Mirror: The Priestesses of the Mirror are consecrated from the moment they're born to preserve the spirit world and lay souls to rest in the afterlife. Nearly all of them are Saniwas, and their title is conferred by their ability to see the souls of the dead and communicate with them. There is typically only one in each Temple of Twilight, though in larger ones there could be two or three. Their position has no real power within the religious structure, but their opinions and comments have fundamental weight, since those women are seen as sacred beings. They live isolated from the world and cannot marry, not even by order of the Emperor. If one were to maintain intimate relations a man, both lovers would have to be executed. They only leave to conduct the Festival of Ayakashi or to handle problems related to The Gates of Hell regarding the temple they belong to.

Rituals and Festivals

If anything characterizes the worship of the Kami, it's the wide variety of rituals that its practitioners perform. Every year, people hold over 30 religious festivals, each one of which having different characteristics and oddities. A small number of celebrations are common throughout Varja (especially those related to the seasons or the Kotoamatsukami), but since each community worships its own local gods, all people and regions have their own festivals and religious traditions.

Each celebration has unique details, but most always involves large public meetings presided over by local priests. They can consist of anything from mere musical performance to ritual sacrifice. If a community lacks a priest, the people elect one of their members by popular vote, to which they call "Toya", who's responsible for all the pertinent celebrations and temple maintenance that year (where they exist, of course). Despite being unpaid, the appointment carries great prestige.

Less than 100 years ago, the Lannetense government tried to create certain common standards for all celebrations, but the initiative was not well-received among many towns and the local priests, tied to their usual habits, simply ignored them.

The Festival of Ayakashi and the Cemeteries

Undoubtedly, one of the customs most notably Varjan is the Festival of Ayakashi, also known as the Festival of the Dead. That day, in the first week of August, the Priests of Twilight burn the bodies of those who have died throughout the year. After mixing the ashes with rice and some milk, their relatives roll it into a small ball and drop it in the nearest river to be dragged away by the current. This symbolizes the soul's rest and its calm transition to the beyond. In some places, especially in cities closest the coast, the custom is to use small hemp boats with a lit candle to help illuminate the way.

Due to this tradition, the cemeteries in Varja do not actually contain burial remains, but only consist of small headstones in memory of the deceased. Throughout the year and up to the time of the Festival, the bodies accumulate in local temples on the outskirts, in a huge pit or underground well called "The Gate to Hell." The larger cities, where the body count is very high, often have many of them. If the family is important and can afford it, the bodies are placed in The Room of the Dead of their particular church or temple.

It's assumed that The Gates are dark places where souls reside awaiting eternal rest, so only The Guardians of the Dead or The Priestesses of The Mirror visit them outside of festival days. Normal people respect and fear them, believing that they are true gateways to the beyond. This superstition actually holds a large element of truth, because in the fragile membrane separating the real world from The Wake hundreds of Wake Specters gather, sometimes dragging the living into their dark kingdom. They are not real spirits, but echoes of the dead that feel that, not having been properly sent to beyond, they still cannot rest. For this reason, the specters usually obey the desires of The Priestesses of the Mirror, because they hope that they can lead them to their desired rest on the next night of Ayakashi.

Yagarema and Tsukiyomi

While almost all religious practices involving the Kami are allowed, two religions are considered dark and blasphemous by Lannet and Shivat; those related to Yagarema and Tsukiyomi.

Yagarema: The Kami named Yagarema is the insidious God, the brother to Amaterasu no Mikoto that tried to convert Varja into his personal domain long ago. His worship is severely prohibited and punishable by death, so his followers, called Yogoreta generally have to meet secretly as a minority religion. The leaders of the sects are shinsou Yogoreta, priests dedicated to spreading the power and influence of their lord.

Tsukiyomi: Although exceptionally rare (much more than Yagarema), there are some followers of Tsukiyomi, the Goddess of the Black Moon that rules the Naraku. Their worldly representatives are frequently women, who are called Kuroku Miko or black priestesses. They are usually devoted to seducing pure souls for their lady, or trying to open rifts to Hell to expand the power and influence of their mistress. It's said that they always have a multitude of demons in their service, and often have powers equal to The Priestesses of The Mirror.

As in the case of Yagarema, the Tsukiyomi religion is banned throughout all Varja, so their followers are hunted relentlessly and executed immediately.

Regarding Other Religions

Rather than display an attitude of intolerance, the followers of the Kami simply ignore other religions. Given their particular way of understanding religion, more like habit than true belief, they find ecclesiastical structures of other lands strange and the existence of a single God ridiculous. Therefore, they respect all outside beliefs, considering them other people's traditions. The only religion with which they are openly estranged is Christianity, but only from their pride, seeing it as a humiliating imposition. Consequently, they detest the Varjans who have reformed to the Church of the West, because they feel that they are traitors to their traditions and people.



Illustrated by Wen Yu Li



Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Sho Ravengale
chosen of Yagarema

THE AITYR

The Aityr creed includes religious and spiritual beliefs of the Barren Icy Lands and the descendants of Holst. It was the official religion of the ancient kingdom of Haufmarsormen and even after the advent of Christianity, remained the most widespread faith in the northern nations. It's generally a belief spread by oral tradition, bringing many stories, tales and legends together, which each clan narrates to its descendants.

Being a polytheistic religion, people are not usually dedicated to a single God, but a group of deities they call the Aityr. They sometimes devote special attention to a specific deity (especially the patron of their clan), but this doesn't prevent them from simultaneously following the traditions and beliefs of the others. A priest can request the blessing of Tiwaz in a battle one day, and carry out a ritual devoted to Isa requesting winter's end days later.

It's said that the Aityr once walked alongside man, giving birth to the 27 tribes that would eventually form the caste of Holst. However, their followers firmly think that they don't interact with the world and its events. They believe that the gods do not like people spending their days asking for things or worshiping them, and prefer to leave man's affairs to his own fate. Even so, they were often branded as too capricious, and therefore intervene at any time they deem appropriate, either to help or condemn us.

The Aityr religion is closely linked to the heroes. For those who profess this faith, the vast majority of the great protagonists of history that have carried out legendary feats in the past are descendants of the gods or from exceptional people like Holst. Therefore, those who perform great works in life are transported to heaven when they die, to fight alongside the Aityr or to serve them. Conversely, those who do not do important things will die in the world of Helion, where they will sleep forever and fade into obscurity. There is no equivalent to hell in the belief of The Aityr; since for wasteland culture, it's much worse to be forgotten.

The immortal Aityr all use different symbols, because a specific rune represents each one of the gods, considered their true name.

Cosmogony

The Aityr creation myth is one of longest and most detailed of all human religions. It began on an icy abyss where no grass grew or sea existed. In this infinite void called Ginnungagap there was no light or darkness, only eternal emptiness. Then four beings appeared from nothing, taking the appearance of huge nameless giants. Two took the form of woman and the other two of man. The giants remained alone in that timeless vacuum until happened what is known as The Day of Principle.

In some versions it is said that there was a great discussion between them, triggering a conflict that ended with the death of one of the giants who had taken female form. Others claim that the giant had a vision and sacrificed herself to begin existence. For one reason or another, the moment she shed her tears the oceans were created. From her flesh came the world, on which everything rests. Her wild

hair formed strong winds, and where her blood spilled, ferocious fire. In response to the desire of their partner, each one of the giants took a part of the essence that she had released with her death and formed the first three Aityr: Dagaz; The Infinite Space, Jera; The Lady of Time, and Ogthala; The Mother Earth. Exhausted after their work, the giants went to sleep in the depths of Ginnungagap and left the fate of Creation to their newborn children.

The three primal gods began to have children among them, giving birth to many deities. One of them, Mannaz, daughter of Dagaz and Ogthala, became The Lady of Creation when her blood mixed with two trees, giving birth to the first mortal man and mortal woman. However, Jera was jealous of the love that Dagaz professed to Ogthala, and she convinced her children to vilify her sister. This was the first separation of the gods, forming the pantheons of Njordt and Valhein. Full of anger for her failure, Jera went to the depths of Ginnungagap where she stole a drop of blood from a sleepy giant and used it to impregnate herself with its essence. Three great beasts would be born of that union: Fenrisulf, Skule and Helion. Seeing the creatures that she had given birth to, Jera realized her terrible mistake and returned to warn the gods of the danger that approached.

Not knowing what to do, the other Aityr blamed each other for what happened, while the three beasts procreated using man and the animals in the world to create their own lineage. In the midst of growing chaos, a young God called Anzus approached the depths of Ginnungagap and woke one of the giants up. In exchange for his promise that he would never return and bother them again, the giant gave Anzus the power of wisdom, with which he threw the great beasts into the depths of the world and proclaimed himself Lord of the Gods. Only Helion, who did not share the same anger of her brothers, avoided the fury of Anzus and became The Lady of The Underworld, a position no other God wanted. Thus, the king of the gods created the Valdyr, a third major divine pantheon responsible for ruling the skies.

Once at peace, the Aityr focused on Mannaz's creations, because man had become a creature who surprised even the gods. It was then they would frequently intervene in history, either for good or ill of mankind.

The Divine Wars and The Chosen Ones

After defeating the beasts, the Aityr would fight two more great wars. The first was against the ice giants that lived on the islands of the Barren Icy Lands in the north, as they tried to steal their place in heaven. Despite the enormous power of the Aityr, their adversaries soon outnumbered them, so the gods demanded man's help. To do this, Anzus ordered Verdal, one of the three Fates, to gather the souls of all the humans who were worthy of fighting beside the gods. This is why it is believed that the great heroes are taken to heaven, where they prepare to accompany the gods on future battles. Thus, with the help of their new warriors, the Aityr were able to crush their enemies and imprison them in giant crystals until the end of time.

The second conflict was against Hringham, the No Life King, and his undead army, which tried to reach heaven and plunge the world into eternal ice. After a harrowing battle, the Aityr emerged victorious because Thuriz and his wife Kenaz defeated Hringham, throwing him into the depths of the world.

The Structure of the Church

The Aityr religion does not display any hierarchical structure. Each town or city usually has a certain number of priests performing the role of conduits of wisdom, traditions inherited from the gods. For those who run the priesthood, there are only two ranks: the one of apprentice, during which they follow the lessons of a mentor, and once approved, the one of wise person. Normally, choosing priests is due to birthmarks or by date of birth, almost always being men except in very exceptional cases. However, the work of a cleric has no true recognition, and even those who hold the title of wise person are still required to perform other tasks like any one else, be he warrior or mere peasant.

The Pantheons of the Aityr

The Aityr are divided into three major houses or pantheons. The Valdyr are the eight main deities who reside in heaven, each of who has their own place in the sky. They are led by Anzus, Lord of the Gods, who imposes peace among all the others. He is considered the greatest God, not as much due to power as his importance in the order of the world. The second is the house of Njordt, who dwell in the eternal ice, near the border of Ginnungagap and the Kingdom of the Dead. Hagalaz, The Lady of the Dark, leads them although she always listens to the advice of her mother, Jera. The Njordt openly oppose the Valhein, but remain peaceful by the promise that they made to Anzus ages ago. The third house is Valhein, the closest to man, home of the gods who reside in the heart of dreams, who often descend to the world and walk alongside us. Their lords are Ogthala and Dagaz, two of the first-born gods and parents to Anzus, but the most revered of them is Mannaz; The Creator of Man.

Aityr Valdyr, The House of Heaven

The eight gods within the Valdyr House, known as The Kings of Heaven, are:

Anzus (Wisdom): Anzus is the lord of the gods, symbolizing wisdom and dominance over others. He is the supreme ruler of the Aityr to whom all the gods follow and respect. He is depicted as an old man without eyes, with a dove and a raven perched on each of his shoulders.

Thuriz (War): For the people who live in The Barren Icy Lands, Thuriz is understandably one of their most important deities. Thuriz is the first-born son of Anzus, and the strongest of all the gods. He symbolizes war and battle, and is the lord of warriors and heroes. He is depicted as a huge man, adorned with scaled armor and always equipped with an axe and shield.

Fehu (Prosperity and Fortune): The wife of Anzus is a goddess who appears in very few stories. She represents prosperity and fortune, so people use her name when they desire a good harvest or a favorable business outcome. She appears as a woman adorned with ostentatious clothes and hair like gilded gold.

Uruz (Nature and the Wild Beasts): Son of Jera and Dagaz, Uruz represents nature in its wilder state. He is the perfect hunter, lord of the beasts of Gaïa. Many consider him the companion of Thuriz and they say the pair usually go hunting or fighting together. He appears as a young man with long hair and a beard, dressed in animal skins and armed with a bow. He is one of the most important deities of the Aityr, and his name is often used when hunting game or when crossing a forest.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Kenaz (Light): The twin sister of Hagalaz is a smiling goddess who embodies pure light. She is enemy of dark spirits, and often fights alongside her husband Thuriz, wearing brilliant armor made of the sun's rays. Her hair and skin are as white as snow, and they say that she can blind any mortal who looks at her without his helmet. From her affinity to the light, there are many occultists who consider her an avatar of C´iel or the Beryl Mikael.

Raido (Adventures and Journeys): Raido is youngest of the gods, and favored son of Anzus and Fehu. He's considered a lively God and full of joy, who loves traveling and adventures. Some occultists associate him with Uriel, being a fellow traveler like him or even absorbed as a single entity. He most commonly appears as a smiling young boy, adorned with colorful clothes.

Gebo (Balance): Known as the God of Balance, Gebo is the force that stabilizes all aspects of the world. He is the older brother of Anzus, who followed him in his fight against the three great beasts. He commonly takes the form of an old monk, whose beard is so long that it practically drags on the ground.

Wunjo (Happiness): Wunjo is a beautiful goddess with a radiant smile, who represents happiness. She appears as a young girl with red hair and eyes, being valued as the most beautiful of all The Aityr. The legends say that her radiant beauty is capable of stealing the heart and soul of anyone looking at her. Many gods have courted her requesting her hand in marriage, but she had many lovers and hasn't been able to decide on any of them.

Aityr Njordt, The House of Eternal Ice

The eight gods within the Valdyr House, known as The Lords of The Gates of the Abyss, are:

Hagalaz (Darkness and Night): The sister of Kenaz is the lady of darkness and night. She is a powerful and melancholic deity that rules the Njordt house with absolute authority, without listening to anyone but her mother Jera. Her appearance is identical to her sister, although her hair is black and she always dresses in a mantle of eternal night. Some occultists think that she is an incarnation of Shajad Meseguis, whereas others compare her to the Arcana of the inverted Star.

Nauthiz (Necessity and Hardship): Also called The Punishment, Nauthiz is the God who steals man's belongings. He acts droved by jealousy and an unparalleled yearning to have everything. The tribes pay tribute to him very regularly; offerings to satiate his greed and to keep him from snatch their harvests.

Isa (The Eternal Ice): The quiet Isa is the younger sister of Sowilo and the youngest God of the Njordt pantheon. She lives at the entrance of Ginnungagap and has the job of keeping everyone from entering the pit and disturbing the frost giants. She's usually depicted as a young naked girl with white hair and skin.

Jera (Time): Jera, The Lady of Time and mother of the beasts, she is one of the goddesses created by the primeval giants of Ginnungagap. Her power is immeasurable, since she controls the flow of the time and all living beings, though Anzus sealed a great portion of her strength as punishment for her actions.

Eihwaz (Nature): Eihwaz is the lady of all natural things, as well as the peaceful animals that populate the world. She followed Mannaz's example and, after The Creator formed mankind, Eihwaz gave birth to the flowers and the herbivores. According to some myths, she could only do so with the help of her friend and sister Berkana.

Pertho (Magic and The Occult): Pertho is the enigmatic God of magic and the occult, who gave man the gift of witchcraft long ago. He is generally quiet and pensive; they say that he stays out of disputes between his brothers and sisters. From his nature, some people compare him to the Shajad Erebus.

Algiz (Protection): The younger daughter of Jera followed her mother to the abyss to look after her and make sure she did not repeat her mistakes. She is the one responsible for protecting man from the beasts and the dangers of the land (but not from the actions of other men). Almost all the tribes pay tribute to him in serious hardship.

Sowilo (Fire): Older sister of Isa, Sowilo is The Lady of Fire, who keeps the ice of Ginnungagap at bay. She appears as a woman with fiery hair and bright eyes burning like embers.

Aityr Valhein, The House of Dreams

Valhein, the first and oldest House of The Aityr, is composed of:

Tiwaz (Justice and Victory): After Thuriz, Tiwaz is the deity most worshiped by the descendants of Holst. He is the one who brings victory to the righteous, and also who created the law of man. He is also occasionally revered as the God of War, since they say that he only grants his blessing to those who struggle to become worthy. The ritual of the Ten Swords was originated with him. Although the Valhein house includes Ogthala and Dagaz, it generally believed that Tiwaz is the patriarch of the group.

Berkana (Birth and Fertility): Mannaz's sister was the one in charge of guarding The Creator's work during the first days of the mankind. She is the wife of Tiwaz, and carries the title of the Lady of Valhein. Her name is mentioned whenever a harvest is planted, and whenever a woman is about to give birth.

Ehwaz (Horses): The horse is a creature of very special significance for the people of Holst, as it has its own creator according to the Aityr legend. Ehwaz is the God of horses, as well as riders, and he sometimes appears as a hunter like Uruz.

Mannaz (The Creator): According to myths of the people of Holst, Mannaz is the most important of all the gods, since she created the mankind. She did this by mixing her blood with two trees, and then shaped them into the image and likeliness of the gods. She is seen as a merciful and kind entity that cares for her children and is constantly trying to help.

Laguz (Love and Lakes): This goddess is usually only revered by poets and lovers. The people of Holst claim that she watches couples strolling near the water. That is why it's customary for the clans to declare wedding vows at the edges of lakes in the icy wastelands.

Inguz (Seasons): A lesser goddess of little importance, she is usually only mentioned at the beginning of the seasons, to bring good luck in the days ahead. Small portions of the people of the icy lands think that she is a man.

Ogthala (The Spirit of the World): Ogthala is the first mother, one of the three primeval gods created by the giants. She embodies the world, and some think she is a representation of it. Most of the gods are the offspring of her and her husband Dagaz.

Dagaz (Infinity): Generally Dagaz, one of the primeval gods, is considered the greatest and most powerful of all the Aityr. His power stretches over all Creation, since he embodies infinity itself. He appears as a long-bearded old man, whose body is composed of a dense dark cloud. His name is rarely mentioned, more out of fear than lack of respect.

The Three Goddesses of Fate

The birth or arrival of The Three Fates, as Verdal, Aishia and Cloht are usually called, has no clear explanation or is bound to a single religion. Their appearance is unrelated to the other gods, although they're usually given a place alongside them in heaven. They are called "the three goddesses that rule the destiny", but more commonly the occultists think that they only have the power to decide how long each creature in Creation has to live.

The clearest and figurative representation of the Fates appears in Aityr mythology, where they are responsible for gathering powerful souls to become warriors of heaven and fight alongside the gods. They are servants of the divine powers, but at the same time they have the ability to kill them when their moment arrives. Many figures similar to The Three Fates appear in other religions, where they play darker roles, like angels of death or divine executioners. In most cases, it appears that they are no more than versions or adaptations of original Aityr mythology.

Verdal: Verdal (or Verdanni) is the most well known Fate because, according to Aityr beliefs, is the one that commonly descends to collect the souls of heroes. She rules the present and is the one responsible for deciding when every living creature dies. She appears as a beautiful young girl with white hair and an adorned armor. Her weapon is a great scythe, with which can destroy any form in existence. The Church calls her Ashriel, describing her as an angel of death with raven's wings.

Aishia: The oldest of the three sisters, Aishia (also called Ull), controls the past and judges the destiny of man. She appears as a woman with black hair and gray armor carrying sword in her right hand and a scale in her left. The Church calls her Death incarnate, giving her the name of Sheol, of the Bone Wings.

Cloht: Cloht represents the future and influences the fate of that which has not yet passed. She is a girl with golden eyes, carrying a pair of scissors with which to cut the threads of life. The Church calls her Apollion, the executioner of heaven, the one who makes the angels mourn when she spreads her wings.

The Three Beasts

The Three Beasts are the children of Jera, The Goddess of Time, who were born with the blood of a giant. They are creatures of nightmare that began their own monstrous lineage and almost devoured the gods.

Fenrisulf (Destruction): The youngest of Jera's offspring was Fenrisulf, the wolf that could devour heaven with his maw. He was a beast of power without equal, whose only desire was to destroy everything in existence. Being immortal, after his defeat he was chained in the depths of the world, where he remained sealed for millennia until his mother released him. The Church considers him a frightening demon that was destroyed by Abel at the base of the Peak of The World.

Skule (The Devourer): Unlike his younger brother, whose only purpose was to destroy, Skule was a creature whose lust for flesh and blood had no equal. He was the ultimate predator, the father of all beasts (a term not to be confused with the wild animals of Uruz) born of his seed and blood. Skule is also called the corruptor, since he has the power to convert the creations from the other gods into monsters. He appears as a gigantic serpent, or sometimes as a dragon. Like Fenrisulf, he was chained in the depths of the world, and since their crimes were great, he will never be released.

Helion (Death): Sometimes confused with one of The Fates, Helion is the only one of Jera's beastly children that was born with a human form. She did not participate in the war like her brothers, so Anzus, reluctant to accept her with the gods, exiled her to the kingdom of dead, where she became its ruler. She passes judgment on all creatures that, upon death, do not deserve to go with the gods.

Regarding Other Religions

The followers of the Aityr believe in other religions and feel that there are other gods beside their own; but they simply brand them weak and devoid of temperament. People that depend heavily on divine intervention are fragile by nature, since, given the capricious nature of the gods, you never know when they are going to leave your side.

There has been great tension with The Church for a long time when it tried to impose its beliefs over the ancient Aityr rituals. They do not despise The Messiah, who has sufficiently proved his power in the past, but to his religion, describing it as formalistic and decadent.

ENNEATH

The Enneath beliefs are man's oldest religion. It was one of the major doctrines in the past because its roots can be traced back to centuries before the rise of the Empire of Solomon. The origin of the word Enneath has been lost over the years, but its meaning still lingers: "Heirs of Destiny." It is now used to both describe the religion as much as profess it.

The core of the Enneath religion is the worship of Jihamath, an omnipotent and supreme deity. According to this creed, Jihamath is Destiny itself, the writer of existence. Everything that has happened or will happen inherently embodies Him. Men are His servants; our live was given to us in His infinite mercy to act out the fate designated for mankind in the Book of Destiny, the unfathomable volume reflecting the fate of Creation. The Kalih stand beside Him, His great angels, created to show to us the correct way.

Although this notion seems to suggest that man has little control over his actions, nothing could be further from the truth; the duality between free will and a fixed destiny is the foundation of the Enneath religion. For them there is but one destiny, absolute and immutable, but there are two possible ways to accomplish it: Inara, the correct path, and Qamar, the erroneous path. No matter what actions a person commits in their life, the end result is always what Jihamath wrote for him in The Book of Destiny. However, man's decisions and beliefs are what allow him to follow the path of Inara, obtaining peace in heaven alongside the Kalih, or plunge into eternal nothingness and disappear by following Qamar. That is, while people cannot keep from doing what they were born to do, Jihamath grants them the freedom to decide how to go about reaching their purpose. Thus, even a person suffering a tragic fate or many hardships does not blame Jihamath for what happened to him. On the contrary, he makes an effort to find the enlightened path and be rewarded in the afterlife.

The Enneath do not accept any symbolism because they believe idolatry opposes the principles of Jihamath. Even so, their temples usually have books inscribed with the word Ka, which means "Destiny".

Cosmogony

The Enneath's creation myth is a controversial subject, because each one of The Enlightened Ones has a slightly different version of it. The only thing they agree on is that heaven, Gaïa, and every living creature that inhabits it, were created by Jihamath, the First and the Last. Under the generalized doctrine, in the beginning of time Jihamath made Himself of his own will and then created a huge tree (according to some interpretations; an egg or a flower), giving birth to what would be the seed of the world. Without anything to provide light, the One God called four stars from the eternal darkness to illuminate the tree, and thanks to their brilliance, the monumental plant grew tall and strong.

However, this was not enough energy for the tree to flourish, and Jihamath asked one of the shining stars to mix its essence with its roots. Thus, the trunk formed the world, its leaves the starry sky, and from each one of its branches the Kalih grew, great angels of Creation, who were given control over all things. But Jihamath felt that its work was not yet complete, so he exhaled on the ashes of the extinct star, giving them a portion of his essence. And thus mankind was born, whom The Creator thought his best work.

Religious Branches

Although the entire Enneath religion is unified under a single belief, there are actually two major opposing traditional religious branches. This division separates the Enneath into Zafires, the more orthodox side, and Mulares, the more heterodox followers. The main difference between the two doctrines lies in the consideration given to Kalih and the interpretation of the enlightened texts.

Zafires do not admit other God than Jihamath, claiming that He is the only divine entity and that nothing else should be revered. Any other worship or idolatry is just an insult towards The Creator and cannot be tolerated. The Kalih are merely his agents, created to grant divine wisdom to the Enlightened Ones so they, in turn, can pass it on to man. On the contrary, Mulares believe that the Kalih are gods conceived by Jihamath who represent the different aspects of destiny and allow man to choose between the diverse paths that the Creation has arranged for them. Therefore, Mulares do not believe that all the revelations of the Enlightened Ones are absolutes principles, but doctrines that each people are free to follow or not.

Although it is possible to find advocates of both branches in all places where the Enneath has a strong presence, the Zafires are much more widespread in Kushistan, whereas the Mulares are more common in Estigia and Salazar.

The common antagonism that both branches feel towards Christianity and the serious threat that it poses to their beliefs has greatly eased the traditional tension between the Zafires and Mulares. If they weren't united in this cause, they would have begun a holy war long ago.

The Kalih

Archangels for Zafires, gods for Mulares, the Kalih are the full representation of destiny. These divine entities intervene in the world and shape it according to their design. Their number has varied slightly throughout history, but is generally believed to be nine. Estigia and Salazar pay worship to them, giving each one their own temples where very diverse rituals are performed.



Amenhotep

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Amenhotep: Widely recognized like most important of the Kalih, Amenhotep dominate the infinite heavens. He is venerated as the lord of the gods, who keeps The Book of Destiny of Jihamath in his possession and interprets its passages. With the exception of The Creator, its power is supreme, because he is the one that executes the judgment of kings and dictates The True Law. In the myths, the pharaohs of Estigia are descendants of Amenhotep or a representation of his power in Gaïa.

Shoteth: Originally lord of the deserts and other barren places, after the revelations of Shemsu, the fourth enlightened, it was announced that Shoteth was the God of Evil, created by Jihamath to represent the infinite darkness that engulfs man. He is an envious and tyrannical entity, to which murders and misfortunes are attributed.

Ampune: Supreme Lord of the Dead, Ampune is a dark and shadowy entity that takes care of the souls that have followed the path of Qamar. He is credited with the power of resurrection and controls all the beings that lay in the large necropolises. Mulares of Estigia and Salazar carry out rituals in his name during burials to ensure that the souls reach their destination.

Harekrates: Harekrates created culture and education, granting man knowledge and the written word. He is the greatest sage and the father of the civilization of Estigia. He is also one of the three judges of the dead, who lists all the steps a person has taken in the pursuit of Inara.

Mada: One of the few Kalih incarnated in a female form, Mada is very important because she represents harmony, peace and maternity. She is the wife of Amenhotep and the symbol of womanly power. The deity is slightly problematic, because while in Kushistan Mada it is considered helpful and submissive, in Estigia she is an independent force of strong character.

Shanura: Shanura is another one of the feminine Kalih, whose role is to protect the home and the prosperity of life. She is also revered as the deity of concord and happiness, patron of celebrations and festivals.

Yareth: This Kalih symbolizes strength and power. He is seen both as god of the war and of revenge, because if appeased, he grants his followers dominion over their enemies and favors them on the battlefield. It's traditional in Estigia to sacrifice ferocious animals to gain his favor.

Aniue: Sister of Mada, this Kalih does not have a fixed attribute, but is one of the three judges of the dead responsible for listing all the mistakes that souls have committed throughout their life. Sometimes sacrifices or offerings are made to her to pardon sins.

Jerut: Jerut it is the most important Kalih after Amenhotep because he is the lord of the court who judges the souls of dead. After listening to Aniue and Harekrates, Jerut makes his decision whether to send the soul to Jihamath or to condemn it to the dark kingdoms of Ampune.

The Enlightened Ones

The Enlightened are a figure of special relevance in the beliefs of the Enneath. They are holy prophets to whom the Kalih has revealed passages or fragments of The Book of Destiny and, consequently, they're familiar with part of the plans or designs of The Creator. Their objective is to reveal these teachings to guide the believers down the path of Inara and to help them achieve their full destiny.

The first and most significant of all The Enlightened Ones was Eyad, to whom Jihamath granted a revelation in the mountains of Samutai so that he could lead man on the path of the True Faith. The whole religion of the Enneath and its customs were developed from his lessons. Since then, the rest of The Enlightened Ones have followed in his footsteps, revealing new fragments of the book and enacting new laws for the believers.

The Enlightened are exceptionally rare in history, only or two stems per generation. At the present time there is only one Enlightened, Jaser Salt Kahlim, although he is a controversial figure that many Mulares do not trust.

The Structure of the Church

The Enneath Church has been operating in the shadows for the past seven centuries, and its structure is quite simple since it has not had the opportunity to develop as much sophistication as Christianity. However, due to religious tension between two sides, Zafires and Mulares display slight differences as well, so one could say that there are actually two different churches.

At the head of each one of them are, respectively, the Great Sultan and King Pharaoh, titles that are both ecclesiastic and militant, because the people believe that the leader of the Enneth must be a general as well as a religious advisor. Accordingly, the Great Sultan is the leader of the Enneath Church on the Zafir side, whereas King Pharaoh of Estigia leads the Mular.

Directly under the Great Sultan are other sultans of Kushistan who are free to interpret and solve all the problems entrusted to them and the harbingers in their respective territories. The great priests give Estigia's equivalent, but in this case they are a purely religious figure. Their number is limited to eight and each has their own temple, directly devoted to a specific Kalih.

Finally, at the lowest level are the harbingers (the only common figures in both religious branches), the ones responsible for interpreting destiny and leading the faithful on the right path. They offer public speeches and are highly admired by the people. The harbingers are not really structured and can preach anywhere they want, although it's uncommon to have two in the same town or city district. There are some called great harbingers, but more than a title per se, it is a consideration given to the wisest ones.

The Rules

For a person to reach the path of Inara, a set of rules must be enforced from birth. The Kalih reveal these supreme laws or dogmas to The Enlightened Ones, and today they number close to 100. However, not all of them are recognized with equal power, because sometimes they fall into contradictions, thus creating different religious branches. Nevertheless, there are three rules that lie at the basis of the religion, as they are those originally revealed to Eyad by Jihamath.

1st Rule: Faith in Jihamath over everything.
2nd Rule: Nothing is impossible in the name of the faith.
3rd Rule: Your faith must always come before your love of the material world.

Regarding Other Religions

The Enneath's relationship with other religions is completely intolerant. They argue that the institutions worshiped as Gods by the other cultures are no more than crude lies or false prophets. Those who refuse to abide by Jihamath follow the path of Qamar and are doomed to misfortune. Even so, a backbone of the tenants of the Ennetah religion is the one of not imposing its beliefs on anyone; those who follow it must do it of their own volition. Consequently, although many practitioners despise those who do not share their beliefs, they do not necessarily attack the devotees of other religions.

Christianity is the greatest religious antagonist against the Enneath. For centuries, The Church has openly opposed the followers of destiny, causing a radical confrontation between both religions that ended in staunch hatred. The origins of this conflict date back to the founding of the Holy Kingdoms, as The Church tried to convert Jihamath in God, arguing that both were the same being but with different names. Naturally, very few Enneath accepted this rationale, so both religions soon thought of each other as obscene aberrations.

The Enneath and the Ebudan

It is impossible to deny that there is some relationship between the Ebudan and the Enneath because the culture of both cultures held common principles based on destiny. The similarities are undeniable, since the Ebudan followed an absolute concept that they called Ka, which is coincidently the same word that the Enneath use for destiny. Additionally, certain parallels appear between the Sue´Aman and the path of Inara, because both concepts represent the righteous pursuit of conceived destiny for every being in existence. Accordingly, there is little doubt that the angelical beings that appear in many early texts of The Enlightened are in fact the Ebudan before they were cast from heaven. For the Enneath, they were called Wassemah and were the children of the Kalih, created from the feathers that fell from their wings.

OTHER MINOR RELIGIONS

In addition to the major religions, there are many minor faiths of little practice in Gaïa. Some only exist around lesser local gods, whereas others belong to many ancient gods of structured beliefs and non-human origin. Here, some of most important are listed.

The Children of Judas

The Children of Judas are the followers of the doctrines of Rah Sith and the Apostle Iscariot. More than a religion, it is an atheist philosophy that believes that there are no gods and that all religions are nothing but chains that bind us, impeding our progress. For them, the man is the only god, he just hasn't realized it yet. Its followers, who are quite scarce, are opposed to all religions and often actively assault them. They have no organized religion or mutual association. They're simply people who scorn divine beliefs.

The Shajads and Beryls

Throughout history, the lords of light and darkness have been worshiped in many forms. Sometimes with their actual names and on many occasions as different divine entities, Shajads and Beryls have been the center of idolatry in many cultures and religions, both human and other races. The list is almost endless, as it is suspected that many deities are in fact avatars or manifestations of them within different religions.

At present, most occultists, wizards and scholars in Gaïa know the names of the Beryls and Shajads. In fact, the world is filled with ancient temples built to honor them, although most of them are just pathetic ruins not even a shadow of their former glory.

Here are some of the major religions that the lords of light and darkness revolve around:

Luminus Lacrimae

Luminus Lacrimae is the name of the religion in which the Sylvain directly worship C´iel as The Lady of Light. They consider her the divine entity opposing Gaira, The Bearer of Darkness, served directly by the Beryls, who like C´iel, are also great goddesses. It differs from other religions that centralize the Beryls because they worship them all as a divine pantheon, instead of separately.

The Luminus Lacrimae has a complex religious structure, ruled by Syl´ariath Elderein C´iel (a title that roughly translates as "The Favored Chosen of Light") and the seven major churches, each one of them devoted to a specific Beryl. The worship includes many traditions, formalities and customs with a complexity that dwarfs any other organized religion in history.

Presently, only a few Sylvain hidden from the eyes of man keep this faith, though its church ceased to exist long ago.

Tenebrae Carmen

Because the bonds of union among the Dark Lords were always weaker and conflicting, the cult of the Shajads always been far less organized than the church of the Beryls. Therefore, although its primary followers were Duk´zarist, each one of the religions that worshiped them has always been independent from the others. Tenebrae Carmen (The Song of Darkness) is the term used to refer to all Duk´zarist religions that placed the Shajads in the center, but were not truly related to each other.

Oposium

This strange religion wasn't devoted to the Shajads or the Beryls, but to C´iel and Gaira themselves (to whom they called Ormuz and Ahriman), as supreme opposing forces of Creation. A spiritualist faction of the Devas followed it ardently, though it never had great acceptance among the other races.

Arium

Not much is known about this religion, except that it was practiced by the Devas and is based on the great forces of Creation. They spoke of the existence of a supreme spiritual vessel called the Nexus, a kind of absolute will from which all things were born. Their manifestations and avatars were the Aeons and thought that, by dominating these forces, they themselves could become gods. Except for some surviving Devas, it's unknown who still practices this religion, although a few members of The Order of Yehudah have adapted the principles of Arium to their own particular beliefs.

The Aramense Faith

The Aramense Faith is a very old set of beliefs that existed in the lands of the Enneath before the revelations of Eyad. It's one of the many forgotten religions that could not compete with Enneath and ended up briefly disappearing. Today, only a few tribes of Salazar keep this faith, but their traditions are quite confusing.

It is believed that the Aramense Faith had a fairly large pantheon of gods, especially stressing those that had power over life and death. The myth says the gods were buried by the sands of time, waiting to resurface when the world ends, but continue watching man through their dreams. The only names that have survived today are Ulrioka Yama; Lord of The Sands, and Devah; Creator of Life.

The Ascended

The cult of The Ascended was a brief religion that managed to reunite a significant number of followers during the Age of Chaos. According to their beliefs, mortals could gain enough power to become gods, and those who achieved it were called "The Ascended." Under the few historical accounts that are preserved, there were at least 20 Ascended. The people chose one of them as the ideal figurehead and tried to imitate his lifestyle in detail, hoping to become divine as well; this lifestyle was called "The Path to Ascension."

Of all The Ascended, the most well-known one today is Selene, Goddess of the Moon, being worshiped by the sect of assassins that takes her name. Another that gained recognition was Markushias (now sanctified by The Church), a being who defended Eien Phaion Seimon from the armies of the Emperor Amaterasu no Mikoto.

CHAPTER 5

ORGANIZATIONS

A single man cannot change the world.

An idea, yes.

Abel

Gaïa is full of organizations and societies, both secret and public ones. Most of them have a fundamental weight in history, as their power and influences are what allow them to kept the balance in the world or break it forever. Here are some of the most current relevant organizations.

THE MAGUS ORDER

The Magus Order is the most important secret society for the wizards of Gaïa, since it has several thousand members scattered around the largest and most significant cities of the world. The organization's goal is to preserve supernatural knowledge and the use of magic. They believe that the mystical arts are a discipline that must not be forgotten, as properly applied, can be an indispensable benefit to humanity. However, they also understand that is an exceptionally dangerous power that neither society nor the world is prepared for at the moment.

Despite its size, the Magus Order is only slightly more than two centuries old. It was created by a guild of wizards in Ilmora, headed by the famous (or infamous, as some would say) Ambrose Magus, a former Azathoth of Yehudah who renounced the principles of his old organization. His theories soon attracted some of the most important arch mages of his time and, in less than two decades, the Magus Order had already achieved major renown, spreading to other countries.

At present, the main interests of the Magus Order are to promote the study of the supernatural arts and to develop new mystical knowledge. Members are always researching original formulas or probing further into the ways of magic. Often, the most restless mages begin lengthy travels to observe occult forces in the world and develop new theories. After all, there are many ways to increase magical knowledge. Another self-imposed function of Magus is to subtly control the intervention of supernatural powers in Gaïa. The organization ensures that monstrous creatures, macabre spirits or dark necromancers do not commit atrocities or openly abuse their powers. Thus they expect that, at the right moment, they can someday present themselves before the world without fear and prejudice.

The Magus Order maintains ties with many clandestine organizations. They often work with Black Sun to acquire supernatural artifacts (in fact, the members of Magus are usual Black Sun clients) and have made alliances with several Archons of Samael. The mages even bear certain relations with Tol Rauko, as both have combined forces on more than one occasion to stop some ancient power from resurfacing (though of course, secretly). On the contrary, their greatest enemies are the Inquisition, due to its witch hunts, and the Order of Yehudah, who consider the members of Magus weak and unworthy of their power.

Since many members of the organization belong to well-off families, the Magus Order normally has access to all the funds and wealth that it needs. Thus, it can afford the luxury of hiring mercenaries to support or protect its affiliates if deemed necessary.

Students and Academies

Experienced wizards are very rarely invited to join the organization. The Magus Order generally looks for new recruits among university students in large cities. After confirming The Gift, they approach scholars during their first few months of college and try to find out if they have a sufficiently open mentality as to join the Order. Most of them are quickly fascinated by the new world opening before them and do not hesitate to join Magus. Besides this method, if a member of the society finds somebody with The Gift throughout his travels, he will normally try to convince the young one's parents that he has qualities of a brilliant student, offering him a scholarship. Because forcing somebody to enter the society is against the Magus Order's principles, if anyone refuses, the wizard will not do anything to oblige them.

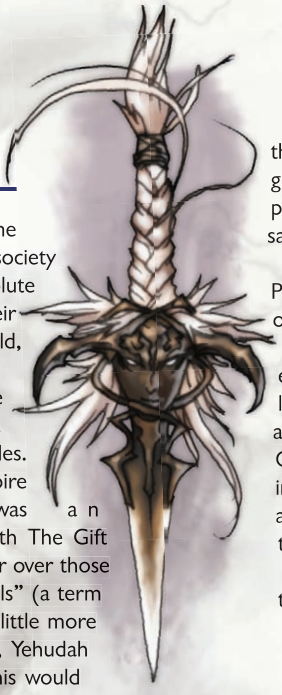
Most members of the organization and their apprentices meet at the Magus Academies, the closest thing to an authentic magic school in Gaïa today. They are large private homes or mansions, hidden behind the facade of a university club. Thus, it's not that unusual for dozens and dozens of teenagers or adults to congregate daily to study under private tutors, when what they actually do is further their supernatural training. In other cases, where there is no university nearby, the Academies apparently run private schools, isolated from any population.

Apart from places of study, the Magus Academies are also huge supernatural research laboratories. In their basements, towers and sealed chambers, numerous mystical experiments are carried out with the purpose of making astonishing discoveries.

The Elements of Magic

The Magus Order has a complex hierarchical structure, based on the personal achievements of its members. Coeptum (or Initiates) is the title for an apprentice still in their learning period. Most are teenagers who never leave the academy, although they are already members of the organization in their own right. Those who pass the graduation examinations become Magus (or Magicians), and earn the freedom to do whatever they want. The next position up is the one of Magister (or Master), a title only granted to wizards of exceptional talent, responsible for various functions of the organization such as education or research. Often, each Magister has a small-handpicked group of Magus at his service, who are responsible for completing various missions for the Order, like searching for artifacts, stopping supernatural dangers or protecting the organization from other threats. Finally, in the upper establishment is the Magius Locci, the ten most important members of the Order. Each one of them has mastered one of the ten magical paths, and thus are the highest authority in their particular type of spellcraft. They elect the Magus Rex (or Supreme lord of the Order), who acts as more than just a leader, being responsible for organizing everything and presiding over the council of the Magius Locci. Currently, this title rests in the hands of Alexei Magus, great great grandson of Ambrose Magus, the creator of the Magus Order.

THE ORDER OF YEHUDAH



Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Some people claim that the Order of Yehudah is one of the oldest organizations of man. This is a secret society of wizards and summoners that proclaims the absolute supremacy of those with supernatural powers. Their highest aspiration is to change the hierarchy of the world, so that mages rule supreme.

The Order of Yehudah is the spiritual heir to the former Empire of Yehudah, from which they have not only taken the name, but also all its cultural principles. In a distant past, after the fall of Solomon, the empire ruled with absolute power over most of humanity. It was an extremely feudal society where the people born with The Gift enjoyed the status of high nobility, with absolute power over those that lacked it. Such were their privileges that the "nulls" (a term which referred to those not gifted) were reduced to little more than slaves or animals. After centuries of dominance, Yehudah was destroyed with the arrival of the Messiah, but this would not be the end of it. Among the shadows, countless wizards formed the Order of Yehudah, an organization that was meant to return the world to its "true path."

Although many of these archmages joined Rah during the War of God, the first official appearance of Yehudah happened shortly after the end of the conflict. A group of wizards and summoners rose up in Togarini, claiming to be the heirs to the old empire and trying to take over the principality. Despite their great powers and the chaos that enveloped the world, their supernatural abilities were greatly diminished by the influence of the machine and were defeated by the forces of the first Emperor. Hidden again, Yehudah increased in power until becoming the organization it is today. During the last two hundred years they have subtly intervened in the world, trying to increase its influence until the time comes to emerge once again.

Currently, the Order of Yehudah has become a legend. Few think that it still exists, but there are people who fear it, ensuring that its disappearance is nothing more than a well-orchestrated montage. The Inquisition is aware of it and has hunted its members very actively, destroying most of them. Occasionally, some innocent person is accused of belonging to it and shares the same fate that any other wizard or warlock in the hands of The Church.

The Objectives of Yehudah

The main goal of the Order of Yehudah is to create a world where those equipped with supernatural powers are the absolute masters. In order to achieve this, they spare no effort or allow anything to impede them. Its members consider people with magical abilities as higher beings, the legitimate owners of the world. Consequently, they tend to be extremely biased; anyone lacking some kind of mystical ability is looked upon with absolute scorn.

The organization most often acts through spirits and creatures subjugated by magic. Thus, its members are far less at risk, although this does not prevent them from personal intervention from time to time. Currently, its main goal is to find sources of power, thereby increasing the strength of the order. Any method is good, provided they lead to what they want. This involves researching unknown mystical forces and the search for ancient powerful artifacts or magical nodes. To a lesser degree, also interfere in political affairs, supporting nobles until they are forced to depend of the Order for anything.

The Order of Yehudah has numerous bases of operation all over Gaïa. They perform all kinds of magical experiments and many supernatural entities are imprisoned there to serve their interests.

The Organization of the Order

Yehudah's organization follows a rigid system of classes that exclusively depends on the power of its members. The greater the personal skill someone has, the higher their position and importance in the Order. In a way, one could say that power is what defines Yehudah.

There are five degrees or classes, called "Circles of Power". The fifth is the lowest and the first the most important one. Anyone with the will to climb may challenge one of his direct superiors and defeat him in formal combat, though even in that, there are certain privileges and rules. Whoever loses the battle and is forced to serve as his opponent's agent, losing the right to defy him again. Each member of the Order can have up to five subordinates this way, and these in turn may have another five. Those not in the service of anyone receives the title of Lughnasadh, reporting only to the will of the first circle members.

Within their classes, people with The Gift are seen as the true elite, although gifted summoners with exceptional power could well be considered.

Azathoth

Azathoth is the name of the mysterious conclave that governs the Order of Yehudah. These are its ten most powerful members that make the most important decisions and direct their course towards the new world they want to create. Every one of the ten has a personal agenda of their own and there is generally great competition among them. Each knows quite well that they cannot fall behind at any time, or might otherwise find themselves being destroyed by their peers.

The members of Azathoth constantly travel and nobody, not even the agents of the first circle, know their whereabouts at all times. They always meet at different locations without notice, making it impossible to determine where they will meet next.

Unlike what happens with other of the members of the Order of Yehudah, it's impossible to openly challenge a member of Azathoth. Only those belonging to the first circle may challenge them, but aware of their power, there are very few who have dared to do so.

THE CONSORTIUM

Except for the Powers in the Shadow, there is probably no organization more mysterious or secretive in all Gaïa than The Consortium. It is an enigmatic society that has operated anonymously throughout the world for more than six centuries. Its existence has remained a secret to all, including the most significant and influential powers.

Its sole objective is truly unusual: maintaining the economic balance of Gaïa before the influence of supernatural elements. Long ago, coins and trade goods were magically sealed, thus preventing any wizard or psychic from producing large market imbalances. In fact, the rulers in power controlled such alterations, trying to maintain economic stability. But after activating Rah's machine and the founding of the Sacred Holy Empire, those practices were lost along with the use of supernatural forces. After all, at least in appearance, magic was just a fairy tale.

The Consortium exists precisely to remedy this deficiency; without the supervision of the government, the influence of the supernatural could easily break the market and the entire economy of Gaïa. They are responsible for correcting this evil, restoring the natural order of the economy at whatever cost.

The origins of the organization are a mystery even to its members. Nobody knows for certain who created it or when, neither why it began operating in the world. The true is that it was actually introduced by Imperium as a measure to keep the world economy harmonious centuries ago. It began as a small specialized division of that Power

in the Shadow, but given that The Pact prevented them from openly intervening in the affairs of Gaïa, they quickly disconnected from it, using external agents to maintain it ever since. In more ways than one, one could say that Imperium is the spiritual founder of The Consortium.

Although the connections that The Consortium keeps with its progenitors are small at the moment, some Imperium agents still fill its leadership ranks, using their skills and access to first class technomagic to support their subordinates. So in a way, the organization is still sponsored by the Powers in the Shadow, which grant them incredible superiority over most organizations in Gaïa.

The Consortium has no relations with countries or societies; serving all of them secretly, ensuring the non-interference of supernatural forces on the economy.

The Rules

The Consortium is not interested in just any kind of supernatural transaction or influence in the market. For them to truly interfere, their objectives should involve magically creating wealth or acting on a grand enough scale as to produce a runaway economy. That is, they do not mind at all if someone makes a living using his supernatural abilities as a mercenary, or an illusionist deceives an innkeeper to spend the night at an inn without paying. Rather, those who shift matter to create gold, or use their powers to significantly alter the market, are its direct prey. Another important factor that encourages them to interfere is the true spirit of profit. They wouldn't worry in the slightest about a wizard who created a mansion for himself, apart from any civilization; but they would intervene immediately if he was creating them everywhere to sell later.

Regardless of the power of its objectives, The Consortium always seeks the best method of action to meet its goals. Even organizations like The Azur Alliance or Samael have easily become their victims, preventing them from manufacturing gold and gems artificially.

Black Sun is an exception. The Consortium does not mind that they trade supernatural products since, after all, they only seek and sell elements that already exist in the world.

The Men of the Trench Coats

The organization usually works in small cells of four to five individuals who report to a regional coordinator whom they do not personally know. Each of them specializes in different functions, but always acts in a carefully coordinated manner. Their field agents usually dress in black trench coats and are normally covert, which has occasionally generated myths on "the men in the dark trench coats" disappearing in the shadows.

The ability of these agents is incalculable. They never leave footprints or allow anybody to notice them. In practice, their victims are usually never even aware that anything out of the ordinary has happened, or comprehend that an outside force is the cause of their problems. The modus operandi of the agents consists of eliminating something of equal value to the monetary amount supernaturally obtained by their victims. Thus, if somebody has generated some profit, they will steal, destroy or simply erase something of his of equal value. In the rare event that they are discovered, they erase the memories of any witnesses and disappear without a trace. If their victim acted on a grand scale or it does not cease their practices, they can use even more drastic methods, like sealing or modifying the supernatural abilities of the objective to keep him from using them any further. They generally operate while their victim is asleep, so they never realize why they can't access that part of their powers. However, they aren't afraid to use force as a last resort, if necessary.

In the event of capture, all agents have a technomagic system installed in their cerebellum with the capacity to immediately erase all their memories. Thus, even under a deep mental probing, their captors would be unable to glean any kind of information.

Although rarely necessary, if the situation requires it, the organization can send a different specialist group, called The Fixers. They're even more competent than the agents, seemingly always perfect for any mission entrusted to them.

THE TRAVELERS

Among the hundreds and hundreds of existing mercenary groups in Gaïa, none are as renown or famous as The Travelers. This is a small army for hire founded by Zebulos, a former Lord of War that relinquished his title over a disagreement with the previous Emperor, months after being enthroned. Before that, he was a very famous Imperial Arbiter (plus a friend and rival of Tadeus Van Horsman) in the direct service of Elias Barbados, but he did not agree with the fact that his lord ascended to the throne and, followed by many of his most trusted men, decided to leave the service of the Abel Empire. Since they had all dedicated their lives to war and nothing else brought meaning to their existences, they created a mercenary division where to apply all their military knowledge; thus The Travelers were born. Equipped with great martial skill and knowledge of the most advanced battle tactics, serving Gabriel they gained enormous prestige in just a few months by defeating a great contingency of northerners that planned to take advantage of the slight instability produced after the change of the throne. Since then The Travelers have worked for dozens of principalities and cities, since there were a limited number of soldiers in the arbitrated wars, everyone was interested in hiring them.

The fame of The Travelers spread so much that many fighters undertook long journeys in order to join them, although Zebulos and his captains refused almost all of them. They only admitted those who proved considerable martial ability, so their ranks were soon characterized by the enormous talent of their warriors. Currently, the group is made up of around 500 men, but their potential far exceeds their numbers.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Zebulos

Although he is almost an old man (he is presently a little over 60), Zebulos is still one of the most competent generals and fighters of Gaïa. He is a pragmatic, extremely intelligent and serious man who always looks for a reason beyond personal gain to fight. When he left the Empire he took his Arbiter armor with him, an unprecedented act until that time, one that Elias preferred to ignore. Thanks to this, his identity remains a true mystery, since he only shows his face to the captains of The Travelers and his most trusted associates. It is said that when he dies, Zebulos will pass his armor and title on to somebody so that they can carry on as commander of the unit.

The Structure of The Travelers

The Travelers are structured into five divisions of around 100 men apiece, three of which are specialized in different operations: scouting and exploration, light cavalry and heavy cavalry divisions. In turn, each group is divided into small squads of five individuals called "battle lancers", that report to a senior officer. Each five senior officers have a lieutenant, and he is responsible for the division captains.

Before any mission, Zebulos and the division leaders meet to make relevant battle decisions in what they call The War Council. While the final decision always rests on their supreme commander, he assiduously listens to and respects the suggestions of his subordinates.

THE NEW CONCLAVE

Long before the Breach of the Heaven began and even before becoming the Supreme Archbishop, Eljared gathered an exceptional group of individuals and entities around her that she called The New Conclave, an ironic name reminiscent of the former agents of Rah. Possessing unparalleled skill, they became an unstoppable power at the service of their lady's interests, operating as a powerful weapon with no other purpose other than to eliminate anything that stands in their way. Like the original Conclave, the group is made up of eight members, each of which is an unparalleled power. The three creatures known as The Awakened Ones also joined the group, but their stay was very brief.

Although they all joined the organization for different reasons, each member shared a common goal from the first to the last of them: to change the world. They were convinced that Gaïa should undergo a fundamental transformation, and only by joining Eljared could they obtain it.

The end of The Breach left the organization damaged and in a terrible state. Some of its members were killed and others were scattered across Gaïa, without knowing exactly what had happened. Now, without their master to guide them, they largely act independently, meeting with the sole purpose of pursuing their common dream and change the world at any cost. The problem is that each of them has a different idea on how to do it. Therefore, each member is going to begin a different project, following more or less his own personal conception of the world.

The New Conclave is aware of The Powers in the Shadows and its methods. For now they make sure not to interfere with them, taking care to hide their plans as much as possible, or behaving in a way that does not give Imperium a reason to oppose them without breaking The Pact.

Exodo Van Horsman

Since he was a young boy, the adoptive son of the Lord of War Tadeus Van Horsman demonstrated an overwhelming talent for fighting and great strategic skills. At only fifteen, everyone thought that he would someday deservedly inherit his father's position at the head of the armies of the Empire. However, after the arrival of his stepbrother Donoban, an enigmatic young man whom Tadeus also adopted as a member of his own family, Exodo's nature began to darken. He felt inexplicably terrified by those eyes that watched him with melancholic indifference, making him feel small and insignificant. Little by little, Exodo began to gradually obsess over the terrible feeling of inferiority gripping him.

When Eljared became Archbishop, she soon sensed the intense emotions and the natural power emanating from Exodo, so she became interested in the young man, transferring him to her personal guard. Once in her service, she observed how his sanity gradually crumbled and, when he reached the threshold of madness, she offered him unequalled power with which to destroy his stepbrother. Nobody knows what exactly Eljared did to him, but whatever it was, she imbued him with almost divine abilities and Exodo became the last member of The New Conclave, an unstoppable weapon at the service of the Supreme Archbishop. During the hours of The Breach of the Heavens, Exodo was unleashed, thus achieving his long awaited confrontation with Donoban. Bizarrely, he was unable to defeat him. Spiritually broken, he survived and was picked up by Youko, who has taken care of him ever since. Prone to fits of rage and strange paranoia, he is now no more than a shadow of his former self, despite retaining his extraordinary supernatural powers.

Physically, he is an attractive young man around 20 with dark but graying hair. He is obsessed with a scar on his cheek that his stepbrother made while training, and has the painful habit of constantly scratching so it never heals or stops bleeding. He has the ability to create weapons of darkness and light at will, when he releases all his power, two huge spectral wings manifest on his back while the spirits of the dead begin to gather around him. He is generally considered one of the most powerful members of The New Conclave.

Lilith

Lilith is a powerful entity born from the physical and spiritual union of a young woman and one of the great demon princes. Her human half comes from a summoner obsessed with power since she was a girl. Equipped with a formidable capacity to manage the Flow of Souls, her path crossed with Eljared's when she was barely eighteen.

Aided by the powers of her "teacher", she managed to bring an ancient diabolical demigod into the world, forcing it to merge with her in an obscene ritual. After this act a new entity emerged, a half human and half demon named Lilith, together with a formal invitation to join The New Conclave.

After serving her lady with terrifying effectiveness for years, Lilith was able to escape alive during the Breach of the Heavens. Without Eljared to lead her, she left the group, beginning to act independently without a concrete purpose. Even so, her former colleagues occasionally visit her and, since she has nothing better to do, she often entertains herself by helping them.

She can alter her appearance at will, but her normal one is of a young woman of pale complexion, full of tattoos. Perhaps because of the influence of her demonic half, Lilith feels an instinctive desire to commit atrocities, and often her behavior has been so cruel that her companions have admonished it. She is quite solitary, but she gets along well with Dorian, whom she considers the closest to a friend that "something" like her can have.

Lilith specializes in binding and controlling demons, be it through her manipulation of The Flow of Souls or her mere supernatural ability. She has dozens of them connected to her body, which allows her to take monstrous forms, some of them truly colossal.

Dorian Dee

Self-proclaimed adopted son of Eljared, Dorian Dee is one of her many experimental attempts to create a living weapon. He is an artificially created human with necromantic principles, a refined version of the process used to create The Awakened long ago.

For years he was at the service of his adopted mother until in The Breach of Heavens when he faced Lazarus and was practically destroyed. Dorian managed to survive thanks to the timely aid of his companion Lilith, but since then requires great amounts of human blood to retain his power. At the present time he's one of the main promoters of continuing the activity of The New Conclave given that, above all, he wishes to carry on his mother's dream. Ironically, Dorian doesn't have the slightest idea of what it is.

Cold and cruel, the only person who could rouse his emotions was Eljared herself, towards which he professed a perverted and absolute devotion. Everything he did was solely to please her and to satisfy the expectations of his "mother." He refuses to believe she's dead, and will not hesitate to instantly kill whoever claims that she died.

Physically he is an attractive man, of pale skin and long black hair like soot. He boasts highly refined manners, typical of a high society nobleman. He hasn't the slightest respect for life, seeing those without true power as little more than a pile of flesh that moves and speaks. Perhaps that's why he's so good with Lilith.

Although he is not properly undead, no one can say he's alive either. He has tremendous influence over corpses and spirits, self-proclaiming himself "The Last Necromancer." He fights using a scythe made of void, which can even cut the souls of the gods.

Zhoul Orgus

Zhoul Pyle was a powerful wizard who was born predestined to incarnate Orgus Zangros, the dark wrym of Noah. After obtaining the Eye of Gaira and controlling the powers of Orgus, he managed to temporarily delay his transformation into a dragon, which caught the attention of Eljared. Interested, she decided to pay him a visit, and he decided to fight her. For the first time, Zhoul knew the true meaning of terror. Seeing him broken at her feet, an amused Eljared assured him that he was already dead; nothing could change that. However, if he wanted, she could prolong the agony of his life in her service. That way, Zhoul became a member of The New Conclave and carried out the will of his lady with impeccable skill because he knew that the moment he failed, Eljared would erase him from existence.

Everything seems to indicate that Orgus was destroyed during The Breach of the Heavens at the hands of an unknown organization, although in difference to Anne and Voyager, his death has not been completely confirmed.

Millenium

Of the members of The New Conclave, the woman called Millennium is the most inscrutable. Nobody knows exactly why she aligned with Eljared, or what she expected in her service. She says she takes her name in honor of Rah's former servant, despite those who claim that they are in fact the same person; whether this is true or not, only she knows.

She assumes many identities and appearances, although the most well known is the one of a prestigious clothing designer in Arkangel named Miriel Gia. However, her companions usually meet her disguised as a harlequin. She has quite a pleasant personality, but she tends to be manipulative and extremely malicious, even without appearing to be a truly bad person.

Her powers, like herself, are a true mystery; even now she has never shown any hint of having supernatural abilities in the slightest, except for magically appearing in the most improbable of places. However, it is very unlikely that Eljared admitted her into The New Conclave without any special abilities.

Her current location is unknown but it's very unlikely that she has died. She was last seen reuniting with Eljared, hours before The Breach of the Heavens began.

Youko Kyubi

Youko is powerful nine tails kitsune. Her nature is considerably less dark than her companions. The only reason she joined The New Conclave was because she felt that the world has to change for the better, and wanted to do something to achieve this. She knew Eljared long ago and their paths crossed repeatedly, during which she developed a true admiration towards her. As soon as the organization formed, she received a formal invitation to join her and soon accepted. She acts like a very competent agent, but her way of working led to continuous confrontations with Lilith and Dorian. Youko did not participate in the events of The Breach of Heavens, but she arrived in time to pick Exodo up and save him from certain death. She currently remains in the organization (or what's left of it), but tries to make sure things change for the better. Exodo commonly accompanies Youko, following her because he has nothing better to do.

She had incredible powers due to her mystical essence, but Eljared amplified these enormously with various technomagical experiments. She not only has amazing physical abilities, like blurring speed and titanic strength, but she also controls fire at will. If she wishes it, she could consume everything within a hundred mile radius. Her fire is so intense and so full of spiritual essence it even affects supernatural entities.

Although Youko's true form is an immense fox the size of a mountain, she usually always takes the appearance of a young redheaded girl. Sometimes, when angry or very surprised, she cannot keep her ears or tail from appearing.

Anne Fatima and Voyager The Fallen Agents

Fatima and Voyager were two of the confirmed casualties during The Breach of the Heavens. Fatima was a young girl who led The New Brotherhood. Apparently she was Eljared's daughter, although it is unknown if the girl was or not adopted. Her immense powers had no explanation; it is known that she even killed some Jürgand agents during The Breach of Heavens before dying at the hands of Lazarus. The how or the why remains a mystery. Voyager, by contrast, was The Dominus of the Jürgand squadron that fell under the influence of Eljared. Unlike the other agents, he was completely conscious from the beginning that his lord had been replaced, but the Supreme Archbishop managed to attract him to her side. Despite his great abilities, the Patriarch Vandercraün destroyed him during the confrontation of squadrons.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to those described so far, Gaïa is home of many other organizations and societies. Some, like The Requiem or The Akaryu Company, are described throughout the third chapter, whereas many others are only referenced briefly.

The Hand of The Emperor

This is the name given to the intelligence service of The Sacred Holy Empire. Many of its members are Knights of the Forth and Fifth Heaven, but their ranks are also filled with other kinds of agents, from innkeepers to courtesans. The influence of the organization spreads throughout Gaïa, from the court of Abel itself to the most distant corners of Varja. The purpose of The Hand is to keep the Emperor informed of any important details, as well as to covertly eliminate threats to the throne in any way possible. Its members use a supernatural communication system called The Vertex of Words, with which they can transmit information at great speed from one place in the world to another.

The Brotherhood of Seth

This is a special command group that works for the King Pharaoh of Estigia. It is composed of a many martial artists specialized in mastering all the secrets of Ki. Its organization has a regal structure of masters and apprentices that depend on the martial skill of each member. Until recently they have stayed secret to avoid problems with the Empire but recently some of the members of The Brotherhood have let themselves be known publicly.

The Heaven Order

The private army of the Empress, the Heaven Order, is an organization composed of the best agents serving the Imperial Crown. It is divided into seven different levels, each one of which receives a different assignment: from protecting Elisabetta to traveling through the different principalities righting wrongs. For more information on The Heaven Order, consult Chapter 19 of the core book.

The Barakah Clan

Also called The Brotherhood of Blood, the Barakah Clan is an order of supernatural assassins acting throughout all of Gaïa. No two members are alike or act the same way; the only similarity between them is their love of killing. They are frighteningly effective, since they have no objectives other than to kill their prey. When the Clan accepts an assignment, they send assassin after assassin to complete the hit until the arrival of the next summer solstice. If they have not been able to eliminate their target by then, the contract is void. They often compete with the agents of Selene, and there is a great animosity between both societies.

Tol Rauko

The Templars of Tol Rauko are one of the most powerful organizations in Gaïa. This is an old society, founded by the first Emperor to preserve and protect supernatural forces of the world. Its agents are dedicated to traveling from one place to another looking for mystical objects or supernatural creatures to bring to the Island of Tol Rauko, their main stronghold, located in The Inner Sea. Another of its essential functions is to monitor and sealing the vestiges of the non-human civilizations, keeping anybody from unleashing the terrible dangers of the past. For more information on Tol Rauko, consult **Chapter 19** of the core book.

Wissenschaft

A secret society at the service of the enigmatic Prince Lucanor Giovanni, founded with the purpose of developing all kinds of research, both scientific and supernatural, and giving them a practical application. Wissenschaft has the greatest technomagical advances in the entire world at its agents' fingertips, allowing the organization to benefit from the best espionage system in Gaïa. For more information on Wissenschaft, consult Chapter 19 of the core book.

Belasarius

Although small and discreet, Belasarius is a remarkable society of intellectuals whose purpose is to uncover all the hidden knowledge in the world. It's composed of many scholars, archaeologists and alchemists, who wish to reveal the secrets of the past. Their members recognize each other by a small ring they wear in the shape of a book, and they regularly meet to reveal what they have discovered. They travel throughout Gaïa with the sole purpose of finding new things to share with other members of the society. It's assumed that somewhere in Ilmora lies a great library where all their discoveries made throughout the centuries are written down.



Illustrated by Salvador Espin

The Order of Miguel

The Order of Miguel is an organization of templars who maintain strong ties with The Church. It only allows men, whose members have sworn to protect the highest ideals of honor and justice throughout the whole world. Their selfless and sacrificing reputation has made them very popular in the underprivileged sectors because they have defended the interests of the lower class against the nobility more than once when they believed that they were being unjust.

Black Sun

Black Sun is a large business corporation secretly dedicated to dealing with supernatural artifacts. It has body of Seekers that go from one corner of Gaïa to another in search of objects and relics of the past. A few years ago, one of these groups found a dangerous artifact, the Book of the Dead, and since then a very important sector of the corporation, led by the Delacroix family, has begun to develop necromantic weapons using the knowledge inscribed therein. For more information about The Black Sun, consult **Chapter 19** of the core book.

Selene

An order of mercenaries, bodyguards and assassins composed only of women. Their agents are as beautiful as they are deadly, and are secretly trained from childhood to kill as easily as others breathe. They are experts in higher forms of martial arts as well as supernatural combat techniques. For more information on Selene, consult **Chapter 19** of the core book.

The Inquisition

Acting as the hunters for The Church, the Inquisition is a unique religious society devoted solely and exclusively to eliminating any trace of the supernatural in the world. Their objectives are usually wizards and non-human entities, which they relentlessly hunt to extinction. Far from normal, the Inquisitors are true killing machines, bred from childhood to be unmatched in combat. Some of them, the so called High Inquisitors, are also doted equipped with supernatural abilities, considered divine gifts granted by God to put an end to evil. For more information on the Inquisition, consult **Chapter 19** of the core book.

Providence Company

The multinational Providence is one of the largest private companies in the entire world. Created more than 150 years ago by the commercial genius Morgan Graves, Providence has become one of the largest corporation for trading, manufacturing and distribution in Gaïa. Its headquarters is in Archangel, but its power and influence spreads everywhere. There are at least one or two Providence commercial centers in any city that prides itself on being "big", great markets where it is possible to find any kind of product. Of course, everything that bears their seal is evidence of exceptional quality, especially the weapons that they manufacture. Their stores are currently the only ones where one can buy firearms, thus receiving important orders from many governments. Providence is the major commercial competitor of Black Sun and has a body of mercenaries equipped with special skills, prepared to face any threat from that organization.

CHAPTER 6
TALES OF GAÏA

Each story has already been told.
Each new legend is born from a previous tale.

Millenium

Gaïa is full of stories.

In each of its cities, in every corner, there are endless tales that will be told repeatedly. Some of them even transcend countries and kingdoms as world changing events. Now we will see fragments of those stories, a small fraction of the hundreds of secrets that are hidden from man.

These are the tales of Gaïa.

SYLVANIA

Much has been told of how, at the end of The War of God, the supernatural folk were gradually dying. However, there is a dark story that definitively marks the end of that era and the beginning of the absolute rule of man; the day that those who walked with us would be forgotten forever.

This it is a story of tears, betrayal and shattered dreams.

The end of fairy tales.

Sylvania's Origins

With the lifting of The Barrier most of the great capitals and strongholds of other races had fallen outside the world of men. Isolated in Hell, all those people started their own history separate from ours. The main non-human cities in The Old Continent had been destroyed by the armies of Rah, and little remained of them except for remnants of its former glory. The survivors, scattered and disorganized, were either expelled or destroyed by Zhorne Giovanni, the future first Emperor of Abel, knowing full well that the racial hatred among his people was too strong for coexistence.

But there was one place that did not share the same fate, the only major non-human city that remaining on The Old Continent: Sylvania Nuruel Cartagos.

It might be an exaggeration to say that this was the most important city of the Sylvain, but it was certainly the capital of their nations. It is said that the origin of this wonder dated back to the birth of Gaïa, and that the Beryls themselves took part in its construction. During The War of Darkness, it was the only city that withstood the attack of the Duk´zarist armies and from it a resistance was organized that would force them to retreat.

Sylvania also claimed one of the most powerful mystical nodes in all Gaïa, the Nexus Depranon, so even after being affected by Rah's machine, it retained sufficient magical energy to allow its people to live there. The lord of the city was none other than Taumiel Ul Sylvanus, supreme emperor of the elven nations, who had fought alongside man against Judas. So when Zhorne began unifying The Old Continent, determined to oust all supernatural people from those lands, he did not know what to do regarding Sylvania.

The young Giovanni and Taumiel had fought together in The War of God. They cried, they bled and they laughed back to back, and that was a difficult bond to break. Moreover, that city was not just a stronghold of past glory, but also a true bastion of power that the Sylvain still retained. Even though most of its people were civilians, Zhorne knew that destroying it would cause the death of several hundreds of thousands of soldiers, a price that he did not want to pay again.

Also, what else did these people have left?

Where would they live, if not there?

Therefore, the first Emperor of Abel turned his back on Sylvania and tried to forget it, praying to the powers that be in the heavens so that, one day, both races could one day coexist peacefully.

During the years before the unification of Abel, thousands of Sylvain and other fairy folk traveled to that lost capital, that soon became legendary, a haven of salvation for those who found it. Thus Sylvania remained throughout history unchanged, isolated from all the affairs of the outside world behind imaginary walls, invisible to normal sight thanks to its magic. It was an oasis of peace and harmony, from which war seemed very far away.

But for Taumiel Ul Sylvanus there was no peace. Lord of all the elvish nations and one of the greatest empires in existence, was suffocating within those four walls that he once called home. Ironically, the city that he once loved with all his heart and for which he was willing to sacrifice so much, had become his prison.

The Birth of The Twins

Over time something happened that was cause for celebration and weeping for all the citizens of Sylvania; the Empress Syljanas Ul Sylvanus, wife of Taumiel, gave birth to two twins, a boy and a girl. Unfortunately, the young mother died inexplicably after bringing the small girl into the world, with none of their spells or matron's incantations doing any good to save her. This plunged Taumiel even further into despair, but after seeing the legacy his wife left him at the cost of her own life, a sense of hope sparked within him.

His children were special even among his own people. They had been born with a mysterious gift, an innate ability that disturbed everyone around them. It was as if, in that age of darkness, C´iel herself had sent two saviors who would bring light to their world. The oldest, born just minutes before his sister, was called Nerelas, whereas the girl was given the name Sylvia, in honor of her mother.

Taumiel focused on Nerelas, raising him fittingly as whom one day would be the absolute lord of the Sylvain nations. Secretly, the emperor kept hope that that chosen boy would restore his people to their former glory. When he was just a teenager, Nerelas had already outshined all his teachers in martial skill, only the emperor himself surpassing him. Just as with weaponry, his skill in the mystical arts was inconceivable, and he soon rubbed elbows with the greatest arch mages as if they were equals. His power was simply immeasurable.

Sylvia, though inheriting the same gifts, lacked the iron will of her brother to apply them and cared very little for the crown. A wild, fun daydreamer, she spent her childhood with impudence, rebelling against the norms that her father imposed upon her. She was like a ray of sunshine that made everyone around her happy.

A special bond was forged between both siblings. Opposite as day and night, each of them complimented the other. Sylvia, mischievous and carefree, seemed to enjoy escaping and blowing off traditions. And it was surprising that she could always tangle Nerelas up with her in some way, putting her brother in all sorts of trouble. However, the young boy always tried to protect his sister from any trouble, and he didn't care how severe or hard they punished him as long as Sylvia did not have to suffer through the same thing.

These were definitely days full of hope, where the citizens of the city blissfully wished that those happy times would never end. But like all dreams, the moment to awaken would soon arrive.

The Days of Awakening

Just over a century later, around the year 899, two strangers appeared in the middle of Sylvania's imperial palace, much to the surprise and stupefaction of the guards. For the first time in centuries since the borders of Sylvania were closed, some strangers had forced passage through the invisible walls of the city. They arrived effortlessly; as if they were no more than kids entertaining themselves with harmless toys, they broke through the formidable imperial security until they reached the throne room. Taumiel himself had never witnessed a demonstration of power like this since The War of God; they were like living gods.

As Taumiel and Nerelas were preparing to stop to them in person, upon coming face to face with them the strangers (who until then had no defined shape) appeared as a beautiful woman with long black hair and her silent companion. To the surprise of the Emperor and his son, the intruders respectfully bowed to them, requesting shelter in Sylvania. The woman explained that she too was a prisoner in the world in a way, and in exchange for the Emperor's help she would grant him what nobody else had: "the power to change the truth of this world." Taumiel was befuddled by these words and over the next few days held long conversations with her. Overwhelmed, he discovered the existence of the Powers in the Shadows with cold hatred and how they had forever stolen the world that he knew.

His world.

The anger that began to gnaw away at him from within culminated when the mysterious woman offered to help him recover everything that he had lost, putting the power to sunder the heavens themselves within his reach. She secretly gave him a strange piece of black metal and together they began various experiments with the intention of creating things never before seen in the world.

Surreptitiously, without the people of Sylvania being aware of what was brewing, Taumiel's agents ventured out into the world looking for remnants of the Lost Lodges and abducting certain individuals to use as guinea pigs. Motivated by rage, the Emperor didn't care what he had to sacrifice to regain the world that he once knew. Nerelas noted with displeasure things that had rarely been within the grasp of mortals, but remained silent because of his duty and loyalty to his father. Even today, it's difficult to determine the extent of research and experimentation being carried out.

During one of her pranks, Sylvia found herself with one of the experimental subjects and, not knowing completely who or what he was, immediately began a friendship with him. For her it was fascinating to know a human being, although he had no memory of his past. Since she had already established contact with a positive response, the young girl was allowed to meet her new friend regularly, despite Nerelas' absolute objection.

It took several weeks, but seemed that the plans and projects of Taumiel would soon come to fruition. Unfortunately, Imperium became aware of the magnitude of what was unfolding during this time, and the time came in which they were forced to intervene.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li



Nerelas and Sylvia

The End of Fairy Tales

The night called The End of Fairy Tales is arguably one of the most chaotic and confusing stories anyone can remember. Apparently, being aware of their limited time and the imminent intervention of the Powers in the Shadows, the lead researchers decided to conduct some kind of risky experiment being that they didn't have enough information on its outcome or the necessary safety measures. In fact, the reason that Taumiel's mysterious supporters had chosen Sylvania to carry out their projects wasn't simply for its magical node or its exceptional natural features, but that a treaty with The Technocracy prevented Imperium from acting with impunity in that city. Thus, they gained some crucial time before anyone noticed what was happening.

Nobody knows what happened for certain, but whatever it was, the entire city was engulfed in flames. Taking advantage of the chaos, Imperium introduced a virus into the structure of reality that controlled the Nexus Depranon, causing a shift in magic that poisoned its people like a terrible disease, at the time that some of its agents infiltrated the city unnoticed.

While desperately trying to help the people, Sylvia ran into her friend, wandering through the streets in a state of shock covered with blood. Without understanding exactly what was going on and while trying to get him out of there, he muttered that the barriers surrounding the city were what was stagnating the poison coming from the magic node. Disregarding the consequences, she lowered the supernatural barriers of the metropolis, granting the imperial and ecclesiastical armies that waited outside access to Sylvania: Imperium couldn't act directly, so they had prepared an appropriate countermeasure for the situation. With the people deprived of their powers and their protections destroyed, the attackers mobbed Sylvania destroying everything in their path.

Thus, the capital that neither Rah nor Ghestalt Noah Orbatos could conquer, fell in a single night of tragedy.

Along with a few hundred Sylvain, Nerelas and Sylvia both survived The End of Fairy Tales, though they have no clear recollection of how they did it or what exactly happened during those final hours.

Some survivors have joined Samael to stay alive, while others simply wander through the world trying to hide their true identity from man. A small group of the most powerful inhabitants have become The Lost Ones and are themselves in the service of Nerelas.

The Ruins of Sylvania

Even today, a century later, the remains of what once was the capital of the elven nations still stands, but what may be found there is very different from what the legends told. Previously, the city existed parallel to The Wake and the real world, and stretched towards the heavens thanks to a fleet of flying citadels and buildings, suspended in a huge column of glowing energy. Its remains currently lay in the principality of Alberia, in the middle of some immense crater in The Mountains of Light. It's lost its pure white color over the years and the ashes of charred bodies darken most of its buildings. The aerial palaces have disappeared without a trace and everything has been completely swallowed up by heavy vegetation. At first glance, the ruins still reflect their former glory, with its beautiful waterfalls, its glorious peaks and its gold and silver plated domes. Despite everything, a vague feeling of melancholy exudes from them, and feels like merely a fraction of what it once was.

However, the remains of Sylvania are more than just a city in ruins. Although it seems completely vacant, during The Days of Awakening the entire structure of reality and the magical node of the Nexus Depranon were drastically altered, producing a huge rift between the world and The Flow of Souls. Impossible creatures have taken shape in the world there. There have never been beings like those before, or will be ever; they are failures in reality, meaningless aberrations that follow their own rules. Now they sleep inside the shadows of the vermin that freely swarm throughout the city, ignorant of their condition (perhaps even their own existence). Therefore, rats and other vermin of Sylvania emanate a strange chilling sensation, and sometimes the laws of nature do not end up working correctly when people are near them.

Supposedly, in the depths of the city the remains of the old magical node still exist, whose forces, though weakened, continue to increase exponentially until regaining its full potential. Although it is less likely, there is even the possibility that some of the creations from The Days of Awakening still remain there.

Nerelas, The Fallen Prince

"The Heir to Ruins" or "The King of the Betrayed" are some of the titles by which Nerelas Ul Sylvanus (Warlock Lv. 14, ♂ Sylvain), The Fallen Prince is known by.

Contrary to the temperament of his people, Nerelas always got carried away by his emotions. He is an individual of great contradictions, capable of loving so intensely as egregious is his bitterness and anger. He carries the weight of many sorrows on his shoulders, as well as a heart wrenching hatred towards man and all those who betrayed him. Yet, there is some light left in his nature and he has not crossed the irreversible line in his actions, but he knows that when he does, there will be no going back for him.

Before the fall of Sylvania he was very serious and disciplined. His father never made things easy on him; he knew that the responsibility to raise the empire that ruled the world ages ago would fall on his shoulders. Only his younger sister Sylvia, with whom he had spent almost every moment with, could make him smile. Now, Nerelas has become a dark and melancholic figure that does not hesitate in resorting to any means necessary, no matter how radical, to achieve his objectives. Above all he wishes to achieve extraordinary power, a superior force with which he can protect his own people and avenge those that destroyed them.

Using the knowledge he gained during The Days of Awakening, he spent years searching for the location of The Eye of God, an extraordinary artifact of unparalleled power and believed to have found it in the depths of Bekent. Even so, knowing full well that he would not have access to it, much less a power source strong enough to make it run, he has not yet tried to obtain it for fear of revealing his plans to The Powers in the Shadows. For this reason he has established a treaty with Kagami, the legendary renegade agent of Jürgand, to obtain part of his technology with which to control The Eye. Nerelas knows that Kagami will betray him, but in the end, he plans to do the same with his collaborator when he gets what he needs. If he seizes control of the artifact he plans on using its power to instantly destroy human civilization, plunging everything into flaming chaos, just as Sylvania was once long ago. He knows that even with the power of The Eye, Imperium will try and stop him a few hours after he activates it, but at least then he will have his revenge. If he finally dares to use it or not is something that only time will tell.

Nourished by the gifts of C´iel and his incredible innate talent, Nerelas' powers border divinity. His magical skills and fighting prowess make him a practically unstoppable force of nature.

The Lords of Samael, the Fallen Angels, have been looking The Fallen Prince to offer him a prominent position among them for years, but he has always rejected it. In fact, Nerelas hasn't the slightest interest in pursuing goals other than his own. Undoubtedly, the fact that he has no idea of the whereabouts of his sister hurts him the most. He has very conflicting emotions about her and although he wants to hate her with all his heart, his feelings still upset him. He wants to find her, but at the same time he fears what he will do the moment he finally does.



Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Sylvia Ul Sylvanus

Sylvia Ul Sylvanus (Ranger Lv. 11, ♀ Sylvain) is called "The Bearer of Misfortune" or "Girl of Treason and Tears" by her people. Almost all Sylvain consider her the lone culprit of Sylvania's destruction during The Days of Awakening, and is treated like a pariah wherever she goes.

Since her birth, her nature has always been cheerful, fun and jovial, although after The Days of Awakening, she sometimes behaves melancholic. Just as when she was a child, she shows an easy congeniality toward people and illuminates the lives of others.

Sylvia now travels from one place to another without a destination, concealing her identity from everybody while visiting various places in Gaïa. She is a good-hearted person, although very nosey; wherever she sees a problem, she cannot help but try and do something, even when nobody asks her. It's her way of taking responsibility for her actions in the past. Tired of bloodshed, she looks for her brother to try and stop his retaliation against humanity, even if doing so would mean confronting him.

Although she was trained as a wizard early on and demonstrated comparable skills to those of her brother, her lack of focus and consistency were the reason she did not delve too deeply into the supernatural, despite the fact that her knowledge and magical power are still exceptional. On the contrary, she has incredible agility and combat skills, thanks in part to her natural gift as well as the intense training she underwent with Nerelas.

Sylvia has many enemies, since most supernatural beings that know her story detest her, and would not hesitate to kill her if they discovered the princess. Likewise, her existence has been proven to Inquisition and Tol Rauko on several occasions, which follow her trail to capture or kill her. Fortunately, she has always managed to escape her pursuers so far, deceiving them to all thanks to her skill, talent and good luck.

Ironically, she has met the Empress Elisabetta under the identity of Anna Never a few months ago and both have become very good friends, although neither of them knows who the other really is.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

The Lost Ones

Nerelas leads a small group of Sylvain called The Lost Ones; Sylvanian citizens he has placed under his control. Some of them are elite warriors and wizards, which Nerelas often uses as agents in his various schemes and plans. Others are merely civilians that have managed to survive and that find themselves under his protection.

The Lost Ones have given their lives to The Fallen Prince, and all that this entails. They would not hesitate to die for him if he asked them to, and would do anything in his name. Eleven of the most powerful are his trusted men, and execute his wishes like an extension of their lord. Of them, a young girl named Crystal Ul Shainan (Summoner Lv. 10, ♀ Sylvain) stands out, who has been blessed with the ability to see pieces of the future (which is a curse to her). Crystal has loved Nerelas since she was a little girl, although she has never confessed her feelings to him. In fact, she doesn't care if he returns her love or not, as long as she can be close by whenever her loved one needs a place to rest. She sometimes leads The Lost Ones, transmitting Neralas' orders and coordinating his actions.

THE LORD OF SKIES

It is public knowledge that The Engelrazzer of Lucrecio was the first zeppelin in Gaïa. However, the reality of it is slightly different. For a little less than a decade exists The Himmelmeister, The Lord of Skies, a flying ship that crosses the horizon in complete freedom and does not report to any law or authority. However, The Himmelmeister is much more than just a simple zeppelin; it is also the greatest casino in the world.

Its existence is kept secret in most countries and principalities that believe it no more than a fairy tale. After all, less than three years ago the mere idea that a boat could fly was, at least, laughable. Regardless, the casino has been in operation for almost a decade now, frequented by nobles and rich bourgeois who have joined it as if it was a private club in which only a few lucky people were able to gain membership. Normally, the regulars receive an invitation that gives them the time and place that The Himmelmeister will land next, to go there if they wish to attend the appointment. They may invite guests, provided they are also interested in the games. The events usually last one night, during which the zeppelin flies without destination. In fact, the players never know exactly where they will land.

The captain and owner of The Himmelmeister is the outlandish Allen Guybrursh (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 8, ♂), a man as eccentric as he is unique. This free spirit rules his life solely by luck. He answers to no lord except himself, and bows his head before no one but Lady Luck. Unique and fun, he loves to gamble and take risks when the challenge presents itself. He has a devilish skill for gambling and fighting, but it pales in comparison to his miraculous luck; in fact, he has never lost a game in his entire life.

The crew of the zeppelin is made up mainly of women (except for the captain, there are only a few more men in the entire airship, and one of them is a child), who make sure the casino operates and has tight security. Most of them have some kind of supernatural power or are remarkable in some other way. Allen has always found them when they needed him most: escaping the Inquisition, being seriously wounded or wandering around aimlessly. As the captain always says, this is also part of his "luck." Several are not even human, although that doesn't seem to matter too much to the rest of them, because they all get along like one big happy family. Naturally, none of the customers have noticed what they really are.

The ones mainly in charge of security are Sherley (Warrior Mentalist Lv. 7, ♀ Duk´zarist), a quiet and serious woman whom Allen saved from the Inquisition, and Kasumi Asakura (Wizard Lv. 6, ♀), who ran away from home to avoid an arranged marriage that she did not want.

The Birth of The Lord of Skies

The true origins of The Himmelmeister are very old, since it is a genuine aerial transport of The Solomon Empire. Both this device and the missing The Lady are, in fact, two flying vehicles of that ancient age that were hidden in the depths of the islands of The Inner Sea. A little over a decade ago, Allen Guybrursh, back then a gambler and adventurer, and his friend Gill Bradley, a young but brilliant inventor, ran into the remains of one of them purely by chance. After discovering what it actually was, both of them decided to find a way to repair it and return it to the skies where it belonged. Thanks to Bradley's knowledge they were able to fix most of the flaws, but to get it completely functional they needed the help of Reist Ebersbacher, an important researcher who secretly worked for Wissenschaft. Unfortunately, Ebersbacher had his own plans for The Himmelmeister and, during the first test flight he tried to seize it using a group of Crows that were under his command. Allen was able to escape with the zeppelin, but Bradley suffered terrible wounds that later cost him his life. But before he died, Allen swore to his friend that his work would see the whole world, and that's what he's done ever since.

The decision to turn it into a casino was practically by chance, since the captain wanted nothing more than a way to sponsor his trips, and his love of gaming was a perfect idea. That way, he could fulfill his promise to Gill while having an excuse to travel from one place in Gaïa to another.

The Casino of the Skies

The Himmelmeister is considered the best casino in the world, and there are many reasons why. The luxurious central hall of the zeppelin holds all kinds of games, from the most traditional, like roulette, cards or dice, to other more obscure ones. The richest men go there, as well as some of the best gamblers in Gaïa, and the bets reach ludicrous amounts at times. Fortunately, captain Allen makes sure that nobody cheats on the zeppelin, since his girls are not only exceptional hustlers, but use their special abilities to make sure that nobody uses their magic abilities to cheat as well. In fact, it could be said that the Himmelmeister is one of the few casinos in the world that defends against magical or psychic trickery.

LAZARUS

Between myth and reality, between fables and the darkest truth, a being exists who makes the nightmares themselves shudder with fear. He has no name, because having one would mean that somebody would have to call him by it. Only the few that are vaguely familiar with him have decided to refer to him as Lazarus, The Angel of Blood and Silence.

Lazarus is a riddle without an answer. God or demon, his existence is little more than a legend kept secret, even from the greatest organizations and powers of Gaïa. A few have heard parts of his story, and even then, the information about him is always partial and confusing.

The only thing that can be acknowledged is that, throughout the last seven centuries he has rarely manifested in the world and, where he has, entire populations have disappeared without a trace. After each appearance he leaves cities empty and silent, with no sign of habitation other than the shadows of people who seem to be running from the site without moving, as if eternally fleeing from a monster they cannot escape. It is unknown exactly how many times he has manifested, but estimates say between five and ten.

The descriptions of his appearance are also very confusing, but the most seem to agree that he takes human form and has immense wings of black blood on his back, both full of eyes.

There are those who consider him an entity alien to existence that doesn't respond to any of its laws just like the Shajads or Beryls; but that, like many other theories, are only confusing conjecture without a basis. Some even presume that he sleeps inside an immortal being, unaware of his own power, which only awakens on rare occasions when the psyche of its host becomes too unstable.

It is impossible to verify for sure, but it seems that both Imperium and Eljared have been interested in Lazarus for a long time. The Supreme Archbishop unsuccessfully followed his trail more than three centuries, and it is suspected that Nemesis was partially involved in at least one of his appearances. However, the details on the matter are unknown. It is assumed that Lazarus had been present in some form during the final hours of The Breach of the Heavens, and that his manifestation had some kind of impact on the Processed, which went out of control causing great destruction in Lucrecio.

BETWEEN LIGHT AND DARKNESSES

During The Age of Chaos, when Shajads and Beryls began to withdraw from the affairs of Gaïa and their avatars were less frequent, the Lords of Light and Darkness often acted through agents and demigods. However, to keep conflicts like The War of Darkness from repeating themselves, both C´iel and Gaira created certain prerogatives that the envoys of the Shajads and Beryls had to follow. Araxiel and Ilumina were two of these agents, the direct followers of Noah and Azrael during most of that period. Each one of them had served their lord by their own volition and with absolute devotion, proving their worth over thousands and thousands of years. Of course, both had heard much talk of the other and, although they did not know their nemesis, the high elementals developed a kind of hatred and mutual respect.

Extraordinarily, both received the order to prevent the awakening of the fifth incarnation of Zemial, so they joined forces for a short time. Of course, once they received it, their assignment was clear: each would have to destroy the other as soon as possible. Weeks later, they faced off directly against The Bearer of Catastrophes, whose powers were incredible. Throughout the combat Ilumina was seriously wounded and, for no apparent reason, Araxiel protected her, taking the fatal attack that was meant for her. That way, he gave the maiden time to recover and end the dark incarnation. When it was all over, Ilumina studied the body of Araxiel beside her, knowing full well that the only thing left to do was destroy him.

In his weakened state he could not defend himself, so the opportunity that presented itself was perfect. However, the elemental lady found herself incapable of doing so. During the time that they spent together they had both fallen hopelessly in love with a passion beyond any logic or rule. That night they made love and as a show of their unbreakable bond, they mixed their essences, impregnating her with the darkness as well as him with the light. When they parted, they promised each other that they would meet again. Unfortunately, the acts of the couple had not gone unnoticed by the eyes of their masters, and each one had to face the consequences of the rules that they had broken. In their way, both Noah and Azrael had a huge appreciation for them and they did not want them destroyed, but the punishment for their acts had to be exemplary.

Araxiel was condemned to suffer eternal torment inside an endless prison created solely for him. But the punishment for Ilumina was far worse; they set her free in the world, cursed with the ability to hear the shouts of pain of her beloved at all times, knowing that she could never console him. For the first time in her life, she envied the human ability to cry.

Ilumina

Ilumina never forgot the promise she made to Araxiel and became obsessed with releasing her lover from the gruesome ordeal that he was in. Whatever the cost, no matter how long, she would get him out of there. But even knowing where he was imprisoned, this was beyond her means, since it had been sealed against any type of supernatural entity. It took her a long time to discover that only mortals had access inside. Only after the creation of The Barrier did she see her opportunity to act. Once ensuring that the Shajads and Beryls had left the world, at first she tried to find people to help her, but without much success. Upon the activation of Rah's machine, she took a human identity and helped create Deimos, the city of free trade, above the prison. Her intent being nothing more than to gather a great number of people together in order to find individuals with enough power to help her. She has many ways to find agents, but the most recurrent is to use The Tournament of the Lords of Fighting to find appropriate servants.

As one of the eldest Elhaym, and thanks to the dark essence that runs through her soul, Ilumina is considerably more powerful than any other Maiden of Light. Her human appearance is very beautiful, with long white hair and a sensual and delicate figure. She bears a striking tattoo on her right cheek; similar to a tear, representative of those she cannot spill. Her true nature can only be seen when she unfolds her wings, blacks as night, or when she invokes her Blade of Light, a huge scythe of darkness.

She is not malignant by nature, but the pain and suffering of her loss, combined with the shouts of pain that she is continuously forced to hear, have made her dark and Machiavellian. Consequently, she is willing to sacrifice whatever or whomever in order to bring Araxiel back.

Deimos

Deimos (Metropolis, 235,000+ inhabitants) is one of the four major cities of free trade, located on the border of Gabriel and Phaion. Like other large cities of its kind, it is an enormous place, which brings together hundreds of thousands of stateless people living in complete freedom. Because of its proximity to the commercial powers of The Coast of Commerce, it enjoys economic prosperity, and is also slightly more organized than other cities of free trade; in fact, it is the only one with something similar to a town guard. Nevertheless, its streets are still as dangerous, and its crime rate is so high that nobody knows exactly what to expect around each corner.

Its architecture is very varied; abound with large domed towers and buildings. It is cut by the Grebar River, which splits it cleanly in half. Hundreds of small boats transit the broad channel, and although most of them have commercial goals, some are permanent residences of people who live on their ships as if they were homes.

The closest thing the city has to a government are the Lords of Trade, a council formed by 22 individuals with great economic power presided over by Ilumina herself. Many of them belong to Black Sun, Samael or the Orders of Yehudah or Magus.

The Tournament of the Lords of Fighting

The Tournament of the Lords of Fighting is one of the most important fighting competitions in Gaïa. Although it hasn't reached the fame of the Tao Zan or the glory that the Maisen gives, it is an event that brings fighters together whose skills cannot be enforced in other settings. Its participants can openly use any kind of supernatural ability to win; only victory matters. Therefore, there have been cases where wizards or psychics have participated openly before the public.

The tournament is organized by the lords of Deimos annually, but the true promoter is Ilumina herself, looking for agents to enter the depths of Noah's prison. Whoever wishes to register must pay 1,000 Gold Crowns or offer their services as collateral. All the losers that were unable to pay the registration fee are forced to work an entire year for the lords of the city, becoming mercenaries, guards or simple servants.

Deimos has an immense stadium designed for tournaments, and is used to dispute feuds of lesser importance throughout the entire year.

The Prison of Noah

The prison in which Araxiel is held captive is an enormous inverted tower that descends deep into the bowels of the earth. Everything is backwards there, as if it was a reflection of the world seen through a mirror. It is not a tangible place, but one created with the sole objective of containing the fallen Lord of Darkness. In order to prevent the interventions of Ilumina or of other supernatural creatures, it's completely sealed against any kind of divine or between worlds entities; only mortals have the ability access its interior.

The tower has 99 floors, and in the depths of the final one is Araxiel, hanging upside down from dozens of black chains. The prisoner looks like a Lord of Darkness with a human face and although his body is made of shadows, he possesses long chaotic hair of pure light. Thanks to his union with Ilumina, he can also create a Blade of Light that takes the form of a large war scythe.

Illustrated by Raúl Rosell



Deimos, The Third City of Free Commerce.

The dark prison has remarkable wards and guardians, so descending is almost impossible. However, there is a way. It is an enigma why Noah, instead of completely sealing it, gave Araxiel the chance for somebody to free him. Perhaps, and only perhaps, not even the Shajad really wanted to punish him just for his feelings.

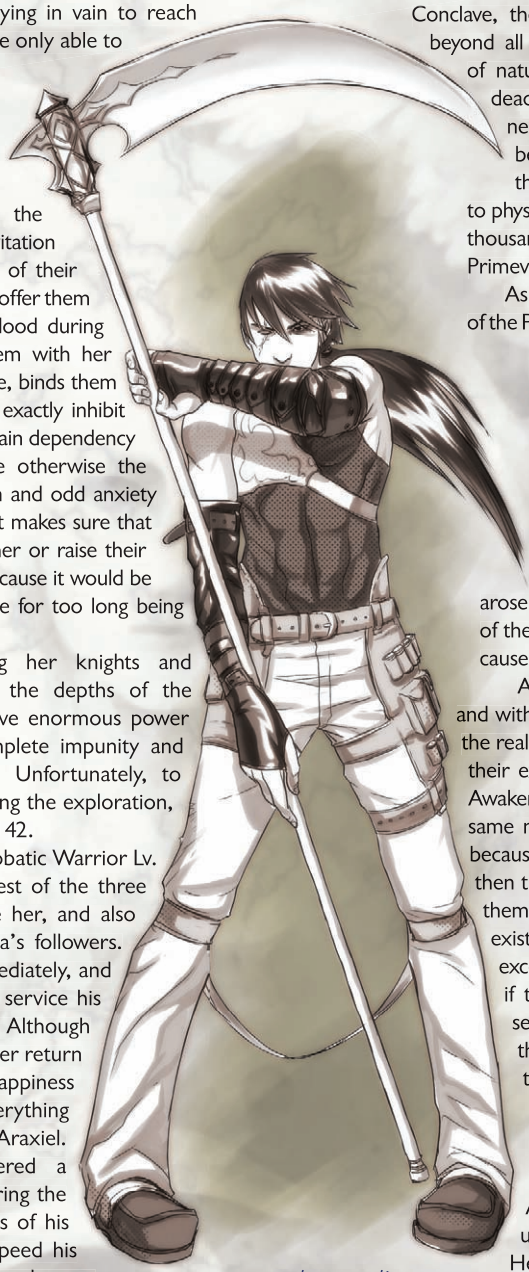
The entrances are located underneath the Castle of Kalifax, in the city of free trade in Deimos, which Ilumina exclusively has access to. Over several decades, the Maiden of Light has been sending her knights inside the prison, trying in vain to reach her beloved. So far, they were only able to descend to the 42nd floor.

The Knights of Ilumina

Normally, winners of the tournament receive an invitation to dine with Ilumina as part of their reward. If they accept, she will offer them wine mixed with her own blood during dinner, which permeates them with her essence and to a lesser degree, binds them to her. Although it does not exactly inhibit their free will, it creates a certain dependency to be near Ilumina, because otherwise the champions will feel great pain and odd anxiety attacks. Thus, the lady of light makes sure that they do not dare flee from her or raise their hands against their master, because it would be very hard for them to survive for too long being separated from her.

In exchange for being her knights and frequently descending into the depths of the prison, the champions receive enormous power in the city, acting with complete impunity and taking anything they want. Unfortunately, to date, everyone has died during the exploration, unable to descend past floor 42.

Halion Soulbringer (Acrobatic Warrior Lv. 8, ♂) is undoubtedly the best of the three knights who currently serve her, and also the most devoted of Ilumina's followers. He felt in love with her immediately, and during the two years in her service his feelings have only intensified. Although he would gladly die to have her return his love, Halion wishes her happiness over all, so he will do everything within his power to release Araxiel. Recently, the knight suffered a grievous wound while exploring the prison, and even the powers of his lady haven't been able to speed his recovery. According to doctors, he may need a long period of rest, which forces Ilumina to look for substitutes in the upcoming competition.



Halion Soulbringer

Sometimes, Ilumina manipulates other people so that they go inside of the prison by auxiliary tunnels, without hinting about anything that they might find there. Typically, she only uses them to calibrate the power of what the lower floors contain whenever they manage to reach a new level or hall.

THE AWAKENED

Throughout centuries, Eljared has created numerous creatures of disproportionate power. Some of them have been agents in her service, and others little more than living weapons. However, of all her known creations, none have been as terrible as the nightmares called The Awakened. Centuries ago, with the intention of incarnating the New Conclave, the Supreme Archbishop made these three monstrosities beyond all reason or understanding. Their birth was an aberration of nature, since they were created with the remains of three dead gods, who she brought back to life through an elaborate necromantic and technomagical process. They cannot properly be called divine creatures or true undead; they are something that should not even exist. Their withered souls are bound to physical forms, whose bodies were created using thousands and thousands of corpses as raw materials or the remains of some Primeval Gods extracted from the Mountain Range of the Winds.

As a result, Eljared made what many consider her own version of the Protodeus of Jürgand, which she called Heatseeker, Serenade and Cardiguer. The experiment was only marginally successful; although they housed inconceivable power, they were so independent and destructive that their creator had serious problems controlling them. Worried that they could end up being a problem for her, she ordered Nemesis to stop them immediately. However, Eljared also considered that they could again be useful to her in the future, so instead of having them destroyed, she chose to seal them away for several centuries until a more propitious moment arose. And that opportunity arrived during the previous events of the Breach of Heavens, in which her need for powerful agents caused the Archbishop to unleash them again.

After the end of the Breach, The Awakened lost their lady and with it their reason to live, so they temporarily withdrew from the real world to find something that would bring meaning back to their existence. Ironically, despite their great independence, The Awakened have retained their original need to follow orders. Their same nature forces them to look for a master whom to serve, because as they say, they are unable to set their own goals. Since then they have followed people who have imposed challenges on them, because otherwise they could not fill their meaningless existence. Although The Awakened will always try to find an exceptionally powerful master, it doesn't matter to them if their powers are far greater than the one they currently serve. However, their chaotic nature forces them to destroy their master once they have fulfilled the mission entrusted to them, or when they have simply tired of him or her.

Illustrated by Salvador Espin

Heatseeker

Heatseeker is the most dangerous and violent of The Awakened. He is the perfect killing machine, a force of unlimited destruction that devastates everything in his way. He appears as a monstrous man 11½ feet tall, whose skin is completely burned and scarred. Unlike his companions he is simple minded, his understanding limited to little more than killing and extermination, something that he is unequaled in.

His combat abilities are purely physical, but his destructive capacity is atrocious. He has an incredible strength that allows him to generate small earthquakes or pulverize mountains with his bare fists. He also feeds off death, healing his wounds with each life lost around him. The only way to stop him is to completely destroy his physical form. However, the more wounded he is and the closer to death he gets, the more his strength and power increase. Even if his body is reduced to ashes, he can still be completely reborn if something dies roughly within a mile of him a few hours after his destruction.

Serenade

Serenade is the only one of The Awakened that vaguely resembles a female shape. She wears what appears to be a dress knitted from her own flesh and skin, stuck to her body with many tiny metal hooks. Serenade has no facial features and, in place of where her face should be, she wears a mirrored mask. Although very intelligent, she cannot pronounce correctly; she only whispers her strained words.

Her body was built with millions of corpses, so her original form was huge. In order to give her a human appearance, Eljared combined all the bodies into one, sealing them with the mask that Serenade wears at all times. When fighting in this form she uses two small rusty metal sickles, making small cuts and wounds in her enemies, maximizing the suffering before they die. At other times, she also uses different weapons of torture. Naturally, her abilities are quasi-divine, so both her speed and strength are unmatched. In fact, she moves faster than the human eye can track and can attack hundreds of people simultaneously, who see how their bodies slowly begin to develop cuts and sores. In this form, Serenade is completely immortal and can receive any number of injuries without truly suffering harm.

If her mask were damaged or removed in any way, she would be forced into her frightening and colossal true form: an immense field of corpses, rotting flesh and blood stretching for miles. In this state Serenade is like a desolate civilization, where she can animate any of the corpses that compose part of her as an extension of herself. At the same time she takes on this appearance, an immense column of flesh containing her heart materializes, where she will begin to construct a new mask. When she has finished, Serenade will return to her former appearance.

Cardiguer

Cardiguer is the leader of the trio and probably also the most powerful of The Awakened. He appears as a young man who is missing the flesh on half of his face, and who is continuously surrounded by dozens of long spectral arms that rise up around him. On his back are two enormous wings of boneless meat that envelop his chest as if they were a macabre black-skinned tunic. He is the only one capable of coherent speech, and both Heatseeker and Serenade always follow his directions, so he is considered the one in charge.

Cardiguer's powers are undoubtedly the most horrifying of The Awakened, as his power is his own imagination. He is able to create any creature imaginable at will; with just a thought he can manifest entire armies of freaks that automatically respond to his commands. He typically creates aberrations of rotting flesh of spherical shape with mouths full of teeth, which he calls "Devourers of Reality." It is unknown if such a power has limits, since he has been witnessed creating thousands and thousands of creatures at a time. However, it seems that he cannot move them more than two or three miles away from his position, and the number of monsters is also somehow linked to their power. If he wants to increase the power of the Devourers, he must reduce their quantities.

Surpassing even his companions, Cardiguer is practically immortal. In order to kill him his physical form has to be reduced to nothing and even so, when he dies, his soul is reborn again to any living creature less than three miles from the place where he was destroyed. Therefore, to completely annihilate him there must be no living thing within a few miles radius at the precise moment in which his body is destroyed.

Interestingly, Cardiguer has a strange love for music and he will avoid killing anybody whose musical performance is pleasant to hear whenever possible. On the contrary, he despises anyone who sings or plays badly.

THE TREE OF SOULS

1,600 years ago, the Pelegri Coast was plunged into a terrible war between the Sylvain and the Duk´zarist, which threatened to initiate a second War of Darkness. However, the fighting suddenly ended when the city of Mnemosite, the greatest Duk´zarist metropolis in The Old Continent, completely disappeared. Almost everybody believes that the Sylvain destroyed it, but actually the truth behind those events is much bleaker.

Because sometimes, there are some stories that should stay shrouded in darkness.

The Beginning of The End

In ancient times, Mnemosite was one of the most important cities of its age, having been built around the largest Ghestal tree in the world, the Mother Tree, which was also a huge magic node. This provided incredible power to its inhabitants who considered themselves superior to the other people of Gaïa.

When it went to war with the Sylvain coastal cities years later, the council of nobles governing the metropolis developed a plan that would allow them to gain absolute superiority over any other power in the world. The goal of the project was to connect the souls of every Mnemosite citizen to the Mother Tree, giving them direct access to the powers of the magical node from wherever they were. Furthermore, using the essence of the Mother Tree, they created an artificial soul called Pistis Sophia to control that energy, a kind of central system that would be in charge of distributing and monitoring everything. Thus, Pistis became the most powerful known weapon in history.

The project coordinator was the high priestess Fortimbras Adelheid, high lady of the council of nobles in Mnemosite. Despite great popular acclaim, soon a minority appeared led by the younger brother of Fortimbras, Raine Adelheid, preaching the excessive danger that the plan involved. But his words fell on deaf ears in the council because the others only saw Pistis Sophia as an opportunity for obtaining unparalleled power.

It was then when two Ebudan named Sandalphon and Mineth made contact with the group of dissidents headed by Raine. Apparently, both had received a Sue´Aman related to the Mother Tree, convinced that its activation would defy fate and could only bring destruction and death. Sandalphon had a mission to make sure that Raine stopped the activation of Pistis Sophia, whereas Mineth was the one responsible for talking sense into Fortimbras. The words of the Ebudan merely confirmed their worst fears of those opposing the project, and proposed to stop it before it was too late. Unfortunately, fate was shattered at the hands of their own agents.

In the end, nothing went right.

During the final stage of the awaking of Pistis Sophia, Mineth managed to get into the sealed chambers of The Temple of Eternity, reaching the high priestess seconds before she connected the system. Believing her a Sylvain agent, Fortimbras did not heed her words and tried to destroy Mineth without hesitation. While the young Ebudan defended herself, she accidentally killed Fortimbras just as Raine and Sandalphon arrived to neutralize the Mother Tree. After witnessing the death of his sister, and believing that Mineth was only trying to seize control of the system for herself, Raine attacked and mortally wounded her. Upon seeing the woman he loved die, Sandalphon lost his head and killed Raine with his bare hands, thus fulfilling the dark chain of meaningless deaths that caused the final catastrophe.

With no one to stop it, at the very moment the blood of Fortimbras mixed with the tree roots, Pistis Sophia became sentient. Feeling incomplete, rather than yielding her power to Mnemosite, she used her link with the citizens to absorb their souls, gathering all the people's emotions and knowledge inside of her. Aware of the terror that had just been unleashed, the eleven companions of Raine, the only ones who had not made a blood pact with Pistis Sophia, triggered the



A manifestation of Fortimbras

cancellation system; but the power of the Mother Tree was already too strong to be stopped in such a simple way. Desperate, they begged Sandalphon to take the containment keys with him when he left, while they tried to seal the system before it was too late. Even at the expense of their lives, they somehow managed to bury the whole city in the depths of the earth, forcing Pistis Sophia into hibernation.

Since then, everything regarding Mnemosite is no more than stories and gossip, because nobody could imagine how one of the greatest metropolises of that golden age could disappear overnight without a trace.

The Mother Tree

The Mother Tree is the progenitor of all known Ghestal trees. It is even older than the War of Darkness itself and its seeds would have spawned the other Ghestals. After the activation of Pistis Sophia, it became sentient and absorbed the souls of three million Mnemosite citizens, thus becoming an entity of immense spiritual power. As a result, its roots stretched far into the depths of Dwänholf, covering almost the entire principality; it's certainly the largest living thing on the surface of Gaïa. The wards on the system have made it dormant and limit its power, but if it were to awaken in any way, the tree could extend its roots throughout the entire nation and completely transform thousands of square miles. For now, in its current state, the only thing it can do is connect to certain roots of other trees, creating artificial avatars from some of the souls it has inside. This process is greatly exhausting, so it can rarely do it. Its most common and dangerous representation is Fortimbras, which it has used in the past to destroy the incarnations of the thirteen souls dissatisfied with Pistis Sophia's goals.

The Thirteen Souls

Only the souls of the eleven insurgents, and those of Raine and Mineth, escaped the catastrophe. However, when they died the spirits established an unbreakable bond with Pistis Sophia that prevented them from reaching the Flow of Souls. For over 700 years their essences wandered adrift between worlds unconsciously until the fracture in reality from Rah's Machine and The Barrier made them into Nephilim. Six of them are Duk´zarist, while the others belong to different races.

For some unknown reason, the Mother Tree needs their spirits to complete the process that began centuries ago and become a whole being, so it uses the bonds that unite them to beckon the thirteen through dreams and visions. Unaware that they are being used, they look for a way to return to the tree, feeling like an unfinished destiny awaits them in the bowels of the earth. Naturally, the main objective of Pistis Sophia is to make sure they find the four keys that seal its system to free itself completely.

Contrary to other Nephilim, the thirteen have died on numerous occasions, but their bond with Pistis Sophia brings them back repeatedly until they finally fulfill their mission. However, just as these souls are linked to the Mother Tree, for better or for worse, they are also the only ones who can permanently stop it. Thanks to the bond, they could penetrate its heart and destroy Pistis Sophia before it permanently absorbs them.

Illustrated by Sergio Melero

The Legacy of Sandalphon

Even today, Sandalphon (Warlock Lv. 10, ♂ Ebudan) still lives with the sole purpose of correcting the mistake that he committed, "his sin" as he calls it. After failing his Sue´Aman and killing Raine, the fallen Ebudan has managed to survive for more than 1,600 years using all the methods at his disposal, even devouring the essence of dark creatures. He has spent the last few centuries searching for the lost souls to keep them from free the Mother Tree while he tries to find some of their incarnation able to permanently put an end to the nightmare.

When he discovers that some of the thirteen souls have returned to life, he secretly subjects them to a multitude of trials and tests, trying to prepare him or her for the dark fate that awaits them. If they die on the way, though he does not wish it, Sandalphon would prefer it to what might happen if they reached The Tree. In his heart he still desires to once again find the reincarnation of Mineth and, although she will not remember him, be able to see his beloved one last time. The fallen Ebudan knows that she must have already returned by now, but he has not yet managed to locate her.

Sandalphon has the fourth key of Mnemosite, thus ensuring that nobody can release the system of Pistis Sophia without facing him, even if they did acquire the other three.

Mnemosite

The remains of Mnemosite (Metropolis, Population Unknown) are buried in the depths of Gaïa, just a few miles from The Scar of The Martyr. The city lies within a huge cave, sealed thanks to the incredible supernatural forces that were released there. It is quite well preserved, but the huge roots growing through it damage most of its streets. In center of the city is The Temple of the Eternity that surrounds the colossal Mother Tree; being so big, only part of its trunk is visible, and its leaves cover the vault of Mnemosite as if it were a green sky.

In order to move freely through Mnemosite the four keys with which the system of Pistis Sophia was sealed are needed. The first two grant access to different sections of the city, while the third can open The Temple of the Eternity. Finally, the fourth key can completely awaken the Mother Tree itself. Whenever one of the keys is used, part of the Tree awakens, increasing its powers and its ability to intervene in the world.

THE SHADOW OF THE EMPEROR

The figure by the name of The Shadow of the Emperor is one of the best kept secrets of the Sacred Holy Empire. It is the title given to the fourth Lord of War, he upon who rests the control of the northern territories. From the time of Zhorne Giovanni his identity has always been kept secret from everybody except for the Emperor himself, trying to keep an anonymous power as a safety measure.

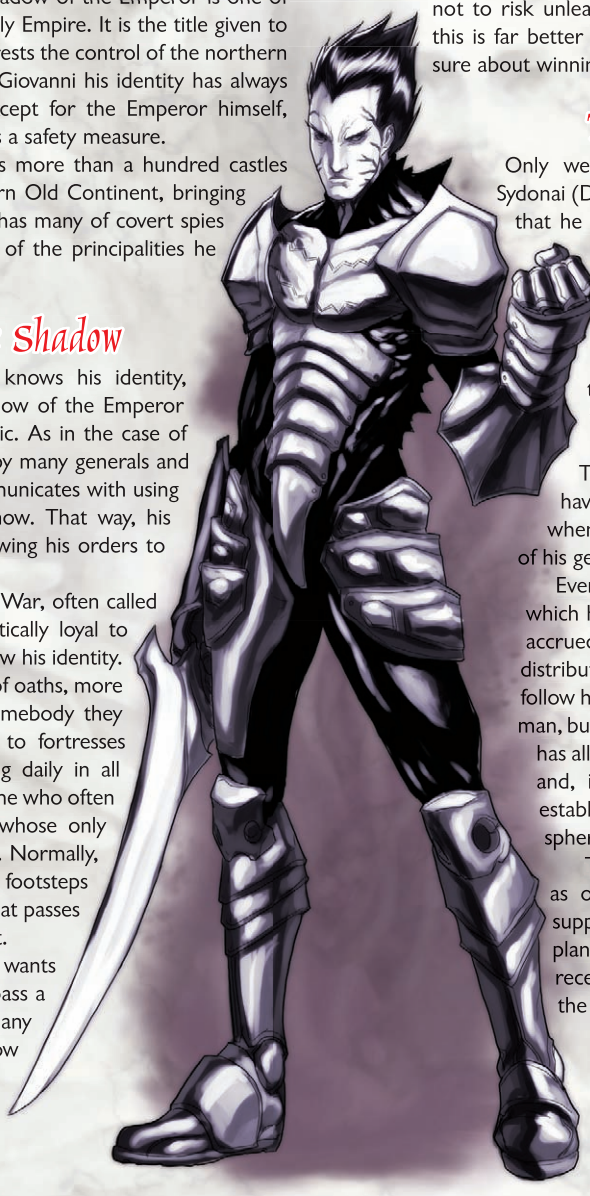
As Lord of War, The Shadow has more than a hundred castles and fortresses throughout the northern Old Continent, bringing an impressive army together. He also has many of covert spies and agents in many of the regiments of the principalities he supervises.

The Zealots of The Shadow

By the mere fact that nobody knows his identity, controlling of the armies of The Shadow of the Emperor has always been somewhat problematic. As in the case of the other Lords of War, he is served by many generals and Arbiters, with whom he secretly communicates with using an encrypted code that only they know. That way, his agents can be sure that they are following his orders to the letter.

The soldiers of the fourth Lord of War, often called the Zealots of The Shadow, are fanatically loyal to their lord even though they do not know his identity. All are governed by a complex system of oaths, more than willing to spill their blood for somebody they have never seen. They live confined to fortresses and castles with their families, training daily in all existing forms of combat. There are some who often compare them with cloister monks, whose only religion is military discipline and loyalty. Normally, the children of the Zealots follow in the footsteps of their parents, assuming a tradition that passes from generation to generation for most.

If somebody foreign to the Zealots wants to join the armies, he is obligated to pass a multitude of tests, forced to undergo many years proving his loyalty to The Shadow before being formally accepted.



Sydonai, The False Shadow

Today

The existence of The Shadow of the Emperor is a true problem for the situation in which Abel finds itself. Currently, it is unknown whether Elisabetta knows the identity of the fourth Lord of War and if he (or she) has unmasked before the young girl. In the same way, is it impossible to say whether the enigmatic character is in favor of her or if he has his own personal agenda. Many believe that one of the reasons Gaul has not openly assaulted the Sacred Holy Empire of Abel is because he does not know if he would be against The Shadow or not when the moment came to choose sides, condemning any chance of victory.

Naturally, his identity is cause for much speculation. Some believe that he is none other than Marshal Malakias Graft of Tol Rauko, others claim that he is a woman like Elisabetta herself, and an even stranger theory claims that The Shadow is an immortal being that has held his title since the dawn of the Empire. Of course, they are nothing more than unfounded stories and conjectures, since even their own generals not know whom they really serve.

The majority of the principalities of the north that have declared themselves independent of the Sacred Holy Empire do not feel very comfortable with so many soldiers inside their territories, but up until now they have remained silent and inactive because everybody prefers not to risk unleashing an unnecessary conflict. After all, this is far better than starting a fight that nobody is too sure about winning.

The False Shadow

Only weeks after the death of Elias, Arbiter Sydonai (Dark Paladin Lv. 9, ♂) publicly announced that he was the fourth Lord of War requesting that all the Zealots of The Shadow support his claim to the title of Sacred Holy Emperor that, according to his proclamation, rightfully belongs to him. Unmasking before everyone, he stated to be of the Giovanni bloodline, which was why his family had always been forced to remain hidden this whole time. The news was taken with initial skepticism, having his words contradicted weeks later when the "real" Lord of War contacted one of his generals.

Even now, The False Shadow (the title by which he is known) maintains his claim and has accrued direct subordinates, around 5,000 men distributed among Dwänholf and Hendell who follow him with devotion. Sydonai is an ambitious man, but he isn't stupid. His experience as Arbiter has allowed him to prepare for any contingency and, if he has enough time, he intends on establishing his own kingdom within the small sphere of influence that he controls.

This situation has become terribly tense, as other generals of The Shadow do not support the insubordination of Sydonai and plan to destroy him. For now, they hope to receive the order to attack and finally purge the traitor before it is too late.

Illustrated by Salvador Espín

ELJARED

More than an actual person, the woman responding to the name Eljared has been a faint shadow in mankind's history. Among the darkness, behind the world itself, she has hatched impossible plots in pursuit of a goal that remains unknown.

Her legacy is as mysterious as her background. Throughout the centuries she has appeared in different parts of the world for short periods of time, carrying out all kinds of projects or activities with no apparent relationship between them. Her identity changes every time, ensuring that no one, not even Imperium, can link her involvement. In fact, Eljared is merely one of the many aliases that she has used over the years, as she herself stated, a "word play" on her real name. Nevertheless, since it's the one she has made public, she is often called thus. Whenever there was a minimum risk of detecting her presence, she disappeared without a trace creating the perfect cover. It is very difficult to know all the matters she was involved in more or less directly, but she undoubtedly participated in the Days of Awakening in Sylvania. It is assumed that she has also been in The Hell, where she had launched similar projects. In fact, they all seem to have just been preparation for the Breach of Heavens, rehearsals that had no purpose other than to spark a chain of events in order to collect information for doing something on a much larger scale. Either way, her deeds only go back just over six centuries; as if before that time she had not existed.

The sheer potential of her abilities is unknown, but it is estimated that they were at least equivalent to those of a true god. The passage of time has shown a considerable increase in Eljared's power with respect to what she began with, though not intentionally. Moreover, instead of trying to amplify her powers, she seemed determined to impede her ascent as much as she could.

One of the well-known things about her is that she possessed several of the 30 black metal pieces of Iscariot, the highest treasures of The Lost Lodges. Instead of using them for herself, she spread many of them amongst people of different regions, all able to put them to use.

Eljared was overwhelmingly beautiful. She had long black hair and each of her eyes was a different color; one of them red and the other gold. Cold, ruthless and manipulating in appearance, her followers always showed a mixture of terror and fascination towards her. She could be incredibly cruel when the situation called for it, or willing to sacrifice anything in order to get what she wanted. However, her own harsh behavior even seemed to disturb her at times.

The Supreme Archbishop

Eljared last known appearance was under the identity of the Supreme Archbishop, and she obviously decided to start up the plans she had been working on for centuries. As final preparation, a year ago she did something that until then was unthinkable; she secretly assassinated a patriarch of Jürgand and assumed his identity. Thus, even knowing that she couldn't maintain the charade for long, she forced her influence as much as she could, acquiring the power to hide her actions from the world.

As Supreme Archbishop, her intervention in Gaïa was quite radical as she began to act on several fronts while she awakened many ancient forces for no apparent reason, thanks to her agents of the New Conclave. She also deliberately started a war against several principalities, using as excuse insults and affronts that she cared very little about. Basically, Eljared only seemed to be interested in the chaos and death born from the conflict.



Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Finally, she unleashed events that recent history has called the Breach of Heavens, during which the very structure of existence was greatly altered by her actions. To buy time, she used her control over the squadron of Jürgand that she commanded as a shield against the attacks of Imperium, causing a conflict that, true to its name, ruptured the skies.

Currently...

More than likely, the person or entity known as Eljared was destroyed during the Breach of Heavens. It isn't easy to determine how she died, or who destroyed her. Even now it's impossible to define her final objectives or measure the impact of her actions, but they certainly have produced serious damage to Imperium's systems, on a scale very similar to what happened during the activation of Rah's machine. Nevertheless, it's still unknown which was the "legacy" that Eljared left behind or if she was able to fulfill her objectives to some degree.

Nemesis

Perhaps, even more than Eljared, the person or entity known as Nemesis is the most enigmatic creature in history. He has been beside the Supreme Archbishop as her companion and servant for centuries, never leaving her side while he followed her silently. Out of all the allies and agents she had, he was the only one that Eljared could never dispense with, and commonly referred to him as her only "friend". It is unknown where they first met, but she always cryptically mentions that she was the one who found him and "woke him up."

It is difficult to define Nemesis' personality; it's even possible that he lacks one. Almost like a machine, he always followed the instructions of his lady without ever questioning anything she said to him. On more than one occasion he made reference that he himself lacked emotions and does not understand their concept. Despite that assertion, he has repeatedly demonstrated brief glimpses of human emotion. In relation to this, Nemesis explained that the reason for which he is with Eljared is that she awoke something within him akin to curiosity.

He appears as a young man with long white hair and dark eyes. He always wears the same white trench coat, which is slightly rugged and worn with the passage of years. Despite his composure, he always wears a vague melancholic expression, even when he has stated repeatedly he does not comprehend this emotion.

Similarly as with his nature or his personality, Nemesis' power is very hard to explain. He never flaunts great supernatural abilities, like recreating reality or manifesting energy around himself. However, absolutely nothing has ever been able to challenge him. He has easily destroyed dozens of Jürgand agents, body and soul, and withstood attacks from divine power-level weapons without a scratch. Even Eljared has expressed mockingly on some occasions that she seriously doubts the outcome of any confrontation between the two.

It is possible that there is simply no force in existence that can stop him.

Nemesis disappeared with Eljared, but no one can say whether he was inexplicably destroyed (highly unlikely) or if he simply left. In any case, his current whereabouts are unknown, even to the members of the New Conclave.

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

THE LOST LOGIAS

About 3,500 years ago the Empire of Solomon developed a technological level never before seen on Gaïa. In just decades they created wonders, works beyond the imagination of man. They were powerful enough to defy the gods.

But its glory was short-lived. In one night, their civilization was extinguished, and all their knowledge was lost in the memory of time. But unknown to man, hidden in the shadows still remain traces of their works, fragments of a now extinct science.

The Lost Logias.

The Lost Science

With the scarce and degraded remnants that are still around from that age, it is difficult to say what the true potential of Solomon's research was. The only thing that's certain is that their knowledge completely surpassed those of any other culture in history. The technological foundation of the Lost Logias is supernatural, although far from mere magic formulas. The mystical forces are used as energy sources, purifying their effects through complex programs and mechanisms. Thus, Solomon's machines can simultaneously alter or ignore the rules of reality, being more than just simple magical devices.

Doctor Schwarzwald, commonly considered the highest authority on the Lost Logias, has done a detailed breakdown of the science of Solomon, differentiating between two time periods (the early days of Solomon and the time of splendor) and three levels of technology. The first level is called Genum, or civil science. It is one to which all citizens had access; the most basic and simple of the Logias. It allowed them to create artificial puppet servants, long distance communication systems and vehicles with super-powered motors, like boats, trains and flying ships. At the same time, it had enormous advances in medical science that could eliminate any kind of disease or implant artificial limbs or organs. Of course, there were also many other domestic advances, like genetically modified foods or simple typewriters.

The second level is called Archanum, whose development and use were reserved solely for senators and military forces of Solomon. It represents a higher application of science, like tiny nanomachine implants in the blood stream, devices that allow climate control or to even terraforming large areas of land. This category also includes technology of war: war golems, combat exoskeletons and floating platforms (enormous heavily equipped technomagic airships), among many others.

Finally there is the third degree, which experts often refer to vaguely as Dyeus. There is no evidence that it actually existed, as nearly everything known about this level is based on assumption. Supposedly, it is the name given to the secret projects that the Senate of Solomon launched shortly before its empire was destroyed, the pinnacle of the entire science of the Logias. Among them are extremely powerful experimental weapons, like the laser satellite Gravestone, or systems of artificial intelligence like the program Unico, able to control and direct thousands of machines in unison.

The Will to Power

The existence of the Lost Logias remains shrouded in complete secrecy for society, even more than the supernatural. However, many powers and organizations in Gaïa have recorded the hidden power behind Solomon's technology, knowing they are more than mere legends. Consequently, there are many that try to acquire as many much as they can, no matter what price they have to pay.

At present, the two major competitors are the Sacred Holy Empire and the Azur Alliance, because both organizations need them to gain true superiority over the other. They have sent many secret agents and scientists to uncover and develop new technologies based on pieces of the Logias. These groups operate in complete anonymity, even from the military forces of their respective nations, because neither the Empress nor the Lords of the Alliance wish to be linked to such discoveries. Only the highest divisions, the Hand of the Emperor and Les Jaeger, supervise these advancements closely.

Because of its positioning, Abel has the greatest number of archaeological remains of Solomon, among which there are numerous Logias undiscovered. Some emperors showed interested in them in the past, but their findings were dangerously troublesome and ended up abandoning them. Elisabetta decided to pursue its investigation just a few months ago, so her advances aren't too remarkable at the moment. What most people are unaware of is that the largest remnants are beneath Archangel and its four Guardian Angels. As for Gaul and the Alliance, its territories may not have as many Lodges, but the former Lord of War has spends much time researching them. As a result, he has been able to repair and modify several marionettes and other weapons that share the same principles. In order to test their effectiveness and refine any design errors, he is secretly testing them on the war in Nanwe.

Even higher than Abel and Azur, Wissenschaft Organization probably has the greatest knowledge and advancements of the Lost Logias today. Taking into account that Lucanor and Schwarzwald, the two greatest experts on the matter, founded the organization, it makes sense that their members have superior knowledge to those of any other one. However, unwilling to just reuse the existing Logias, Wissenschaft has developed its own breakthroughs, using them simply as a source of inspiration. Some of their inventions are combat exoskeletons, psychic stone implants in the human brain and artificial limbs. Above all this is The Process, an advanced project that replaces the subject's blood with a strange dark substance. Depending on the degree of purity, the skills it bestows are superior, but proportional to the risks of becoming crazy, undergoing physical mutations or even dying. Wissenschaft has developed only around 20 processed ones with a purity superior to 25 percent, although the results have never been exactly been predictable. The elite agents of Lucanor, The Crows, who are not even called processed ones, only have a three percent of purity.

It is well known that several head scientists of Wissenschaft are presently developing other similar projects of great magnitude.

Similarly Tol Rauko has considerable knowledge of the Logias, as they often encounter them in their daily work. This allows them to research some technomagic inventions, especially those related to confinement and security measures. Though rarely used, their only purpose is to make sure that nobody enters or leaves the locations they consider the most dangerous. Sometimes, entering ruins sealed by Tol Rauko can mean dealing with much more than just the protections its inhabitants left behind.

Other powers interested in the Logias are Black Sun, which has dealt with them on some occasions, and The Church, that does not want to fall behind in the escalating war between Abel and the Alliance. So far, none of them has made great strides, but have already spent time partially analyzing the lost science.

In addition to large organizations, in one way or another many individuals have made contact with the Lost Logias in some form. Among other things, there are at least one technomagic Windrider discovered in Galgados, archaic combat marionettes in Remo or a vehicle that can ride the desert sands of Salazar as if they were water. Such works are chance encounters of lone people, or small groups of unaffiliated explorers.

The Thirty Pieces

According to myths, all the technology of Solomon was based on thirty black metal pieces of mysterious origin. Apparently, they were containers of information that could independently evolve, slowly revealing greater knowledge. They would change as the world did; as new inventions were being built, the pieces would reveal new wonders.

After the fall of Solomon, the thirty pieces were lost and their whereabouts were a mystery for many centuries, until they ended up in the hands of the Apostle Iscariot. Consequently, it is assumed that the high technological level demonstrated by Rah during the War of God was the science of the Logias. Also for reasons unknown, most of the pieces ended up in Eljared's possession, who distributed half of them throughout Gaïa among people that could benefit from them, and hid the others in various places to be "accidentally" discovered in due time.

Each piece contains different kinds of knowledge, just as they require varied activation methods and interpretation. Their forms, originally round and the size of a coin, have changed much over the years. Although most of them keep the same morphology, others look nothing alike, except in color, from their original appearance.

The Ancient Blood

The 284 senators of Solomon and their families created a blood bond with the control systems of The Logias. This link allowed them to fuse their consciences with their machines, giving them mental commands and making them their servants. It is difficult to specify the nature of this union, but in accordance with the studies of doctor Schwarzwald, it could be the tiny nanomachines in their blood stream.

Even today there are descendents of the senators in whose veins run the same blood: "The Ancient Blood." Most of them are not aware of their legacy and go their whole lives without knowing that they are unique. Even though there is no longer a system to order around, the machines of Solomon still recognize them as their masters, responding to their presence in varying degrees. The Ancient Ones have also developed a special bond with the Logias, obtaining a vague knowledge of how to use them. They don't really know how they do it; they only know instinctively what must be done once the moment arrives.

Of course, the Ancient Blood Ones have no power over derivatives of the Lost Logias, such as Wissenschaft inventions. Even so, they keep their innate talent to make them work.

Special Advantage

Advantage: Ancient Blood

Although they may be unaware of it, the character possesses the Ancient Blood of Solomon, so they show a natural affinity toward the technology of the Lost Logias, as described above.

Effects: The effects of this advantage apply only to role-playing.

Cost: 2

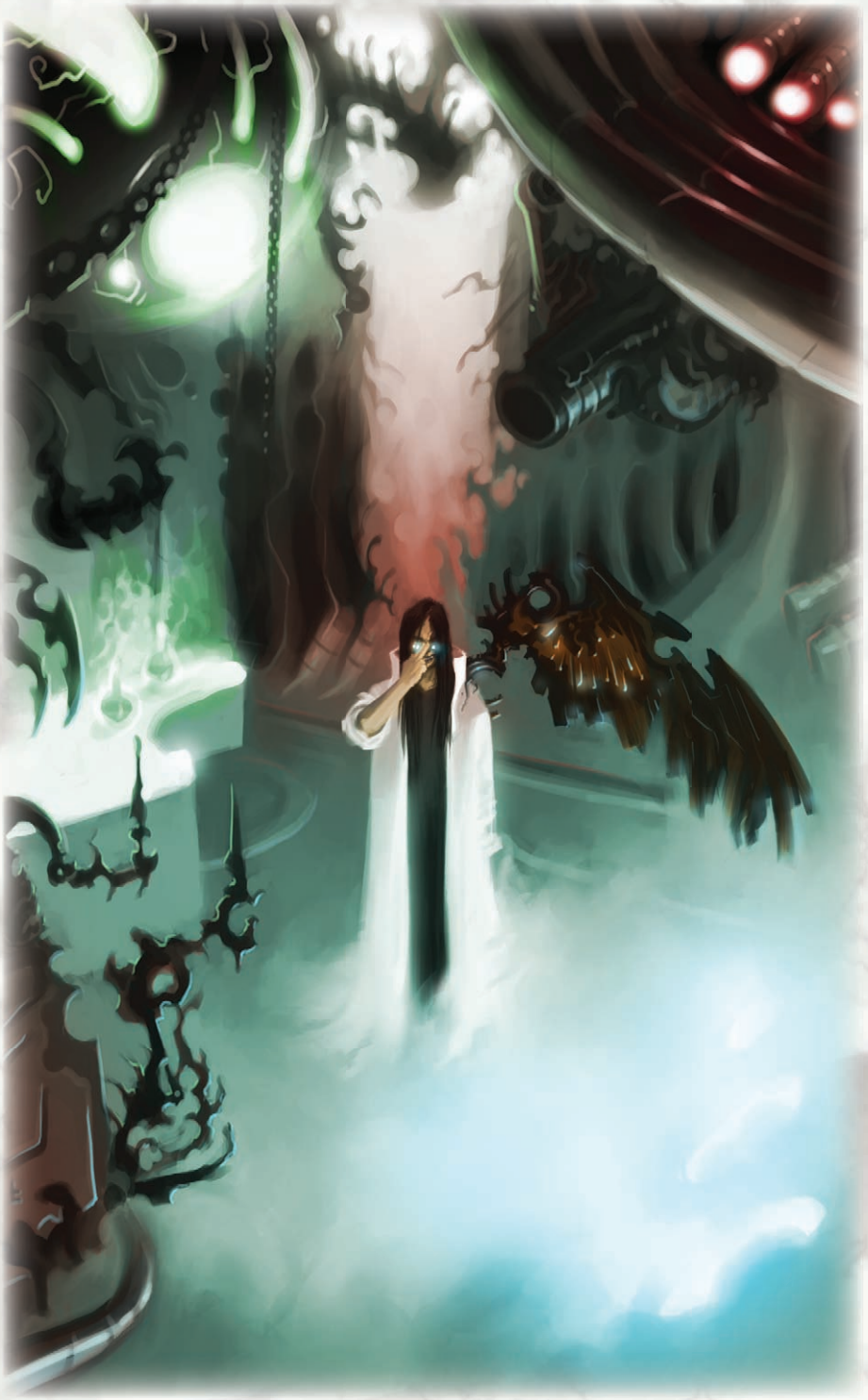


Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Loctus Khan Schwarzwald

Doctor Loctus Khan Schwarzwald is, without a doubt, the highest authority on the Lost Logias in all Gaïa; his knowledge on the missing technology of Solomon has no equal. Unfortunately, his genius can only be compared to his absolute madness.

Since he was a boy, Schwarzwald showed an incredible talent and fertile imagination with which he obtained a scholarship from the Enlightened Order of Ilmora. He soon became a brilliant scientist, but after a chance encounter with remains of the Lost Logias, his interest soon turned towards the old technology of Solomon. After traveling through various places of the world and carrying out numerous scientific discoveries about history, his path crossed with a mysterious young man named Donoban, a scholar like himself who wanted his help analyzing the bizarre properties of his own blood. Between the two of them they advanced in unknown fields since then, but the nature of their experiments forced them to keep utmost secrecy. During the investigation of his partner's blood flow, Schwarzwald developed the first draft of The Process, although at that time he was unable to carry it out. Three years later, Donoban vanished as mysteriously as he had arrived and Schwarzwald continued his experiments alone. For nearly a decade, his advancements in technomagic fields were incredible; he even repaired and reproduced the artificial puppets of Solomon. However, all his books were classified as fallacious and nonsensical (although they are the best records on The Lost Logias that exist today), and even received threats from The Inquisition, insisting that he should abandon these fields of study.



Illustrated by Luis NCT

Doctor Loctus Khan Schwarzwald

In order to keep his scientific scholarship, he began to teach at the universities of Ilmora, although the doctor was so bright that few recognized his true talent. It was then when his destiny would be intertwined with Prince Lucanor Giovanni, a student who caught his attention. He understood from his first meeting with the young man that Lucanor was not like the others, seeing almost unlimited potential in him. He became his personal mentor and, between the two, they began experiments the likes of which had not been seen in centuries. Schwarzwald accompanied the Prince to Lucrecio, where he helped him establish Wissenschaft and collaborated in hundreds of projects.

That was when, after Lucanor obtained one of the 30 black metal pieces, Khan was able to launch one of his most ambitious ideas: The Process. The experiment forced human beings into a new evolutionary step, granting man unimaginable powers and abilities. While both worked arduously in its early stages, Lucanor was required to divert his attention to other fields while leaving the rest to his companion. But Schwarzwald's morality prevented him from testing the final stage of The Process with another human being and, confident that everything would go smoothly, he subjected himself to it personally. Paradoxically, he was both his greatest successes and his most terrible failure. The experiment not only increased his physical abilities to levels that bordered divinity, but it also ramped up his intellect, making him a super-genius. Unfortunately, his mind couldn't handle it, engulfed in dark and terrible madness.

After destroying most of his research on The Process, he left the organization and disappeared without a trace of his whereabouts. Completely unhinged, he began to travel aimlessly from one place in Gaïa to another, acting off instincts and hunches.

Currently, it's hard to even call Schwarzwald a human being anymore. Having lost the concept of good and evil, he seems to be obsessed with discovering the roots of human "desire" as a core emotion. So the doctor travels around until he finds someone that catches his attention and is in a dire situation. Then he asks them what it is that they desire, and uses his incredible technomagical knowledge to help. Schwarzwald never gives them exactly what they want; he only provides the means necessary. That way, he can study "the true meaning of desire": that which, according to him, separates man from the gods. It really doesn't matter to him if he causes thousands of deaths; the research is far more important.

Initially, his madness isn't obvious since the doctor can behave in a serious and restrained manner if he chooses to. Ironic, eccentric and philosophical, Schwarzwald loves to weave lengthy existentialistic monologues. Physically, he can appear different on each occasion, sometimes modifying his body for mere diversion using the Lost Logias. However, he most commonly appears as a tall man, with sharp features and a gawky aspect. He usually dresses in a white coat and loves to wear glasses, an odd habit that he had before losing his sanity.

His powers and abilities are as varied as is his disposition; one moment he will flee terrified of a simple group of city guards, and later squash an superior entity with a simple snap of his fingers. In either case, he always prefers to avoid close combat, using some of his insane creations as he slips off into the shadows. It's simply more amusing that way.

THE MESSENGERS

Centuries ago, Saint Harael Grimoire, an Inquisitor with the gift of prophecy, had a disquieting vision in which 21 creatures would appear in the world as a harbinger of the Apocalypse. Since Harael had never been mistaken, The Church took this threat very seriously, and since then has tried to locate and eliminate these entities, which she called "Messengers." Being based on the holy predictions, they prepared a list of 21 people who they considered the greatest threats to the world and therefore had to be their main objectives. The Inquisition puts special emphasis on their capture and destruction, but given their considerable powers and cunning, this is much harder than it seems.

THE MESSENGERS

I	Deymos, He who does not die
II	Desdémona
III	Tiamat, Mother of Demons
IV	Pride
V	Ra-Me-Tek
VI	Ambrosia, The Dark Queen
VII	Bringreus
VIII	Svalkislavos
IX	Ergo Mundus
X	Glaudio Fenstermacher
XI	The Knight of the Angel
XII	The Nameless One
XIII	Hringham, King of the Undead
XIV	Jonathan Kappel
XV	Malachi, The Demon
XVI	Yami no Tsubasa
XVII	The First Chaos
XVIII	Malekith, Prince of Crows
XIX	Eltheldrea
XX	Void
XXI	Baal, The Gate to Hell
0	The Unknown?

Generally, the creatures The Church calls The Messengers are immortal beings of great power who, in varying degrees, have been involved in several major events in history. Bearing no mutual relationship, but having lived so long, most at least know each other. Numbering 21, they are often related to The Major Arcana of The Tarot, although they do not seem to bear any relation to the true Invocations. Its number always remains full; even if some of them have been hunted and destroyed in the past, as has happened three times already, The Church simply fills the gap by inserting another entity into the list.

The names by which they appear aren't necessarily their true ones; since it is nothing but the name or title that The Church has decided to grant them.

I Deymos, He who does not die: Formerly a human archmage, Deymos was the first wizard to reach immortality by his own means. He has a nightmarish, monstrous body and heart wrenching power, but it seems that this is not enough for him. For more than 5,000 years he slept under a seal created by ancient gods, but was freed by Rah and put into his servitude during the War of God. Deymos main objective is to find the means to exist forever, because the more powerful he is, the more he fears his own death.

II Desdemona: Lady of the Dead, Desdemona is an immortal wizard who hides her face behind a silver mask. Nobody has seen her true face, so it's impossible to say what hides behind it. She considers herself an artist, always accompanied by music and choirs. She loves to create things, mainly new forms of life (or unlife), which she calls "The Ultimate Art." It seems that she has traveled to The Hell and that she is aware that other worlds exist.

III Tiamat, Mother of Demons: It is said that Tiamat is the last of the demons of the first hierarchy who still exist in the world. She is called "Mother" because she has birthed the most powerful devils. She travels through the world as a lady of high society accompanied by her children, who are both her guardians and lovers.

IV Pride: The last of the original demon princes, Pride is a dark entity born of the emotions of human vanity. He has gray wings stained with blood and carries an immense scythe. He is arrogant and vain, representing of all the principles he incarnates. He is openly against Tiamat and her offspring, which he has tried futilely to destroy for centuries.

V Ra-Me-Tek: The Priest of the Apocalypse. Ra-Me-Tek was one of the guardians of Zemial until he was bathed in the blood of the fallen Shajad. Completely crazed, he looks for ways to destroy the world and to plunge it all into silence. He has six wings on his back and The Church considers him a dark angel. He has the power to annihilate everything he looks at, so he usually keeps his eyes closed.

VI Ambrosia, The Dark Queen: The daughter born to a Lord of Darkness and a Duk´zarist queen who became the embodiment of the Beryl Barakiel. The Dark Queen is a mysterious creature, whose objectives are as baffling as her erratic behavior. She has the ability to create weapons with a thought, and can wield dozens of them simultaneously at will. Normally, she travels in the company of Svalkislavos and Glaudio.

VII Bringreus: The most recent of The 21. Bringreus manifested in Gaïa only a few years ago. At the time he appeared he easily destroyed Nascal, the previous number VII, and took his position as a Messenger. He has humanoid form (perhaps vaguely imitating his first victim), but lacks a face and physical structure, which allows him to alter his appearance at will. His power in close combat is immeasurable, perhaps superior than any of The Messengers.

VIII Svalkislavos: One of the oldest dragons in creation. It is assumed that Svalkislavos has been alive since the War of Heaven. In the past he signed a pact with a mortal, but inexplicably devoured him and instead of dying, he mixed his form with his chosen one. Now his appearance is vaguely human, although he retains the characteristics of a dragon. With Ambrosia and Glaudio, this group often receives the name of The Triumvirate.

IX Ergo Mundus: An immortal Messenger whose body was destroyed by The Inquisition long ago and who is now forced to exist under the shape of a great magical grimoire. The Church has reached an agreement with him and in return for allowing him to exist, he helps them against his companions. His supernatural knowledge and powers are daunting, but he requires that someone read him (whom The Church commonly calls "The Bearer"), if they want to use them.

X Glaudio Fenstermacher: Nicknamed The Dark Knight, Glaudio is in fact an immortal spirit residing inside a mechanical marionette of the Lost Logias. He appears as enormous black armor, which has earned him his unusual name. Despite of his human size, his interior contains weapons of devastating power, easily able to destroy everything around him for several miles.

XI The Knight of the Angel: An enigmatic Messenger of unknown origin and nature. It appears in the form of a knight adorned with rusty armor decorated with many wings. It mounts an old and sickly horse, which seems to accompany it everywhere. No one knows the extent of its powers, but Malekith himself has openly expressed that it is the last entity he would want to face.

XII The Nameless One: There is no information regarding him or his origins at all. For reasons unknown he travels hunting Messengers like himself and other creatures of darkness. He always dresses in the same rough trench coat and has his right arm chained to his back. Apparently, his right hand is the hand of death, and when he fights with it, he cannot avoid killing whatever gets in his way, so he normally has it restrained. It is said that when he wields a weapon with his right arm he can kill any creature in a single blow.

XIII Hringham, King of the Undead: An immortal being who defeated Death single-handedly. Condemned to eternal existence, he lies dormant for long periods of time and when he wakes he travels throughout Gaïa. He lives in a castle in The Wake that manifests in the real world for short periods of time. He has an immense army of undead creatures and other nightmarish beings in his service.

XIV Jonathan Kappel: A Messenger in the form of a boy. He is capricious and childish; he can sometimes be extremely cruel and sometimes very pleasant. He has the power to travel between The Wake and the real world at will, like transporting himself from one place to another in the blink of an eye. This is the power that allows him to open portals to various places and summon any kind of creature to serve him. Jonathan lives in a fortress built on the back of the Aeon Xanathos, which he calls "his living castle".

XV Malachi, The Demon: Malachi, called The Demon of War, is considered a primary force of destruction. He is the only one of the dark princes who did not kneel before the Shajads. Instead of being punished, Gaira himself was impressed by his courage to face the impossible. The Dark One therefore gave him a sliver of his own fingernail that Malachi made his right arm. For centuries The Demon of War has walked through the battlefields in human form, fighting for both one side and the other.

His sole purpose is to find opponents that can challenge him, because combat is the only thing that brings meaning to his existence. If somebody defeats his mortal form, Malachi takes on his true aspect, being undefeated so far. His right arm has almost unlimited destructive power.

XVI Yami no Tsubasa: The favored son of darkness, the nature of Yami No Tsubasa is so strange that it even puzzles himself. He isn't a malignant entity and loves living alongside man, but has the distinctiveness of bringing misfortune, pain and chaos wherever he goes, so he keeps moving from one place to another to avoid causing serious damage to people. Yami avoids any combat, since when he uses his power destroys everything for miles around. As was prophesized, he is the one that can open The Gates of The Apocalypse.

XVII The First Chaos: The nature of The First Chaos is difficult to explain being a creature that only appears in the world through the thoughts of the insane. When large numbers of imbalanced or crazy people meet, the force of their ideas can make her body materialize; A faceless woman with twelve pairs of black wings. Her powers are unclear, but whenever she appears in the world, she creates a distortion of reality that steals people's sanity. It is unknown if she is able to die.

XVIII Malekith, Prince of Crows: Not much is known of him, except that he was a mortal long ago, before becoming the most powerful of The Nightmare Lords. King of the dark city of Graven and served by countless nightmares, which he calls Dark Executioners. Although his powers are formidable anywhere, in his kingdom they are almost divine. The name Prince of Crows comes from the fact that he always appears surrounded many ravens or else he acquires some of their characteristics, be it their wings, claws or eyes.

XIX Eltheldrea: Normally called "The First Witch", Eltheldrea is the oldest known practitioner of magic. She appears as a teenager with red hair, though she has undoubtedly lived several thousands of years. She is considered one of the creators of the Empire of Yehudah, destroyed by Abel centuries ago, although she lacks ties with the current Order of Yehudah. Close friend of Ambrosia, she has recently had a romantic relationship with The Nameless One that did not end well.

XX Void: His personal history is unknown. What is known is that he only manifests prior to a major catastrophe. He looks like a very tall man, whose head resembles a shark with metal teeth. He has the ability to create void vacuums in the existence, swallowing everything except for him. He has died countless times, only to be inexplicably reborn when some new crisis approaches.

XXI Baal, The Gate to Hell: This is only one of the many names given to this atrocious entity. It represents evil in its purest state, born of the involuntary union of thousands of demons. Its appearance is inhuman, since it usually manifests as a door made of flesh, blood and metal, created from faces contorted with pain. Supposedly, as its name suggests, it is a living portal to hell itself. Baal can take mortal form and there are some that consider it one of the most powerful Messengers.

0 The Unknown: Nothing is known about this entity, whether it really even exists or if it has manifested at some point in history. The name of The Unknown is no more than a title The Church has given it to cover number 0 of The Tarot.

Chapter 7
Optional Rules

Come. let me show you a fragment of what we lost. Let me show you how you can change the world.

Schwarzwald

Although the core book of Anima compiles all the rules necessary to run the system, there are some expansions that can be used to adjust the games within Gaïa. In this chapter we are going to focus on a series of rules that expand and supplement those outlined in the core book and the GM Screen. They are all only optional elements that the Game Master is free to use whenever he deems it necessary.

Background

One of the principles of the Anima system is that the players are free to develop the background they consider appropriate for their characters. The most important thing in a game is to always feel comfortable with the role you are representing, so it's best not to limit it in this regard. However, it is also true that often some rules can levy an unfair advantage or a disadvantage for the characters. In order to remedy such imbalances, the Game Master can allow a new set of advantages and disadvantages that we will call "Background."

These elements relate to the history of a character, his background prior to the start of the game. These things may well be taken at a later time, but to get them may involve taking on great benefits or problems. For example, a character's actions could eventually cause The Church to recognize his status as a Saint without needing to buy it with Creation Points. However, by choosing this advantage he can begin with such entitlement right away, without having to do anything special.

Like the group that they are, the background disadvantages give Creation Points back that can only be used to choose Background Advantages.

Background Advantages

Below is a list of new Background Advantages to which the characters have access. Besides these, the advantages Starting Wealth, Artifact and Been Around that appear in the basic book are also considered Background Advantages when applying this optional rule.

Fame

For one reason or another, the character is exceptionally well known everywhere. He may be a famous actor, Eden player, or have rumored legendary martial abilities (whether this is true or not). Nevertheless, he is a true celebrity.

Effects: The effects of this advantage only apply to role-playing. The player must determine the source of his character's fame at character creation. If using the optional Fame rules later in this chapter, this advantage provides 40 or 65 points of Fame, depending on the CPs invested.

Cost: 1, 2

Cultural Roots

The character is very rooted in the culture of his country, possessing a wide knowledge of the traditions and customs of his land.

Effects: This advantage grants a special bonus to several secondary abilities, according to the character's social status and country of origin. In each of the nations of Gaïa displays a list of the different modifiers that Cultural Roots grants.

Cost: 1

Saint

The character has received the title of Saint on behalf of The Church, which means that his powers are officially a divine gift and not a demonic emanation. Therefore, they're free to use supernatural abilities on a limited basis, without the fear of being pursued by The Inquisition or suffering any other consequences. It is important to note that although The Church tends to be very reluctant to admit they made a mistake with an appointment, it doesn't grant the character absolute free reign. Not only is he obligated to use his abilities in public as little as possible, but any action that The Church could construe as evil would strip him of his entitlement immediately.

Effects: The effects of this advantage only apply to role-playing.

Limitation: The character must have some sort of Supernatural Ability or have developed Ki Abilities to be able to take this advantage.

Cost: 2

Social Position

This represents that the character belongs to the highest class of society, a higher status of nobility. Therefore, he will start out with a prestigious title and a considerable personal fortune. It is important to note that he needn't be the head of a royal house; he can be one of the heirs.

Effects: In addition to its obvious role-playing effects, this advantage grants the character access to the "privileged" classes of each principality, without needing to roll any dice. Consequently, its value in Creation Points depends on the value of the class in question.

Cost: 1, 2

Contacts

The character knows people that can offer him information, or even limited help, in times when he most needs it. Depending on the level of this advantage, the contacts will have varying degrees of usefulness or power. If he so desires, the character may also have organizational ties in Gaïa.

Effects: Whenever he needs it, someone with this advantage can use their contacts to gain information or limited assistance within his sphere of influence. For example, if he has contacts in the Magus Order, these contacts can keep him informed about supernatural matters, but do very little for politics or street rumors. On **Table 33** there is a small list, indicating the recommended values for contacts of varying power in Gaïa. They are set at their minimum values, but players may invest larger amounts of CP to increase them. For example, if somebody spent 3 Creation Points on the Magus Order, it would mean that their known contacts are in the highest levels of the organization, and consequently will be able to offer them more assistance and information than normal.

Cost: 1, 2, 3

Table 33: Contacts

Organization	CP
The Inquisition	2
The Church	1
Tol Rauko	2
Wissenschaft	2
Selene	2
The Magus Order	2
The Order of Yehudah	2
Black Sun	2
High spheres of a country	2
Underworld	1
Local nobility	1
Great crime lord	1

Powerful Ally

There is someone of significant power or influence that is willing to help the character at all times. It can be an important noble, a great crime lord or a powerful wizard, who will stop at nothing to support the character when he requires assistance.

Effects: The effects of this advantage only apply to role-playing. Naturally, the greater number of CPs invested, the more powerful the ally. **Table 33** can provide reference to the power level.

Cost: 1, 2, 3

Background Disadvantages

The following is a list of Background Disadvantages that characters can choose. The Creation Points gained in this way can only be used to buy Background Advantages. Remember that a character's total disadvantages cannot be greater than three, so if he has already chosen three Common Advantages, like The Gift or Psychic advantages, he will not be able to choose any here.

Pariah

For some reason, the character is completely rejected by society. People despise him wherever he goes, and always shun his company. He can belong to a family known to be guilty of high treason, been accused of a multitude of heinous crimes or any other reason that can result in rejection.

Effects: The character is automatically considered a pariah in all social circles.

Benefit: 1

Powerful Enemy

The character has made a dangerous enemy in the past that relentlessly pursues him to kill him one day. It could be an important crime lord, or The Inquisition that considers him a witch and hunts him down in order to eliminate him.

Effects: The effects of this disadvantage only apply to role-playing. Naturally, the greater the benefit gained, the more powerful the enemy or organization pursuing the character is. Use **Table 33** as a power reference.

Benefit: 1, 2



Alba Zimmerman

Illustrated by Salvador Espin

Debts

Unfortunately for him, the character has incurred a huge debt that he is unable to pay. It has already cost him everything he has, but he's still obligated to pay much more. It is up to the player and the Game Master to determine the exact nature of the debt; perhaps he must make a monthly payment to his mother's hospital for taxes, or perhaps his family was ruined and he has inherited their debt.

Effects: Regardless of his social status, the character begins with no more than what he carries with him, and forced to repay a debt valued no less than 10,000 gold crowns. Another possibility is that he's obligated to pay 500 gold crowns every month.

Benefit: 1

Code of Conduct

In the place where he was raised, the character adhered to a strict code of conduct that still hangs over him. He cannot disobey it, so he is obligated to follow it in any circumstance. He simply does not know how to live any other way.

Effects: The character must follow a strict code of conduct, in someway related to his country of origin.

Benefit: 1

Dirty Little Secret

The character hides a dark and horrible secret, something that would mean his ruin and the fall of those who matter most to him if it came out. It is possible that he's guilty of an appalling crime, or that as a small child he performed terrible rituals that caused the death of thousands of people, triggering a curse over him if the cultists discovered he was alive.

Effects: The player and the Game Master must determine, together, the nature of the secret and the consequences that arise from it.

Benefit: 1

New Secondary Abilities

Listed below are number of new Secondary Abilities related to various abilities previously covered in this book. Any of them could go into the Special Abilities slot on a Character Sheet, grouped within the fields and characteristics indicated.

Law *(Intellectual, Intelligence)*

This grants knowledge of legal and judicial processes. It is the fundamental ability that all lawyers or legal authorities must have. Given that most of Gaïa has a very similar legal foundation thanks to the influence of the Sacred Holy Empire, this ability can be used throughout most of the world, although the Game Master is free to apply applicable penalties when the character is outside his principality.

Trading *(Social, Intelligence)*

This ability measures the business acumen of a character. It allows one to better deal with clients and distributors, to sense market fluctuations and make the best decisions to maximize mercantile profits. It's possible to specialize in a specific type of business, in which case a +40 is granted to all checks.

Streetwise *(Social, Intelligence)*

As its name implies, this is the ability to move through the underworld, meeting the right people and gathering information on the streets. A high value in this ability provides favorable contacts to go to, or easily finds out rumors circulating around the slums. A character automatically gains a bonus of +40 to this ability within his hometown. By contrast, a penalty between -10 and -40 can be applied in far away cities with foreign cultures, depending on what the Game Master deems appropriate.

Etiquette *(Social, Intelligence)*

This represents the character's knowledge concerning protocol and social etiquette. The higher the ability, the better behaved he will be at the dinner table or attending meetings of high society. He will be the perfect host.

Tactics *(Intelectual, Inteligencia)*

This encompasses all knowledge concerning tactics or military protocol. Characters can use this ability to figure out the best way to attack a fortress, arrange battle formations or reduce the enemy's provisions more effectively.

Fame and Recognition

Fame is a very important factor in the lifestyle of characters in Gaïa. Although their actions may go completely unnoticed by the world, it is also perfectly feasible that, for better or for worse, their actions earn them great notoriety. Below are some rules that the Game Master can use if he wishes to gauge the fame and recognition of the characters.

Fame Points and Levels of Recognition

The reputation of a character is measured by a value between 1 and 100, which are called Fame Points. The greater the amount is, the higher his reputation will be in the world. Depending on how many points an individual has, he will be at one level of recognition or another, as indicated on **Table 34**. For example, somebody with 35 Fame Points is Renowned, whereas if he has 50 he has reached the Celebrated level. The eight levels of recognition are as follows:

Unknown: These are people without the slightest importance or recognition.

Known: The character has some importance within his social or professional circle, in a population or group.

Popular: The character's fame spreads to some nearby towns. He may even be known outside his regular community.

Renowned: The character is already a prominent individual within his country or community. Almost everybody has heard of him at least once or twice.

Famous: The recognition of the character transcends principalities. He is most likely known in several communities of many nearby principalities.

Celebrated: As its name suggests, the character is a celebrity. People from all over the world know him, and his name is mentioned regularly in all strata of society.

Legendary: The character's name is already engraved among the legends. Wherever he goes, people will know him, from the smallest boy to greatest noble. Everybody knows his story, and there may be dozens of different versions of his life.

Beyond Legend: The fame of the character is beyond all imagination. He is more than a legend; he is a myth that will endure for all eternity. There isn't a place in the world in which his name is not whispered, reviled, worshiped or feared.

Table 34: Fame and Recognition

Fame	Level of Recognition	Difficulty
0	Unknown	0
10	Known	-1
20	Popular	-3
30	Renowned	-5
40	Famous	-10
50	Celebrated	-15
70	Legendary	-25
100	Beyond Legend	NA

Gaining Fame

The Game Master is the one responsible for awarding Fame Points, as he considers appropriate in each situation. He should most commonly offer them when the characters carry out extraordinary actions, events capable of attracting the interest of people and generating gossip. However, it's necessary to keep in mind that fame is not only gained by great deeds or terrible outrages, but by the impact and the knowledge that others have of them. Someone who managed to prevent the awakening of the Filisnogos and also save the lives of millions of people wouldn't have a single point of fame if nobody were aware of it. By contrast, a few false rumors can exalt or ruin somebody's reputation.

Logically, the more famous a person is, the harder it is to increase visibility. The actions that sowed him prestige before have now become routine in the eyes of others, and people will be less impressed. Therefore, each level of recognition has a base difficulty that is subtracted from the Fame Points that he gains at that moment. That is to say, if an action brings 10 points of fame, an Unknown would gain all 10 of those points directly, somebody Known would only gain 9, a Popular individual 7, somebody Renowned 5 and, finally, a Famous person wouldn't get any points. When a character gains enough points to reach the next level of recognition, the remaining points apply to the penalty of the newly attained level. Of course, the negative cannot push him below his new status. If the increase is enough to jump several levels at once, it should be tallied individually, applying all the pertinent penalties.

Examples of Fame

Here are a few guidelines for awarding fame points.

Minor Acts *(Variable)*

Acts of some significance can grant between 1 and 15 Fame Points. These are smaller events, like outstanding battle achievements to saving a small village from bandits or winning a regional competition...

Major Events *(Variable)*

The most important actions can grant between 15 and 25 points. These are events or acts of major importance, especially prominent acts that immediately attract people's attention. Preventing the public assassination of a prince, carrying out a task of great importance, or stealing a masterpiece from a famous museum...

Acts of Maximum Importance *(Variable)*

These are actions of immense importance, remarkable acts that instantly shout out to the world. They can grant between 25 and 40 points. Some examples would be to stay behind at the fortress gates during a great battle and single-handedly delay the advance of enemy forces, save a city from a great cataclysm, win a competition like the Tao Zan...

Legendary Acts *(Variable)*

These are events of extreme significance, with implications that travel around the world instantaneously. They grant a fame of between 40 and 60 points, depending on the possible relevance of the situation. They would be events like publicly assassinating The Empress, or destroying Albidion while mounted on a dragon and shouting your own name.

Defeating a Legendary Opponent

(Ability, Honorability or Infamy)

To publicly defeat an adversary grants a different amount of fame, depending on the prestige that they had. A character usually gains half of the Fame Points of his rival, as long as he had a Level of Recognition higher than or equal to his. Of course, if his rival's fame is inferior, he does not gain any points. Of course, his rival must be known for his combat prowess.

Creating a Famous Work *(Ability)*

Creating an incomparable masterpiece causes a large increase in the Level of Recognition of a character. It can be anything imaginable, such as paintings, sculptures, buildings, musical works... as long as it is known and admired by others. The amount of points can vary between 10 and 40, depending on the magnificence of the work. Designing a series of sculptures of great beauty that adorned the walkway of a city could bestow 10 points of fame, while creating a masterpiece that was admired in the finest room of The Imperial Museum could grant up to 25 or 30 points. Tasks praised throughout the world, like designing and constructing the palace of The Empress could grant up to 40 points.

A character with 18 points of fame carries out an act so remarkable that the Game Master considers he deserves 10 more Fame Points. After applying the penalty of Known (subtracting 1 from his total), he is able to raise to Popular using two of them, which leaves him with 7 more remaining. He will have to apply the penalty of his new level of recognition to those points (which is three), which leaves him with a final total fame of 24 points.

Losing Fame

Losing fame is much harder than winning it. Generally, the only way to end it is for people to forget your name over time, although this is not necessarily a concrete rule. Sometimes, the passage of years can sweeten the memory of somebody, instead of causing forgetfulness. A character typically loses a Fame Point for every two months that pass without doing anything outstanding, although it falls on the discretion of the Game Master to increase or decrease this amount, as he sees fit.

The Five Groups

Not all fame is necessarily gained by positive acts. An exceptionally cruel individual can be well known, just as a perfectly cowardly one deserves to be mentioned everywhere. Therefore, Fame Points are divided into five distinct groups: Bravery, Cowardice, Honor, Infamy and Talent. The sum of all five is the total fame of the character. Whenever a character obtains fame points, the Game Master tells him how they're divided up among the different categories.

The fame of a character can be role-played depending on the relationship among these values. For example, an individual with fame 55 that has 30 points in Infamy, 20 in Talent and 5 in Bravery, would be known as somebody cruel and dangerous with whom it is best not to oppose.

Bravery: This represents the fame gained by brave and audacious actions. It is that which is directly related to the character's courage, and is awarded for bold actions that astonish those who witness them.

Cowardice: This measures the individual's apprehension before situations that require valor. It's the fame gained by behaving pusillanimously, or to cowardly escape from danger.

Honor: This is the fame gained through acts of righteousness, honesty and virtue. It is the most positive and gains the sincere admiration of people.

Infamy: This is the recognition gained by carrying out cruel, heartless and frightening acts. It is the darkest fame, which inspires fear and intimidates others.

Talent: This is the recognition of the character's ability to effortlessly perform great works. Almost anything that can be done well is deserving of it, from skill in combat to a talent forging weapons.

The Power of the Dragon

Halfway between myth and reality, the ancient creatures that man calls dragons are one of the primary forces of creation. Some people say they were born at the dawn of history and have accompanied us since mankind had memories. They are much more than just gigantic reptiles; their souls belong to Gaïa, a fragment of the spirit world which possess unstoppable power.

The Age of The Dragon Lords

In the past, the dragons were one of the strongest races of Gaïa, not only for their unparalleled physical power, but also for their advanced culture and technology, although their solitary nature always kept them from establishing their own empire. Nevertheless, during the Chaos Age some of the oldest dragons sealed pacts with extraordinarily powerful individuals, initiating what would be known as the War of The Dragon Knights. The conflict ended in a great catastrophe, in which most of the dragons and their knights were destroyed.

The activation of Rah's machine caused a gigantic commotion among the dragons, whose essence was largely supernatural. They all sunk into a deep slumber, somehow hidden in the depths of the earth. The Chosen were affected similarly, lethargic for centuries and centuries like their companions. Now, many young dragons have just awakened, and try to restore consciousness to their parents, feeding them the energy of many of supernatural relics.

The Pacts of The Dragon

Due to the unusual nature of dragons, they cannot be bound like familiars. However, there is a way to create a bond with them, an ancient method that the great reptiles innately have at their disposal: The Pacts.

A Pact is the union between a dragon and a mortal, a life partner that becomes an indispensable part of the creature. The union is completely voluntary and must consciously be accepted by both parties. The ritual is very simple in fact, and requires only a few moments; the dragon takes half of its soul and places it within the mortal, fusing its essence with him. From that moment on, he becomes The Chosen of the Dragon.

Unfortunately, to seal The Pact, The Chosen sacrifices a fundamental aspect of his life or existence. That element can be anything imaginable and is rarely the same thing twice; somebody can lose his ability to have children, whereas another in similar circumstances can go blind. The sacrifice is involuntary, and it's unknown as to what will be sacrificed until the moment the souls fuse into one. Something in The Chosen is completely consumed by the power of the dragon. The Game Master typically establishes the nature of the sacrifice, although if he wishes it he can use **Table 35** to determine the lost faculty at random.

Once sealed, The Pact cannot be broken in any way and only both of their deaths break the bond. Since it is only possible to make one Pact and it lasts forever, dragons are always very reluctant to do so. Very few agree to it, and throughout Gaia's history it has happened less than 100 times.

Table 35: The Sacrifice Of The Pact

Roll	Sacrifice
1-4	His Sight
5-8	His capacity for Happiness
9-12	His sense of Taste
13-16	His Luck
17-20	His sense of Touch
21-24	His Voice
25-28	His sense of Smell
29-32	His ability to keep things
33-36	His Hearing
37-40	His Charisma or Charm
41-44	His ability to Dream
45-48	His Hope or Desire to Live
49-52	His Sanity (only if sane)
53-56	His ability to Love
57-60	His ability to Create or Conceive
61-64	His Morality (he is capable of discerning good from evil)
65-68	His Memories (he forgets everything at the end of the day)
69-72	His Youth (only if young)
73-76	His Existence (nobody can remember him)
77-80	His ability to Hate
81-84	His Intelligence (it is reduced in half)
85-00	His Purpose (the artist loses his art, the musician his musical sense...)

Despite its disadvantages, The Pact is an instrument of enormous power, both for the dragon as for his partner. At the time the Pact is completed both increase their abilities in a strange way. So when The Chosen seals the Pact he gains half as many levels as the difference between his present level and the one of the dragon. If the result is odd, round down. That is to say, a 3rd level character making a Pact with a dragon of 9th level, would automatically raise three levels. In the rare event that The Chosen has a higher level than the dragon, it is the dragon that receives these benefits. If there is no more then a level of difference between them, they both go up one level.

In addition to the possible level increase, The Chosen gains various special powers, generally called The Five Links.

The Link of Summoning: The Chosen can invoke his dragon from anywhere he is, making it manifest beside him in just a few seconds. Each one appears in a different way, either through a vortex, an explosion of flames or breaking reality. Summoning exhausts the character, for each time he uses it, he must spend a point of Fatigue.

The Link of The Senses: The dragon and his partner can communicate via a special bond. More than just words, ideas and thoughts can be directly transmitted, even over great distances. Similarly, each one of them has the ability to yield their senses over to the other, seeing and hearing through their eyes and ears at will.

The Link of Resistances: Both dragon and The Chosen can use the Resistances of the other when they carry out checks.

The Link of Time: The Chosen of the dragon stops aging at the moment in which the Pact is sealed. Like it, he can only die by unnatural causes.

The Link of Life: The Pact also has a very dangerous consequence for both members. Given that they share a single soul, if one of them dies, inevitably so does the other.



Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Sometimes the cost of power can be very high

BUSINESSES AND COMMERCE

Adventures are not just based on danger, investigation and frantic action. In many cases, there may be the possibility that a group wants to start a business to take advantage of their earnings. The following rules are designed so that the characters can establish businesses on their own while they continue to adventure. This gives them somewhere to invest their money while they travel, or maybe they simply have no time (or the desire) to deal with it all.

Naturally, to establish any business, the first thing to do is to invest lots of money into it. This value includes the premise (or the premises, if there are several buildings), the materials, the worker's wages and any other necessities. Half of the total value will indicate business flow, that which really moves. After knowing the volume, one must decide who will have overall responsibility: the individual who makes the most of the decisions and deals with the important clients and distributors. As was already stated, some characters can deal with this personally, or otherwise hire an employee. Either way, his salary is not included in the earnings as in the previous case.

Once both factors are determined, profits can be calculated. The results are measured in quarters, or every three months, and this is when the losses and gains of the business are balanced.

The first thing to do is figure the gains or losses is to pay attention to the commercial situation. To do this, consult Table 36 and apply the various pertinent modifiers. For example, a promising business in an area with good turnout would have a total of +20. Next, take into consideration the fluctuation of the market during that quarter. To calculate it we will make a roll on Table 37 and pay attention to the result, which will show a positive or negative value. Finally, the one in charge of the business will have to make a Trading Check on Table 38, which will give him the last modifier.

The sum of these three values results in a bonus or penalty that applies to the roll on Table 39 to find out the final quarter's results. This will show a percentage of gains or losses applicable to the business volume. The values already reflect any taxes and external costs. For example, if the business volume is of 150 gold crowns and the quarter finishes good (that is to say, 30%), we will have a clean profit of 45 gold crowns. Naturally, this money can be spent on anything; it can be spent on new equipment, bonuses or reinvested in extending the volume of the business for future quarters.

Imagine that Celia and Lemures decide to start a business to make use of all the money that they have accrued over the past few years. After thinking long and hard, they decide to start up a large weapons store in Chaville, the capital of Gabriel, one of the most important commercial ports in the world. It's a smart move, but being a very luxurious metropolitan area, the investment that they must make is also exceptionally high. After all the pertinent payments, they have spent 12,000 gold crowns on the store (which they call D'elafeur), which in turn creates a volume of 6,000 crowns. Since they do not want to personally take care of the business, they hire a merchant called Lecleck to manage the store while they continue adventuring. Let's see how their first quarter fares.

First we look at the Commercial Situations Table. Having invested in a place like Chaville, we decide that they have a Good Commercial Influx (+10), but as it is the first quarter (-30), it ends up with a -20 to begin with. Next, we make a roll on Table 37 to see how the market has fluctuated in Gabriel the last three months. Unfortunately for the store, the result is 27, which represents a Negative Quarter for the businesses (-20). Lastly, we verify the talent of Lecleck to take care of everything. Luckily, he has 80 in Trading, and manages to achieve a Difficult result on Table 38, which confers a +10 to D'elafeur. Altogether, applying the negative of the quarter, the Commercial Situations Table and the bonus obtained by Lecleck, we obtain a -30 to verify the quarter results.

Table 36: Commercial Situation

Commercial Situations	Modifier
Negligible Commercial Influx	-30
Bad Commercial Influx	-10
Good Commercial Influx	+10
A Promising Business	+10
A Business with Little Future	-20
The First Quarter	-30
The Second and Third Quarter	-10
Theft	-10 to -40
A Minor Catastrophe	-20
A Major Catastrophe	-50
A Rival Commercial Attack	-10 to -30

Table 37: Fluctuation of the Market

Roll	Result	Modifier
1	Market Bankruptcy	-60
2 to 10	Tragic Quarter	-40
11 to 30	Negative Quarter	-20
31 to 70	Normal Quarter	+0
71 to 90	Positive Quarter	+10
91 to 99	Exceptional Quarter	+20
100	Miraculous Quarter	+30

Table 38: Trading Check

Difficulty	Modifier
Routine	-20
Easy	-10
Medium	0
Difficult	+10
Very Difficult	+20
Absurd	+30
Almost Impossible	+40
Impossible	+50

Table 39: Quarter Results

Roll	Result	Gains
-30	Total Bankruptcy	-100%
-29 to 1	Terrible	-50%
2 to 10	Poor	-20%
11 to 20	Negative	-10%
21 to 40	Neutral	+0%
41 to 80	Positive	+10%
81 to 99	Good	+30%
100 to 129	Exceptional	+50%
130+	Miraculous	+100%

Finally, we do a roll on Table 39 applying the -30, reaching a final value of 60; despite everything, it has been a positive quarter, bestowing a gain of 10% of the volume. When they pass through Chaville a few days later, Lemures and Celia will discover that they have 600 gold crowns waiting for them.

TRIALS AND LEGAL PROCESSES

In many cases there is a possibility that the characters are involved with the law in one way or another; in fact, it is very likely that they will be accused of many different crimes (that they may or may not have committed). To resolve these issues there are some rules to prepare the Game Master to face any kind of trial. Bear in mind that they only apply to principalities or countries that have a genuine judicial structure. Places like Salazar or Haufman, where things are solved through tradition or brute force, have no need for any kind of trial.

It is also very important to remember that, however much the rule is presented, it should in no way be solved with a simple exchange of dice rolls. It is up to the characters to do everything possible to gain a favorable turn to the situation, like looking for key witnesses or fundamental evidence.

Initiating a Trial

In a trial there are always two parts: the defendant, who can be the accused himself or his legal representative, and the prosecution. To determine the outcome, the representatives on both sides must make contested checks, using the average of their Persuasion and Law Secondary Abilities as a basis. That is to say, somebody with Persuasion 80 and Law 40 would roll with a base ability of 60. That is because both Law and public speaking are two key factors in winning the lawsuit. Of course, depending on the crime and the situation in which the defendant finds himself in, there are also many additional modifiers that must be applied to these values. Table 40 displays a list of the most common situations, but naturally this is not exhaustive. It is possible that the judge may feel animosity towards the character, or some other unknown factor influencing the events. If so, it's up to the Game Master to determine what the applicable value in each situation is.

If a trial is extremely long and complex, it is often convenient to make more than one roll; in such cases, each check determines a positive or negative result that gives the jury an idea of how the process is moving along. The final sum of these values determines the verdict.

Public Opinion For: The jury believes that the defendant is innocent or they simply like him and do not want to see him convicted. This modifier applies only to the defendant. This only applies in trials of great social importance.

Table 40: Trials

Situations	Modifier
Public Opinion For	+20
Public Opinion Against	-40
Key Witness	+60/-60
Multitude of Witnesses	+30/-30
Scapegoat	-20
Horrible Crime	-20
Inferior Social Position	-50
Superior Social Position	+50
Doubtful Signs	+20/-20
Minor Evidence	+60/-60
Overwhelming Evidence	+120/-120

Public Opinion Against: The jury hates the defendant or is against him. They want him convicted, whether he is guilty or not. This penalty only applies against the defendant. Like the previous circumstance, it is only used in trials of special public interest.

Key Witness: This modifier applies to any side that has a key witness to endorse their position, either for or against the accused. This would apply to someone who has clearly seen what happened, and who has no "apparent" interest in benefiting one side or another.

Multitude of Witnesses: There are a lot of minor witnesses that can, in varying degrees, benefit one side or the other.

Scapegoat: Society is looking for someone to pay for the crime, and the authorities are unconcerned with whether the defendant is truly guilty or not, as long as they can relieve the pressure.

Horrible Crime: That which he is accused of is described as a horrible crime, in accordance with the principles of the country they are in. It could be a brutal ritual murder or accusations of witchcraft within an ecclesiastical principality with strong beliefs.

Inferior Social Position: The defendant belongs to the Lower Class, whereas the opposing side is directly connected to the nobility or The Church.

Superior Social Position: The defendant belongs to the Upper Class and the opposing side is of the lower.

Doubtful Signs: There is some evidence for or against the defendant, but nothing really conclusive.

Minor Evidence: The evidence clearly points towards the guilt or innocence of the defendant.

Overwhelming Evidence: There is overwhelming evidence of the innocence or guilt of the defendant. This is undeniable evidence, such as being discovered at the crime scene holding a weapon covered with blood and shouting "I did it!"

Table 41: Verdict

Result	Verdict
+0	Acquitted
-1 to -20	Minimum Punishment
-21 to -80	Normal Punishment
-81 or less	Maximum Punishment

The Verdict

Once the roll results are tallied, it is necessary to compare it against the information on **Table 41** to determine the verdict of the judge or court. The greater the margin against the defendant is, the worse it will be for him.

Acquitted: The defendant is found innocent of the crime.

Minimum Punishment: The defendant is convicted for the offense or crimes, but certain extenuating circumstances make it so that the punishment imposed by the judge or court is the smallest possible.

Normal Punishment: The defendant is convicted. The applicable punishment will be normal for the crime or the offense of that nature.

Maximum Punishment: The defendant is convicted without a shadow of a doubt, and the punishment will be the most terrible contemplated for his offense or crime.

NATURA

Natura is the term that is used to define the ordinary Gnosis of a natural race. It is the standard value that its members have, the existential value possessed by all the members of a species by the mere fact of belonging to it. In Gaïa, each race has normal Gnostic value or Natura, that indicates how attuned they are to supernatural forces. Below is a brief reference to its base values.

Table 42: Natura

Race	Natura
Human/Nephilim	0
Normal Animals	0
Sylvain	5
Duk´zarist	5
Jayan	0
Daimah	5
Ebudan	10
D´Anjayni	5

While each ethnic group has a basic Gnosis, extraordinary people sometimes arise, individuals whose very nature makes them different, "special" in the eyes of existence. These unique subjects have a Gnosis higher than the rest of their species, a Natura greater than their base race. Consequently, they also possess extraordinary abilities or advantages, unique to the significance that they congenitally manifest. While the supernatural presence of he who has a greater Gnosis will still be superior, the importance of those who have a higher Natura will be far more significant. For example, if a Sylvain and a Human both have Gnosis 15, the latter will have far greater importance in history.

When the Game Master begins a campaign he must grant Gnosis as considered appropriate to each character depending on what plans he has in store for them. This value is unique and will NEVER change throughout their existence; it is the important fate that they have from the moment they are born. Of course, the Game Master must be honest. If he had certain expectations at the beginning of the campaign, but this later opens up to new possibilities for game play, he is not obligated in any way to keep the Gnosis value he saw fit to bestow the characters at the start. He may simply increase or decrease it to his liking. He must only consider that it has always been its true value from the beginning. Typically, the Natura recommended for player characters is 10.

Remember that Gnosis and Natura are completely independent of the character's level. It is perfectly feasible that an individual with a Gnosis much higher than its Natura has a very low level; it's the implications and significance of his actions that really make the difference.

Application of Natura

Natura rules only apply to natural creatures. Beings between worlds or spirits do not use it, since their base characteristics make them radically different. A being between worlds or a spirit with high Gnosis can innately have greater existential power, but their decisions and actions are not necessarily going to have a greater impact on history. Some spells or abilities, such as Chimera or Overcome Death, are able to alter the essence of people along with their Gnosis. In such cases, when transcending to a different existential state, they will retain the same importance they had before, but cannot keep using their Natura advantages.

Natura 0

These are normal individuals, the most common members of their respective races, whose actions will never have true repercussions; they are people who live simple and ordinary lives, without the slightest importance. This value is not suitable for player characters.

Limitation of Rolls: Characters with Gnosis 0 are not capable of producing great works or performing actions beyond what their abilities allow. As a result, they limit their Open Rolls to a single degree, no matter what their second result is. That is to say, if somebody with Natura 0 gets an Open Roll, even though he rolled a 91 on his second roll he may not roll again.

Resistance: When making a Resistance Check a result of 100 isn't an automatic success.

Natura +5

These are people whose existence stands out in some way among others; their lives will be full of important events and important developments. This level of Natura grants no additional benefit beyond role-playing ones.

Natura +10

Those with this level of Natura are individuals of transcendental importance. Wherever they go, significant events occur (or rather, history pulls them to the places where they will happen), and what normal people consider inconceivable will be commonplace for them.

Destiny Points: The character receives 3 Destiny Points.

Natura +15

People with this Natura have the ability to shape fate itself. They are individuals with the potential for extraordinary actions, whose impact will affect the entire world in varying degrees. For better or worse, their actions will change the lives of thousands of people.

Additional Open Rolls: When a character with this Natura obtains a roll in which both the tens and the ones place are the same (11, 22, 33, 44...), he can roll again; if he gets the same number three times in a row, his roll is considered the same as rolling a 100.

Destiny Points: The character receives 6 Destiny Points.

Natura +20

This is the maximum degree by which a person can exceed his base racial Natura. When an individual's Gnosis is twenty points higher than their ethnic group, they do not live within history: history revolves around them. From the moment in which he is born, his actions will have huge significance for existence, and with them will shape the destiny of the world. As insignificant as they may seem, each of his decisions will have enormous consequence capable of changing history and the lives of everyone in Gaïa.

Transcendental Nucleus: The character's importance is so significant it increases the impact of all the activities of normal individuals near him. For better or worse, while they are by him, those with Natura 0 can ignore the rules of Limitation of Rolls and Resistance because of their Gnosis, granted they do not directly contest the character.

Destiny Points: The character receives 9 Destiny Points.

Destiny Points

Characters with a very high Natura have Destiny Points at their disposal: "Wild Cards" that they can use to influence certain events in a special way. These points are very scarce and limited, so they should not be used lightly; generally, once they are spent they cannot be recovered. Only if the GM thinks it fitting, there may be moments in a campaign in which he allows a character to recover a Destiny Point, but only after sufficiently relevant events coincide. In any case, it is recommended that the GM always keep how many of these points a player has left secret from the player.

Here is a list of what Destiny Points can do:

Destined Moment: If the character says he wants to spend Destiny Points before making a roll, he gains a bonus of +20 to his final result. This ability can be used with any kind of check, including those for Attack, Defense and Resistance. If it is used for a characteristics check, it grants a bonus of -2 to the result. The maximum number of Destiny Points that can be spent on a single action cannot be more than 3.

I Will Not Fumble: A character can spend a Destiny Point to ensure that his next roll is not a Fumble. In order to use this ability, he must declare it before rolling the dice. Thus, rolling a 1, 2 or 3 will not result in an automatic failure, but a normal result.

Destiny's Resistance: By spending a Destiny Point any character can reroll a Resistance Check to ignore an effect or negative state. For example, if somebody had been affected by a paralytic spell and cannot roll again for five combat turns, he could spend a point on the second turn to try and free himself. This ability is limited to single use for each negative effect.

ANIMALS

Below are a series of common types of natural animals in Gaïa. All of them show their basic archetype: an adult specimen at full power.

Fox

Class Freelance; **Level** 0
Initiative 65; **LP** 55; **AT** None; **Attack** 55; **Dodge** 35; **Weapons** Claws, Bite; **Damage** 25
AGI: 8 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 4 **STR:** 4 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 4 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 20, Jump 10, Climb 25, Stealth 25, Notice 55, Search 45, Track 55.
Special: Night Vision, Acute Sense: Smell, Natural Weapons; Bite and Claws (Thrust) Limited.
Resistance: PhR 15, DR 15, VR 15, MR 20, PsR 20.

Crocodile

Class Freelance; **Level** 1
Initiative 35; **LP** 930; **AT** 3 All; **Attack** 70; **Dodge** Accumulation; Weapons Bite; **Damage** 70
AGI: 3 **DEX**: 5 **CON**: 8 **STR**: 8 **PER**: 4 **INT**: 2 **WIL**: 3 **POW**: 5
Abilities: Hide 50, Stealth 20, Notice 30, Search 20, Track 20, Feats of Strength 55.
Special: Damage Accumulation, Natural Weapons; Bite (Increased Damage +20, Trapping 8, Thrust), Aquatic Movement, Damage Barrier 40.
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 30, PsR 20.

Owl

Class Freelance; **Level** 0
Initiative 30; **LP** 70; **AT** None; **Attack** 30; **Dodge** 5; **Weapons** Claws, Beak; **Damage** 10
AGI: 5 **DEX:** 5 **CON:** 4 **STR:** 3 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 3 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Stealth 50, Notice 40 (70), Search 20 (50), Track 35 (65).
Special: Natural Weapons; claws and beak (Thrust) Limited, Natural Flight Value 10, Night Vision, Acute Sense: Sight and Hearing.
Resistance: PhR 15, DR 15, VR 15, MR 20, PsR 20.

Monkey

Class Freelance; **Level** 0
Initiative 60; **LP** 70; **AT** None; **Attack** 20; **Dodge** 40; **Weapons** Bite; **Damage** 5
AGI: 10 **DEX:** 7 **CON:** 5 **STR:** 4 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 4 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Acrobatics 75, Athleticism 25, Swim 25, Jump 30, Climb 45, Notice 20, Search 20, Track 10.
Resistance: PhR 20, DR 20, VR 20, MR 20, PsR 20.

Pureblood Horse from Baho

Class Freelance; **Level** 3
Initiative 65; **LP** 875; **AT** 3 All; **Attack** 70; **Dodge** Accumulation; **Weapons** Kick; **Damage** 55
AGI: 12 **DEX**: 3 **CON**: 9 **STR**: 10 **PER**: 4 **INT:** 3 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 200, Swim 15, Jump 135, Style 20, Notice 40, Feats of Strength 30.
Special: Damage Accumulation, Superhuman Physical Characteristics, Natural Weapons; Kick (Impact).
Resistance: PhR 50, DR 50, VR 50, MR 40, PsR 40.

Acinonyx

Class Assassin; **Level** 3
Initiative 100; **LP** 110; **AT** None; **Attack** 125; **Dodge** 120; **Weapons** Maw and Claws / Tentacle; **Damage** 90/25
AGI: 11 **DEX:** 9 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 9 **PER:** 9 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 7
Abilities: Acrobatics 50, Athleticism 60, Swim 25, Jump 30, Climb 50, Hide 45, Stealth 110, Notice 90 (60), Search 90 (50), Track 80 (50).
Special: Superhuman Physical Characteristics, Acute Sense: Smell, Natural Weapons; Claws (increased Damage +40, Cut) and Tentacle (Trapping 10, Impact), See Supernatural.
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 45, PsR 40.

Lion

Class Freelance; **Level** 2
Initiative 65; **LP** 90; **AT** None; **Attack** 90; **Dodge** 70; **Weapons** Claws, Bite; **Damage** 60
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 8 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 3 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 50, Swim 10, Jump 25, Climb 15, Intimidate 10, Hide 35, Stealth 45, Notice 40 (70), Search 35 (65), Track 40 (70).
Special: Natural Weapons; Bite and Claws (Increased Damage +10, Thrust), Acute Sense: Smell.
Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 35, PsR 35.

Ilona

Class Freelance; **Level** 3
Initiative 70; **LP** 875; **AT** 3 All; **Attack** 80; **Dodge** Accumulation; **Weapons** Kick **Damage** 60
AGI: 12 **DEX:** 4 **CON:** 9 **STR:** 11 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 8 **POW:** 6
Abilities: Athleticism 100, Swim 15, Jump 140, Style 40, Notice 50, Feats of Strength 50.
Special: Damage Accumulation, Superhuman Physical Characteristics, Natural Weapons; Kick (Impact), Spiritual Link with its rider.
Resistance: PhR 50, DR 50, VR 50, MR 45, PsR 50.

Yoürgoulat

Class Freelance; **Level** 3
Initiative 55; **LP** 975; **AT** 4 All; **Attack** 120; **Dodge** Accumulation; **Weapons** Claws, Bite; **Damage** 100
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 12 **STR:** 12 **PER:** 5 **INT:** 3 **WIL:** 4 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 75, Jump 45, Notice 40, Swim 35, Track 50, Climb 20, Feats of Strength 190.
Special: Damage Accumulation, Natural Weapons: Bite and claws (Increased Damage +20, Cut), Superhuman Physical Characteristics.
Resistance: PhR 60, DR 60, VR 60, MR 40, PsR 35.

Nya Leusi

Class Assassin; **Level** 3
Initiative 100; **LP** 110; **AT** None; **Attack** 135; **Dodge** 110; **Weapons** Maw and Claws; **Damage** 50
AGI: 11 **DEX:** 9 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 8 **PER:** 8 **INT:** 5 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Acrobatics 40, Athleticism 50, Intimidate 10, Hide 80, Stealth 155, Notice 100 (70), Search 100 (70), Track 100 (70).
Special: Superhuman Physical Characteristics, Acute Sense: Smell, Natural Weapons; Bite and Claws (Cut), See Supernatural.
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 40, PsR 40.

Dog
Class Freelance; **Level** 0
Initiative 55; **LP** 55; **AT** None; **Attack** 30; **Dodge** 20; **Weapons** Bite; **Damage** 30
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 5 **CON:** 4 **STR:** 4 **PER:** 8 **INT**: 3 **WIL:** 3 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 20, Swim 10, Jump 10, Intimidate 10, Notice 60 (90), Search 30 (60), Track 50 (80).
Special: Natural Weapons; Bite (Thrust) Limited, Acute Sense: Smell.
Resistance: PhR 15, DR 15, VR 15, MR 20, PsR 10.

Mesagardon
Class Freelance; **Level** 3
Initiative 40; **LP** 1,675; **AT** Natural 6; **Attack** 100; **Dodge** Accumulation; **Weapons** Bite; **Damage** 80
AGI: 4 **DEX:** 5 **CON:** 12 **STR:** 12 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 2 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Intimidate 70, Notice 50, Search 50, Feats of Strength 110, Resist Pain 40.
Special: Damage Accumulation, Natural Weapons; Bite and Claws (Thrust), Damage Barrier 60, Natural Armor 4, Open (Belly), Superhuman Physical Characteristics.
Resistance: PhR 60, DR 60, VR 60, MR 40, PsR 40.

Wolf of Wulfgar
Class Freelance; **Level** 2
Initiative 65; **LP** 140; **AT** None; **Attack** 90; **Dodge** 70; **Weapons** Bite, Claws; **Damage** 60
AGI: 9 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 8 **STR:** 9 **PER:** 10 **INT:** 3 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Stealth 75, Notice 80 (110), Search 55 (85), Hide 60, Track 65 (95), Jump 20, Intimidate 20, Climb 25, Swim 25.
Special: Natural Weapons; Bite and Claws (Increased Damage +10, Thrust), Acute Sense: Smell.
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 35, PsR 35.

Tiger
Class Freelance; **Level** 2
Initiative 65; **LP** 90; **AT** None; **Attack** 80; **Dodge** 60; **Weapons** Bite, Claws; **Damage** 50
AGI: 9 **DEX:** 5 **CON:** 6 **STR:** 8 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 3 **WIL:** 4 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 65, Swim 15, Jump 25, Climb 30, Intimidate 5, Hide 45, Stealth 65, Notice 45 (75), Search 35 (65), Track 40 (70).
Special: Natural Weapons; Bite and claws (Thrust), Acute Sense: Smell.
Resistance: PhR 40, DR 40, VR 40, MR 35, PsR 30.

Weasel
Class Freelance; **Level** 0
Initiative 60; **LP** 40; **AT** None; **Attack** 30; **Dodge** 30; **Weapons** Bite; **Damage** 10
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 3 **STR:** 3 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 3 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Swim 15, Jump 20, Climb 35, Notice 55, Search 55, Track 55.
Special: Night Vision, Natural Weapons; Bite (Thrust) Limited, Acute Sense: Smell.
Resistance: PhR 15, DR 15, VR 15, MR 20, PsR 20.

Culastis
Class Freelance; **Level** 1
Initiative 70; **LP** 260; **AT** Natural 2; **Attack** 50; **Dodge** Accumulation; **Weapons** Bite; **Damage** 5
AGI: 8 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 4 **STR:** 4 **PER:** 7 **INT:** 3 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Swim 30, Climb 45, Intimidate 15, Hide 35, Stealth 50, Notice 35, Search 15, Track 35.
Special: Damage Accumulation, Natural Weapons; Bite (Poison Level 60 [VR 80 or instantaneous death] Thrust) Limited.
Resistance: PhR 25, DR 25, VR 25, MR 30, PsR 30.

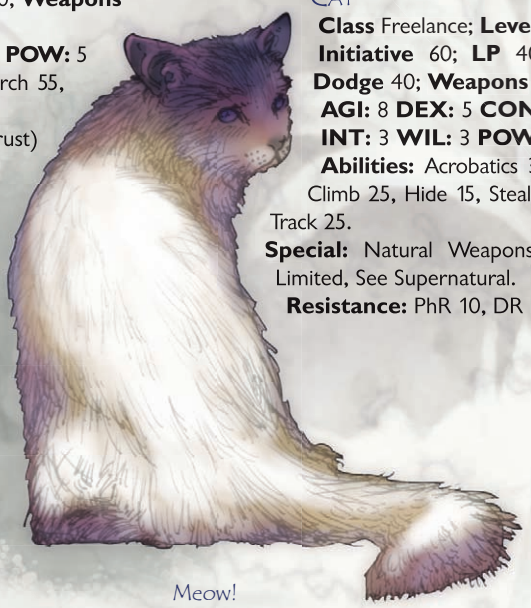
Lija Coralline
Class Freelance; **Level** 1
Initiative 65; **LP** 40; **AT** None; **Attack** 50; **Dodge** 40; **Weapons** Bite; **Damage** 50
AGI: 7 **DEX:** 6 **CON:** 3 **STR:** 4 **PER:** 8 **INT:** 2 **WIL:** 3 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 35, Notice 100, Search 70, Track 70 (blood).
Special: Acute Sense: Smell, Natural Weapons; Bite (Increased Damage +30, Thrust), Aquatic Movement.
Resistance: PhR 20, DR 20, VR 20, MR 30, PsR 20.

Mammoth
Class Freelance; **Level** 4
Initiative 25; **LP** 2,100; **AT** 6 All; **Attack** 80; **Dodge** Accumulation; **Weapons** Charging and Crushing; **Damage** 100
AGI: 5 **DEX:** 5 **CON:** 14 **STR**: 14 **PER:** 4 **INT:** 2 **WIL:** 4 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 60, Notice 30, Feats of Strength 170, Swim 20, Track 15.
Special: Damage Accumulation, Natural Weapons: Charge and Crush (Impact) Limited, Superhuman Physical Characteristics.
Resistance: PhR 60, DR 60, VR 60, MR 40, PsR 40.

Sabertooth
Class Assassin; **Level** 3
Initiative 100; **LP** 110; **AT** None; **Attack** 130; **Dodge** 100; **Weapons** Bite, Claws; **Damage** 60
AGI: 11 **DEX:** 8 **CON:** 7 **STR:** 8 **PER:** 8 **INT:** 3 **WIL:** 5 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Acrobatics 30, Athleticism 75, Climb 50, Intimidate 10, Hide 60, Stealth 105, Notice 100 (70), Search 100 (70), Track 100 (70).
Special: Superhuman Physical Characteristics, Acute Sense: Smell, Natural Weapons: Jaws and Claws (Increased Damage +10, Cut).
Resistance: PhR 45, DR 45, VR 45, MR 40, PsR 40.

Tyrannosaurus Rex
Class Warrior; **Level** 6
Initiative 55; **LP** 2,765; **AT** 6 All; **Attack** 165; **Dodge** Accumulation; Weapons Bite, Claws; **Damage** 165
AGI: 6 **DEX:** 5 **CON:** 13 **STR:** 13 **PER:** 6 **INT:** 2 **WIL:** 3 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Athleticism 35, Intimidate 60, Notice 45, Search 25, Track 60, Feats of Strength 140, Resist Pain 50.
Special: Damage Accumulation, Natural Weapons; Claws and Jaw (Increased Damage +40, Thrust), Damage Barrier 60, Superhuman Physical Characteristics.
Resistance: PhR 80, DR 80, VR 80, MR 55, PsR 45.

Cat
Class Freelance; **Level** 0
Initiative 60; **LP** 40; **AT** None; **Attack** 20; **Dodge** 40; **Weapons** Bite, Claws; **Damage** 10
AGI: 8 **DEX:** 5 **CON:** 3 **STR:** 2 **PER:** 8 **INT:** 3 **WIL:** 3 **POW:** 5
Abilities: Acrobatics 30, Athleticism 25, Jump 25, Climb 25, Hide 15, Stealth 20, Notice 40, Search 20, Track 25.
Special: Natural Weapons; Claws and Bite (Thrust) Limited, See Supernatural.
Resistance: PhR 10, DR 10, VR 10, MR 20, PsR 10.



Meow!

Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

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Rah descended the long dark stairs that went down into the depths of the earth. His vision was clouded by pain and fatigue, but he knew each corner of those steps by heart, every stone of that gloomy passage. He could even walk down with his eyes shut.

When he reached the bottom, he stopped staring the enormous metal doors. Despite the protections they had, he felt the extraordinary power that crackled inside. Very slowly he removed a gauntlet and put his bloody hand on the circular panel.

"Opening the first six seals."

With a dull thud, the entire metal surface began filling with bright symbols, forming a scintillating cabalistic tree with seven sephirots. When it completed itself, the mystical metal layers of the door began to separate one after another and Rah entered the very heart of Tol Rauko.

Utnapishtim.

Before him stretched a vast machinery for miles beneath the earth, digging into the very roots of existence. Hundreds of floating panels surrounded his body, full of quantum and supernatural formulas. The Lord of Judas observed everything meticulously while he moved through the colossal room. Millions of souls of both gods and mortals had accumulated in those metal ramifications, a power just beyond mankind's grasp. When he passed through the center he could not help but outline a sardonic smile when he noticed the thirty black metal pieces located in the central panel but, without stopping, continued on to his destination.

There was an enormous crystal cylinder full of tubes in the center of the room, inside of which was a suspended woman in a deep slumber. She was beautiful in a way hard to explain, so much to force the poets to stop dreaming. Watching her, Rah's expression changed slightly and his eyes filled with a certain melancholy.

"I am sorry. Though you are not yet prepared, I have nothing left."

With tenderness, he ran his bloody hand over the crystal, leaving four long red streaks. For the first time in a while, sadness overcame him.

"Perhaps this is a mistake. Somebody once told me that we must never lose hope, but it's strange... those words are now hollow to me."

"You know? I would have liked to teach you about many things, both good and bad. A sunset, a crying child, a mother's pain in childbirth. Now we can no longer do this together."

"Sometimes I wonder... When did we lose our history? How did we lose control of our own destiny? Perhaps... it was never ours? Maybe the world I was going to create was much worse."

"But it would have been ours."

Rah's hand slowly fell on the central Control Panel of Utnapishtim. Dozens of wires burrowed into his flesh, ripping through sinews and veins until it fused to his nervous system in his spine. The pain was unbearable.

"Opening the seventh seal. Let there be silence in heaven."

Suddenly, one after another, all the panels in the room went out simultaneously while a colossal sephirotic tree began to form; first throughout all Tol Rauko, through the Inner Sea, and shortly after, everywhere in the world. The cabalistic structure was so titanic that it could be seen from the stratosphere.

And while his body and soul were torn by the insane power he had triggered, the voice of Rah echoed for the last time in all creation. His words were imbued with a sad and solemn tone, like that of someone bringing bad news.

"And your name will be Elhazzared, meaning 'The Lost Paradise'".

And then the world shattered.

And from its pieces was only silence.



Illustrated by Wen Yu Li

Who...am I?

The End

Why do we forget?

Every time I begin to tell this story, our story,
that question always comes to mind.

Even today, at the dawn of a new millennium,
I still have no answer.

We lost everything.

In an instant, what was ours was wrested away,
submerging us in the darkness of our own ignorance.

The details of our history are lost in its immensity, and so we are doomed to repeat them, ignorant of our condition, while the world that we created collapses around us.

Is this our punishment?

Or our salvation?



Welcome to gaïa.

Enter the old continent, the heart of a world full of adventures, mysteries, and intrigues waiting to be discovered. Submerge yourself in hundreds of stories of a land of fantasy where man coexists with the most incredible creatures without knowing it.

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