



Castles  
& Crusades



SURIN

# After Winter's Dark

Aihrde: A Fantasy Adventure Setting

Stephen Chenault



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of  
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# AFTER WINTER'S DARK

## THE WORLD OF AIHRDE

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
I Geogrpahy	3
Lands	4
Oceans	6
Cradle of th eWorld	7
II Cultural Landscape	11
People's	11
Kingdoms	20
111 Cosmological Landscape	31
The Heavenly Bodies	34
Gods Of Aihrde	36
IV History of Aihrde	46
Index	53



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## INTRODUCTION

The world of Aihilde spins upon an earth-like axis of ancient civilizations where good and evil have struggled for countless years. It is a world that bares the markings of its past; where ancient evils slumber, stained with the power of eldritch wizardry; where gods dwell in bejeweled halls of wonderment, worshiped by men and women of all creeds; where dragons live in great dens of heaped treasure; where the new stands upon the ruins of the old in beds of ancient glory. Here, kingdoms have risen and fallen, ground to dust by war, famine, plague or time. Aihilde is a world reborn, and in the *After Winter Dark* heroes tread in iron shod boots and wizards lean on crooked staffs to plunder the buried wealth and power of the ages. Here, the eternal struggle goes on, age after age, for Aihilde is a world of adventure, of undaunted heroes, untainted by the decadent philosophies of those meek who suffer in the shadows of lesser men. For here the stone columns of history are wiped clean, awaiting the bold to carve their mark and gain entry to the halls of immortality.

*After Winter Dark* is designed as a primer for the world of Aihilde. Within its pages lies a multitude of information from the mundane to the fantastic, from the mythologies of the people of Aihilde to the long history of the world. Aihilde is unique amongst settings in that it is specifically designed to allow participants to build and shape the world to fit their style and mode of play. The

foundations for an epic world are solidly built into the cosmology and history of the world, but new players enter a world reborn after a millennia of the Winter Dark. The kingdoms are young, the people newly liberated from slavery and despotism and the world is ripe for development.

Written with the Castle Keeper and player in mind *After Winter's Dark* is presented here in two books. Geography, Culture, Cosmology and History. Geography is an overview of the world, with brief notations made on all of Aihilde's continents and oceans as well as climate, the Wall of Worlds and the Four Corners. Geography also includes more detailed information on the "Cradle of the World." This region is highlighted on the map and consists of the countries and peoples around the Inner Sea where the focus of the setting, adventures and other material for Aihilde are generally located. In the Culture an overview of the peoples, languages and calendars is given with details supplied on those nations and peoples in the Cradle of the World. In Cosmology, religion and mythology are explored in some detail, the unfolding tapestry that is the struggle of good and evil, law and chaos is explained as are the relations of the planes and other cosmological bodies. The Histories supply the reader a brief overview of the days of Aihilde, from creation to the present, including the birth of the first races to the victories of the Winter Dark and the fall of the Great Shroud.



# 1 GEOGRAPHY

## OF THE FIRMAMENT

**AIRHDE:** Aihrde was created by the All Father in the deeps of the Void and made to rest upon the firmament of the Maelstrom. In its beginning it was flat and sat upon the back of Inzae, the dragon goddess of the Maelstrom. A great fence, the Wall of Worlds, was made to surround the world, and it rested upon the far edges of creation. Here the waters of the oceans collided with great tumult upon the fog of the Wall. It was built to protect the world from the emptiness and the denizens of the Void. Too, it bound the creatures of Aihrde to the world. During the Winter Dark, Unklar bent the world and shaped it into a sphere, binding it at the Four Corners. This served to imprison Inzae in what became the Inner World. He reshaped the Wall of Worlds and made it into the Shroud of Darkness.

**THE FOUR CORNERS:** When Unklar rose to power, the world was flat. He reshaped it. Here Unklar bound the four corners of Aihrde together. Using magic and force he drove a giant spike shaped of bronze metal into each of the corners and fused the world into a rough sphere and made it round. But the Four Corners showed the strain of his labors and keeping it required his constant attention. He placed Yas-d'Kramn, an Aenochian magician and engineer, the greatest of his age, upon the Four Corners to keep it secure. He gave him an army of slaves. These slaves work tirelessly to keep the bronze spike in place and the world held together. Unklar gave him power as well and taught him the Empty Riddle, prophesying that when one came with the answer to the Riddle, only then would the spike break and the world return to its origins and natural shape.

The Four Corners lie in the very center of the Dulzdine Ocean upon a huge island of bronze. The waters around the island are ferocious, deep and have never been passed by ship or beast. The air around the island has a massive updraft that draws even the strongest of dragons up into the air less reaches of the atmosphere. Magic does not work around the island, failing utterly. A host of dark skinned, misshapen people dwell here, slaves to the engineer that keeps the Corners. The island is devoid of anything but one large, square pyramid.

**THE WALL OF WORLDS:** The Wall of Worlds is not a plane in and of itself, but rather a magic barrier that lies between the Void and Creation. It was crafted of pure magic and its nature reflected this. Its size was stupefying for the Void stretches from horizon to horizon as far as the eye can see, rising from bottomless depths and reaching limitless heights. It stood as a giant wall of fog and mist.

Now the Wall of Worlds is little more than a shell of what the All Father created. Unklar, the horned god, devoured the Wall and cast it back out as the Shroud of Darkness, the very ensorcellments he used to blanket the world and create the Winter's Dark. The Wall was not, however, completely destroyed and enough of it remains that breaching it is still a horrible and difficult task. At times it is calm, with the white mists quiet and serene. At other times, the Wall rages in mindless anger, hurling great bolts of electrical energy through its swirling clouds.

It cannot be seen from Aihrde with the naked eye, except on moonless nights, when it appears as a distant haze of milky lights in the sky.

**SHROUD OF DARKNESS:** With his great might Unklar devoured the fog of the Wall of Worlds and blew it forth again as a breath of chill air. Great clouds settled far and wide across Aihrde, blanketing all in a world of Winter and Dark. The legends of those days tell of a great fog rising in the heavens, of the dampening of the light of the sun. The fog, they called the Shroud of Darkness or the Cold Mist, for it brought a terrible cold. Sheets of snow and sleet blanketed the northern lands in ice, and much of the south as well. The Shroud hung over Aihrde for 800 years, and in time the warmth of the sun and the pure, unfiltered light of day became legends to the people and they spoke of these things as if faerie tales.

In the latter years of the Winter Dark Wars the Shroud began to wane, even as Unklar's power faded and he struggled to keep his throne. In the end Wenafar the Queen of Fey drove the Shroud from the skies and it fell to Aihrde as so much mist and dew.

**THE CLIMATE:** Airhde is a very wet and warm world. Precipitation is heavy in most regions through the early spring and late fall. Warm springs and summers keep a constant flow of melt water from the highlands which add to the overall prosperity of agriculture. The thousand years, called the Long Centuries or Long Years, of the Winter Dark left tremendous reservoirs of glacial waters throughout the world. The sudden collapse of the Shroud allowed these to melt off quickly. Regional climate varies. There are five types of climate in Aihrde: tropical, dry, temperate, cold and polar.

CLIMATE	ANNUAL AVERAGE PRECIPITATION	ANNUAL AVERAGE TEMPERATURE
Tropical	65in.	65°
Dry	.3in.	60°
Temperate	35in.	56°
Cold	21in.	12°
Polar	16in.	-2°





## OF THE LAND & WATER

### THE CONTINENTS

#### AATUCK

**CLIMATE:** The climate varies from dry to polar.

**LANDMASS:** Aatuck lies in the northern hemisphere. This is a land of great contrasts. In the south are deep conifer forests, where the ancient Ean Trees dwell – huge poled monstrous trees that tower hundreds of feet into the air. These forests stand upon deep firths and inlets, countless bays and estuaries. Further north, beyond the forests, are frozen tundra, stark rocky hills, deep valleys and gulches. There are two great mountain chains, both of which sport active volcanoes. The slumbering magma beneath the lands of Aatuck give rise to hundreds of hot springs and lakes making much of the land hospitable, despite its northern latitude.

**POPULACE:** Some dwarven settlements created inroads for almost all the peoples of the world. Of the humans, the Aathuk and Engale dwell here. There are scattered tribes of orcs, some few elves and other peoples. But largely the land is inhabited by monsters of all calibers.

**MYTHOLOGY:** It is a land rife with adventure.

**HISTORY:** Home of one of the most ancient human civilizations in Aihilde. Here the Aathuk (*see below page 13*) settled and plied the skies with their flying ships, studied the stars and built wondrous cities. They eventually declined and many of them died out. After the decline of the Aathuk many people came and went from Aatuck: orcs, elves, other humans and more besides. During the Winter Dark the land was largely ignored and its people retreated into the hinterlands. It is largely a wilderness area now.

#### AENOCIA

**CLIMATE:** The continent of Aenochia is huge and its climate varies from tropical to cold, though it is largely temperate.

**LANDMASS:** Aenochia lies largely in the northern hemisphere and is the greatest landmass in Aihilde. It extends from the Inner Sea in the west to Ikem's Horn in the east, from the frozen tundras of the north lands to the jungles of Zuala in the south. It comprises massive mountain chains, the great Channel Lakes, several large inner seas, the temperate forests of the central belt and great southern deserts.

**POPULACE:** Hosts of people of all races make their home in Aenochia including three of the tribes of men: the Aenochians, Zuala and Madrui. The orcs dwell in the eastern wilderness as do many of the elves.

**MYTHOLOGY:** It is here that the gods first took refuge, fleeing from the fires of the All Father's forge that lay further west. The dragons first came from the White Mountains north of those lakes and still infest those high peaks in tremendous numbers.

**HISTORY:** Aenochia has seen peoples rise and fall and the ruins of ancient civilizations are found throughout the whole continent. The dwarves made little penetration of the lands beyond the

Crenthul Mountains, though they did settle on the far coasts around Ikem's Horn. Their decline saw the rise of man and the Aenochians extended their power into the Marl where they were halted by the iron fortresses of the orcs. During the Winter Dark the orcs of the Marl rose to power over most of the eastern countries. Since the fall of Unklar their power has waned and other regional powers are on the rise.

#### ETHRUM

**CLIMATE:** Its climate varies from tropical to cold, though it is largely temperate.

**LANDMASS:** The lands of Ethrum are those that lie west of the Inner Sea and include the Gorthurag mountains where lies First Home, the huge Coral Bay, the sprawling forests of the hinterland and much of the Inner Sea region.

**POPULACE:** The dwarves were the first to settle these lands and are still found there in many parts. Of the tribes of men, most of them are Ethrum though some Aenochian immigrants live around the Inner Sea. Large tribes of the Engale have settled throughout the lands. Giants dwell here in abundance.

**MYTHOLOGY:** Ethrum is considered the cradle of life for here the All Father dwelt upon the slopes of Mount Thangondrim and fashioned the world. From those heights he saw the first fires of the distant mountains, created the Maidens and pounded the molds of the dwarves.

**HISTORY:** This land is truly a part of the greater landmass of Aenochia, and many do not separate the two. But the dwarves first came to power in these lands and their first and greatest kingdoms were here. It has played host to the world's greatest wars and suffered like no other from the Winter Dark. Of all the lands of Aihilde, Ethrum is ripe with ruins, dungeons, old cities and the like for the dwarves and goblins had their beginnings here and left much in ruin or abandoned it after the many wars.

#### IANUK

**CLIMATE:** The climate varies from temperate to cool.

**LANDMASS:** Southern Ianuk is temperate and seasonal, whereas the northern reaches of the land are gripped in long, harsh winters. Many indigenous hardwoods grow along the southern slopes of the mountains with conifers further north. Ianuk has a great chain of mountains for its spine, and as with much of the mountains in the north, there are many volcanoes here.

**POPULACE:** There are some few dwarves, halflings, gnomes and the like. The land is largely dominated by the Nia peoples and elves. Legendary creatures stalk the highlands and forest paths, ever preying upon the Nia who dwell here. There are many orcs, ogres and giants in Ianuk as well as hob-goblins and gnolls.

**MYTHOLOGY:** The land is filled with great and ancient magics for it is these cold lands that the first humans made war upon the gods for the peoples that settled these lands were minions of Mordius.

**HISTORY:** The dwarves almost never ventured this far north and across the seas, though some few colonies of Alanti were founded

## 4 CASTLES & CRUSADES



along the coasts and in protected harbors. These vanished with that kingdom and left only a remnant of its people. The Nia dominated the land for many centuries, so much so that these First Born absorbed the customs and manners of these humans. The Winter Dark left all in ruin and the peoples have not recovered significantly from them.

### **INKLU-NAID**

**CLIMATE:** Its climate is tropical with cold climates in the highest reaches of the mountains.

**LANDMASS:** This great island continent consists of deep jungles and a great plateau of mountains. It is separated from the Aenochain mainland by the Dwarven Anvil, the violent straights that divide the Wilston and Amber Seas.

**POPULACE:** For the most part this landmass is occupied by men. The Inkle dominate but the Naid and some scattered remnants of Aenochians and Ethrumians dwell here. There are almost no dwarves and halflings, but elves and gnomes are found throughout the jungles. There are humanoids, some wild orc tribes and many lizard men and troglodytes have lands here, some dwelling in large kingdoms.

**MYTHOLOGY:** Wild and strange monsters dwell here, exotic and beyond the reckoning of the men of the north.

**HISTORY:** Inkle–Naid has a long history of habitation, starting with the great tribe of Inkle and the lesser tribes of Naid. The Aenochians and Ethrum built colonies, waged war and the like upon the northern coasts. In times past the dwarves of Alanti built colonies and trade centers here. But the Winter dark left much of these lands in ruin and now the island societies are shadows of their former selves. Jungle covered ruins mark the place where great cities once stood and if some of the peoples retain the knowledge and wealth of their ancestors they have hidden themselves in the deep jungles.

### **SURNE**

**CLIMATE:** The climate varies from temperate to cool.

**LANDMASS:** Surne is a huge land mass located in the northern hemisphere. It includes the frozen tundra of the north, the archipelago of Chianuk in the south and the large island of Ephar. A harsh land of frozen wastes, high mountains, deep and forbidding forests, where narrow firths cut gashes into the land and stark cliffs hold back a violent sea.

**POPULACE:** Here the folk of fey gather in great numbers and build cities upon the edge of the world. There are powers in Surne, avatars and demons who do, from time to time, rise and build kingdoms of their own. They fight the Nia, the elves and other folk who dwell in and around these unforgiving lands. Only in the southern islands of Ephar did the early dwarves make their homes and there a remnant of their people still dwell.

**MYTHOLOGY:** It is the land of the faerie.

**HISTORY:** Surne is a land of tremendous magic, filled with monsters great and small for it was to these forbidding lands that the greater host of creatures fled in the Days before Days, even

before light came to Aihrde. They came here after the All Father made the land and the sea but they hid from him in fear of being banished to the Void. But even after the war of the gods, many stayed here and have dwelt in secret for countless eons.

## **OTHER LANDMASSES**

### **ALANTI**

**CLIMATE:** The climate in Alanti is tropical.

**LANDMASS:** These series of islands stretch between the mainland of eastern Aenochia and the land of Aroyo. There are hundreds of them, great and small. The waters around them are always choppy, so much so, that many sailors prefer taking the long voyage south of Aroyo rather than risking the dangerous waters about the islands. The islands themselves offer a variety of vistas, from soft sandy beaches to high rocky cliffs. Many of the islands are covered in beautiful tropical jungles. There is plenty of fresh water on almost all of them. Monsters from the dawn of time crawl and creep through the jungles, great hydras, manticores and the like.

**POPULACE:** Here the Zuala dwell in some few numbers and some of Rykaard. There are also a few scattered groups of elves and other demi-humans.

**MYTHOLOGY:** Fabled lands of Alanti lie somewhere in these islands.

**HISTORY:** The fabled dwarf kingdom of Alanti is said to have resided throughout these islands with her streets of cobbled gems, high alabaster halls, sea walls built of pearls and the like. But Alanti is no more, destroyed by the Dragon Riders and swallowed by the seas and wasted by time.

### **AROYO & ELIS**

**CLIMATE:** The climate here is tropical.

**LANDMASS:** These islands are the two largest landmasses in the southern Oddine Ocean. The northern of the two, Aroyo is covered in dense jungles and low lying hills and some few active volcanoes. The southern and larger of the two, Elis has sparse jungles along the beaches and inland valleys but is largely dominated by highly active volcanoes.

**POPULACE:** Rykaard are the only humans who dwell here in any numbers, some very small communities of Aenochians still thrive, and remnants of trading posts.

**MYTHOLOGY:** The warm climes and the updrafts in the atmosphere attract many dragons who come to these islands to mate and fight one another.

**HISTORY:** Both islands were settled by the dwarves of Alanti and their human allies the Rykaard. Early on the dwarves left the islands to the humans, concentrating on the huge megalopolis that was Alanti. The civilization of the Rykaard thrived for several thousand years, but the fall of Alanti and the course of time degraded the civilization much. It is now largely forgotten or much diminished. The ruins of their red-brick towns are reputed to be filled with the magics and lore of the ancient dwarves who befriended those who settled there (see below page 13). The islands



themselves are wilderness areas much visited by dragons and other strange monsters. Their distance from the greater landmass of Aenochia has shielded them from many of the devastating wars of the northerners.

## **GAL-LAND**

**CLIMATE:** The climate is cold, dry and polar.

**LANDMASS:** Gal-land is a mountainous cold land with short seasons as is to be expected in the northern climes, but is well blessed with many warm springs, ponds and the like. It has a generous supply of both hardwood and conifers. The Engale live mostly on the southern or northern coasts, or along the rivers where they have a plentiful supply of wood.

**POPULACE:** This land is home to the North men, the Engale.

**MYTHOLOGY:** The North men have their origins here.

**HISTORY:** They migrated here long before written history and thrived in the harsh mountains and cold. Later their numbers and power grew and they spread to the Aenochian landmass and Ethrum as well.

## **KATH**

**CLIMATE:** The climate here is tropical or temperate.

**LANDMASS:** The twin lands of Kath are covered in dense jungles and high mountains. Rivers and streams criss-cross the country, massive waterfalls dot the landscape, deep gulches and ravines filled with all manner of tangled vegetation. The skies are very blue here and the weather generally warm. Gentle plains end in stark, high mountain ranges and cliffs in this land where many active volcanoes sweat upon the earth's continued creation.

**POPULACE:** The Katha dwell here, though they are much reduced in number and power. No dwarf ever built a colony here, though orcs and other humanoids came during the Winter Dark Years. Other monsters, some strange, some commonly found elsewhere, dwell in the terrible jungles of this land on the far side of the world.

**MYTHOLOGY:** The Dragon Cult of the Kath have their origins here and their dragon god, Lamul, dwells here still.

**HISTORY:** The Katha rose and fell in these islands, but since their time none have come to the fabled land and many have ceased even to believe it ever existed. It is reputed to have many lost treasures.

## **WODONHOHLE**

**CLIMATE:** The climate here is polar.

**LANDMASS:** An island locked in the frozen snows much of the year. Dominated by one huge mountain and its low lying hills, the Engale call this Wodon Hohle, as it is the home of Odin and the North men gods. Few dwell here, but some venture forth to explore it and seek out its legends. There are strange monsters here, many beyond the reckoning of northern scholars and unrecorded.

**POPULACE:** None.

**MYTHOLOGY:** The home of Odin.

**HISTORY:** In the dawn of time Mordius planted her most hardy seedlings here, but Yggstirle was the only one to take root. It grew huge in this wasted land and its roots stretch to the bottoms of the world, sprouting, it is said leaves in the land of Inzae. Odin and the North men gods dwell here and war with the stone giants in the high cold capped mountains.

## **THE OCEANS**

**IULDINE (THE WINDY SEA):** The waters of the far north are little explored. Sheets of ice break from the Northern Ice Shelf and float through these choppy waters, unnamed ridges jut to within feet of the surface making navigation difficult and dangerous. A constant wind blows across these waters, whipping up the fury of the waves. It is cold as well, and boats that venture here are often coated in ice.

**DULZDINE (DEEP WATERS):** The great ocean that spans the world. It is deep and stretches from the Wilston Sea to Ikem's Horn and from the land of Surne to the Southern Ice Sheet. The water warms in the summer months and possesses currents like rivers that ship traffic uses to traverse great distances. These waters are rich in sea monsters and lap upon the shores of a thousand islands.

**ODDINE (GREEN WATER):** This ocean extends from the continent of Inku-Naid to Kath and from Aenochia to the Southern Ice Shelf. Here Ea-Lor makes his home in the Green Halls and rules over all the world's bodies of water. The ocean is deep and wide and filled with hosts of small, many unnamed, islands. Though it is subject to massive and violent storms, which kick up the sea bed making the waters possess a greenish tint, it is normally a calm body of water and has served the world as a highway for centuries. Here the dwarves plied their great ships in times past before the sea swallowed Alanti and through it the fleets of Unklar created their dominion across the world. Now it is largely quiet, for few nations are great enough to afford the ships and fill the lanes with traffic.

## **OTHER BODIES OF WATER**

**THE AMBER SEA:** The great southern ocean, famous for violent storms and unpredictable weather.

**THE MISTY SEA:** A shallow body of water, where reefs and islands abound. Active volcanoes push the ocean floor to the surface with great tumult. There is always vast amounts of steam and smoke rising from the water. A dangerous region, but one reputed to be the dwelling place of many of the merman and their kind.

**THE SEAS OF AUSTUN (GOD):** This sea is tumultuous, deep and filled with all manner of strange creatures. The waters are dangerous and only the most skilled sailors risk their crafts in these deep blue waters. The Sea of God is reputed to be where the All Father came to wash the toils of his labors from his hands and body. The stuff of his being sank into the waters, giving birth to strange creatures.

**WILSTON SEA:** The waters which lie between the coasts of Ethrum and Inku-Naid are calm, and colored a light blue for the many reefs of coral, rock or sand that lie scattered throughout the region.



## THE CRADLE OF THE WORLD

In the center of the Cradle of the World lies the Inner Sea, fashioned from the thrashing of Inzae's mighty tail. Indeed the broken ridges of the Bergrucken Mountains are reputed to be the scales of her thorny spine thrusting up and into the world of Aihilde from the depths of the Maelstrom – the roots of Inzaa itself.

## EASTERN ETHRUM

These are the lands where the tribe of men called Ethrum have their origins and from whence their greatest kingdoms rose and fell. It is the center of great power, for here the Knights of Kayomar and the Magi of the White Order dwell.

## FORESTS

**DARKENFOLD:** A sea of green, the Darkenfold thrives where few men dare tread. Beneath her great black-barked oak trees exists a world of wonder. The light of day, absorbed, some say, by the bark of the trees, rarely penetrates the forest depths. Twisted paths to nowhere lead through deep meadows and past brooks babbling enchantments. And where the light of the sun falls, flowers grow purple, blue and yellow, contrasting with the mortality of green which is the Darkenfold.

**THE ELWOOD:** Of all the forests in the world, the Elwood is the oldest. Its ancient oaks stand like monuments in time. Their massive tower-like boles line the forest like pillars of stone and are capped by arching branches and leafy canopies. Beneath the forest vault lies a land of ancient mystery. Deep pools in hidden places feed cold streams that trickle through lost valleys. Glades of wondrous beauty hide the homes of dryads and faeries. Deep within live the wood elves of King Nigold. These seldom seen elves are ever diligent for the forest. Their feasts, while seldom seen, are often heard. The elves work with the Watchers in the Wood, rangers who serve the demi-god Daladon the Protector.

Together they insure the safety of the Great Oak, father of all trees that lies somewhere in the lost reaches of the Elwood.

**ELITHIAN WOOD:** This forest once stretched from the Straits of Ursal in the east to the Massif in the south and to the Inner Sea in the north. The forest's trees are numbered amongst the strongest conifers in the world. Their strength is ideal for shipmaking, their pliability ideal for the construction of bows and lances, and their numbers feed the need for fuel and building materials in the burgeoning populations of Anglamay, Avignon, The Hanse Cities, Kleaves, Sienne, and Kareelia. It has shrunk since the days of old.

**GREAT NORTHERN FOREST:** In the trackless wastes north of the Moravan Plains lay vast stretches of virgin pine forest. These largely unexplored lands are wild and are home to large prehistoric animals and tribes of men.

**THE GREENWOOD:** The King's wood. These trees are hotly contested between the King's of Anglamay and the Lords of the Hanse.

**MITHLON EVES:** This forest of hardwood trees lies nestled at the feet of the Rhodope Mountains. Here the wild elves live and other creatures of faerie besides. It is rumored that many undead stalk the forest paths. Mithlon the High Elf fell here, embattling orcs and goblins. The wood has borne his name ever since.

**TWILIGHT WOOD:** Under the Winter Dark the forest evolved anew into something altogether different. Here, twisted branches of perverted elm and oak grasp the night air like fingers of death. The peculiar leaves, black with white veins, absorb the light of the moon, growing thick and long. In the forest heights they intertwine with leafy vines, blocking the light of the sun such that the forest is in perpetual twilight. The wood is home to all manner of fell beast and undead creatures. Twilight elves walk these woods. These elves, the perverted offspring of high elves who remained behind, are as evil as they are good. Utumno, the dreaming god, is said to wander forgotten paths of this haunted place.

## PLAINS

**GREAT WALL:** The wall is several hundred miles long, and ranges in both height and width. The average width is 100 feet and the average height about 200 feet. A broad road spanned much of it, with many forts and castles built upon its height. Barracks and dungeons, with corridors to connect them, ran throughout the complex structure. It is much in ruins now and the host of dungeons, the home of many strange creatures.

**THE WILDS:** Beneath the Bleached Hills and far from the settled lands of Kayomar are The Wilds, a large untrammelled forest in the middle of Ethrumania. This forest is a mixture of pines and hardwoods. The northern tracks are thickly covered in tall aged pines. The forest floor is littered with their dying husks. In the south are large hardwoods, beech, oak, elm, hickory, locust, and the like. The lands roll with gentle and wooded hills and are cut



by many clear flowing streams and creeks. Small ponds and lakes are fed by deep clear springs. The headwaters of the Ardeen River are found within this wood but none have yet found their exact location. All manner of exotic beasts dwell here.

## MOUNTAINS AND HILLS

**BERGRUCKEN (THE SADDLEBACK RANGE):** These mountains stand between the lands of Kayomar and the east like a great stone wall. Thin and long, the range runs south to north. Several roads cross the tall rusty colored mountains. The dwarves of Norgorad–Kam patrol the range, jealously guarding her secrets. It is rumored that a great tunnel exists underneath the mountains allowing travelers to cross beneath, as opposed to over, the mountains.

**BLEACHED HILLS:** These jagged upland hills marked the furthest reaches of Nulak–Kiz–Din’s dominions during the Winter Dark. The large battles fought there and the many fallen, most of whom were never buried, give the region its name.

**COAL RANGE:** These low lying hills rise north of the Bergrucken. Deep gulches, rocky precipices and steep cliffs make travel in the Coal Range an adventure in itself. Tall thin loblolly pines grow throughout the hills, harboring small bands of kobolds. The local folk, the Coal Burners, mine coal and sell it to the neighboring countries of Maine and Anglamay.

**HOLLMGRAD:** This is a low range of mountains that creep out of the great northern wastes and edge up to the Inner Sea. The mountains are thickly forested in evergreen. Winter lasts throughout much of the year and snow can fall at any time. In the short summers many creeks and streams of frigid water wash through frosty vales and across wide plateaus. The mountains are not high and are gently sloped, having been scraped raw by the glaciations during the Winter Dark.

**KLEBEROCK PASS:** This pass lies between the north end of the Shadow Mountains and the west end of the Hollmgrads. It is a very low valley cut all the way through these two mountain ranges. Towers and fortresses are sprinkled throughout the valley floor as tribes of Trolls or Orcs move back and forth battling for supremacy. Many slaves work the land for food and it is a horrible fate to befall any of those who are cast into slavery in this land. The once great Troll Kingdom ruled by the Troll Lords lies upon the valley’s southern flanks.

**THE MASSIF:** The Massif dominates central Ethrumania. Its towering cliffs are broken by washes and a few roads. Lake Orion lies in the central part of the Massif, making the lands on the heights bountiful.

**MOUNT NORLLING:** This is a range of tumbling time–worn mountains of sandstone and granite. It abuts the Massif but has no relation to it. Mount Norlling is not a single mountain as the name suggests. Rather, it is a series of ridges and peaks. These mountains have been worn smooth with the passage of years and its structure is neither very high nor strenuous. It is a gentle range. With few natural caverns and open accessible valleys, the Mount has never been used as a hiding for those less than estimable denizens of Aihrde; rather it has attracted giants of a

not altogether evil bent who enjoy its peaceful valleys and easily worked stone.

**RHODOPE MOUNTAINS:** These towering mountains ring in the lands of Ethrumania and Aenocia. The tall wicked peaks of these inhospitable heights are best known for dragon aeries. They also harbor the home of Aristobolus the Arch–magi. He built Turm Ghewir, the Tower of Chaos, here during the Age of Heroes. The location of the tower is unknown.

**SHADOW MOUNTAINS:** This sprawling mountain range dominates northern Ethrumania. The scarred peaks of the Shadow mountains stretch from the North Sea to the distant west. Here, rumbling volcanoes cause constant minor quakes and send rocks and slate crashing to the earth. The ridges are jagged and perilous to cross. The land encircles the Moravan Plains, once home to some of Unklar’s fiercest minions. Orcs guard the passes and dragons nest in the many caves and old lava tubes.

**THE SHELVES OF THE MIST:** These gently rolling, forested hills, are home to all manner of fantastic creatures. The many creeks and small lakes lend to the banks of mist which seem to forever hang over the shelves. ‘Tis said that these hills harbor the gates of Vakhund, doorways to other worlds.

## LAKES, RIVERS

**ARDEEN RIVER:** Another of the massive rivers in central Ethrumania. The river collects runoff from the Bergrucken Range and the plains to its immediate west. It is a healthy, though muddy river, home to many fishes and water fowl. As it dumps into the Amber Sea, it loses its strength and spreads out into a vast swampy, though not uninhabitable, region with many courses and breaks. The delta is home to the White Order.

**DANAU RIVER:** This mighty river collects the runoff from the southern Rhodopes and the plains of far western Ethrumania. It begins small far to the north of Kayomar, collecting both water and power as it courses south. It bends and turns in great arcs through the plains of Kayomar changing its course constantly. The river flows through the Soup Marsh and maintains its course to the sea.

**DEEPS:** The Deeps are a small stretch of Ocean located several hundred miles off the southern coasts of Eloria. They are distinguished by their unusually calm seas.

**THE DRAB SINKS:** These fetid swamps lie upon the southern reaches of Gottland. Foul, slime covered water from the Ington River trickles into the bog and mingles with mud filled sink holes, oxbow lakes and silted pools. Thick vegetation clouds the water ways and the few hillocks which mark the Sinks.

**INGTON RIVER:** Originating in the Shadow Mountains, this slow moving river gathers slime and debris from Gottland on its way south. It vanishes as a broad shallow river in the Drab Sinks.

**THE INNER SEA:** The great depths of the Inner Sea serve as roads for the northern raiders from the barbarian kingdoms. A great deal of traffic crosses the sea, and the Hanse cities field small and affective navies that patrol for pirates and raiders.



**LAKE ORION:** The waters of Lake Orion are cool and deep. Many fisherman from all the surrounding lands make their home upon the banks of the lake. Pirates ply their trade here as they do on the open sea. No nation dominates the lake, though from time to time they try.

**LITHANIAN RIVER:** Fed by mountain springs, the frigid Lithanian River divides the County of Kleaves from the southern kingdoms.

**SALINE RIVER:** Lake Orion dumps over the Massif at the Thorgrim Falls. From here the waters course fast and plentiful to the Amber Sea. This is the Saline River and it passes through the Kingdom of Maine.

**SEA OF SHENAL:** When the cool waters of the Inner Sea spill through the Straits of Ursal they collide with those warm currents from the Amber Ocean creating the turbulent waters of what fisher-folk call the Sea of Shenal.

**SORGON RIVER (SLAG):** A broad shallow river originating in the Shadow Mountains. It winds its way across northern Gottland until it spills into the Inner Sea. It is generally filthy as many orcs and trolls make their home upon its banks.

**THE SOUP MARSH:** These fetid bogs dominate the lands south of the Darkenfold. The region is a morass of mud and muck, and almost impassable. Tales of lost dwarf mines bring many foolhardy adventurers, but few return.

**STRAIGHTS OF UNGARA:** This is a very shallow and rocky passing between Eloria and the mainland.

**THE STRAIGHTS OF URSAL:** The straights connect the Inner Sea with the southern ocean and officially divide Ethrumania and Aenocia. The straights, though not wide, are very tumultuous and difficult to cross. The remnants of pylons from an ancient bridge spanning the straights still dot the waters from Hallbridge in Aenocia to Avignon in Ethrumania.

## WESTERN AENOCHIA

Here the early Aenochians settled and made their home along the coasts of the Amber Sea. They spread north and their homes became the center of the world's greatest empire.

### FORESTS

**AENOCHIAN FOREST:** Another of the great forests of old. A seemingly harmless and innocuous place, these fantastic beech, birch, oak and hickory grow straight and tall. It is a haunted forest whose depths are said to house the bones of the old Imperial family. Some say the crown, the Cuna Mundus Usquam, is lost there still.

**THE DETMOLD:** An old and dark forest. Its short thick trees grow close together and crowd the northern road. It is a magical wood where the Unicorn dwells, and rumors abound that heret Queen Ephremere of Aachen became one with the Unicorn.

**ELITHIAN WOOD:** The oaks of the Elithian supply many of the neighboring countries with their timber. The forest is home to a few bandits.

**GROSSEWALD, (THE GREAT FOREST):** This mass of old growth timber dominates the central plains. Here goblins of old still live and monsters from Aufstrag creep. The forests are also home to battle hardened halflings of various clans.

**THE KELLERWALD:** A sprawling forest upon the borders of Aenoch.

**RILTHWOOD:** The slender, stark white trees rise high above the numerous ponds and streams like spires of bone. In the fall, the normally shiny, broad green leaves of the Rilthwood trees turn a brilliant red. When viewed from the Grundliche Mountains to the east, the trees appear to be columns of white coated and red helmed giants marching across the landscape.

**THE WILDS:** The Wilds are loosely forested hills and dales where some few hardy folk have settled. The stretch from the northern regions of Kayomar to the Hobgoblin Kingdom of Burnevitse. The lands are dangerous and inhabited by monsters of all descriptions. The place was once the heart of the Ethrum Kingdom and it is rumored to have many lost dungeons, old keeps and the like, filled with the treasures of the old world.

### PLAINS

**AENOCH VALLEY:** This deep and ancient valley rests in the nook of the Red Hills and the Voralberg Mountains. It houses the Aenochian Forest. The Mundus and Olgdon Rivers flow through it before cutting a path through the mountains to the Amber Sea. The valley's rim is sparsely forested and covered in great sandstone boulders while its central region is covered by the consuming Aenochian Forest. The southern uplands of the valley are wild and untamed, with roots stretching into the ancient past.

**FROZEN SALT FLATS:** North of the Kingdom of Punj and beyond the Grundliche Mountains are the Frozen Salt Flats. This great glacier is one of the few remaining signs of the horrid Winter Dark and Unklar's rule. A barren waste where few travel, it is said that many of Unklar's minions fled to the Flats at the end of his epoch.

**ILLUMBRIAN PLAINS/COAST:** This area of poorly watered land extends from the Kolkrab Mountains in the west to the Red Hills in the north, and to the edges of the Kellerwald in the east. To the south lies the Illumbrian Coast. The plains are dry, receiving little runoff from the mountains and even less rainfall than those heights to the north and west.

**RED MARCH:** The Red March comprises that region around the Rilthwood. It refers to a wilderness area that is claimed by no king, but is distinct for its stone mounds and friendly thickets. The land is fresh, the ground fertile, the winters mild, and the trees abundant. What distinguishes this land most though are its people. Hospitable beyond words, these sturdy farmers offer house and home to stranger and friend alike. No lord rules over the Red March or impresses taxes upon its people. Thus, adventurers seeking respite in the hearty food and drink and comfortable beds of the March's taverns and inns can obtain it at a reasonable price.

**ALPA (TOTEN, FIELDS OF THE DEAD):** A blasted plain, once fertile and green, where the forces of the Young Kingdoms and Unklar met in

battle. The whole plain was destroyed and covered in the dead. It is now a wasteland of haunted morasses and evil spirits.

## MOUNTAINS AND HILLS

**THE FLINTLOCK:** The jagged hills of the Flintlock are home to the 47 gnome clans. Once part of the Kingdom of Grundliche Hohle the Flintlock has since become a dangerous place to travel.

**GRUNDLICHE MOUNTAINS:** These white capped burgs are the tallest in Aihilde. Mount Grimfang's, the highest of the peaks, rocky spires reaching beyond the clouds. The Grundliche range is an inhospitable place rumored to hold riches beyond compare. The dwarven home, Grundliche Hohle, lies in these mountains, as does the goblin kingdom of Ngorondoro.

**KOLKRAB (RAVEN HEIGHTS):** Tall mountains which dominate the southern coasts of Aenocia, the Red Hills and the Aenochian Forest. Ravens, the oldest and most intelligent of all birds, are found only in the Kolkrab.

**NICOLEIGH HILLS:** These stark hills were once the hunting grounds of the royal houses of ancient Aenoch. The water in the many streams and creeks runs clean and pure. Copses of forests grow here and there, slowly spreading across the now stark mounds.

**THE RED HILLS:** The gently rolling slopes of the Red Hills are home to many human and gnome settlers. The region is well known for its pottery. With little in the way of government the villages have become prey to many bandits, human and otherwise.



**VORALBERG MOUNTAINS:** The Voralbergs are a huge, towering range of mountains that stretch many hundreds of miles north and south. Volcanoes are active in this chain but are not a constant occurrence. The peaks are high enough to have glaciers tucked between them and are covered in snow the year round. Deep troughs and narrow defiles and crumbling ridges make up the bulk of the mountains. Its upper reaches are bare except in the south where the range is more broad and vast. Upland plateaus can be found there, and are famous for their colorful summer flowers. The lower portions are covered in all manner of tree depending on the elevation. Crooked creeks and streams pour off the mountain in abundance feeding the lands to the east and west with fresh water.

## LAKES, RIVERS

**ROMIA RIVER:** This muddy river tumbles out of the northern Red Hills into the Aenoch Valley and thence into the Mundus River.

**GRAUSAMLAND, THE FELL SWAMP:** The swamps around Aufstrag consist of fetid bogs of putrid water-logged ground. They sit atop the ruins of the city of Al-Liosh and have seeped into the depths of that place making foot travel very dangerous. Mud and muck yields to pits deeper than one can imagine. Untold wealth lies in dungeons covered by the marsh.

**MUNDUS RIVER:** The Mundus flows through the heart of the Aenochian Forest. It is possessed of tremendous currents, eddies and underwater whirlpools, largely fed by the fury of the two mountain streams which feed the river, the Fromia and the Nostian.

**NOSTIAN RIVER:** The twin river of the Fromia, these rivers twist and turn through the northern slopes of the Red Hills, crashing through valleys and cascading down cliffs and through narrow canyons.

**OLGDON RIVER:** The greatest of the eastern rivers, the Olgdon flows from its headwaters in the Grundliche Mountains through the plains and forests, emptying in the sea. The river ranges from 2000 to 5000 feet wide and is impassable absent boat or bridge. Other than a few fords in the distant north, the river is bridged only twice, both in Augsburg, where great castles sit, ever diligent of the distant east.

**ONDAVAR RIVER:** Fed by the snows, glaciers, rivers, streams and springs of the Grundliche Mountains, this river flows fast and furious into Aenochia. It is a turbulent river, only calming as it approaches the northern reaches of the Grossewald.

**ROT-TOR:** This river tumbles madly out of the Grundliche Mountains in the north to the Inner Sea.

**STRAIGHTS OF LIGON:** These straits lie between Onwaltig and the mainland. It is a bountiful area. The sea is fed huge amounts of fresh water by the run off, and with it comes nutrients to feed the teeming hordes of fish that live here.

**UDUNILAY:** One of the two great rivers which flow past Aufstrag, through the Toten fields, and into the Grausamland. Around the confines of Aufstrag it picks up all manner of ilk and runs black with filth.



# 11 THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

## DATES AND CHRONOLOGY

### THE CALENDARS

There are 367 days in the Aihrdian year. The year is divided into twelve months and one week of celebration and holiday, the Feast of the Unmaking. Each month has thirty days and the Feast seven. Though there are many local and religious holidays, the Feast of the Unmaking is celebrated universally throughout the Cradle of the World as a time of thanksgiving for the destruction of Unklar.

**CALENDAR RECKONING:** The standard calendar year is that of the Millennial Age (as begun by the Dark God Unklar), also called by men the Modern Age. The current year is 1097md. There are, however, four calendars of reckoning, Dwarf, Elf, Aenochian (Olden Year) and Millennial. All campaign dates are given in md.

#### CONVERSION CHART

Millennial Age (md):	1
Aenochian (ae):	800
Dwarf Year (df):	12188
Elven Year (ey)	3452

To arrive at the Aenochian Year, add 800 to the present md. For Dwarf year add 12188, and for Elven year 3452. A history will read: In 1029md (13217df; 1729oy; 4252ey) the dwarves of Grundliche Hohle made peace with the 47 clans of gnomes.

#### MONTHS

Erstdain (First Month)	Spring
Regnerisch (Rain)	Spring
Lothian (named for the god Daladon)	Spring
Uthdain (named for the god Luther)	Spring
Feast of the Unmaking (7 days)	
Falkhyn (named for Jaren Falkynjager)	Summer (low)
Trocken (Hot)	Summer (high)
Frostig (End of heat)	Autumn
Erstfrore (First Frost)	Autumn
Lexlicht (Last Light)	Autumn
Nochturn (Evening)	Winter
Winterdark	Winter
Arist (named for the god Aristobulus)	Winter

## THE PEOPLES OF AIHRDE

### THE FIRST BORN (THOSE OF THE ALL FATHER)

#### TROLLS

**LANGUAGE:** Vulgate; Speak with Animals/Nature, Language of Creation (very old and powerful trolls only).

**RELIGION:** They have no gods but call upon Nulak-kiz-din, their long time master, from time to time.

**LANDS:** Many diverse small tribal lands and a few scattered kingdoms. They are found on almost all continents and in all climes. Their greatest kingdom lies on the edge of the Gottland.

**LONGEVITY:** Immortal.

Trolls are huge hulking beasts. Fat and ungainly, their legs seem too small to bare their weight. They have long arms, are thickly muscled and have giant, wide fingers. They have large tusks sprouting from their maws, shorter on the top and longer on the bottoms of their wide mouths. The tusks on the lower jaw continue to grow as a troll gets older and often grow into the creature's face. They are shaped, cut and sometimes decorated with carvings. Very old trolls have very large, often bent and chipped tusks. They use these tusks in battles against one another, roaring at each other with mouths agape. Though they occasionally try to gore each other, a battle usually ends with the troll with a wider yawn and larger tusks victorious. They are ferocious creatures, bent upon destruction.

The trolls of Aihilde evolved from the sentients of old and are the first peoples to walk the world. Trees, bent and evil, whose hearts were twisted long ago, were driven from their forests and into the wilds by their kin. These trees evolved over the millennia and were common enough when the first of the All Father's children walked the world. In time they became creatures altogether different than their ancestors and they bred and built lands of their own and many forgot their ancestry and cared not for what came before.

All trolls share a common longing for the quiet of the deep woods and the gentle sounds of brooks and creeks linger in their minds and can, at times, charm them. When trolls die they return to stone, or some, who are very old root to the world. These latter are called Gottland trees.

#### DWARVES

**LANGUAGE:** Mountain Dwarf, Oceanic Dwarf, Vulgate.

**RELIGION:** Worship the All Father, ancestry, house gods and heroes. Their fallen merge with the firmament. By calling on various heroes and house gods they call that one back from the firmament and gain strength, wisdom etc.

**LANDS:** Grundlich Hohle, Norgorad-Kam, Hoheisenhole and some few scattered kingdoms about the world.

**LONGEVITY:** On average dwarves live about 600 years. Some dwarves live to very old ages, ranging upwards to 900 years.

Dwarves were many and varied in the Days before Days, tall and stalwart, thin and limber. But now, the majority of them are short of stature, stout and strong. Their skin is thick and tough, built for extremes of temperature. They sport thick beards, smaller



eyes and full, round faces. They are thick limbed and have wide hands and large feet. They favor deep, full colors such as reds, blues, greens or yellows. They are skilled craftsmen, even in these latter days of the world. They live in patriarchal societies, but the women (beardless) are not subservient, but rather often play a commanding role as the mother's of kings and great warriors. Dwarves believe that the race's collective memory is contained the mind's of their women, and these stalwart lasses are consulted often on deeds that would reflect honor and nobility.

The dwarves were created from the All Father's rage and frustration. He tried to create the creatures of his mind's eye and could not and he destroyed his hammer upon the anvil in the attempt. In rage he shaped the raw stuff of creation with his hands and thus the first dwarves came to be. They were called "The First Born" for they were the first peoples of the All Father and for they were cast in his image. They scattered across the world and unlike all those who had come before they set to mimicking the All Father and shaping the world to their own desires. In time they grew numerous and built kingdoms far and wide across Aihilde. There were a dozen great kingdoms and these spawned a host of lesser kingdoms. They mostly settled in far western lands of Ethrum, but also in Aenoch and the island kingdoms of Alanti. Their greatest kingdoms were Gorthurag (First Home) and Grausumhart (Grimjaw). Since the end of the Age of Dwarves the dwarves have become scattered. Only a few of the great kingdoms of old remain and only a few of the lesser. They are found most anywhere but are not common to most lands, living rather in small enclaves, towns and villages. Only in the kingdoms of Grundliche Hohle and Norgorad-Kam are there dwarves in great numbers.

## GIANTS

**LANGUAGE:** Vulgate, most can speak and understand Dwarf.

**RELIGION:** They have no religion generally, being animistic and worshipping house deities and the like.

**LANDS:** Everywhere.

**LONGEVITY:** Different giants have different life spans, but most live 200–400 years.

Giants range in look as much as any humans. They are large, being two, three or sometimes four times greater than the average human. Some are crafty such as the fire giants and more dwarf like, others are simple such as the hill and swamp giants.

When giants were first fashioned, there were many who were tall and stout. These giants soon split from their kin and moved into distant

lands. Most of these did not revere the All Father and as such they were always an impoverished people. In time the giants evolved into different peoples, with different languages, codes and beliefs. Only a few retained the ability to shape the world, and none but the Trotigen giants remembered any of the Language of Creation. And these last were enslaved by Inzae and hauled to that inner world. The giants became numerous and of many breeds. Frost giants settled in the far north, fire giants in the mountain deeps, cloud giants into the islands of air fashioned from their knowledge of the language, not far removed from their kind were the storm giants. The greater number of giants settled in the hills and mountains of stone, in caves, swamps and the like and their breeds have become so great that they are too numerous to count. Most grew to dislike their distant kin and made war upon them when they could so that there has ever been an enmity between dwarf and giant.

## HUMANS

**LANGUAGE:** Vulgate.

**RELIGION:** Any and all gods.

**LANDS:** Everywhere.

**LONGEVITY:** The average life span is 70 years, though some tribes may have longer life spans (see below).

In the early days of the dwarves, when that diverse people began to build kingdoms underground, a great part of them remained beneath the open skies. These peoples, called the Muen, did not take to the teaching of the All Father, but rather divested themselves in the worship of Mordius. They were generally taller, though not as great as their giant kin, nor as stout as their dwarven cousins. They migrated to all corners of the world. Eventually these peoples became numerous and distant from their ancestors and few, if any, realize their origins.

The humans lived in far more climes than the dwarves, almost as many as the giants. They were hearty and versatile, adapting to their new homes where ever they lay. Early in their history they divided, moving to different locales and have ever since been associated with 13 tribes, or divisions, of men, six greater and seven lesser, each very different from the other. They all speak their own languages and worship a diverse number of local deities, many of which are creatures of extraordinary power than came to Aihilde in the beginning. It should be noted that many worship the same deities, but the names, faces and religious symbols are different. Further, humans have walked the world almost as long as the dwarves. Each of the Divisions of Men listed below, except the Katha, has had a long history, replete with a variety of different civilizations that have risen and fallen, multiple numbers of political entities, that have warred with each other and others. Of all the humans, only the Aenochians have created an Empire so great that it consumed much of the world, but even their empire never touched all the tribes.

These are the 13 Divisions of Men as classified by their race, but this does not mean that those people of a racial group refer to themselves as such. In fact, it would be rare for an Aenochian to call himself an Aenochian, rather they would refer to themselves from their political or religious entities, such as Rhunelander. A native of the Inklu race would call himself by his tribal name or that of his kingdom, not as an Inklu. These classifications, though



generally known, are left to the scholars. All the Divisions of Men should be treated this way.

**GREATER DIVISIONS:** The Greater Divisions of men are Aenoch, Ethrum, Inklu, Niada, Aathuk and Chianuk. They adopted many of the practices of the dwarves, in craftsmanship, society and language.

**AENOCH:** The Aenochians originated in the far north where they paid homage to Mordius and served the early dwarf kings. They migrated during harsh times to the south and settled mostly in the lands east and north of the Inner Sea, as far as the Channel Lakes. They are pale skinned peoples, on average 6 feet tall with light colored or red hair. They have interbred with the Ethrum for many hundreds of years. The Aenochians were the greatest of all the tribes of men, in power, numbers and conquests due in large part to the meddling of the greater deity Thorax. They conquered the Inklu and Niada to the south, the Madriu to the east and the Ethrums to the west. They served Unklar during the Winter Dark.

**ETHRUM:** The Ethrum were close kin to the Aenochians in the beginning. They lived in the north lands and came south shortly after the Aenochians. These people settled mostly south and west of the Inner Sea along the coasts of the lands that later became Ethrum. They were much enslaved by the dwarves during the long wars of the early days of the world and they adopted many dwarf customs and practices in those days. They became skilled practitioners of the arts and created some of the world's most wondrous magics. The Ethrum resisted Unklar's rule throughout the Winter Dark, much to the destruction of their people.

**INKLU:** The Inklu were the greatest of the southern tribes. They crossed the Anvil in the early days and settled in the lands now known as Inklu-Naid. They are a tall people, with dusky red skin, broad faces and broad noses. Their hair is generally dark and they sport little facial hair. The Inklu are numerous, dwelling in the jungles and mountains of their native lands. A scarcity of natural resources, combined with little interaction with the dwarves left the Inklu without the skills to create iron weapons. They craft most of their items from bronze or lesser metals. They have highly sophisticated societies, built largely around the worship of local deities, monsters and animals. Much of the northern continent was conquered by Aenochia during the Age of Man, but with very little impact. During the Winter Dark worship of the Snake God prevailed and the Inklu defied the worship of Unklar (the Snake God was a manifestation of the Wizard Aristobulus), but as a result much of their civilizations was destroyed and their populations greatly reduced.

**RYKAARD:** Deep in the world's history a great host of dwarves set themselves to conquering the seas. They eventually settled in the southern climes. They took with them a hearty race of Muen and these settled in lands not far from Alanti, upon the great island of Aroya and later explored and built some settlements on the land of Elis. The Rykaard are tall and thin of limb, with dark brown or black hair. They have narrow features with wide eyes. At one time they were the world's greatest seaman and their vessels were seen in many if not all the harbors of the world. They served their friends of Alanti in the great goblin-dwarf wars with distinction, but suffered grievous losses. When the oceans consumed Alanti many of Rykaard's lords and wizards were in the megalopolis and

were drowned with their allies. After that they dwindled as a people. They left behind a host of ruins, strange cities of red stone, lost now in the islands of the south. Though some of the kingdoms survived and some few retain the knowledge of the ancients. They did little to resist the coming of the Winter Dark and they served their appointed overlord with little love or violence. Since those days some of them, particularly in the far south, have gained some strength of arms and even now have begun to uncover the magic and power of their forefathers. They are a people with great love for the dwarves.

**AATHUK:** The Aathuk were early wanderers and in their long lives studied the heavens and the All Father. They plotted points in the Void and charted the planes for the dwarven seers. They were never numerous but held in great council with the dwarven kings. They are tall and limber folk with long arms and legs. They are generally quite thin, with elongated faces with narrow, thin noses and shallow cheeks. Their eyes are deep pools of calm, and belie a hidden wisdom, all this decked in long silver, white, copper or golden hair. They dress in ornate clothing and armaments. They are kin to the Oanthuil. They settled in the far north in the lands of Aatuck. There they built cities of alabaster in the high mountains, often capping the clouds. They studied the world and the Void and their sages mastered all manner of travel long before the Wall of Worlds. They used sky ships and strange beasts of flight to cross the world and even beyond. When that dubious barrier was constructed the Aathuk lost much of their powers and with that their ambitions. They dwindled then in numbers and their cities fell to ruin. Some few still thrive, hidden with magics and sorceries at the top of the world.

**LESSER DIVISIONS OF MEN:** The seven lesser Divisions of Men are the Madriu, Niada, Engale, Zuala, Katha, Oanthuil and Ustracan. These are the people who shunned the dwarves and walked their own paths.

**NEHIAN:** The Nia are a numerous people who followed the paths of Mordius into the distant east. They settled upon the lands of Ianuk and lived there for several thousand years undisturbed by the troubles in the far west. They spread further, settling in the archipelago of Surne as far south as the land of Dur. They are small of stature, a light tint to the skin with narrow eyes and high cheeks. They have dark hair and brown eyes. They are skilled craftsmen in their own right. The Nia thrived for many years, building kingdoms, warring one with the other and battling the forces of the minor gods and demons of Surne who ever taunted them with war and conquest. They alone of all the peoples of the world have had almost no traffic with the dwarfs and therefore the customs and practices are wholly different than the rest of the worlds. The Winter Dark took them utterly by surprise and Unklar leant his strength to the armies of Surne and the Nia were overwhelmed and enslaved to the master of Auftrag. Many fought on into the deeps of the Millennial Dark, and their heros are recounted in song and poem. At the end of the war, when Unklar's hold began to break the Nia threw off their masters and plundered much of southern Surne. They are somewhat recovered now, but their peoples are diminished.

**MADRIU:** The Madriu have dwelt in the plains and deserts of southern Aenochia for time without count. They are a shorter

people, with dark hair and thick beards. Their skin is darker but they are built more like the Aenochians than all other peoples. The Madruin are fiercely independent and war with each other constantly. They are largely tribal and dwell in large semi-permanent settlements, rarely building cities or towns. Though some have, from time to time, settled and built cities in the deserts. They were conquered by the Aenochians for many long years, and passed into the services of the horned god during the Winter Dark. They served as foot soldiers and cavalry in many western battle fields. They have since thrown off that yoke and have returned to their old ways.

**NAIDA:** The Naid dwell in the southern reaches of the continent Inkle-Naid. They are shorter than the Inkle, with darker red skin, black hair and dark eyes. They have wide faces and large eyes as well as high cheek bones. The Nia are numerous and their history is replete with kingdoms that have risen and fallen without notice in the northern realms. They are primitive peoples with little metallurgy, but they are spiritual and well connected to the gods of the forest, the spirit of Mordius and other druidic deities. During the Winter Dark they too worshiped the Snake God but were much wasted by the wars that followed. They have since recovered some and dwell, as they always have beneath the eves of the southern jungle.

**ENGAL:** These folk moved into the far north and dwelt under the aegis of the early Aenochians for many years, only when those folk migrated south did the Engale begin to thrive. They are tall, fair skinned, with blond, red or light brown hair. They are a hardy folk and dwell in the harsh climes like no other. The Engale are very warlike, skilled sailors and have settled in much of the lands south, even to the edges of the Inner Sea. They never submitted to Unklar and call those years "The Long Winter without Light." They worship Odin, Thor and other gods that dwell in the high places of the world.

**ZUAL:** The Zuala have dwelt in the deep forests of their lands for eons. They are the most diverse of the human tribes. They are a widely divided people scattered in many different tribal areas or small kingdoms. They are a numerous people and range in height

from about 4 to 6 feet or more. They are dark skinned with curly black hair and dark eyes. Throughout their long history the Zuala have had contact with almost all the peoples of the world from the dwarves of Alanti to the elves of Fey. They have trafficked with most of the other human tribes at one time or the other and their lands reflect this. Some of their folk are very primitive, others mastering metallurgy and stone craft. All manner of new and old towns and cities dot the landscape, many of them long abandoned and left to ruin, lost now in the jungles or forests or in ruins upon the slopes of mountains. Some kingdoms still thrive however, especially in the forest deeps of the continent. They dealt with Unklar's folk as they deal with most outsiders, that is, with suspicion and later war. The bulk of them fought long wars against the Dark, forgotten now by most of the western scholars, which were both brutal and ruinous. Collectively they call this the Cloud War, and it is one of the few times in recorded Zuala history that inter-tribal warfare was set aside to allow a united front. They were defeated in the Cloud War and their peoples scattered. They have made some recovery since those distant days, but the lands are filled with ancient ruins, dungeons and the like. They pay homage to animistic gods, Mordius and other such divine creatures.

**KATHA:** These minor peoples, the smallest of all the Divisions of Men, began their long trek from the Inner Sea in the very early days of their evolution, long before the arrival of the Aenochians and Ethrum. The Kaath are divided into the High Kaath and the Low Kaath. The High Kaath are thin, tall, almost long people, stygian colored with little hair, small mouths and deep eyes. Long association with the Waters of Life (*see below next page*) has left many of them almost translucent. The Low Kaath are shorter, robust people and have for ages supplied the Kaath with their muscles, warriors and the like. Few of these chose to take of the Waters of Life and they did not suffer the affects. They settled for a time along the southern banks of the Inner Sea, but eventually were displaced by the dwarves and they moved south through the great deserts. They built settlements there, even before the Madruin made those lands their homes, but grew weary of that place as well. In the deep forests south of the Channel Lakes they built new homes, and then took the patronage of the goddess Athria and they worshiped her. In turn she taught them many





things about the world's magic and the Language of Creation as she understood it. The Kaath became a wise people, though their numbers remained small. When the goblins came, the rumor of war preceded them and Athria gave them visions of wondrous lands across the seas, where the Waters of Life flowed.

They built ships and set sail across the Oddine Ocean and came at last to two great islands and there they made their homes. They settled and built wondrous cities and towns along the coasts. They discovered the Waters of Life in pools and fountains and by many long, fresh droughts they gained immortality. They built temples to Athria and worshiped her many aspects. All manner of magics and wondrous things they constructed, they learned the secrets of the deeps of the world and they traded with the dwarves of Alanti and the men of Aathuk. At their height they built colonies on the Aenochian mainland, this even as the Aenochians themselves rose to power, and in the islands of the Rykaard. The world spoke of them in hushed tones as legendary men of great power and wealth. In Katha lived in peace and contentment, or so it was said. But the Katha were never a numerous people and their long decline accelerated in the latter years. The High Katha became addicted to the sacred waters and took it too often and needed it for life, they fell to worshiping the Dragon God and many turned to dark sorceries. In time they faded and became shadows of themselves, only visible in the brightest parts of the day. When the Winter Dark came the Katha were almost driven to extinction by great armies of orcs and Ungern that invaded their homeland. Some of the High Katha were enslaved to the Dark and the Low Katha took to the mountains and hills of the island kingdoms. They have never recovered. Some few live in their high towers, shadows from a forgotten world, wise but empty. Some few have fled to the wider world, and with dark sorcery spread the rage of the Dragon Cult. Some of the Low Katha have come forth and dwell now in the open in the wilderness of their lands.

**OANTHUIL (DOPPLEGANGERS):** The strangest of all the humans are the Oanthuil. As a young people they took up the worship of Thorax and followed the path set for them his dark sorceries. These consumed them utterly. They were neither wise enough, nor possessed of the strengths that later forged the goblins and they were corrupted. The Oanthuil are blue of skin with no noses, long fingers and toes, thin ungainly legs and arms. They are hairless but have wide brows and narrow craniums. Their eyes are yellow. They have few trapping, using their sorcery to cloth themselves in warmth or bath themselves in cool air. Most of their women died out and they bred only with a few. Too they forgot themselves and evolved into shape-shifters possessed only of a great hunger for memories and identity. They hid themselves in the high mountains and in time came to worship their own women as gods for these beastly creatures spawned more Oanthuil. From time to time they come into the lands of men and dwarf and take shapes of those they see and live hollow lives without meaning. They are found throughout Aihilde as their lonely wandering brings them on long paths. The Oanthuil are the longest lived of all the Muen, living upwards to a thousand years before their bodies give out and die. They were unknown to the Lords of the Winter Dark.

**USTRACAN:** The Ustracan are cavemen, wild and close to the beasts they hunt. The largest of all men, the Ustracan average about six

and a half feet in height, have massive barrels chests, thick arms and muscular if short legs. They are hairy and primitive, living in tribal groups of not more than a hundred. Usually the women and children live separately from the men. They are found in most any clime or terrain in Aihilde, but never close to civilization, be it man, dwarf, elf, orc or other. They worship the Twin Sisters generally and have no written languages and possess only a simple language to communicate with each other.

## **GOBLINS**

**LANGUAGE:** Vulgate, Goblin and most Dwarf tongues.

**RELIGION:** Queen Mother Ogoltay.

**LANDS:** Anywhere, generally underground.

**LONGEVITY:** Eldritch Goblins are immortal. Common Goblins live about 50–60 years.

The goblins came to Aihilde early in the world's history. Many whispered of dwarves turned evil, corrupted by the dark of deep places and greed. There is truth in this tale. As is told, the dwarves were plentiful and tunneled beneath the world. They became scattered far and wide, so much so, that many lost contact with their fellows, living out their days in solitude far from their Kingdom's Halls. They became removed from the discoveries of other dwarves, lingering in the past as their cousins moved into the future. Thorax found them thus, and made easy prey of them. He twisted them and breathed words of sorcery into them so that they changed and evolved. In time they too became plentiful and they spread beneath the world. They chose a King and Queen and their Queen became a horrible beast of corrupted evil that laid living eggs by the hundreds. In short order the goblins were spreading across Aihilde.

Goblins live in underground caverns, only rarely building above ground. They take great pleasure in all things to do with water, often building channels and underground aqueducts to move water to fountains, waterfalls and the like.

There are two notable breeds of goblins, the eldritch goblins and the common goblins. The former are rare, powerful creatures of tremendous magic. The latter are plentiful and simple creatures.

**ELDRITCH GOBLINS:** The goblin queen lays many eggs in the course of her pregnancies. Some few of these are powerful, immortal goblins possessed of great magic. They cannot be killed but for through some peculiar circumstance. And each eldritch goblin is different from the next. They are wise, cautious and possessed of great philosophy and understanding. Though evil, they do not act upon their desires unless it is to their benefit. Some of the oldest are upwards to 9000 years old, outlived only by some of the ancient drakes, trolls and sentients. They always command the instant obedience of common goblins. These creatures are rare, but found in almost every clime and corner of the world.

**COMMON GOBLINS:** The great horde of common goblins exists throughout Aihilde. Short, generally hairless, goblins have skin color far more diverse than humans ranging from green, blue, red and yellow and on rare occasions orange. They are crafty creatures, able craftsmen and possessed of some metallurgy. Goblins are evil, vicious and always filled with some rage. They hate dwarves of any stripe and almost always attack them.

## THE CHILDREN OF CHAOS

### ELVES

**LANGUAGE:** Vulgate, Elf, Fey.

**RELIGION:** Mordius, Aihrdian deities.

**LANDS:** They are spread through Aenochia and Ethrum. Few organized kingdoms but in Shindolay.

**LONGEVITY:** Immortal. Cursed so that their spirits go the Shadow Realm.

Long after the dwarven kingdoms were founded, the All Father ceased to be and his mind opened upon the world of Aihrde. His wildest imaginings were made real. Thus were born the host of the people of the fey and with them the elves. They came to Aihrde, a handful of them, slender, gentle creatures with eyes wide with innocence. They came of the same thoughts and design that had created Wenafar in the deeps of the Void long before the world came to be. So when they came to Aihrde Wenafar knew of them and sought them out. She took the fledgling people under her wing and nurtured them. For many long years, in the hidden vales of the great forests of the distant east, the elves thrived. Their people grew in numbers and their wisdom too as the goddess, the Faerie Queen, taught them all they would need to know. They developed a deep understanding of the world and befriended many of the sentients who still remained. They took other deities too and in those forgotten lands lay the foundations of a great people.

In those early days they had little dealings with men and only met those dwarves that dwelt in the mountains east of the Channel Lakes. Through these dwarves they learned metallurgy and the skills needed to shape things of wondrous beauty. They built gardens of power and planted the Great Oaks, nurtured by Wenafar and Mordius. They bent themselves toward making their dwellings of these trees and constructing wondrous towns in their high branches. In these latter days, about the 900<sup>th</sup> after their coming to Aihrde they wandered into the west and some became embroiled in the Stone Wars and saw the brutality of the hatred of goblins and dwarves. They armed themselves with weapons of steel and iron.

The Stone Wars marked the first involvement of the elves in the affairs of other people and they found themselves as often as not pulled into the wars of men, orcs, goblins and dwarves. Their affinity for the ancient trees earned them the hatred of the trolls so that those folk always hunted them out and slew them when they could. In turn elves learned to hate the troll kin and in the lost years of their youth they waged a number of wars against those tusked monsters. In these years Wenafar removed herself from them for she was bound by the Judgment of Corthain (see below page 36) so they chose for themselves a queen, and so it was that a queen forever sat in governance of the elven people.

In time the elves grew numerous and fractured and small bands settled throughout the wide world and became involved in local affairs. Their greatest colony settled upon the feet of the Rhodepe Mountains (ef 2000) and were there when the Ethrum began to

build their kingdoms. As wars embroiled the Inner Sea region and the greatest tribes of men fought over those lands the elves were drawn in and more of them left the ancient groves and traveled to that area. With them came the Court and the Queen. In time of years there were no great kingdoms of elves, only scattered princedoms, tribes and bands.

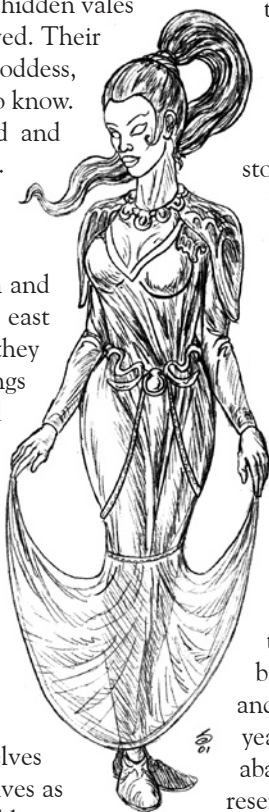
Thus it was when the Winter Dark began. The elves foresaw what was coming, the Unklar and they dreaded the evil that it would bring for the trolls were grown mighty in dread anticipation of the coming darkness and hunted elves in many quarters. The dwarves had waned and men were bound to their strange codes and bent on unleashing the evil upon the world. Some refused to believe that others would do this and sought to talk to them and dissuade them, but the elves knew that to talk with madness is folly so they gathered in a great council to decide the fate of their people.

There it was determined to gather those folk of their own that they could and leave Aihrde and travel back into the wilds of the Multiverse to the undying lands of Shindolay. And so, after many years of council and debate a call was sent out and those elves that actually heard it and chose to heed it, left Aihrde by magical paths to the realm of fey. So the elves were not there to strengthen the armies of men who stood against the horned god. Many remained behind, lost in hidden woods throughout the world and some others refused to go, vowing to fight on. Londea, daughter of the Queen was one such.

From distant spheres they watched the world fall into darkness and many recanted, calling upon their lords to take up arms and defend the world that was their home for 3000 years. But the lords would not and the Queen forbade it. In defiance many took up their weapons and with powerful magics opened the paths that would lead to Aihrde. They left then and walked the Void to the gates of Aihrde. But Unklar was young and filled with the mirth of his youth and closed the gate to them. They raged against the gate but could not break it. Too proud to return home they set themselves the task of passing back to Aihrde no matter the cost. And so they waited and struggled in the poverty of their power for a thousand years. They called themselves the Fontenouq, which is "the abandoned." Their hatred was aimed at Unklar but not reserved to him and in time the Fonetenouq came to hate their kindred in Shindolay.

Soon thereafter, as is recorded by the Elven Scrolls, the folk of Shindolay found an entrance to Aihrde and sent out the Quest Knights. These lords had two purposes, to find Londea, the daughter of the Queen, and to locate the elves of Fontenouq. Though they hunted for many centuries, they failed in both tasks, many suffering death, many suffering a fate far worse. Only one returned, and he brought reports of a despondent evil and of a world in strictest order.

In despair, Melius the Wise, their greatest wizard, bared the gates of Faerie to all, forever closing out the possibility of any Fontenouq elves returning. He bound all the gates in a ring, fashioned after one of the Brass Rings. Within it stood the gates of Faerie, Aihrde,



Wenafar



and unknown to Melius, Fontenouq. The ring he placed in a stone and set many knights and magic to guard it in the Castle of Spires, buried in the planes, but linked to Aihrde by the Twilight Wood.

Many centuries later Daladon Half Elven came upon the Castle of Spires and found its guardians slain by his own half brother, Meltowg. That elf, long a servant of Londea had raged upon his kin for he hated them all, driven by the curse of Daladon. But it was the Half Elven that opened the gates and allowed the armies of the elves to return. They scattered after the long Winter Dark Wars, ever seeking their lost kin and the places of ancient legend where they lived in the youth of the world.

**HIGH ELVES:** High Elves average 5 1/2 to 6 feet in height. They weigh between 160 to 185 lbs. Their skin is fair, their hair is light, and their eyes bright. They have no facial hair or body hair. They move with grace and purpose, no motion being wasted.

The High Elves of Aihrde are a melancholy race whose past is clouded by guilt for abandoning the world in its darkest hour (see *below page 51*). Unlike their ancient ancestors and kin, the High Elves have turned from carefree spirits into brooding philosophers, content to indulge themselves in the pursuit of music, poetry, and other arts. Their independent lives have led to a slowly declining population, with little concern among the young for propagation.

**SHINDOLAY ELVES:** High Elves descending from Shindolay tend to be more colorful in dress. They prefer to employ spells in conjunction with swords, and when arming themselves, they utilize light to medium armors, bows, and swords. They most closely resemble their ancient forefathers, and some see them as arrogant. Still, good remains in their heart, and they will stand back-to-back with any that would eradicate evil.

**FONTENOUQ:** High Elves of Fontenouq ancestry leave the safety of their family's towers, and their books, art and music. Instead of talking philosophy and debating the sins of history, they seek to live in the present and honor the memory of their ancient forefathers, those proud elven warriors that combated evil before their descendants fled the world.

**MIST ELVES:** Mist elves are found only in the lands that comprise the Shelves of the Mist, those broken hills to the west of Kayomar and upon the slopes of the Rhodope Mountains. They do not refer to the Shelves by this name, calling them rather the Forest of Ohd, after the ancient elven name for those regions. They are shorter than their high elven kin, with stouter arms and legs, their faces are wider too, with eyes that are oval. They are related to the high elves, and the tell tale signs of that ancestry is apparent in their proud bearing. They never look down, always looking friend and foe full on and they stand straight, appearing taller than they actually are. The mist elves are the survivors of the long Winter's Dark and the horrible wars that Unklar's minions waged upon the high elves of those hills. Only those who could adapt to the cold wastes survived. They have pale skin, blue and gray eyes and silver or white colored hair.

**TWILIGHT ELVES:** Twilight Elves are the smallest of all the elves, standing between 4 to 5 feet tall on average. Their skin tends to a deep brown, with hair being almost any color. Most compelling

are their eyes, which are typically violet, blue, or orange. They have no facial hair.

The Twilight Elves are the offspring of the High Elves who chose to remain in the world rather than leave with the coming of Unklar. Unlike the Wild Elves, they chose to remain isolationist. The Twilight Elves have lost their connection to the Realm of Faerie. They tend to be serious, with mirth reserved for holidays among their own kind and for intimate relations.

**WOOD ELVES:** Wood Elves are the largest elven race, with some equaling humans in proportion. Their skin ranges from fair to pink, and their hair shades blonde to brown. Eyes are rarely anything other than deep green or blue. Unlike other elves, some elder Wood Elf males develop facial hair.

Wood Elves originate in the Realm of Faerie. When the All Father's mind was splintered, the Realm of the Fey became part of the Multiverse. For a brief time, the Faerie Queen allowed open travel between her realm and Aihrde. In those days, some fey passed into Aihrde, never to return to their homeland. Over many generations, those fey became Wood Elves. Thus, the Wood Elves are a sister race to the High Elves, rather than their descendants.

**WILD ELVES:** Wild Elves stand and weigh as typical among elves, but their skin tends toward deep tan to light brown. They are dark-haired, with eyes ranging from deep green to hazel. They have no facial hair, but they do have light body hair. Their ears resemble that of a half-elf.

Wild Elves also descend from the High Elves. They chose to spread across the lands during the Age of Winter Dark, fighting Unklar's forces whenever and wherever they could. In doing so, they developed trust with the other peoples of the world, especially the halflings and barbarians living at the fringes of civilization. Aspects of halfling and barbarian culture help form the foundation of Wild Elf tribal society. Very few remnants of high elven culture remains among the Wild Elves.

## HALFLINGS

**LANGUAGE:** Vulgate, Halfling, tribal tongues, versions of Cant.

**RELIGION:** Aihrdian, Animistic.

**LANDS:** No organized kingdoms, they live in small villages, townships etc.

**LONGEVITY:** Average 150 years.

Larger than their civilized cousins, nomadic halflings average 3 1/2 to 4 1/2 feet tall and weigh 50–70 lbs. Their skin is tanned, and their eyes are typically brown or black, but sometimes green. They wear their dark hair long, sometimes in braids or tails. Facial hair is very rare. They tend toward light dress of simple and practical design, and prefer not to wear footwear.

The first record of the halflings comes in the year 614ae when they were hired to work wagons for the city fathers of Avignon, but it is known that they have dwelt in Aihrde for many centuries before that. When the All Father fell they came to Aihrde by the many gates that opened up upon his splintered mind. Where they came from even they could not say, but they took to the wilds with ease. Living in small family groups and clans they traveled to the

far reaches of Aenochia and Ethrum. They settled in mostly temperate zones where the weather was mild, wet and the ground good for a variety of crops. By and large halflings have always kept to themselves and avoided all traffic with the other peoples. They quickly mastered many crafts including animal husbandry, carpentry, metal smithy and others. Thus they lived without history, avoiding almost all the folk of the world until the Age of Heroes.

By that Age their clans had become more numerous and they took their rightful place at the table of the free peoples of the world, settling in cities and towns and creating their own. Soon halflings were as common as any of the other peoples. They never founded their own kingdoms but lived in the midst of others, or dwelt in small towns and communities of towns on the edges of human lands. During the Winter Dark they were hunted mercilessly by the agents of the horned god, mostly for sport. So great was the genocide that few survived into the new era and they became an oddity, fierce and battle-hardened. They have since recovered and some few have settled again in the cities of man, reverting to their old habits of comfort and ease, but many have taken a suspicious stance to the other peoples and interact only when they must.

## GNOMES

**LANGUAGE:** Vulgate, Gnome, Halfling, Dwarf, Elf, Fey, Lawful Evil (amongst the older gnomes)

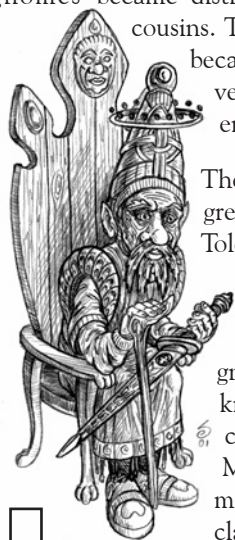
**RELIGION:** All Father, Aihrdian.

**LANDS:** Grundliche Mountains and Flintlock. But scattered throughout Aihrde.

**LONGEVITY:** Average 400–500 years

They range from 3 1/2 to a little over 4 1/2 feet in height, and weigh 70–90 lb. on the average.

Gnomes are an offshoot of the dwarven family tree. They are the third oldest of the peoples of Aihrde, coming after the dwarves and goblins. Somewhere in their history, the gnomes became distinctly different from their dwarven cousins. They lived largely above ground, and became smaller in stature. They are very adaptive to new terrains and environments.



Grotvedt

The gnomish population suffered greatly during the Age of Winter Dark. Tolerated, they lived on the fringes of society and established a soon-to-be thriving trade with the powers of the dark. This adaptation led to gnomish society evolving into tight knit clans. Eventually, the strongest clans settled in the Grundliche Mountains and the Flintlock, and made war upon the Dark. The gnomish clans now number forty-seven, and they are spreading to other regions.

## ORCS

**LANGUAGE:** Orc.

**RELIGION:** Unklar, House gods like Agrol.

**LANDS:** The Marl, Red Hills, Gelderland, scattered throughout.

**LONGEVITY:** Average 60 years.

The orcs of Airhde came to the world when the All Father fell. They were many and they fled into the shadows upon their arrival. They lay hidden from the world and watched it for many years until at last one of their number, Agrol, took courage and ventured forth into the world. He was a huge beast and slew some men with a rock and took their plows. These he battered into shapes more usable and returned to his people. They flocked to him and he guided them into the wilds of the far east, beyond the Channel Lakes. Into the deep mountains that men call the Marl and there he settled into a wild and broken country. The orcs scattered over the wide empty land and built crude houses and forts and they lived thus for many centuries, coming into contact only rarely with others. Their songs speak of wars with giants and other creature but little of them are reported in the histories of the dwarves or men. For a time Agrol and his descendants ruled over a large kingdom of orcs, called Agrol after its founder. They built cities of stone, roads and conducted commerce. But they never left their roots where small family groups held the dominate sway. Eventually the kingdom dissolved and the small family groups divided into tribes and they began to outgrow their land. Constant internecine wars led them to migrate into the west and north. In time they came to the lands of the Empire of Aenoch and made war upon their eastern frontiers. They scattered beyond when the empire fell so that in time of years they were found far and wide in Aihrde. They flocked to the banners of the horned god and served him as faithful servants for the whole of the Winter Dark. Since his fall they have lamented his demise and long for the years when they ruled Aihrde at his behest.

Aside from the Kingdom of Agrol the orcs have only organized once in their long history. Under the banners of the Hlobane, a fierce and young tribe of orcs from Aufstrag served the horned god in his personal legions. The Hlobane Kingdom lies upon the northern borders of the United Kingdoms. They serve the Prince of that land in some capacities but are ruled by the Warlord Iurs who rules from the town of Ruk that rests at the feet of the Kolkrab Mountains.

Beyond this there are many tribes through Ethrum and Aenocia and they vary in size from several dozen to many thousands. The orcs are fierce, predatory people who have no love for men or elves, dwarves or goblins. They worship their own ancestors, Agrol most of all, but pay heed to Unklar as well. The afterlife is given to those who are mighty in battle and they are blessed with a chair at the feet of their First King in the Shadow Realm where they plot their return and the overthrow of the world.

**OTHERS (BUGBEARS, HOBGOBLINS, ETC)** Many creatures have found their way to Aihrde, some came with the demise of the All Father. Some others, such as the hobgoblins, traveled the length of the Rings of Brass and came to Aihrde from the dark lands of Inzae. Still others, such as the bugbears, have evolved from other creatures (bovines in their case). The gods have created creatures and happenstance, but whatever their origins or



endings, there are many creatures great and small throughout all the lands of the wide world.

## THE CHILDREN OF THE HORNED GOD

### UNGERN

**LANGUAGE:** Lawful Evil, Vulgate.

**RELIGION:** Unklar.

**LANDS:** None, Aufstrag.

**LONGEVITY:** Average 120 years.

Before the forges of Klarglich were made, before the hounds of darkness issued forth from Austrag and long before the mogrl devils were crafted in the Pits of Woe, Unklar fashioned the unger. When first he came through the portal, Unklar slew the high priest Nectanebo. After that, he fell upon the Emperor's Guard and the God-Emperor himself. All fell to the Horned God with an ease that made that beastly creature forever after hold great disdain for the folk of the All Father's fashioning. So immediately he gathered to him the substance of the Void and with the languages of his Father, he crafted the unger, the "black spawn." Some say that they were born of a union between the dark fey and wild evil men enslaved in Unklar's service. But this is not so; they are of the Val-Austlich, those creatures forged from the Language of Creation and the Val-Eahrakun, of which Unklar was the greatest. The Judgment of Corthain does not bind them and the unger move freely about the planes as few other creatures can.

In the black days of the Winter Dark when the Horned God, Unklar, ruled the land, the unger issued forth from the fortress of Aufstrag. They served Unklar as soldiers and captains, and spread his evil throughout the lands. They were the battle lords that destroyed Kayomar, drove the elves of the Shelves of the Mist into ruin and plundered the dwarf halls. Their numbers were great and they led the armies in countless battles, ever in the service of their dark master. They filled the holds of Aufstrag with their evil and their numbers grew beyond scope. But during the Winter Dark Wars they suffered greatly. In the great battle of Logn-Kor where the Lord of Sorrow led over 90,000 of his folk, many of them unger, into the Valley of the Sun, they met their first great calamity. The floods destroyed them all, with only the Lord of Sorrow and a few servants escaping that calamity. Later that year, at Gokstead Deep several tens of thousands more were destroyed by the ravages of the North men. And beyond in a myriad number of battles their numbers were wasted away. When at last Unklar was driven from the plane, they fell into disarray and fled to distant parts.

Since those days, they have recovered some. They live now in scattered holds all about the world of Aihrede, but most frequently in the east near the Grundliche Mountains, Aufstrag and the Grausumlands. In the west they are found in the Darkenfold and the wilds north of Kayomar and south of the Gottland where they contend with the fierce hobgoblins of those lands.



# THE CRADLE OF THE WORLD

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## OF THEIR LANDS, KINGDOMS AND RULERS

### AACHEN (THE LANDS OF)

**CAPITAL:** Castle Aachen  
**GOVERNMENT:** Limited Monarchy  
**RULER:** King Baldwin III  
**POPULACE:** Human, some elves

In the waning days of the Winter Dark the mercenary knight Baldwin saw the Unicorn. He believed it a gift from the realm of faerie sent to lead him away from the dark paths of war and slaughter. He deserted the evil god's empire he served, taking with him a small army of like minded men. He wandered the lands of Ethrum and Aenoch in search of the legendary beast to no avail. In time he settled in the Harz, a war torn region of the Aenochia. There he built the great castle of Aachen. The knight conquered the Detmold and Heristat from the dwindling Imperial forces, and in 1027md, proclaimed himself King of the lands of Aachen.

In Baldwin's failing years he was befriended by the Ranger Lord Daladon who waged a bitter war against the Dark. With Baldwin's passing, his daughter Ephremere became Queen. A warrior queen of great renown she led her father's knights and many barbarian mercenaries from Eisenheim into battle. She too saw the Unicorn, and through the ensorcellements of Daladon, the stallion bound itself to her line and the two lived on in her son, Baldwin II. Aachen is the only human land where worship of the goddess is sanctified by the state.

Aachen consists of the three provinces of the Harz, Detmold and Heristat. These lands are thickly forested, with valleys and meadows sprinkled throughout. Little remains of the old imperial roads but for tracks. Baldwin III rules with a benevolent hand. Many small castles dot the landscape, supporting the knights and their families and protecting Aachen's many villages. The close ties established with the barbarian lands of Eisenhiem are the source of continual migrations of barbarians into Aachen. The proud and warlike traditions of those people have inter-mingled with the subdued personality of the local populace. The mixture of knights and barbarians enables Baldwin to field a formidable army. In battle he commands heavy cavalry, his knights, and barbarian infantry.

Baldwin I (1027md–1028md)  
Ephremere (1028md–1070md)  
Baldwin II (1070md–1079md)  
John (1079md–1083md)  
Baldwin III (1083md–present)

### NEW AENOCH, (THE FAR KINGDOMS, THE NEW EMPIRE)

**CAPITAL:** Ascalon  
**GOVERNMENT:** Limited Monarchy  
**RULER:** Empress Pryzmira  
**POPULACE:** Human, elves, dwarves, halflings, gnomes

*We have thrown off the yoke of one autocrat; we will not except the yoke of another. Know that we Free Cities of Aenoch have signed a pact to elect the Empress to her throne. She has been in contact with us, as you very well know, for several years and we had some inclination of your coming from her.*

#### *Desmond of Ascalon to Jaren Falkynjager of the Council*

Heimstadt, Barachia, Dundador, Ascalon, Aesperdi, Kourland, Vilshofen, and Meteira rebelled against the tumbling might of the Empire in 1030md. These cities lived under the shadow of Aufstrag for a thousand years. They grew wealthy through control of the overseas trade routes and they suffered little from the hand of Unklar. In consequence, a powerful, educated merchant class came to rule these cities. When war came to the Empire, the lords of Aenoch banded together in a loose confederation and prepared to rebel. Pryzmira, last daughter of the House of the Old Empire of Aenoch, came to them and promised the wealth and power of the Council if they would support her claim to the ancient lineage. She bore the dagger mark on her shoulder, and they believed her. They agreed to league with Pryzmira under the stipulation that each of the seven lands, the Duchies of Aesperdi, Dundador, Kourland, Barachia and Meteira and the city states of Heimstadt and Vilshofen be given the rights to elect the Empress and her heirs to the throne. In turn, she demanded that their borders be permanently fixed, that they give her the city of Ascalon to rule from, and that they grant her wide privileges of taxation and expansion. In 1040md, the 30 year old Pryzmira became Empress of Aenoch.

The Empress then turned to the western lands and called for a crusade promising land and wealth. The summons generated wide enthusiasm in the west and hosts of men came to carve holdings for themselves. Though the coming years saw many victories and some expansion, the Empire failed to expand much beyond its original borders. The worship of Ore-Tsar, however, came with the crusaders and the seven lands became powerful supporters of the new religion. Heimstadt is ruled by a Bishop in the church of Ore-Tsar.

Pryzmira still rules in Aenoch. She is the last of the rulers who emerged from the wars of the Winter Dark. The last two decades of her rule have seen little in the way of military expansion. She struggles with increasing the commercial power of Ascalon in the face of the seven lands, maintaining the worship of the elder gods in the face of the church of Ore-Tsar, and ensuring her daughter Neratite's elevation to the throne.

Aenoch promises high adventure and quick wealth. The political and religious unrest cause constant feuds between the seven lands



and the Empress, between the old and new gods. The continuous calls for crusaders to rid the lands to the north of wild orcs and remnants of the horrors of Aufstrag make Aenoch a beacon for would be glory hunters.

## ANGLAMAY (KINGDOM OF)

CAPITAL: Allis

GOVERNMENT: Monarchy

RULER: King William III

POPULACE: Human, some elves, dwarves, halflings, gnomes

When the Winter Dark Wars began, Unklar's generals stripped the central lands of Ethrum of their garrisons. William, the provincial governor of Anglamay, seized the opportunity to revolt and separate himself from Aufstrag. Rallying the local lords he drove out the few Imperial garrisons left and established himself within the halls of Castle Allis. His revolt spread rapidly to the provinces of Ogden, Tildune, Thrace, Limnule, Mange and Ceeana. With the Empire helpless in the provinces, the Imperial bureaucracy joined the revolt and the peasants shortly thereafter. Within a few short years the provincial nobles recognized William as their King in the feudal realm of Anglamay. The lords of the provinces paid homage to William and received duchies in return. William proved a benevolent ruler. He converted to the religion of Ore-Tsar and supported the creation of a host of churches.

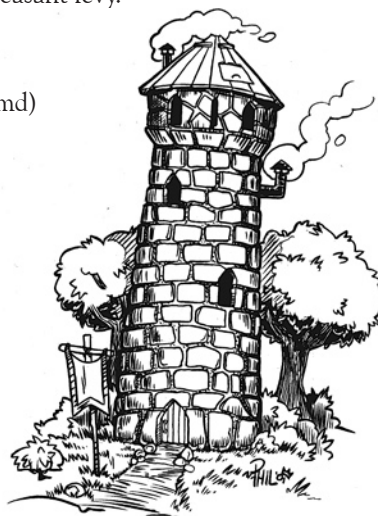
Due to the efficient union of imperial bureaucracy, powerful merchant families and a wealthy peasantry Anglamay prospers. Several walled cities and towns dot the landscape and merchants travel in large caravans, trading the local textile goods for foreign iron, coal and steel. In the west, the realm commands a deciding voice in the young kingdoms and is the major pillar of the Church of Ore-Tsar. The Bishop of Anglamay vies for control of the church with the Bishop of Avignon. The greatest threat to travelers is robber barons and lordless knights who prey on the weak. The King attempts to quell these actions, but his realm is large. Beneath the surface are many unresolved tensions. The merchant guilds are struggling to assert their power in the towns. Thus, tensions are growing between the noble and mercantile classes. There is religious strife as well for a sect of the followers of Ore-Tsar have broken off and created their church, these struggling with the existing church for power and converts. Anglamay fields an impressive array of mounted Knights in battle, these are supported by a large peasant levy.

William I (1027md–1042md)

William II (1042md–1061md)

Phillip William (1061md–1072md)

William III (1072md–present)



## AUFSTRAG

CAPITAL: Castle Aufstrag

GOVERNMENT: Absolute

RULER: Coburg the Undying, Lord of the Tower

POPULACE: Human, orc, ungern

*Fell Unklar, brooding in fear, roused himself and fortified his Keep. Rending the earth with his great axe he cleaved huge rifts about the Imperial Castle of old Aenoch, and with sorceries created great pools of water and pestilence to cover the rent lands. And all of Aenoch between the rivers Udunilay and Uphrates was made a swamp of fell death. Lifting the ground on high, a mountain of slag was built amidst the marshes and his high citadel set atop, surrounded by mighty buttresses and fell towers. And his new abode was named Festung Aufstrag, the citadel of Command.*

### Leopold of Passou

In the days of the Millennial Dark, Unklar reigned over the world from the stone halls of Al-Liosh, the capital of Aenoch. From there he delivered evil into the world. In time of years the place became a cesspool of all things vile. Tunnels, great and small, fanned out beneath the halls into the rock of the world, towers and buttresses rose into the sky, and the city sprawled out over the hills. After the initial defeats in the Winter Dark Wars, Unklar refashioned the halls of Al-Liosh. He destroyed the city, churned the earth into great heaps and let the waters of the great rivers Udunilay and Uphrates pour into the mangled ground. He created a great swamp where the city once stood and it surrounded his new fortress, Festung Aufstrag, the Citadel of Command. The fortress he fashioned in the shape of a tree thousands of feet high, a grim mockery of the Great Oak. The ruins of Al-Liosh sprawl underneath Aufstrag and into the swamps around.

When the wars ended and Unklar was driven from Aihilde, the halls of Aufstrag fell into decay. It became a grim testament to a bygone age. Some Imperial generals ruled from Aufstrag for awhile without success. After many years, the foul place sank into the mire of its own stench.

Aufstrag now stands in the midst of the of the Grausamland, the Fell Swamp, abandoned and forgotten. Few tread into those lands for evil still lurks there. Foul ghosts and devils, and other evils are said to crawl the vast empty halls, living in a nightmare of the past. It is rumored that several of the mogrl still dwell in the deeps, waiting for the return of their dark master. Coburg the Undying, Unklar's lieutenant, rules the throne room and dreams of greater conquest, evil ever on his mind.

Aufstrag is a vast citadel fortress towering over 3000 feet. It dominates the horizon of the Grausamland for miles around. It is a city with tunnels and halls for roads, rooms for houses, and a whole network of fountains and waterways built by the slaves of the horned god. All are wrapped in walls and battlements.

## **AVGSBERG (KINGDOM OF)**

**CAPITAL:** Eichstatt

**GOVERNMENT:** Monarchy

**RULER:** King Aetherfred II

**POPULACE:** Human, dwarves, some halflings and gnomes

At the outset of the Winter Dark Wars the Imperial Sanjak Albrecht made a pact with the Council of light wherein he agreed to turn against Unklar in exchange for a Kingdom for himself and his heirs. He took with him the 67<sup>th</sup> legion, the flower of the Imperial cavalry. In the subsequent wars with Auftrag, his men proved loyal. He established himself along the length of the Olgdon River at Castle Augsberg. At the age of 61, in 1026md Albrecht declared himself King. In the early years, his Kingdom forged a fast friendship with the Dwarf King Dolgan and his folk of Grundliche Hohle.

At Olensk in 1029md, Albrecht fought and won the most decisive battle in the war against Unklar. With him stood three thousand dwarves from the Hohle and several thousand men from Aachen and Eisenheim. Three Imperial legions were destroyed, and Albrecht's troops suffered severe losses. Albrecht lost two of his four sons in the battle. The dwarves left 1600 comrades on the field. This battle established a lasting friendship between the dwarves and men of Augsberg and Aachen.

With Unklar's fall in 1030md, Augsberg emerged as the most powerful force in the eastern nations. Their lands extend along the length of the Olgdon River and give them control of all land-born traffic from east to west. Augsberg flourishes on this trade and its folk have grown wealthy. Small villages abound throughout the realm where people farm the rich black earth and cut wood in the numerous forests. A close trade exists with Grundliche Hohle, the humans exchanging wood and foodstuffs for armor and weapons.

Here, the knightly ideal never materialized as it did further west in Anglamay. Warfare in the neighboring Luneburg plains is a deadly business and there is little room for chivalry, particularly when it crosses the river into Augsberg. A heightened state of military preparedness exists, allowing King Aethelred II command of an impressive force of heavy and light cavalry with some auxiliary infantry.

King Albrecht I "the River King" (1026–1051)

King Alfred (1046–1072)

King Aethelred I (1072–1089)

King Aethelred II (1089–present)

## **AVIGNON (CITY OF)**

**CAPITAL:** Avignon

**GOVERNMENT:** Oligarchy

**RULER:** Governor Milo and His Imminence Bishop Honorius II

**POPULACE:** Human, dwarves, gnomes, halflings, some elves

Avignon is perhaps the greatest city in all of Aihirde. In the Days before Days, an unknown hand built a great bridge across the Straights of Ursal. Later, the Aenochian Emperors built a fortress on the western end of the bridge to safeguard their lands in Ethrum. A city began to grow around the fortress. During the Wars of Liberation, the rebels destroyed the bridge, but the city lived on and grew. Under the Winter Dark, it became a sprawling fortress complex. Concentric walls sprang up around the landward

side of the city and sea walls in the bays of the Straights. The city, judged impregnable, survived several brutal sieges but never fell to storm. In the waning days of the Winter Dark, the city fell into ruin, many citizens deserting to the west.

The city remained, however, the greatest port in Aihirde and it dominated trade from east to west. In 1028md, Philip the Guileless and Ore-Tsar's disciples began the construction of a magnificent church in Old Avignon. They built upon the foundations of the Governor's Palace, and named the cleric Sixtus Bishop of that Prelacy. Sixtus used the position of the city to enrich the church, tithing barges and caravans that passed through. He rebuilt the cities' walls and towers, and soon thereafter, Avignon flourished as merchants, traders and all manner of people came to live within the safety of its impregnable walls. It has flourished ever since.

The present Bishop of Avignon, Honorius II shares his rule with the city Governor, Milo. The two are often at odds. The Governor remembers the days that his office held power. The Bishop struggles to maintain the religious fervor which fed new life into the old city. In general, the foreign population (which is very large), the merchants, and the guilds support the governors. The bulk of the working populace supports the bishops. Recently, the Captain of the Guard, Castus, a Brindisium gladiator and mercenary, has risen to great popularity and caused both Bishop Honorius II and Governor Milo to look nervously in his direction.

Honorius II also struggles to elevate the Prelacy of Avignon to that of the highest in the church. His greatest foe is the church and various Bishops in Anglamay.

## **BRINDISIUM, (REPUBLIC OF)**

**CAPITAL:** Brindisium

**GOVERNMENT:** Oligarchial Republic

**RULER:** The Consulate

**POPULACE:** Human, halflings

Brindisium traces her roots to the Age of Heroes. The Catalyst War (771oy–800oy) ended with the defeat of the Kingdom of Kayomar and the triumph of Unklar. Many of the folk of that proud land, driven to exile into the distant west, continued to resist. They founded the Solarium Empire, the Empire of the Sun, where paladins ruled as emperors. They continued the war against Unklar for a thousand years. Solarium became powerful in wealth and magic, and it used this knowledge to fell intent.

When the Winter Dark Wars began the greater part of these folk migrated back to their homelands. The shape of the world had changed however, and the cultures of ancient Kayomar reflected it. The Kayomarese who remained under the tyranny of Unklar did not welcome them, forcing them to move on. They split into two groups. Some moved to the island of Tagea (*see below page 29*), while others settled in far western Ethrumania. Here, beneath the hot tropical sun, the folk founded the city of Brindisium. They quickly subdued the surrounding lands and established a powerful network of client states. The families overthrew the ruling imperial paladins soon after founding Brindisium, and formed a republic.

The senate rules Brindisium, which is in turn is presided over by the consulate. Only men who trace their heritage to the days



before the Dark are given citizenship. Some exceptions, however, have recently been made however and they have begun to grant citizenship to those who they have conquered.

The most organized of all the Young Kingdoms, Brindisium sports good roads, large towns where citizens live in relative opulence, and a large merchant class. Her people traffic in all manner of commerce and possess a sizable merchant fleet which trades with lands far and wide. They pay homage to the Old Gods and to family deities. They are the last to possess mastery of the ancient arts. The city is rife with corruption and intrigue. Family's feud, and senators conduct secret wars against paladins who are forever trying to regain dominance. The Republic fields four legions of 5000 men apiece and can call upon many auxiliary troops.

### **BURNEVITSE**

**CAPITAL:** Luxor

**GOVERNMENT:** Tribal Monarchy

**RULER:** Vistenodge the Mad

**POPULACE:** Hobgoblins, bugbears, some orcs

In this far distant corner of the Empire, the frontier legions of hobgoblins and orcs, found themselves isolated and deserted. The rebellions in the central provinces permanently separated them from their masters in the east. War passed them by and the empire forgot them. In time, the legions disintegrated, their remnants developing into a broken patchwork of tribal units and Kells. Their proud status as Imperial Legionaries forgotten by all but a few, the hobgoblin Kells began warring with one another. The land became wild and dangerous, and Kayomar to the south, and Anglamay and Maine to the east have encouraged and plotted to ensure that the humanoids continue to war amongst themselves. Even so, they have been forcibly united under Vistenodge, a hobgoblin, who sends armed forays into the surrounding lands.

Burnevitse has become a conglomeration of independent Kells of hobgoblins. The area in which the hobgoblins live is very mountainous with many isolated valleys. Each valley or series of valleys has its own ruler. Culturally, the hobgoblins live in a very martial society with definite, inescapable class boundaries. The class system consists of an elite warrior class, the Vouts; a large army of warriors; the Kells; the workers; and slaves. Women are separate and highly prized for they are very rare. Only the Vouts breed and they spawn hundreds of children. Slavery of all races, including their own, is very common. They mostly farm dairy products, mine for ores, and work wood and stone. The Kells are actively involved in the ore trade throughout the lands and they guard their merchants with great care. Hobgoblin engineers are known to ply their trade in surrounding kingdoms.

### **CEENAA (THE COUNTY)**

**CAPITAL:** Capua

**GOVERNMENT:** Feudal

**RULER:** Count Jean de Artemai

**POPULACE:** Human, halflings

The small County of Ceeana lies upon the southern confines of the Kingdoms of Anglamay. The province won its freedom during Anglamay's rebellion at the outset of the Winter Dark Wars. Due to the power of her local nobility, Ceeana managed to maintain

its independence. As with her neighbors, Ceeana thrives on the knightly tradition and small castles and fortified towns dot the countryside. There are, however, many small villages where people make their daily bread through hard work and toil. The region is known for its excellent warhorses.

### **KLEAVES (COUNTY)**

**CAPITAL:** Olmutz

**GOVERNMENT:** Limited Monarchy

**RULER:** Count Eurich Gunshoff IV

**POPULACE:** Human

Kleaves is nestled against the eastern slopes of the Mount Norling and on the north bank of the wide Lithanian River. The small province won her freedom from Unklar with little effort. When rebellion swept the central plains from Anglamay to the Lechfield, Kleaves' geography saved the province from the ravages of war. Her line of rulers, the Barons Gunshoff, are kindly and value the honor of their ancient house above all else. Like much of the western lands knightly traditions are strong and Kleaves' lords revel in tournament and war. Small villages of thatched houses are found throughout the rolling valleys and along the river. The wealth brought by the river and mining in the mountains generates a great deal of castle building. The Baron rules from the walled town of Olmutz and defends his land with a stout troop of knights and squires.

### **EISENHEIM, (KINGDOM OF)**

**CAPITAL:** Lund

**GOVERNMENT:** Monarchy

**RULER:** King Thorismund

**POPULACE:** Human, dwarves

Throughout the long years of Unklar's Winter Dark, the North men maintained their freedom. The scattered tribes of Ostrogoths and Visigoths thrive in the snow bound mountains and along ice locked seas. With the outset of the Winter Dark Wars, the snow began to recede and the southern lands became lost in internecine war. In 1022md, the first North men ships began plundering the coastal lands. The Imperial response was rapid. A great fleet was dispatched to destroy the barbarians. They sailed north to the sprawling city-encampment of Gokstad. But the North men set out in a host of long boats under King Thorismund and met them at sea. In the ensuing battle, Thorismund destroyed the Imperial fleet and the entire 58<sup>th</sup> legion. This victory left the southern lands open to raids and migrations which continue to the present.

In 1025md, Theodohad, son of King Thuidemere, son of Thorismund, gathered a host of Visigoths, some Ostrogoths and many freed slaves, and set out to forge a kingdom in the wealthy south. His sister Fjorgan joined him.

Along the coasts of the Inner Sea they forged the Kingdom of Eisenheim. Within two years Theodohad's folk became involved in the Winter Dark Wars, many serving as mercenaries in the armies of Aachen and Augsburg. Theodohad led them, alongside those of King Albrecht, at the Battle of Olensk in 1029md. In the waning years of the Wars, the North men joined Aachen in their battles with the orcs of Iogol. Here Fyjorgyn and Ephremere,

Queen of Aachen, formed a lasting friendship with each other and with Daladon of the Council of Light.

In the intervening years, Eisenheim has expanded little. Close ties with Aachen and Augsburg keep the peace in the region. The folk have, for the most part, settled in peaceful farming communities throughout the rolling hills and valleys. However, the lands are not wholly tamed and the folk have not given up all their warlike traditions. On occasion, young thralls gather small armies and take to the sea to raid the lands in the west.

Eisenheim commands a notable force of irregular infantry. In addition, they are some of the most skilled sailors of all Aihilde.

Theodahad (1027md–1040md)

Eurich son of Fyjorgan (1040md–1051md)

Braga (1051md–1076md)

Theodahad II (1076md–1090md)

Thorismund (1090md–present)

### **ELORIA (LATZEN BASTEI “THE LAST BASTION”)**

**CAPITAL:** Elorisia

**GOVERNMENT:** Principate

**RULER:** Morgeld

**POPULACE:** Human, elves

During the Age of Heroes, before the Millennial Dark, King Luther of Kayomar (later Saint Luther), waged continual war upon the Lords of the Abyss. In the heat of battle he was ensorcelled by the succubus Tetstiana. Eighteen months later, Tetstiana gave birth to Luther's bastard son, Prince Morgeld.

As a boy, Morgeld waged war upon his father at every turn. But after the coming of Unklar, he fled to the distant west where he built a great castle on the Edge of Forever. There, he hounded the last remnants of Kayomar (*see Brindisium above page 22*) and languished in drug induced exile.

After a thousand years his father returned and the two made peace. Morgeld gathered his host and sailed the length of the world to the Elorian Islands off the coast of the Gelderland. He built a castle and a kingdom, and named his new home Latzen Bastei, which in the vulgate tongue, is the Last Bastion. He joined his father and the Council in the war against Unklar.

After the war, the Immortal Prince opened the island kingdom to commerce and free religious worship. Most religions have built temples there and the place is much visited by those who search for divine aid. The islands sit upon the east–west trade routes and have become fabulously wealthy. The rolling hills bear huge manors and spired castles. The people of Eloria are indolent and revel in the wealth which their master spreads around. Many of these lords are powerful in their own right and have traveled with the demon prince for eons.

Prince Morgeld still rules in the capital halls of Elorisia. He commands a strong naval task force and several thousand mercenary knights, many of whom traveled with the Prince in the Age of Heroes. In times of need, he hires mercenaries with his immense wealth.

### **FONTENOUC**

**CAPITAL:** None

**GOVERNMENT:** Families ruled by Prince

**RULER:** Maniford

**POPULACE:** Elves, human serfs

Those elven kindred who longed to avenge the shame of their flight came to Aihilde and made war on all things evil. When the wars ended they wandered, homeless for many years, until they eventually settled on the southern borders of the Twilight Wood. There they melted in the rolling, tree covered hills.

The Elves of Fontenouq have no rulers. They live independently in tall spired castles nestled in the foothills and forests of their adopted homeland, rarely leaving their abodes. Instead they indulge in internal pursuits such as the study of philosophy, music and poetry. Even so, they retain a fierce nature and skill in armory, weapons and magic. Fontenouq is not adverse to aiding travelers, or gathering under arms to help the kingdoms of man and dwarf defend themselves against the evils of the world. They keep a loose connection with each other, communicated through magical means.

### **GELDERLAND**

**CAPITAL:** None

**GOVERNMENT:** Orc tribal lands

**RULER:** Dominate Tribe ruled by Unk Oalbone (Ulgars) and Mordun and Grauschvoll (Othines)

**POPULACE:** Human, some elves

In days of old the Gelderland stood as part of the Kingdom of Kayomar. With the rise of Unklar, the trade routes shifted north to Anglamay and the region's prosperity declined rapidly. It became a refuge for criminals and those who sought to escape the horror of Unklar's rule. Orc tribes settled in the land, the Ulgars and Othines being the most notable, along with other evil things.

After the Winter Dark Wars, Kayomar, exhausted from war, failed to muster the strength to drive out the brigands and orcs to reclaim the land. It became embroiled in sporadic warfare to its north and south, and left the Gelderland to its fate. Despite its relative proximity to the sea borne trade routes, the Gelderland continues to languish as a backwater amidst the Young Kingdoms. Settlements and trading posts have been established in a few places along the coast, and some townships (often founded by brigand chieftains) have sprung up in the interior, but these suffer constant raids from powerful orc tribes.

The Gelderland is a fierce country of broken hills, deep valleys, bogs, and peat swamps, where, rumor reports, fabulous wealth of the old world lies buried in forgotten tombs and long buried cathedrals. It is a hard land of high adventure and many who enter its borders are lost to the evil therein.





## GOTTLAND

**CAPITAL:** Castle Nacht, or Night

**GOVERNMENT:** Troll Lordship

**RULER:** Varucks

**POPULACE:** Trolls, human slaves, orcs, hobgoblins

A broken land of winding hills and dark forests, Gottland is as inhospitable a place as the world has ever known. Nulak-Kiz-Din established his great spired castle north in the Moravan Plains beyond the Shadow Mountains. The Gottland, “the land without gods”, served as the gateway to this realm and reflected the evil of its dark master.

Upon the mouth of the overland trail which led into the heart of his domain, Nulak built the stone fortress of Nacht. One of his greater troll lords ruled there and commanded a force of humanoids. Other orcs and hobgoblins settled in the surrounding country, building villages and squalid moat and bailey castles. With Nulak’s passing from the eyes of man, the Troll Kings of Nacht conquered the greater part of Gottland. They ruled for some time, but civil strife and a war with the gnomes and stone giants left their King dead and the region in chaos. Only recently have the trolls begun to gather again under a new lord, Varucks. The rising kingdoms have left the desolate country to its own strife.

The country is not safe for overland travel for trolls and orcs attack all. But even these foul folk need goods, and at times, the very brave or desperate bring caravans into the hinterland. Two towns have sprung up upon the coast, Most and Ossford, and they have become gateways for hordes of luckless adventurers who come to the Gottland to plunder the wealth of the ancient wizard and his minions. Some few score fabulous prizes at the end of long roads, but many more leave their bones on the lonely highlands.

Varucks, a King, commands a powerful, but small troop of trolls in battle. When needed, he forces local tribes to give warriors and material to raise a sizable, if disorganized, army of orcs and hobgoblins. In the far west country, the Olgrack Orcs rule from their fortress of Rackenburg. They resist the Troll Lords whenever possible.

## GRUNDLICHE HOHLE

**CAPITAL:** Grundliche Hohle

**GOVERNMENT:** Monarchy

**RULER:** King Angrod II

**POPULACE:** Dwarves, some gnomes, halflings

As other dwarven realms fell in the Goblin Wars or vanished in time, Grundliche Hohle, or Deep Halls in the tongues of men, delved ever deeper. Ruled by the kin of old King Angrod, they plundered the deep places of the earth for their forges and made mighty things of great renown. Human Kingdoms came and went, yet the Dwarves took little heed. But in time the folk of Angrod declined. When the wars began, wherein Unklar overran Aihilde, the King, old and bitter, closed his halls and buried them under mountain and stone. And the people under the mountain fell into decline. Even then, at the last, the Dark One came and unearthed them. He unmade the doors and opened the deeps, and slew the whole of Angrod’s kin but a few.

The remaining fierce and hardy dwarves fled into the surrounding mountains and swore vengeance and eternal hatred on all of the Dark One’s Folk. In the high wastes was Dolgan born, the son of prophecy and the last of the line of Angrod. Rumor of this came to the Dark, and ever fearful, he plotted to take the yearling dwarf to bend to his ill purpose or slay him outright. By guile and sorcery, Unklar’s minions drug Dolgan, a child still by dwarf reckoning, to the grim holes beneath The Dark One’s Halls. There he worked at

the dark forge, Klarglich, and fashioned all manner of war machines. He aided in the construction of Aufstrag, and stood by the bellows fanning Unklar's fire of hatred which gave birth to the mogrl.

Dolgan remained vigilant for rebellion and when rumors of the Winter Dark Wars came to the deeps, he gathered a host of imprisoned dwarves and eldritch goblins and rose in revolt. The bitter four year Trench Wars left him scarred, but gained him freedom. Soon after he joined the Council, rebuilt Grundliche Hohle and called to the refugees who still lived to come home again. The bitter years of the Winter Dark Wars are another tale, but needless to say, the dwarves suffered untold horrors and losses. When the wars ended, Dolgan yielded his thrown to his infant son, Angrod II.

The realm now dominates the southern Grundliche Mountains. The wide valley which leads to the mountain kingdom is populated by gnomes and halflings. Its deep halls offer inns, taverns and market squares. The best beer in all of the Young Kingdoms originates here. Grundliche Hohle thrives on trade with the west, particularly with Augsburg, trading armaments for food and wood. All of this awards Grundliche Hohle a wide cultural diversity and makes the realm a lively place. The kingdom is powerful in the councils of men, and attracts hearty adventurers in hopes of glory and service to one of the elder lines of Aihilde.

## HANSE CITY STATES

**CAPITAL:** None

**GOVERNMENT:** Merchant Oligarchs

**RULER:** City Mayors

**POPULACE:** Human, halfling, gnome, some few dwarves

When the lords of Anglamay rebelled against Unklar the fiercely independent cities along the Hanse River followed suit. After the war, they avoided absorption into Anglamay by combining into a defensive league. This league expanded to include commercial interests, and the Hanse City States grew wealthy through trade. They came to dominate the commerce on the Inner Sea and the straights. They conquered the coastal regions of the North Sea, but shortly thereafter, commenced warring upon each other. They frequently suffer raids from the North men of Holmgald and Eisenheim.

The city states are powerful and independent, and are ruled by commercial oligarchies representing the trading guilds. The greater cities, Fiume, Capidistria, and Arbel, dominate the sparsely forested grasslands militarily and commercially. The constant shifting of political and commercial alliances have made the region a hot bed of small wars and the home of hosts of mercenaries as the guilds vie for commercial control. Many folk find refuge in the Hanse area for money buys freedom and security.

## HALTLAND

**CAPITAL:** Borgundullum

**GOVERNMENT:** Monarchy

**RULER:** King Odovakar

**POPULACE:** Human

One of the more prominent barbarian kingdoms, Haltland lies in the mountains of the far northern climbs. Several tribes of Ostrogoths make up this loose confederation. Their King is chosen by test of arms and rules until challenged and slain. The Ostrogoths

are a fierce tribal people who glory in battle and war. They live communally in great stone and thatch halls nestled in the bays and estuaries of their land. They are forever warring on their neighbors and crossing the Inner Sea to plunder the Young Kingdoms.

## HOLMGALD

**CAPITAL:** Gokstad

**GOVERNMENT:** Monarchy

**RULER:** King Thorismuch IV

**POPULACE:** Human

Holmgald is the sister Kingdom of Haltland. Thorismund the Conqueror united the Visigoth tribes, some of the Ostrogoths and Tervengi under the Amal clan. The Amals dominate this frozen kingdom. Much like the Ostrogoths, the Visigoths revel in raiding and war. They are not averse to plundering the coasts of their founding kingdom, Eisenheim. Like their neighbors, the people of Holmgald gather in small villages of great halls and are famous for their seamanship. King Thorismund IV rules from the capital of Gokstad.

## KAREELIA (COUNTY OF)

**CAPITAL:** Khemi

**GOVERNMENT:** Feudal

**RULER:** Count Joseph Oblrich

**POPULACE:** Human

As with the other provinces in this region, Kareelia rose in rebellion against Unklar when the Imperial garrisons withdrew. The nobles of Kareelia, sitting astride the east west trade route, found themselves hard pressed until the Battle of Olensk in 1029md. Augsburg's victory in the east shattered the ability of the empire to maintain any control in the west. With the threat of Imperial intervention removed, the nobility established a firm grip on the country and chose one of their own to rule them. They resisted Anglamay's efforts to annex them.

The powerful house of Olbrich continues to rule in Kareelia from the Dragon Throne (named thus for an ancestor's slaying of a great wyrm). Here, as elsewhere, the knightly tradition is upheld through tournament and war. Castles and fortified townships dominate the county. The fierce spirit of independence in Kareelia is supported by close relations with the County of Ceeana. Intermittent warfare with the Kingdoms of Anglamay and beyond offer employment to all manner of adventurers.

## KAYOMAR, (KINGDOM OF)

**CAPITAL:** Du Guesillon

**GOVERNMENT:** Religious Monarchy

**RULER:** King Eadore

**POPULACE:** Human, elves, dwarves, gnomes, halflings

The oldest of all the Ethrum kingdoms, Kayomar's origins predate the Age of Heroes. Her most notable King was Luther of Istal, who abdicated in favor of his son and retired to the Dreaming Sea.

During the Millennial Darkness, the Knights of Kayomar continued the war against Unklar. Driven into hiding, the refugees survived largely due to the protection of their patron, Saint Luther. The Lords of Kayomar were the first to rise in arms against Unklar's Empire. Morgan, Lord of the paladins of the Holy Defenders of the Flame, led the Kayomarese in battle. During the



Winter Dark Wars, the Lords of Kayomar forged a deep bond with the folk of the Eldwood.

They have since forged a powerful kingdom in the far west upon the borders of the wild. Morgan accepted the crown from Saint Luther and his family has ruled Kayomar since 1029md. The politics of the kingdom are determined by 18 aristocratic families, all of whom trace their ancestry to the days before the Winter Dark. Eadore, descendent of Morgan, is the present King. He is a boy of 14, and because of his youth the first king who is not a Paladin.

Kayomar is synonymous with knightly virtues and the rule of law and order. Large castles overlook the countryside, where small villages abound. The people lead a simple, prosperous life, content in the protection their lords offer them. The region is well known for its taverns and drink. Due to its proximity to the wilds, however, the Darkenfold in particular, Kayomar's borders are constantly threatened by creatures of evil intent.

Though the worship of Ore-Tsar is common, most of Kayomar pays homage to Saint Luther, Durendel and the Paladins of the Dreaming. Kayomar is defended by two relics, the Holy Flame and the Durendel, a holy sword. The former, said to be a spark of the All Father's Soul, burns in a sacred dish within the temple complex of the Paladin's Grove. The latter, though its whereabouts are unknown, is so bound to the Grove that most believe it to be buried under the monument of St. Luther.

Palatine King St. Luther I 1026–1029 (House Pendegranze)

King Morgan I 1029–1045 (House Dawin)

King Morgan II 1045–85

King Luther II 1085–1087

King Eadore 1087–present



**The Gonfalon**

## **LUNEBERG PLAINS**

**CAPITAL:** None

**GOVERNMENT:** None

**RULER:** Various Warlords

**POPULACE:** Human, orcs, ungern

A vast savannah of rolling hills and wild grass, the Luneberg is home to a host of abandoned castles, ruined towns, and dungeons. The country once flourished, even under the Winter Dark, but that ended when war came. The Dwarves, Augsburg, and Aachen, met the legions of Unklar on the plains of the Luneberg and there fought countless battles. In the end, after the Imperial defeat at Olensk, the Sanjak Kain laid waste to the country, putting many of its folk to

flight or death. He ransacked the towns, poisoned the waterways, and tore up the roads. He left the country a desolate place.

After the wars, few ventured into the Luneberg, leaving it to the ghosts of the dead. In consequence, the country has become a wild place, refuge to a host of brigands, wild orcs and evil creatures. Only two cities thrive there, Magdeburg and Unspt. Both places are dirty disreputable townships, where small winding streets and old, dilapidated buildings are jumbled together, crammed behind ancient crumbling walls. They are ruled by the local mayors and the city guard, who are controlled by the thieves' guilds. They are notorious gathering points for all manner of thieves, brigands, cut-throats, ne'er-do-wells and people on the run for one reason or the other.

## **MAINE (KINGDOM OF)**

**CAPITAL:** Merdieal

**GOVERNMENT:** Monarchy

**RULER:** King Louis

**POPULACE:** Human, gnomes, halfling, some elves

As with Anglamay to the northeast and Kayomar to the west, Maine rebelled against the Empire after the Council won its first victories. At the battle of Redhill in 1024md, Lord Pius, an Imperial General, established firm control over Maine, the Lechunfield and Rotois. In 1028md, Pius gained the recognition of Palatine King, St. Luther of Kayomar, and crowned himself King of Maine. This peculiar incident led some to believe that the Kings of Maine owe their crown and homage to the Kings in Kayomar. Pius, though personally cruel, ruled benevolently. His descendants followed suit.

Despite numerous border wars with the dwarves of Norgorad-Kam, her northern neighbors, and Kayomar, Maine flourishes. It attracts merchants, adventures and mercenaries. The Kings of Maine are not adverse to rewarding loyal service with patents of nobility and land. The country is well known for its fine grape, and taverns selling all manner of wines dot the country. The wine trade is Maine's greatest commercial asset. The western borders are always torn with strife as the Gelderland is a land filled with brigands and orcs. Many a would-be adventurer and mercenary finds his daily bread in that country.

Pius 1028md–1040md

Aenor 1040md–1058md

Pius II the White 1058md–1061md

Louis I 1061md–1069md

Louis II 1069md–1087md

Louis III 1087md–present

## **MORAVAN PLAINS**

**CAPITAL:** Graugusse (abandoned)

**GOVERNMENT:** None

**RULER:** None

**POPULACE:** Trolls, orcs, other humanoids

Graugusse, the Grey Tower, dominates the Moravan plains. From those dark halls the Arch-Magi Nulak-Kiz-Din, the Troll Lord, ruled over a vast network of holdings including the Shadow Mountains and Gottland. During the Winter Dark, the Troll Lord's evil power attracted all manner of fell beasts, orcs, and trolls to the Moravan. He ruled there for 600 years. The mage's

disappearance in 1030md left the region leaderless. In his absence, the Moravan reverted to a wild country where local tribes of orcs vied for power with trolls and giants.

The dark stain of Nulak's magic remains on the Moravan Plains. The skies are poisoned and dark, and little of worth grows in the barren soil. The blasted plains of broken slate are home to bands of vicious trolls, several small orc tribes, and other evil creatures. Graugusse's abandoned halls watch over the wild wastes of the Moravan. The tower purportedly holds vast treasures in gold and magic and attracts all manner of adventurers. Few return, and those who do report terrors beyond imagining.

## **NGORONDORO**

**CAPITAL:** Ngorondoro

**GOVERNMENT:** Tribal

**RULER:** Uandlich, Eldritch Goblin

**POPULACE:** Goblins

The Goblin Kingdom of Ngorondoro rose from the ashes of history in the midst of the Winter Dark Wars. The last of the eldritch goblins found themselves bound in servitude to Unklar with Dolgan and the dwarves of Grundliche Hohle, and together, they fought the bitter battles of the Trench Wars and forged a kindred alliance. The goblins under Uandlich retook the caves of Ichlin-Yor during the last years of the Millennial Dark, and forged a goblin kingdom in the shadow of Grundliche Hohle. The deep halls and holes are filled with all manner of water passages, as goblins have a great love of water. They have built canals, channels, aqueducts, water gardens and fountains throughout their realm. They bare the imprint of their makers however, for all their fashioning are twisted things, dark and nightmarish in design.

Ngorondoro is a foul place of ancient evil and vile sorcery. Though the goblins have peace with the dwarves, they are ever an evil race and their fell deeds are etched in the stones of history. Few are allowed access to the deeps of this, the only goblin realm, and much of it remains a mystery. Many goblins would unmake the alliance with the dwarves, chief amongst these are the brothers, Ixius and Sonixius. In time of war, Uandlich commands an army of several hundred eldritch goblins and several thousand drone goblin warriors.

## **NORGOROD-KAM**

**CAPITAL:** Norgorod-Kam

**GOVERNMENT:** Monarchy

**RULER:** King Dagmar IV

**POPULACE:** Dwarves

*But the world changed and the Dwarves of the Bergrucken proclaimed themselves in the midst of the realms of Unklar and opened their Kingdom's deeps as if for War. Their mighty and fell King, Dagmar III, bore the scepter of the King of Crazeul and the Axe which is the rightful possession of the Dwarf Lords. And the servants of Unklar fled from him and the whole of the Bergrucken, but for the deeper places, were made as if clean, and Dwarves knew much pride and rest in the days to come.*

*Leopold of Passou*

The dwarves of Norgorod-Kam survived the Millennial Dark hidden in the fastness of their mountain kingdom. Unlike their

kindred in Grundliche Hohle and Roheisen Hohle, Norgorod-Kam flourished and grew strong underground. Old King Dagnir fashioned the Impregnable Doors to keep out the dark. When the Winter Dark War came, the dwarves unleashed the pent fury of centuries and delivered stunning defeats upon the enemy. They rewarded themselves with lands in the highlands north of their country.

Aside from the occasional dispute with the Kingdom of Maine, the dwarves of Norgorod-Kam dwell in peace with their neighbors. They trade manufactured goods for raw materials. The dwarves keep the road over the Saddleback Mountains, Bergrucken in the dwarf tongue, safe for travel and welcome folk in their halls of stone. The taverns are famous for the fine beer and good music. They draw all manner of patrons to the kingdom. There are no communities of peoples living in and around Norgorod-Kam however, visitors are restricted to the Door Level only, and there are the merchants and caravan masters kept and enjoy the comforts of the Dwarf Hole. King Dagmar IV rules in his golden halls and commands a powerful army of dwarven shields.

## **ONWALTIG, ORC**

**CAPITAL:** Carteris

**GOVERNMENT:** Military Dictatorship

**RULER:** The Sanjak Mordinang

**POPULACE:** Orcs

The island of Onwaltig represents the last of Unklar's Empire. Here, the tattered remnants of a dozen orc legions gathered after the Winter Dark Wars. In the aftermath, no nations had navies of any power, and the orcs were left to their own designs. Under the Orc Sanjak Issa, they fortified the island with monstrous slag heap castles and numerous underground warrens. Later attempts at dislodging the orcs proved futile and costly and were soon abandoned. Issa used the old Imperial chain of command to ensure the survival of the country, and his predecessors have adhered to his ideal.

The Sanjaks of Onwaltig command with absolute authority. The country is strictly controlled. The wizard priests of the Paths of Umbra practice their craft openly and serve the legionnaires. Rumors abound that the Arch-Magi Nulak-Kiz-Din resides here, plotting alongside the orcs for the return of Unklar.

Onwaltig is a dangerous place to travel and few interlopers are permitted. The tales of vast treasures which were carted there after the war abound, however, and attract all manner of thieves and erstwhile adventurers. The Sanjak Mordinang commands four thousand heavy orc infantry, several hundred cavalry. They have a dozen large warships, and numerous troops of light infantry. They maintain the discipline learned while serving the Empire's armies, both for their own army and their government. They worship Unklar and statues and holy places abound throughout the islands.

## **PUNJ (KINGDOM OF)**

**CAPITAL:** Ivangorod

**GOVERNMENT:** Monarchy

**RULER:** King Feodor III

**POPULACE:** Human, orc, ungern

The Lords of Punj continued the Winter Dark War even after the Council banished Unklar. The Imperial Sanjak Paskevitch delivered the single greatest defeat on the western alliances in 1030md in the Flintlock, routing the dwarves of Grundliche Hohle and driving the men of Augsburg from the Luneburg plains. When Paskevitch overran Havok castle he ended the dwarven rule of the Flintlock. The castle, renamed Unklarglich, became a place of dread evil when a mogrl from Aufstrag settled there. Paskevitch, his western borders free, turned to reforming his province. Using the priests of Unklar he raised himself to the throne of Punj. He ruled there until his death in 1051md. After the fall of the Paskevitch family and the rise of the Godunovs, the Punj developed in unison with the other realms of Aihilde.

The king rules from his capital-fortress, Ivangorod. The wizard priests of Unklar pay heed to their dark god and their temples are in every major city. Yet they do not inflict evil upon the populace as in the days of old. The countryside is ruled by a noble class of ancient lineage, remnants of the Aenochians of old. Orc lords and even a few eldritch goblins, once a powerful contingent in the Imperial legions, still remain in Punj, and serve the King and his offices. Punj wars upon her southern neighbors, but more often her energies are spent staving off barbarian attacks from the north and east.

The Punj is a country of deep forests and valleys. The people cultivate vast stretches of the region and grow crops of rye and barley. The realm flourishes in trade, and has of late even attempted to bring the dwarves into commercial alliances. The dwarven memory is long, however, and the loss of Havok Castle remembered.

The Punj is a civilized land. Her cities are ripe with court intrigue where powerful merchant and thieves' guilds vie for control with the nobles and the crown. The borders on the unknown east offer the bold a chance for glory and adventure.

Feodor Paskevitch 1031md–1051md

Mikhail 1051md–1058md

Feodor II Godunov 1058md–1064md

Yuri 1064md–1087md

Feodor III 1087md–present

## **RHUNELAND**

**CAPITAL:** None

**GOVERNMENT:** None

**RULER:** None

**POPULACE:** Human, gnomes, some few elves and halflings

The vast sprawling Rhuneland served as the heart of the Imperial domains under the rule of Unklar. Its wealth in agriculture made the land the bread basket of Aihilde and in turn, made its people powerful and wealthy. During the Winter Dark Wars the region escaped despoilment, but the Empire used up its vast wealth financing the war. The fall of Unklar led to rebellion and civil war throughout the Rhuneland as lords and wealthy merchants

vied for power. The region sunk into a long morass of internecine warfare of which it has only recently begun to recover.

Presently, the Rhuneland consists of several dozen townships that play host to mercenary bands that alternately war with one another for control over the smaller independent villages and settlements. The Red March lies within the Rhuneland's borders.

## **ROHEISEN HOHLE, (THE IRON KINGDOM) DWARF**

**CAPITAL:** Roheisen Hohle

**GOVERNMENT:** Monarchy

**RULER:** King Ondorog Helgostohl XIV

**POPULACE:** Dwarves

Roheisen Hohle, beneath Mount Tur, is one of the oldest of the dwarf homes. Here, in days of yore, great stores of metal were mined and fashioned into articles of war.

In the 89<sup>th</sup> century, as dwarves reckon time, during the height of the Goblin–Dwarf Wars, King Helgostohl IX closed the gates to Roheisen Hohle and sealed all entrances to Mount Tur. The dwarves lived out their days apart from the world above. They were ruled by the kings of the line of Helgostohl, the Underfathers. The years have greatly diminished the folk, and they fell victim to the plague of the Stone Curse. If touched by the light of the day, a dwarf from Roheisen is turned to stone.

During the Winter Dark wars, King Ondorog Helgostohl XIV made alliances with the dwarven King of Grundliche Hohle, Dolgan. Though the stone dwarves did not come out of their kingdom to fight, they made weapons of war for their cousins and allies. To this day, they struggle with the Stone Curse, trying to find a cure to the dreadful disease. They travel in huge iron bound wagons drawn by fierce bears and served by mercenary North men.

Roheisen Hohle dwarves are the last dwarves of the old world, having never intermingled with later races. Few in number and often bitter, their wealth lies in metals and weaponry. Under the ground, they have no equal. The human town of Haven lies at the foot of Mount Tur, and the pilgrims to Ore-Tsar who flock here every year marvel at the occasional wagon train lumbering up from underneath the earth.

## **TAGEA**

**CAPITAL:** Tagea

**GOVERNMENT:** Limited Monarchy

**RULER:** Kings Leonidas and Demosthenes

**POPULACE:** Human, halfling

When the migrants of the Solarium Empire failed to find a home in Kayomar, they split into two factions, the Brindi and Tageans. The smaller faction traveled west, settling on the island of Tagea. There, they found a good home astride a growing trade route. A fiercely militaristic society, the Tageans proved apt at defending themselves and seizing the surrounding isles. They grew wealthy on ship borne trade and established close ties with Eloria. The Tageans dwell in sprawling open air villas and revel in building great colonnaded temples to the ocean god Poseidon.

The Tageans are ruled by two kings who each serve for one year. The kings are elected by the warrior citizens, the hoplites. The



enserfed population, which includes many halflings, supports the hoplite armies in the field with light infantry. The Tageans are heralded as some of the best warriors in the world.

### **THE TOTEN FIELDS ( FIELDS OF DEAD)**

**CAPITAL:** None  
**GOVERNMENT:** None  
**RULER:** None  
**POPULACE:** None

Here, the final battle in the Winter Dark Wars was fought. Unklar, banished from the plain some years previous, left a powerful empire around Aufstrag. The allies of the north and west proved determined to extinguish this power. For months, men, dwarves, and elves gathered in the wilds of the Luneburg, and in the high summer of 1037md, the allied host crossed the Udunilay River to attack Aufstrag. But the Imperial forces had not been idle. They had gathered the flower of the empire and called on those dragons that still lived. Several of the foul mogrl joined them, as did many wizards. The Battle of the Tree shook the world to its foundations and left the whole land about Aufstrag a desolate wasteland. So great was the carnage that men left their brothers on the field and even the dwarves' stout hearts failed to pull the fallen from the calamity of the Toten Fields.

In time, the place became a stinking morass of silted pools and poisoned earth. The magic which was wielded in the battle scarred the land beyond healing. Even the druids failed to break the horror which hangs over the land.

Untold wealth and magic lies buried in the Toten Fields, sunk deep into the earth, but the ghosts of the fallen wander the hills calling out their pain. Necromancers thus frequent the land in search of the power of the dead.

### **TRONDHEIM**

**CAPITAL:** Aggersholm  
**GOVERNMENT:** Monarchy  
**RULER:** King Karl the Bear  
**POPULACE:** Human

A northern barbarian kingdom which benefitted from the battle of Gokstad, Trondheim is home to the powerful Gruetungi and Alanni tribes. These wild North men, like there cousins to the west, lived for years off of plunder gathered in the southern lands. The Gruetungi are usually at war with their immediate neighbors, the Visigoths, in Haltland. They are led by their King, Karl the Bear, who makes his home in Trondelag, though the capital some miles off in Aggersholm.

### **CONFEDERATION OF TORRICH**

**CAPITAL:** Torrich  
**GOVERNMENT:** Principate of Oligarchs  
**RULER:** King Innocent III  
**POPULACE:** Human, orc, gnome, halfling

During the waning days of the Winter Dark Wars, the lands south of Aufstrag groped for leadership. Prince Innocent, a lord with shadowy origins, marshaled these remnants of the Empire under a sprawling Confederation of Kingdoms and city states using guile and the remnants of the Imperial bureaucracy. Ihlsa, parts of

Unduliland, Rleuland, the orc nation of Hlobane, and a dozen cities entered into a compact with the Prince. He established the rule of the Principate in the city of Torrich. The Confederation of Torrich is rarely united, however, and wage continual war on their neighbors and one another.

Humans dominate the Confederation of Torrich and the old imperial bureaucracy holds it together. But constant warfare has led to the country being fortified. Towns are walled and few villages survive without defensive protection. Strong castles and towers dominate the landscape. Whereas in the west gallant knights' battle one another for glory as much as for land, here, war is much more deadly. Honor and nobility rarely enter a contest of arms, making warfare vicious.

The ruling Prince, Innocent III, is beautiful above all men. His youthful appearance resembles that of his father and grandfather so much so that rumors abound of his origins. Some say that he is the same man, an undead creature, who changes his guise and name to stave off suspicions. The Prince holds tentative control over the desperate realms through magic and assassination. In the latter, he utilizes the skills of the assassin guild, Crna Ruk, the Black Hand.

### **ZEITZ, THE MARCH**

**CAPITAL:** None  
**GOVERNMENT:** None  
**RULER:** Tribal Lords vie for power  
**POPULACE:** Human, gnomes, halfling, some dwarves and elves

The March of Zeitz consists of Saarbrucke, Umbria and the Sav. Here vast plains intermingle with dense forests and wide rivers. During the Winter Dark Wars the region served as a crossroads for the warring parties. Imperial legions plundered the local towns and villages on their way to the west, barbarian goths raided the coastal regions and rivers on their way to the south, and the folk of Aachen and Augsburg used the March for recruiting grounds. This devastation lasted for 15 years, embittered the local population, and allowed the land to become the home of many deserters, bandits, errant knights and general riff raff. Brigands were attracted by the route of the pilgrims of Ore-Tsar, which led from the southern lands across the March to the Mount Tur and the town of Haven. To counteract the Knights of Haven were founded to protect the pilgrims. They built a number of castles in the March to this end.

The March attracts wild adventurers, desperate fugitives and erstwhile wizards. The locals war and intrigue against each other and raid the lands to the south. The several powerful castles of the Knights of Haven, sitting astride the main north-south road, only add to the confusion in the region.

# III THE COSMOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE

## THE COSMOS

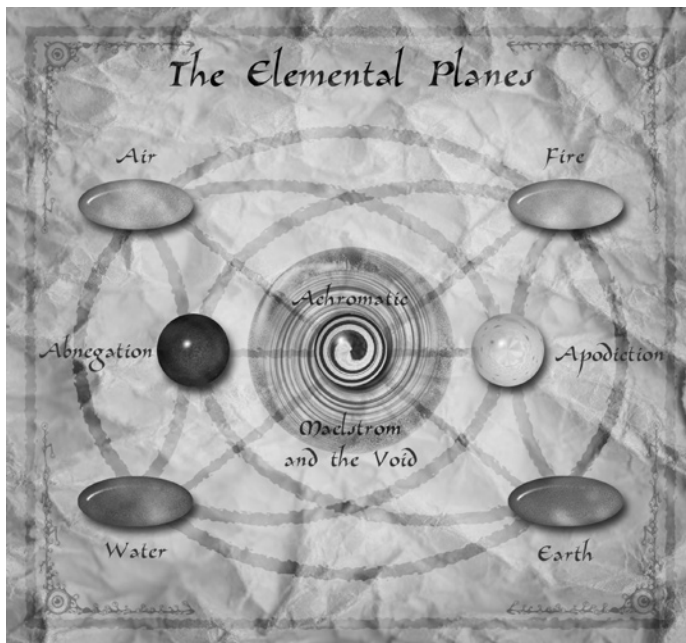
The world of Aihrde came to be through the labors of the All Father that were built upon the chaos of the Great Dragon Inzae. From the Void all things came, for it exists beyond time and place. The work of the All Father began in the infinite depths of that limitless place and it is blessed with his creations.

## THE VOID

The Great Empty exists even where the Firmament lies, occupying the same space if not time. The Void surrounds all of creation, all of those planes that are bound in the Maelstrom. It consists of nothing tangible. However, the power of the Void is immense and infinite. For the Void itself is the source of the All Father's power, where the Language of Creation lies and consequently the source of all things which are, have been or will be.

## THE FIRMAMENT, THE ELEMENTAL PLANES

Beyond the Maelstrom and the Multiverse there lies the Firmament, or the Elemental Planes. These planes exist separate from one another, whole and apart, even from the Void. Collectively these planes are called the Elemental Planes and are named thus: the Planes of Fire, Earth, Air and Water (these include a host of smaller, para-elemental planes) and the Energy Planes of Abnegation (Negative Energy), Apodiction (Positive Energy) and Achromatic (Neutral Energy) (Illustration 1). From the firmament the All Father drew his substance to cast the Language of the Void into shape.



## THE WALL OF WORLDS

The Wall of Worlds is not a plane in and of itself, but rather a magic barrier that lies between the Void and the Multiverse. It is crafted of pure magic and its nature reflects this. It was created by the All Father but Unklar devoured it and cast it back out

again as the Shroud of Darkness. But some of the wall remained and Corthain refashioned it and placed within it the Runelords to guard creation from the Void and to keep those who inhabit the Multiverse from crossing to the Void.

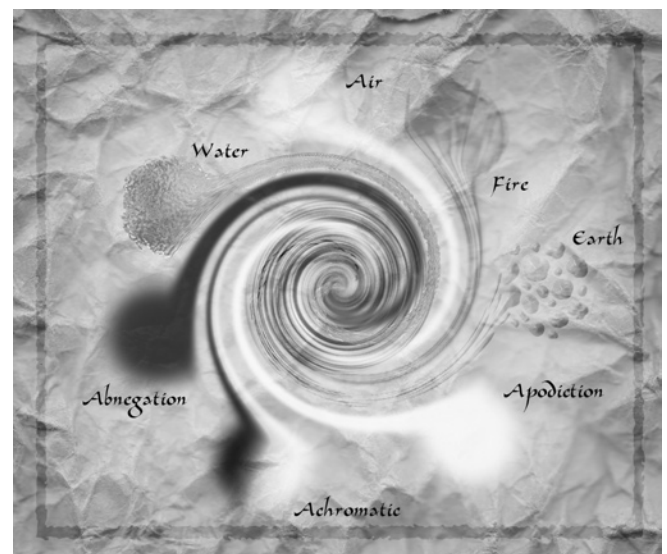
Even in its diminished state its size is stupefying for the Void is infinite and there seems no end to the Multiverse. It can only be located through diverse magics and carefully crafted spells, the Winter Runes. When one does find it they are greeted with its seemingly infinite nature, for the Wall rises from bottomless depths and reaches limitless heights. It stands as a giant wall of fog and mist. At times it is calm, with the white mists quiet and serene. But sometimes the Wall rages in mindless anger, hurling great bolts of electrical energy through the heart of its own teeming black clouds.

Approaching the Wall is akin to walking on air. One stands where one's will dictates. There is no limit on the Wall, so it is impossible to determine where one is in relation to any other plane or reality. Once breached the Wall yields to the cold horrors of the Void.

## THE MAELSTROM

When the Dragon Inzae settled upon the Void she thrashed her tale, ripping holes into the planes of the Firmament. Too, she tore into the substance of the planes of Abnegation, Apodiction and the Achromatic. All of this matter and charged energy thundered through the rift, spilling into the Void to gather in a great Maelstrom.

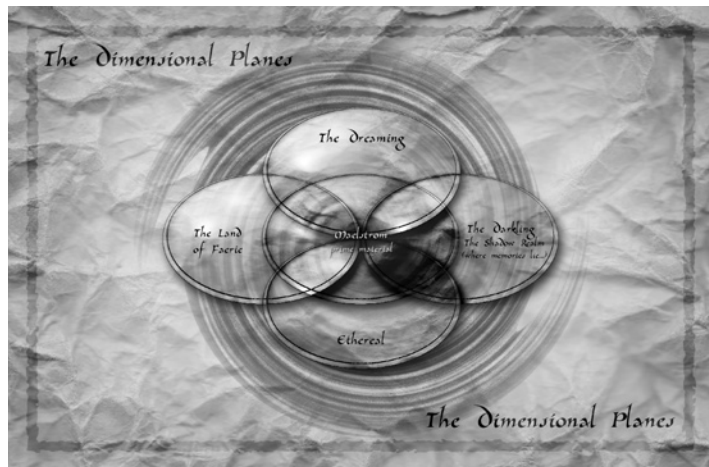
This Maelstrom is commonly referred to as the Material Plane. At the heart of the Material lies Aihrde, the Moon and Sun, the planets Illus and Nexus and the Stars of Wenafar's creation. Beyond these lie the expanse of the creation that is seen from Aihrde from time to time, when the Moon and Stars have set, as long wispy clouds of dust deep in the heavens. Thus even the Void can be seen from the world.



## THE MULTIVERSE

The Material Plane, the Maelstrom, does not lie in the Void alone and singular. For other planes, bound to the prime but separate from it lie there as well. These planes occupy the same space as the Material Plane but in different dimensions or even times.

When the All Father died his mind splintered and all the knowledge that he bore with him opened into the world and a great host of planes and realities sprung to life and these are called, in common usage, the Multiverse. The planes of the Multiverse exist in many times and places and include the Material Plane, Dimensional (Inner) Planes, the Intersecting (Outer) Planes and other spatial anomalies. The planes of the Multiverse breach each other in many places. These ruptures are commonly referred to as gates, but are just as likely to be rifts, pits or holes or something altogether different, beautiful or horrifying. These planes, the Material, Inner and Outer, have a wide host and variety of names and all intersect with each other.



## THE DIMENSIONAL MATRIX OR THE INNER PLANES

These Dimensional Planes exist as one with that of the Material Plane (Maelstrom). Travel between the Material Plane and the other Dimensional Planes is not easily done, but not impossible. Some are gifted and can see or walk between the planes. The Arch-Magi, Aristobulus and the Rune Lords are named thus. For 'tis said that Aristobulus can see into many planes at once, into the planes of Shadow and the Ethereal. The Dimensional planes are named thus: The Ethereal, the Land of Faerie, the Dreaming, the Stone Fields and the Shadow Realm.

**THE ETHEREAL, THE EVER EXPANDING, THE NET OF EA-RAENA:** The All Father tore from his breast a rib and upon it hung long stands of his tissue. Those shreds hung from the long rib-like a curtain of light and he made it to pass through the void. This was the first of the Twin Sisters, Ea-Raena, the Maiden of Night. In time she bound herself into form and cast off the remaining shreds of the All Father's tissue. And those shreds settled upon the Firmament and unbeknownst to her they wove together into a great net. So the Ethereal Plane was made. A plane of wild abandon, only the most hardy can live here for there is no air or light, only the unbridled language of creation. It continues to

grow, being of the living substance of the All Father, but only the most learned have begun to unravel the mysteries of its origins or why it continues to spread across existence.

**LAND OF FAERIE:** Faerie is a magical land of powerful enchantments and sorceries. Of all the All Father's dreams Faerie was and remains the wildest and most unpredictable. It is constantly in flux and is much like a mortal's dream. It is ruled by a variety of creatures, the Faerie Queen being only one. Many of these creatures find great comfort in the Material world of Aihilde and have transplanted themselves to that plane, for they found in Aihilde the true substance of the All Father's creation. The elves are but one example of these migrants. The vast expanse of Faerie has given birth to many of the world's most bizarre creatures - from the elves to sprites, manticores and other creatures.

**THE DREAMING SEA:** This Dimensional plane juxtaposes the Material. The sea is a watery plane of chaos, each drop a physical manifestation of a dream. These droplets are the physical embodiments of the dreams and nightmares of the living creatures of Aihilde, past, present and future. They have accumulated over the millennia to form this great ocean. They are infinite in number, and the Dreaming Sea has no bottom. Few know of it, fewer still have traveled upon it, and fewer still have returned from the Dreaming with their sanity intact. It is also referred to as the Sea of Dreams or the Dreamscape. Saint Luther and the Dreaming Knights dwell here (see below page 43).

**SHADOW REALM:** This is a horrible realm where the arc of time settles. It is dark and dismal, cast in shades of gray and ruled by a limitless pool of unmoving time. It is where the lonely dead come to rest, whether man, humanoid, beast, demi-human or god. Those creatures who are without gods or spiritual homes as well as those who are evil and without mercy, come to the plane to reside in this their drab afterlife. Agorl the orc god dwells here with his limitless legions of dead. Sailors fear this place for it is believed that many of those lost at sea spend eternity in the Shadow Realm. Those who dwell here are burdened by the weight of time and are vacant and unmoving, feeling nothing but the limitless loss of their loneliness. The spirits of the elves come here, ever since the Winter Dark Wars and the Curse of the Elves. It is also called the Darkling, or "Where Memories lie." Ea-Lor, Lord of the Seas guards the gates to the Shadow Realms as the very deeps of the oceans border the Shadow Realm.

**THE STONE FIELDS:** The realm of the noble dead. Here are wide open spaces, the air is always clean and clear water runs in babbling brooks and settles in lakes of blue. The enameled planes are flanked by ancient forests whose trees are tall and crowned with leaves of all seasons. The majesty of her purple mountains fence the world in its glory. Throughout the planes are fields of grain and sprinkled throughout are large columns of stone. Upon them are carved the names of the deserving dead who can say that their lives were spent in the service of what is right and good. It is a paradise for the dead who fall with honor and dignity or for those who live their lives without malice or hatred. Here the paladin, his sword dark with the blood of evil, may lay down his armaments and rest for eternity, as does the mother who raises her children to be good and to work hard. 'Tis said that each resident of the Stone

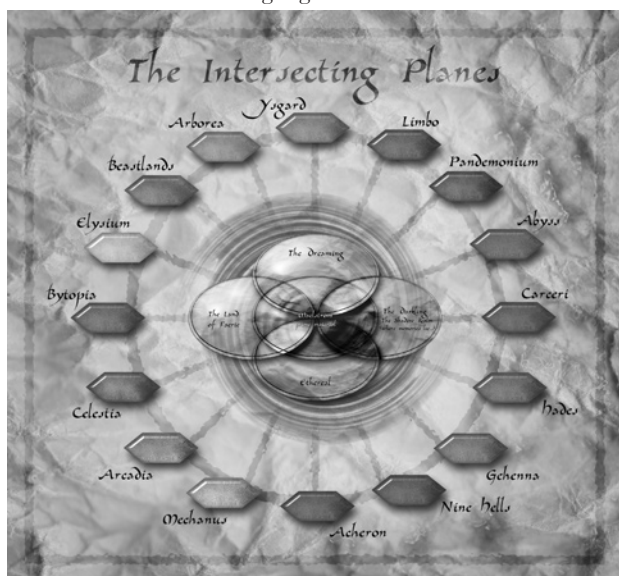


Fields lives that life that would be his paradise, alone yet part of the world that he would love.

**THE RINGS OF BRASS:** These are passages that link the world of Aihrde to the Inner world of Inzae and beyond. They are akin to staircases in towers that wind forever down into or up to the respective worlds. The steps are covered in countless, dwarven runes. In the Days before Days there was traffic between Inzae and Aihrde. And the Trottigens servants of the Dragon-God, and other dwarves took the *Obsidian Book* (see below this page) and not able to understand the scope of it began writing down the numberless characters. They carved the language upon the steps of the many winding passage ways that led between the worlds. Thus the language was written down for a second time, though no-one any longer knows where all the Rings of Brass are located, nor in which order they should read if they were located, nor again if they should read from the bottom up, or the top down.

### THE INTERSECTING OR OUTER PLANES

These are the planes of gods, demons and devils. They are where many beings dwell, given shape and form by those who dwell on the Material Plane. These are the wild imaginings of the All Father and are called by such names as Asgard, Hell, The Seven Heavens, Olympus, Elysian Fields, the Iron Heavens, etc. They are governed by their own laws and destinies. But they are always tied to the Material Plane for there lie the greater powers and the heart of the All Father's creation and only the Material Plane is made of the stuff of the Language of Creation.



### THE LANGUAGE OF CREATION

This is the language which the All Father used to spin the magic of his being into the World of Aihrde. It is a powerful language, and being the greatest source of magic serves as the root for the magic tongue. Mastery of it is almost impossible for each letter of each word of the Language of Creation bears a multitude of magic, and pronunciation is the key to using the Language properly. Any deviation from the Language may cause it to go awry. The goddess of the inner world, Inzae, could not understand it when the All Father tried to teach it to her. He wrote it for her in the *Obsidian Book*. This book she carried to the Inner World with where it was lost or destroyed countless

eons ago. The sentients learned it in the Days before Days, as did Frafnog. But it is unrecorded if these creatures ever created using the Language.

Few of the dwarves of old managed to comprehend it, and even when they did, it was a collective endeavor. Eventually the Greater Dwarves of Inzae wrote it down, scribing its magic upon the tubes they constructed between the worlds, the Rings of Brass, and later, in the Mammoth Scrolls. 'Tis said that Nulak-Kiz-Din mastered some of the Language when he discovered The Paths of Umbra, and that Daladon used its power to bind the Unicorn to the Ephremere, Queen of Aachen. Aristobulus, too, understands some small bits of the Language.

Any spell, written or spoken, represents a small portion of the Language. "Nothing so much as a singular drop of water in the Amber Sea," or so the Mage Patrice used to teach his students, in reference to their individual spells when compared to the overall Language. To master it, a nearly impossible task, would bring the wielder infinite power.

### THE RUNES

These are the spells of the Goblin Warlock Ondluche, the first Sorcerer. They were the first spells and they were taken from the very substance of the Language of Creation and are called the Ondluch-Eroan. There is a multitude of these very powerful spells. From them comes all the wizardry in the world of Aihrde. Any magic-user or illusionist spell, incantation or charm has its origins in the Ondluch-Eroan. Most have of course evolved and changed over time and hold little resemblance to their original design. Few magi even know who Ondluche is, nor would they care.

Some of his original spells still exist, bound in the Runestones or in recently revived magic of the Rune Marks. There are many of the Runes, the Winter Runes that allow travel between worlds, and the Blood Runes that allow travel through time and so on.

### THE RUNESTONES

These are magical stones crafted by Ondluche and which contain the magic of some of his original sorcery. These were scattered throughout the world and few would know them if they found them. Knowledge of them was revived by Nulak-Kiz-Din during the Age of Men and he quested for many years to find them. In time his knowledge of them grew and he catalogued them into schools: the Paths of Umbra, Mark of Redlich, the Og-Aust and so forth. Though he did not find all of them, he did find and master the Paths of Umbra (the Winter Runes) and used them to summon Unklar the Horned One to the ruin of the world. The Runestones remain scattered throughout the world.

### USING THE LANGUAGE OF CREATION

Needless to say the Language of Creation is a very powerful tool and character usage of it should be very limited and restricted to only the most powerful of magi and priests.

# THE HEAVENLY BODIES

## OF THE SUN AND THE MOON

The Moon and the Sun, the Twin Sisters, are of the order of the Val-Eahrakun. The Moon is the eldest of the Sisters and she is given many names, Ea-Raena by the ancients, Dunareu by the dwarves and Mailahm by men. The Sun is the youngest and more rash than her sister. She is given many names too. But by the ancients she is called Ea-Vette, by the dwarves Haydareu and by men Mailuhm.

In the Days before Days the All Father sought to light his world and his labors. He pondered a great while upon the form the light should take and he wondered at the subtle beauty of the distant lights in the heavens, that is the writhing fires of the Maelstrom. And at last he pulled from his chest a rib and remade it. He tore it into countless thin threads and with the strands he wove a great curtain of shimmering silver light and this he unfolded throughout the heavens. But to his amazement it came alive, for unknown to him a portion of his heart, bound to the rib he tore from his chest, came loose and he wove into the splinters of the curtain that part of him that new love and the calm of life, and so he made life as he had in the Void of old. All the heavens were alive with the silvery light of this great curtain of beauty and the All Father was glad.

He named her the Maiden Ea-Raena, that is the “beauty of youth” in the Vulgate, who the dwarves called Dunareu, though in after days she was called Mailahm, the Maiden of Night. And she wandered the heavens for many years.

The All Father marveled and in time he thought the light too soft and the world’s dark places still remained in shadow. He called to Ea-Raena and asked her to brighten the heavens, so she gathered all her strands together and wove them into one form, but even this did not assuage the All Father’s lust.

He cast himself upon the darkness and his lust exploded in fire. She too bore life of the All Father and he marveled at her. A great ball of flame, where geysers of a molten matter shot into the heavens, awed both Ea-Raena and the All Father. So it was that Ea-Vette, which is “fire of youth” in the Vulgate, came to life, which the dwarves called Haydareu that in after days was called Mailuhm, the Maiden of Light.

Her fierce beauty burnt in the heavens so bright that the All Father called on Ea-Raena to calm her and she did, making her take her own shape so that ever after the All Father called them sisters. And they were known in after years as the Twin Sisters, which is the Moon and Sun.

The All Father marveled at his creation for time without reckoning. His face and arms turned red and he knew warmth. But at last he came to miss the cool of the darkness. He pondered his own desires, seeking a solution to his hunger for the dark and the light. He saw then the rivalry between the Twin Sisters and he laughed

aloud. He gave them steeds and chariots. Ea-Raena’s was silver and smaller and Ea-Vette’s was larger and shown orange and yellow. He gave them all the heavens to race in, promising them that she who won would be given command of the heavens. So the twin sisters raced over the world, laughing and goading, but never catching one another. And the All Father marveled for the world changed with the racing of the Maidens. As the Maidens spun about Airhde, it waxed warm then became cold, it snowed then rained, and things lived then died. Thus, the seasons came to be.

## WENAFAR, FRAFNOG AND THE LIGHTING OF THE DEEPS; THE STARS

Upon the All Father’s demise and when the Multiverse sprang into being Wenafar set herself the task of lighting the evening’s sky for in those days the world was flat and the Sun and Moon were not always present and the world was dark in this utter absence of light. Taking council with herself, Wenafar set to lighten the heavens with gentle flames and bring light into the darkness. She sought out Frafnog and he, smitten with her great beauty and seeming wisdom set about the task with her. Taking thoughts from her mind she set them in the heavens. When at last she lay back, exhausted from her labors, Frafnog rose and breathed a great breath of flame and fire across the dark emptiness of the Void and lit the thoughts of Wenafar so that they burned in the sky with a brilliance that all could see. The whole world marveled, and evil things lay and hid for they knew not what strange portent this was.

So the stars were made. The dwarves too were amazed, for they, of all the world’s creatures had studied the makings of the All Father and never before, in all their long memories, had they seen such lights in the empty dark. They called them Cullu Einth, that is, the Lamps of Heaven.

So the world stood through the long ages of sentient, dwarf and man. The Twin Sisters raced through the heavens, bringing day, night and the seasons. The stars shone in the deeps when the Sisters were far beneath the world racing in their eternal game. And thus it was when Nulak-Kiz-Din walked the Paths of Umbra and Unklar, the horned god came to Aihilde.

## OF UNKLAR AND THE MOON AND SUN

When Unklar came to Aihilde he made war upon the gods. Of all those he wrestled, only the Twin Sisters avoided his wrath; at least in the beginning. They turned their minds away from Aihilde and all its suffering, and their light was pale upon the world. And these were accounted dark days and were the very years of the Catalyst Wars. They gathered what they could from the Maelstrom and set themselves to fashioning worlds of their own. But they knew not the Language of Creation and their world’s were imperfect. The Maiden of Light fashioned a great ball of burning gases and it had no foundation. The Maiden of Night built a world of cold stone and it had no life. They set them to spinning in the Maelstrom but to no avail. Their labors were imperfect, for they never forgot their games and the chase of one the other through the heavens.

Unklar came to them then and asked them what life they gave their worlds. And they replied that there was none. He smiled and counted himself as sorrowful and he beguiled the Sisters. Telling them that they should go the Void and cast about for the power of the Language and they would gain the gift of life. The Twin Sisters lamented their world's lack of life and for a short while removed themselves from Aihrde's heavens even to the edge of the Great Empty. The world fell to Darkness.

Unmolested, Unklar set to remaking the world in the quiet dark. Beneath the world he found the bones of the All Father and he harvested what magic he could. He cursed the Sisters, for they were undiminished by his power and even as he, they were made of the All Father. So at first he made war on them by taking up the lust of the All Father and hurling it into the Void. There it burned with a fierce fire and lit the heavens. He did this to dampen their light.

This was the All Father's lust as fashioned by Unklar, and it was later called by the Dwarves, Al-Aihrde Cun, that is the All Father's Eye; but by the Elves the Taler-ur-ion, the guiding light; but by men the Day Star for it burned ever bright in the night sky and could often be seen in the morning and evening. Unklar's great spite bound the world of Aihrde to the star for many seasons, for he wished to mock the world of what they could not have. The Day Star marred all the beauty of the night sky, in that it diminished the Maidens and the Stars of ancient stars of Wenafar's making. But it cast no warmth on Aihrde, and the Winter of those years was cold without match. It was ever after an evil star that men did not look upon unless through need.

But Frafnog defied Unklar, rousing at last he took up the heart of the All Father and gave it to Wenafar and bid her fashion it as she had the stars of old and hurl it into the heavens. This she did and it hung in the north sky as a great star. And Unklar hated it. The All Father's Heart as cast out by Wenafar, called by the Dwarves the Al-Aihrde Onu, that is the Stone of the All Father. But the Elves call it the Taler-ur-seth, the light unseen, while men call it the Evening Star or the North Star. And the stars light the world with a dim light and gave comfort to those oppressed.

In his anger and hate Unklar recast the Wall of Worlds and covered all of Aihrde in a great abiding fog, the Shroud of Darkness. The Shroud kept much of the light of all the stars, the moon and sun from Aihrde and the world withered. Those years were counted as the longest of the Winter Dark and most terrifying for many died of need and want. But after Unklar's war with Inzae when he shaped the whole of Aihrde anew he thought upon the world and saw that without light it would utterly die, and with it his minions and slaves.

### OF THE BINDING OF THE MOON AND SUN

When Unklar saw that the Day Star burned bright but held no life of its own, and the Evening Star was the same, he tracked down the Twin Sisters in the limitless waste of the Maelstrom and bid them return to Aihrde. He took the shape of an elderly man with long beard and kindly visage. In his image he looked as an old Dwarf or other kindly being. He recanted before them of his evil deeds, speaking of the world's suffering and the death

of many plants and animals and he bid them return and make the world thrive in their light. They fought only a little for they were possessed then of a great sorrow and Unklar cast himself as a wounded creature who had meant no harm. They returned then to Aihrde and too late learned his great deceit, for in the deeps of Aufstrag he had forged great chains, these magical bindings were in aft times called the Urlnarch.

When the Twin Sisters came to Aihrde Unklar heaped them in the Urlnarch and bound them both to the world. Aihrde he bound to the sun and the moon has a lesser orbit around Aihrde itself, so that Aihrde orbited the Maiden of Light and the Maiden of Night orbited Aihrde. It is said that in the still quiet one may hear the grinding of the Urlnarch in the heavens over Aihrde.

Unklar fed the Maiden of Light the calamity of his rage so that she burned ever brighter and fiercer and hurled through the heavens at a greater speed for ever did she seek to escape the heat of the Unklar's rage. So the Sun, the Maiden of Light was made to burn more fierce and was in the end corrupted by the workings of Unklar. Her heat and light filtered through the Shroud and came even to Aihrde, so that in her agony she brought life and health however little back to Aihrde. In this fashion she served Unklar's purpose and he deemed this creation good.

The Moon and the Sun hurled now through the heavens apart and rarely came to each other, and they knew great sorrow, for ever in the past they had enjoyed one another the more when they raced through the heavens together. This suffering none could heal, even after the Dark fell from Aufstrag and returned to the Void beyond.

To mock them he bound them too the planets of their making. These he set deep in the heavens so they could be plainly seen by the Twin Sisters. And they mocked them for they were without life. But the folk of Aihrde named these Illus and Nexus, and some there were who worshiped them and made of them gods so that not all of Unklar's purpose was achieved.

But Al-Aihrde Onu he could not touch and that star burned in the wintry heavens throughout the long Winter Dark giving hope to the hopeless.

So were made the Sun and Moon, creations of the All Father's of old and the great northern star, the Evening Star, that guides and protects the folk of Aihrde and the southern star, the Day Star, that reminds men of the coming dark.



THE RING OF FRAFNOG



# THE GODS OF AIHRDE

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Deities are divine beings of great power tied to the fabric of the Multiverse. No person in Aihilde denies belief in the gods, but individualized worship of the deities helps define existence and explains the mysteries of the universe.

In Aihilde, philosophy of life and codes of ethics are based upon prayer to more than one god. Very few, if any, worship a single deity. Instead, the people of Aihilde exhibit a healthy respect to most all powers aligned with their ethos. Some pray to those powers that can best aid them in time of need, and most invoke the names of various deities important to daily life in a hard world. Even priests and clerics of a specific deity might call upon a power similarly related to their own patron. For example, a cleric of St. Luther might call upon the light of Durendel if battling a vampire. Such situations are those that would generally unite followers of various deities against a single cause.

## INTERACTING WITH THE GODS

Interaction with the gods is possible through prayer, sacrifice, donatives and similar actions; however none of these actions guarantee a reaction from the deity. Priests and druids are an exception to this, for they are direct conduits of their deities on Aihilde. They serve as both servants and tools for those deities with designs in the world.

A deities' power is often related to its influence in the Multiverse. Those with few worshipers, temples or the like suffer for the want of power, for it lies within the faith of the believing to give power to the deity. For this reason many deities struggle for followers. Some of course, notably the Val-Eahrakun (see below this page), are exceptions to this rule as their power is derived from the stuff of the All Father.

All deities are bound by the Judgment of Corthain (*see below, this page*) and can only circumvent the judgment by very powerful magics. The gods can however utilize proxies and do so all the time. Also, they can influence creatures through their dreams, desires and so forth and in some limited instances influence the world around them.

## THE JUDGMENT OF CORTHAIN

During the early years of man's rule they were corrupted by Thorax and made war all across Aihilde. Corthain, the Judgment Maker, entered the fray and destroyed Thorax. He then went to the hosts of men and cast judgment upon them. "In your greed, you sought the gifts of immortality. You sought to become what you are not and for this I strike you and place upon you the curse of mortality. Forever more yours days on Aihilde will be short and your lives spent in hurried vanity. Forever more."

The Judgment of Corthain left man in the shells of mortal beings, and but for a few, they lived ever shorter lives. It had however a far greater affect than Corthain intended. For in his rage he unleashed the power that he would later infuse into rebuilding the Wall of Worlds (*see above page 3*) and he bound the Val-Eahrakun from directly interacting with men or any of the peoples of Aihilde.

Only through prayer and worship and very powerful incantations could gods come to the world in any form for the Judgment bound them to not interfere. On rare occasions gods are summoned and the Judgment overcome, the most notable example of this would be the coming of Unklar.

## SPELLS

Spells are granted to paladins, clerics, shamans and druids by their deities. These are tools given over to the faithful for service and sacrifice. They can be as easily denied to those who transgress or even made more powerful to those who are more deserving. Spells are conduits to the world at large and deities are not stingy with them for the spells are nothing to them.

## THE ORDERS OF THE GODS

In Aihilde the idea of "Gods" and "Deities" is a complex one. Both words refer to creatures that are greater than mortals and are able to intervene in the workings of the world. Some of these creatures derive their power from the All Father, others from the worship of their followers. Where a deity derives its power does not mark it as more powerful or less powerful. There are some very insignificant creatures that the All Father made in the Void. Creatures that could never stand up to even the weakest of the Immortals. But they are special in that they do not derive their power from others, are truly immortal and almost beyond destruction.

## THE ALL FATHER

In the beginning there was the All Father. He fashioned Aihilde from the Void, and set life into motion. There is no active worship of the All Father in Aihilde, but his name lives on with the dwarves. They utilize the moniker "All Father" when designating the most wise and eldest counselor of a dwarven kingdom. He is symbolized by the river, for his thoughts were ever changing, ever flowing.

Otherwise, most vestiges of the All Father are lost to time. The dwarves recorded his existence in the Mammoth Scrolls, and some of the other major deities remember his presence. It is unknown whether those deities still give tribute to the All Father. Any being that accesses the Mammoth Scrolls might discover that the All Father is represented by a simple circle. The vast majority of living creatures know of him only as distant legend if at all.

Beyond the All Father there are three orders of deities in Aihilde.

## VAL-EAHRAKUN

The Val-Eahrakun (the Eternals) are the creatures that came over from the Void, when the world was newly made. Some are extraordinarily powerful, such as Corthain, Thorax and Mordius. Slightly less powerful are Narrheit, the Twin Sisters, Poseidon, Frafnog, Wenafar, Unklar, Tefnut, and Toth and the Og-Aust. Others still are small and weak. The Val-Eahrakun refers to the fey as well, the greater and lesser, as this word/concept defines all creatures (aside from the All Father) that came over from the Void and that were fashioned from the substance of Him. Faerie is a world of the All Father's imagining. Most of the Val-Eahrakun

have faded or hidden themselves or been bound by the Judgment of Corthain from intervening in the world. Included amongst the Val-Eahrakun are some of the demons, devils and angelic creatures.

#### VAL-AUSTLICH

The Val-Austlich (the Spirits) are creatures and magics forged from the Language of Creation by the Val-Eahrakun. Many of these creatures owe their existence to the Judgment of Corthain as they were created by the Val-Eahrakun to carry out those tasks the older deities could no longer carry out. Durendel, Ogoltay, the Rune Lords, Aenouth, Athria, Burasil, Ore-Tsar, Glorianna, Grotvedt, Imbrisius, Urnus Gregaria, Wulfad, Amenexl, Angrim, Krateus, Adrius & Zernius, and Rheath are the most obvious. These are the most powerful gods who lord over Aihilde and define existence. They concern themselves with the state of the universe and Aihilde, and the place of their convictions within it. Some greater deities actually walk the plane, and, as in the case of Durendel, are active in shaping the history of the world. Churches to these deities are the largest and most powerful as well. All races worship the greater deities. They grow strong or weak depending upon who and what worship them. In one age a god like Ore-Tsar can be a powerful greater deity worshiped by millions in temples all over the world (such was his role under the Age of Man), in another, he can be weak, worshiped by a few secret cult members (such was his role during the Winter Dark). These creatures can be destroyed and depend upon the worship of mortals to maintain their power. The greater host of demons, devils and angelic creatures belong to this order. The gods of Asgard and other similar pantheons that are not detailed below should be considered amongst these deities.

#### VAL-TULMIPH

The Val-Tulmiph (Immortals) are gods such as Agrol, Aristobulus, Augustus, Daladon, Dolgan, Falkenjagger, Nuluk-kiz-din, St. Luther, Utumno, etc. These gods range from the simple hero to the very powerful lesser gods. They are much akin to the Val-Austlich, but their deification has nothing to do with the Val-Eahrakun, but rather their own deeds, destiny and well earned power. These gods are generally associated with only a few specific provinces. The peoples of Aihilde call upon them in time of need as would be appropriate. Worship of the lesser deities varies from being widespread to very localized.

As noted many lesser creatures are considered part of these hierarchies. Some refer to the elves, gnomes, halflings and orcs as Val-Eahrakun. The unger, being forged from the stuff of Unklar, are Val-Austlich, though scholars debate these latter points.

A whole different classification is given to those mortal creatures, created by the forge of the All Father (not any one of the orders). These would be dwarves, goblins, humans, sentients, giants, trolls and other such creatures are not considered part of these orders, but rather the Ful Aihilde; the people of the All Father. And they are wholly different. Many of them consider themselves greater than (not more powerful than) any of the other orders. That is why you have, in the Days before Days, dwarven kings standing up to any number of the Val-Eahrakun, demanding they leave their Halls and so forth. They knew they could not destroy these

creatures of the Void, but they instinctively knew the All Father had made the creatures and tossed them aside as flawed.

Every region or locale in the World of Aihilde has house deities, racial deities, spirits, elemental powers, and infernal beings that the populace invokes or pray to.

(REFER TO THE HAND-OUT FOR THE GOD'S HOLY SYMBOL)

## THE VAL-EAHRKUN

**CORTHAIN:** The Justice Maker, Slayer of Gods and Shatter of Worlds

**ORDER:** Val-Eahrakun

**PROVINCE:** Confession, Fire, Good, Law, Strength, Sun, War

**ALIGNMENT:** Lawful Good

**HOLY DAYS:** None

**SUPERSTITIONS:** None

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Spear

**MISSIONARY:** "Justice, All things come to one."

Corthain is the supreme deity of law, justice, goodness, and reason. For reasons buried in time he swore to forever maintain a balance of power among the gods. In upholding this conviction, Corthain has slain many gods and beings of extreme power whose names are now lost to time. Worship of Corthain has declined for many centuries and he has taken less and less interest in the workings of the world, devoting himself to maintaining the Wall of Worlds and protecting the Maelstrom from creatures of the Void. Enlightened beings of good and law worship him, though their number is few.

Corthain appears as a tall, well built man, beautiful to behold. His hair is long, blond and his eye a deep blue. He is broad of chest, with huge hands and long arms. He wears a type of ring mail in battle and carries his spear, Paineth, with easy care, for he knows where ever he throws it, it must strike its target true and return to him immediately.

**FRAFNOC (DRAGONS):** Lord of Dragons, The First, Earth Lord, The Great Wyrn

**ORDER:** Val-Eahrukun

**PROVINCE:** Command, Fire, Magic,

**ALIGNMENT:** Neutral/Chaotic Evil

**HOLY DAYS:** None

**SUPERSTITIONS:** None

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** None

**MISSIONARY:** "Upon the dragon's breath."

The Father of Dragons, Frafnog the Great came into the world in the Days before Days. He knew the mind of the All Father and speaks the Language of Creation. Other than the surviving sentients, he is perhaps the oldest living creature upon Aihilde. He is believed to reside in the heart of the Kolkrab Mountains. He is worshiped by Dragons and dragon-kind, as well as by wizards, seers, Dwarves, Gnomes, and the Wild Elves. His holy symbol is a ring in the shape of a dragon.

Frafnog is huge beyond description. Ranging 400 feet long, his massive bulk and size are the things of legends. He has fought gods as great as Thorax, and so hot was his breath that it burned away the Cloak of Red from that dread god's shoulders. He is

red in color, thick broad scales along his back and flanks, with overlapping plates upon his underside. His tail is long and coils about him with a mind of its own. His wings are broad and expansive. He is old and as with old dragons his whiskers hanging down from his snout are as long as thick ropes.

**THORAX:** The Bull-Hound, The Red Duke, Lord of Chaos, The Bull, Rot of the Dwarves

**ORDER:** Val-Eahrakun

**PROVINCE:** Chaos, Command, Death, Destruction, Evil, Magic, Trickery

**ALIGNMENT:** Chaotic Evil

**HOLY DAYS:** 3<sup>rd</sup> day of every 3<sup>rd</sup> month

**SUPERSTITIONS:** Trees

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Two-handed sword, hammer

**MISSIONARY:** "The Duke has come."

Thorax is the supreme deity embodying evil, chaos, and destruction. His arrogant malevolence knows no bounds, having slain his sister and corrupted a strain of the first-born Dwarves into the goblins. Extremely powerful (or foolish) and evil beings offer prayer to Thorax. Though worship of this dark god has greatly waned over the past centuries there are still secret cults and hidden temples that pay him homage. These decadent courts of chaos are filled with the Red Duke's chaos and evil. Worship of the evil god is more like a drug than a spiritual path.

Thorax is a tall human like creature. His is thin, but muscular with narrow features. His frame is powerful, but there is the air of exhaustion about him, a deep seated weariness that scars his face and hands. He wraps himself in the remnants of his Cloak of Red and leans upon his huge two-handed sword named Gruthfael.

**MORDIUS:** Mordius the Green, Our Lady of the Lake

**ORDER:** Val-Eahrakun

**PROVINCE:** Air, Animal, Earth, Healing, Knowledge, Plant, Protection, Water

**ALIGNMENT:** Neutral

**HOLY DAYS:** The first day of Spring and last day of Summer

**SUPERSTITIONS:** None

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** None

**MISSIONARY:** "Beneath the Willow, holy ground."

Mordius was the sister of Corthain and Thorax. Mordius embodied humanity and nature, the balance and beauty, enlightenment and journey. She guided many of the sentients in the early days of the world, and her gardens were set throughout all of Aihilde and gave birth to many great and noble trees. The Great Oak in the Eldwood is one such. Thorax became so envious of his sister's enlightened beauty that it drove him mad, and he devilishly murdered her. Worship of her is rare as she fell a millennia ago. However, her essence remains throughout much of the world of Aihilde and gave birth to the animistic religions of the druids and many of the tribes of men.

**NARRHEIT:** The Abyssal Lord, The Unburdened One, The All Seeing

**ORDER:** Val-Eahrakun

**PROVINCE:** Chaos, Destruction, Misery, Magic, Trickery, Wrath

**ALIGNMENT:** Chaotic Evil

**HOLY DAYS:** The Long Day (4<sup>th</sup> of Trocken, longest day of the year)

**SUPERSTITIONS:** Straight Roads

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Scythe, ever-changing sword

**MISSIONARY:** "Upon the Wings of Dispair."

Narrheit's evil mind is always alive with dark plots, and his ego drives him to ever seek more power. While his followers are dubbed foolhardy, many call upon their dark master for power and revenge. Some Twilight Elves and denizens of the deeps pay homage to Narrheit. To his followers he appears as a tall, waif like human or elven male or female, dressed in gowns of wondrous color. He and all his followers are the arch-enemy of any who follow the Paths of Umbra as Narrheit is possessed of a deep grievance against Unklar.

Narrheit's holy symbol is four interlocking circles. This symbol mocks Mordius and the Earth, for chaos is all things and nothing escapes the Maelstrom.

**POSEIDON:** Ea-Lor, Lord of Seas, the Deep Quiet, Guardian of Shadows, Master of the Green Halls

**ORDER:** Val-Eahrakun

**PROVINCE:** The Seas, All bodies of Water, Air, Travel and Water

**ALIGNMENT:** Chaotic Good

**HOLY DAYS:** The Spring Equinox

**SUPERSTITIONS:** The Gates to the Shadow Realm

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Trident

**MISSIONARY:** The Unconquered

The Greatest of the Gods and Lord of the Seas, Ea-Lor, whose name is the literal translation of "Deep Quiet," is worshiped by sailors and all who wish safe passage on the seas of Aihilde. His churches are common in Tagea, Brindisium and Eloria. Though rare, some high elves pay homage to Ea-Lor. He never fell to Unklar. He ruled the depths of the oceans where the horned god feared to go. He is deferred great respect and alliance by most all deities, particularly Wenafar, Tefnut and Toth. The lesser deity Aristobulus marks Ea-Lor as his patron. Ea-Lor is represented as an impersonal and unemotional deity. He doesn't brook flattery, and he can be impatient. If cause raises him to anger, however, his wrath is devastating.

Ea-Lor is a huge muscle bound humanoid with long legs ending in feet like a manta ray. With his segmented tail and clawed hands he appears a giant crustacean. But his hair is long and he sports a full beard. His eye brows are bushy and reside over a full, broad human's face. He never wears armor and carries a trident in battle. He can take the shape of any sea creature he wishes. He dwells in the Green Halls beneath the deeps of the Oddine Ocean.



**TEFNUT:** Hand Maiden of the All Father

**ORDER:** Val-Eahrakun

**PROVINCE:** Earth, Travel, Water

**ALIGNMENT:** Lawful Neutral

**HOLY DAYS:** River Fest, the 1<sup>st</sup> of Spring

**SUPERSTITIONS:** Flies and filth

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Kopesh Sword

**MISSIONARY:** "The Waters of Life run before and after all."

Tefnut was a greater deity in a pantheon of gods worshiped in the lands that are now the Kingdom of Kayomar. Those gods vanished in history, with only Tefnut and Toth living on. Tefnut lords over the earth and its fresh waters, and she sometimes takes the form of a sleek water dragon. There is much respect between Tefnut and Ea-Lor, and they worked in tandem in guiding the forces of good against Unklar in the Winter Dark Wars.

Tefnut is still worshiped in some Kayomar locales, and also in regions near fresh waters. She is primarily worshiped in Brindisium, where the people pay homage to the triumvirate of Falkenjagger, Tefnut, and Toth. Tefnut's holy symbol is a circle with a horizontal line dissecting it. Her clerics prefer bronze or bronze-colored armors and colorful garb.

**TOTH:** Master of the Path, Death

**ORDER:** Val-Eahrakun

**PROVINCE:** Death, Knowledge, Magic

**ALIGNMENT:** Neutral

**HOLY DAYS:** Last Day/First Day 28<sup>th</sup> of Arist/1st of Erstdain

**SUPERSTITIONS:** Riddles

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Kopesh sword, spear

**MISSIONARY:** He who writes in stone.

Toth is another survivor, with Tefnut, of an ancient pantheon of gods that fell into decline. He wears three faces. As the overseer of the dead, he guides the souls of the deceased to their resting place without favor or disfavor. Toth also knows all things, perhaps even possessing memory of the birth of the All Father, but he is possessive of his knowledge and protects it always. Because of this supreme knowledge, Toth has perfect command of the Language of Creation and thus, magic. His understanding of the universe, and therefore his place within it, has resulted in his steadfast refusal to use the Language of Creation.

Legend holds that the Books of Toth exist in a city on the edge of time, and any who find them may ask any three questions they desire which will be truthfully answered. The consequences of asking questions regarding the foundations of the universe, however, could be dire for any mortal who so dares. The origins of the Mammoth Scrolls may lie in the Books of Toth.

Toth's worship is typically individualized. Sages, wizards, lammasu and sphinx, seekers of knowledge, and those involved with the dead all pay homage to him in some way. Toth is always given worship by the devotees to the Falkenjagger, for Toth is that god's patron. Toth's holy symbol is a circle within a circle, representing the two worlds of man and god bound together.

Toth is tall, with three faces. He wears a tall crown upon his brow and carefully crafted clothes woven of gold and silver. He rides in a golden chariot pulled by two huge lammasu.

**TWIN SISTERS:** The Moon, Ea-Raena, Dunareu, Mailahm; The Sun, Ea-Vette, Haydareu, Mailuhm

**ORDER:** Val-Eahrakun

**PROVINCE:** The Sun and Moon, The Hunt (Ea-Raena)

**ALIGNMENT:** Neutral

**HOLY DAYS:** Ea-Raena: The Full Moon; Ea-Vette: 20<sup>th</sup> of Trocken

**SUPERSTITIONS:** Fetters of all sorts

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** A bow and arrows for Ea-Raena; A quiver of javelins for Ea-Vette

**MISSIONARY:** "The light of the well worn path."

The All-Father forged the Twin Sisters from his soul and their tale is much involved with the unfolding of the world (*see above page 34*). They are powerful deities, though often occupied with their own matters and not as quick to grant a followers wish or prayer.

The sisters are worshiped by astronomers, sages, soothsayers, and lovers of the sun and moon. Some of their clerics worship them in tandem, while others only worship one of the sisters. Their holy symbols are of course the sun and moon. They are very dear to the dwarves as they were some of the first of the All Father's creations on Aihilde and greeted the dwarves when they first walked the world.

In appearance they are similar to each other, though not true twins. Ea-Vette is taller, with long, burnt red hair. Her skin is pale and her countenance not so beautiful. Ea-Raena is gentle and soft and her hair a light autumn color, though it changes depending on which view one should take. Her expression is a sleepy one and she seems always to be drifting in and out of the world she occupies. Her beauty is found in her innocence.

**UNKLAR:** The Horned One, The Dark God, Darkness, The Marsh Lord, God of Night, Lord of the Winter Dark

**ORDER:** Val-Eahrakun

**PROVINCE:** Command, Evil, Law, War, Iron, Swamps

**ALIGNMENT:** Lawful Evil

**HOLY DAYS:** Winters Night (14<sup>th</sup> of Winterdark, Longest night of the year)

**SUPERSTITIONS:** Circles

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Utriel the Mace of Judgment, maul, morningstar

**MISSIONARY:** "Look in yon mirror and the Lord Darkness."

The great evil of the horned god, Unklar, and his rule of Aihilde for a thousand years is well detailed in the Histories. His order of rule was balanced with evil and cruelty, and his will was unparalleled. Though banished to the Void he dwells on the edge of all, waiting for the door to open again.

Unklar's dark priests roam the world, seeking to summon him anew to return the Winter Dark to the world. Large gothic cathedrals to Unklar still tower over the Kingdom of Punj and the United Kingdoms, for the people there recall the order and progress of civilization that arose in the Age of Winter Dark. But in other parts of the world, Unklar's temples are hidden and his

worship kept secret. The sorcerers and wizards in the Paths of Umbra worship Unklar, and the Ungern continue to do their master's bidding. While most humanoids pay Unklar sacrifice, the goblins loathe his name because of the years of slavery and torture they suffered at Unklar's hand and the orcs have taken to the worship of Helg.

Unklar's holy symbol is the crescent moon, typically displayed on a black field. It represents his bending of the flat world created by the All Father. The Justiciaries of Aihrde, Unklar's clerics, indicate their station by the orientation of the holy symbol pointed downward. Those warriors who are, or were, Legionnaires in Unklar's army, point the moon toward the left, while those in the Paths of Umbra point it right. Common worshipers point the moon upward, thus doubly representing that they worship the horned god.

Unklar appears as a gigantic beast like creature with massive horns sprouting from his back and coiling around his skull. His goat legs are segmented and covered in thick, coarse, black hair. Otherwise his skin is red, face broad with eyes filled with an abiding hate.

**WENAFAR:** Niahani, The Faerie Queen, Mother

**ORDER:** Val-Eahrakun

**PROVINCE:** Nature, Animals, the Elements, Woods & Trees

**ALIGNMENT:** Good

**HOLY DAYS:** Full Moon & Morning after 1<sup>st</sup> Spring Rain

**SUPERSTITIONS:** None

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Staff

**MISSIONARY:** None

An eternal goddess of infinite power, Wenafar commands the elements and the fey, and watches over the animals and peoples of the forests. Wenafar's worshipers are numerous and varied. All who live in Faerie call her Queen, and elves, whether high, wood, wild, or twilight, pay her homage. Forest dwellers, rangers, and many druids worship her, and the common folk of Aihrde who live away from civilization often offer her prayer. Gnomes and halflings typically incorporate worship of Wenafar into their religious ceremonies. She is also Queen of the elemental lords and those native to the elemental planes. Other than her holy symbol, a lily, worship of Wenafar incorporates no recurring raiment, ceremony, or organized prayer. Typical display of the holy symbol is done with a wand or rod with a bulbous "seed" bottom leading toward a lily in full bloom.

Wenafar appears as a beautiful maiden, young but with the air of age about her. Her hair is long and usually drawn back in a tail. She prefers single piece gowns, long, with wide, deep sleeves. She hides twin gates in these sleeves; one to the land of Shindolay and Faerie and the other to the Shadow Realm.

## THE VAL-AUSTLICH

**ADRIUS/ZERNIUS:** The Holy Twins

**ORDER:** Val-Tulmiph

**PROVINCE:** Strength, Protection

**ALIGNMENT:** Lawful Good

**HOLY DAYS:** None

**SUPERSTITIONS:** Knots

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Any Sword

**MISSIONARY:** "Reflections."

The origin of these twins is unknown, but their worship arose before the coming of the Dark and has outlasted it. Some believe that the worship came from Inzae. Adrius is a god of strength, and Zernius a god of protection. They are worshiped by paladins, monks and many common folk of noble and good heart. Their holy symbol is a representation of the themselves.

**AENOUTH (HIGH ELVES):** Mistbane, Willow Wind

**ORDER:** Val-Austlich

**PROVINCE:** Air, Knowledge, Magic

**ALIGNMENT:** Lawful Good

**HOLY DAYS:** The 1<sup>st</sup> sunrise of Summer every 40<sup>th</sup> Year

**SUPERSTITIONS:** None

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Long Bow

**MISSIONARY:** The Ever-walking

High Elves value qualities in their deities that are quite alien to most every other race. This holds true for Aenouth, the elven deity. Aenouth's place in the elven cosmology has been indecipherable to outside races, and elves seldom openly worship or display any symbol relating to the deity. Supposition is that Aenouth is the keeper of the spirits of the elves. Other creatures in Aihrde do pay Aenouth homage, halflings, some gnomes, druids, rangers and the like.

Aenouth's holy symbol is an elven rune which relates to unyielding time. As this symbol is not displayed outside of elven ceremonies dedicated to Aenouth, clerics of the deity utilize a glass vial containing air, or if possible a wisp of mist or fog, as their holy symbol to combat undead and cast spells. Aenouth appears as a tall, thin, beautiful elf lord.

**AMENEXL (DARK FEY):** The Red Thorn

**ORDER:** Val-Austlich

**PROVINCE:** Trickery

**ALIGNMENT:** Evil

**HOLY DAYS:** None

**SUPERSTITIONS:** None

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Rope

**MISSIONARY:** None

This minor god originates in the realm of the dark faeries, and many of those fey call upon him to aid in the weaving of dark spells and malevolent trickery. Amenexl is especially interested in gaining possession of the Blood Runes. Outside of dark faeries and other planars, few on Aihrde worship him. His holy symbol is unknown, though his followers bear tattoos of briars on their arms or carry small articles woven from briars.

Amenexl typically appears as a stunted, and pale skinned brownie, but like all faeries he changes form upon whim or as needed.

### **ANGRIM THE BLACK (DWARVES):** The Black Dwarf

**ORDER:** Val-Austlich  
**PROVINCE:** Chaos, War  
**ALIGNMENT:** Chaotic Evil  
**HOLY DAYS:** None  
**SUPERSTITIONS:** None  
**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Battle Axe  
**MISSIONARY:** None

Angrim the Black is one of those ancient dwarves corrupted by Narrheit. That god's influence drove Angrim to madness, so that he now wanders the planes making war and spreading chaos. Evil dwarves and those who dwell in the deeps pay him homage. His holy symbol is four black swords upon a beaten shield, their pommels touching and radiating out to represent the many directions of war and chaos.

He is small with dark hair and curly dark beard. He wears scale mail and wields a long dirk and axe in battle. His face is worn with care and marked by deep scars and pocks. He travels in an ancient flying ship.

### **ATHRIA:** The Birth Mother, the Fates

**ORDER:** Val-Austlich  
**PROVINCE:** Good, Healing, Protection, , Birth, Death  
**ALIGNMENT:** Lawful Neutral  
**HOLY DAYS:** The 1<sup>st</sup> of Erstdain  
**SUPERSTITIONS:** Hanging  
**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** None  
**MISSIONARY:** "Upon this we live and die."

Athria is the goddess of maternity and continuation. Most all peoples, except elves, pay her homage, especially during spring ceremonies and at the birth of a child. Her religion is thus widespread. It is said that Athria appears to each person as they die and removes all pain associated with the death. Her holy symbol is a rune representing the cycle of life from birth to death.

She appears as a maiden with one of three faces, one for birth, the other for life and the third for death. The first is beautiful and innocent, the second is worn but caring, and the third is old and benevolent.

### **BURASIL (HIGH ELVES):** Lord of Light

**ORDER:** Val-Austlich  
**PROVINCE:** Fire, Strength, War  
**ALIGNMENT:** Chaotic Good  
**HOLY DAYS:** 1<sup>st</sup> of Uthdain  
**SUPERSTITIONS:** None  
**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Bastard sword and dagger  
**MISSIONARY:** "The Fire of Wrath."

Somewhat less alien than Aenouth, the elven god of war is Burasil. Like other Elven deities, Burasil is thin, though powerfully built. He is known for his rage and therefore worshiped by almost all the elves of the Fontenouq.

Worship of Burasil always involves fire. Upon achieving priesthood, his clerics receive their holy symbol, a gold ring within which an actual flame always burns.\* Most non-elves avoid touching such a ring, and thieves do not covet it for the curses it might bring them.

If a cleric of Burasil loses his ring, however, they must atone by successfully drinking from Durendel's Holy Flame in Kayomar.

### **DURENDEL:** The Avenger

**ORDER:** Val-Austlich  
**PROVINCE:** Good, Law, Strength, Sun, Holy War, Justice  
**ALIGNMENT:** Lawful good  
**HOLY DAYS:** 1<sup>st</sup> of Uthdain  
**SUPERSTITIONS:** Omens brought through Nightmares  
**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Long Sword, chain and plate armor  
**MISSIONARY:** A Just Vengeance is the true path.

Corthain fashioned Durendel from the muscle of his body and cast the god into Aihilde in the form of a sword. Though his followers and temples do not number as many as those of the other greater deities, many call upon Durendel to combat evil for in him is the power of pure good. Durendel is actively worshiped in the Kingdom of Kayomar at the shrine of the Holy Flame and the tomb of Saint Luther (*see Area Map, Paladin's Grove*).

Durendel's holy symbol is a downward pointing representation of the sword with an upturned cross-guard. The cross-guard represents the chalice into which all matters are poured, and the blade represents the straight arrow of law and justice that funnels out.

Durendel appears as a knight in chain and plate. He carries a kite shield and uses a long sword in battle. He always rides a large warhorse, Grind Earth.

### **GLORIANNA:** Mistress of Battle, Lady of the Iron Kingdoms

**ORDER:** Val-Austlich  
**PROVINCE:** Destruction, Law, War  
**ALIGNMENT:** Lawful Neutral  
**HOLY DAYS:** The 5<sup>th</sup> of Lothian as a day of Sacrifice  
**SUPERSTITIONS:** None  
**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Longsword  
**MISSIONARY:** Peace is found on the far side of battle.

Corthain forged Glorianna from a sliver of his heart. She is the sister of Durendel. Militant in her quest to destroy chaos, Glorianna is the lesser deity of war, law, and destruction. She wields an exquisite magical longsword of holy power that rivals Durendel itself. There have been reports of such a sword appearing in the hand of a great champion of law just as they entered combat against powerful beings and beasts of Chaos. She is the judge of who of the dead are allowed entry into the Fields of Stone.

Glorianna's clerics follow the example of their patron and seek to exterminate chaos and evil. They favor full body armor and will use any weapon. A great number of lawful warriors and paladins pray to Glorianna, as do all that seek to uphold law. Most races incorporate her worship into their religion in some form. She is generous in her aid of the willing. Her holy symbol represents law and justice.

Glorianna takes the form of a beautiful woman. She is always depicted in full plate and chain armor. Her helm hides her long red hair and the armor belies her inhuman strength. She is cunning in battle as well.



**GROTVEDT (GNOMES):** Clan Lord**ORDER:** Val-Austlich**PROVINCE:** Earth, Luck, Protection, Wealth**ALIGNMENT:** Neutral Good**HOLY DAYS:** The Fall Harvest is a holy time**SUPERSTITIONS:** Water**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Hammer and Crowbill**MISSIONARY:** "May Grotvedt bless the Elders."

Grotvedt is unique among the gods for no people worship him directly. Each of the forty-seven gnome clans in Aihrde worship a separate pantheon of clan elders that represent the valued traits of gnome culture. Grotvedt sits upon his throne and grants audience to the hundreds of Gnome deities of the clan pantheons, giving them counsel.

While there are no clerics of Grotvedt and thus no need of a holy symbol, his representation is found in gnomish currency. Gold coins minted by the gnomes bear a sickle and hammer, representing the tools of economy and of defense of the clan which are the foundation of gnome society.

Grotvedt is tall for a gnome, but bares their stature. He has a long, wispy white beard, thick arms and long legs. He wears a shirt of magical ringmail and a crowbill always upon his hip.

**IMBRISIUS:** The Mistress of our Pain, The Suffragan, She Who Wears the World**ORDER:** Val-Austlich**PROVINCE:** Chaos, Evil, Death, Pain, Torture**ALIGNMENT:** Chaotic Evil**HOLY DAYS:** The Full Moon**SUPERSTITIONS:** None**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Knife**MISSIONARY:** "The knife's ecstasy."

Imbrisius is the goddess of pain and death, and she is wholly evil. She takes joy in creating vile monsters and casting them into Aihrde to wreck havoc. She is the consort of Narrheit. Her worship involves dark rituals under the cloak of night. Her holy symbol is a tear drop, and for every level gained, the cleric adds another tear drop to his necklace, bracelet, armor, or staff. High priests wear leather masks.

Imbrisius is thin, of average height and build. She always wears loose clothing, and her gentle light hair rests upon bare shoulders as a wisp of fog. Her eyes are deep and dark, reflecting pools of charm. Her charms are immense and to look upon her is to be smitten with an overriding lust to be near her.

**OGOLTAY (GOBLINS):** The Fat One, Our Mother, The Moulder**ORDER:** Val-Austlich**PROVINCE:** Destruction, Evil, Trickery**ALIGNMENT:** Chaotic Evil**HOLY DAYS:** BirthRight (11<sup>th</sup> of Lexlicht)**SUPERSTITIONS:** The Color Red**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Spiked ball and chain**MISSIONARY:** None

Ogoltay is the Mother of Goblins. Ogoltay resides in Ngorondoro and lays many eggs from which goblin warriors and drones, and

**Ogoltay**

once in a great while, an Eldritch Goblin, are born into the world. All goblins pray to her as their primary deity. Very few other creatures offer her sacrifices on a regular basis for she is corruption incarnate. Her holy symbol is a representation of herself.

Ogoltay appears as a beastly goblin woman, monstrously fat, so much so that she cannot move of her own accord and must rely upon a retinue of slaves to cart her around on the seldom occasions she wishes to be moved. She wears a dress of her own filth and writhes in an unspeakable morass of nightmarish fluids. She can speak only the goblin tongue and even then only a few may understand her. She does communicate her evil thoughts via the Goblin priests.

**ORE-TSAR:** The Horse Lord, Daimatar**ORDER:** Val-Austlich**PROVINCE:** Peace, Nature, Agriculture, Home, and Revelry**ALIGNMENT:** Neutral or Neutral Good**HOLY DAYS:** Feast of the Unmaking

**SUPERSTITIONS:** Sand is abhorrent to their followers as symbolic of death

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Club, staff anything wooden**MISSIONARY:** Ore-tsar

The most pervasive religion of the day is that of the humble deity Ore-tsar. It is worshiped largely by the common folk of Aihrde, but also by gnomes and halflings. Ore-tsar's followers trace their heritage to the town of Haven at the foot of the Dwarven realm of Roheisen Hohle. Phillip the Guileless arose there, speaking the praises of Ore-tsar and converting the folk of the land. The religion spread rapidly from village to town, from town to city. Churches and monasteries sprang up and people flocked to Ore-tsar's worship. Many of the current monarchs of the world worship Ore-tsr, with most making it a state religion. His church has thus grown powerful and wealthy. The church's bishops, prelates, and abbots are always prominent figures in their local community, and regularly engage in its politics.

Ore-tsar often takes the shape of a giant roan colored horse and his followers pay great respect to that noble animal. While the priests in the upper echelons of the Church of Ore-tsr display wealth in their dress, the warrior-priests and traveling priests wear more practical and common clothing.

**RHEALTH:**

**ORDER:** Val-Austlich  
**PROVINCE:** Death, Evil  
**ALIGNMENT:** Neutral Evil  
**HOLY DAYS:** The Dawn of the Dead (6<sup>th</sup> of each of month)  
**SUPERSTITIONS:** None  
**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Scythe  
**MISSIONARY:** None

Now a minor god, Rhealth once lorded over the realm of the dead. He was cast out by the god Toth during the time of the Winter Dark. A few dark cults, necromancers, and the undead themselves pay him homage. His holy symbol is a sword from which arise undead spirits.

**URNUS GREGARIA: The Minstrel**

**ORDER:** Val-Austlich  
**PROVINCE:** Knowledge, Magic, Travel  
**ALIGNMENT:** Lawful Neutral  
**HOLY DAYS:** The Feast of the Unmaking, Coronation Day (11<sup>th</sup> of Erstfhroe)  
**SUPERSTITIONS:** None  
**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Long Sword, spear  
**MISSIONARY:** None

Urnus Gregaria was once a mortal who achieved god status through a life of adventuring. He was a bard of the highest repute and specialized in string instruments. His journey through life carried him to many foreign lands and into contact with druids and wizards. He was renowned for his ability to craft magical staves. Through heroism in service to the Empire he was granted a noble title by the emperor in the city of Gaxmoor. Urnus therefore has a special connection to that city, and he considered it his home despite his preference to be on the move.

Concentrated worship of Urnus outside of Gaxmoor is uncommon. Bards and other travelers often pay him homage. His holy symbol is an imperial eagle.

He is tall and gaily dressed in courtly clothes. He is handsome as well and clever in all that he says. His stories are numberless and he can recount tales of the Days before Days as if he lived in them.

**WULFAD (HALFLINGS): Father of the Halfling, First Walker**

**ORDER:** Val-Austlich  
**PROVINCE:** Animal, Command, Sun, Halflings, Shadows and Trails, The Hunt  
**ALIGNMENT:** Chaotic Good  
**HOLY DAYS:** 1<sup>st</sup> and last day of any hunt  
**SUPERSTITIONS:** None  
**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Short bow, short sword and knife  
**MISSIONARY:** "No faith in double speak."

While halflings, like gnomes, worship family deities, they all recognize Wulfad as the father of the halflings, and first of his people. Even those halflings touched by human civilization pay homage to Wulfad, although their ceremonies typically reflect a desire to return to life in the wilds. Representative of halfling traits, Wulfad is noble, just, and strong of will.

He is the size of the typical halfling, with light brown, curly hair. His feet are bare as are his hairy arms. He fights with a sword, but wears little armor besides his hide-covered wooden shield emblazoned with his holy symbol, a rising sun. Halfling legend is that wherever the sun rises a halfling will be found.

**THE VAL-TULMIPH****ARISTOBULUS: The Counselor, Ar-drauk (Dwarf: White Dragon)**

**ORDER:** Val-Tulmiph  
**PROVINCE:** Destruction, Luck, Magic  
**ALIGNMENT:** Chaotic Neutral  
**HOLY DAYS:** None  
**SUPERSTITIONS:** None  
**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Staff, Dagger  
**MISSIONARY:** None

The patron deity of arcane magic Aristobulus commands powerful and destructive sorcery, and like his patron, Ea-Lor his blood boils when he is angered. In most all cases, he appears as an old wizard, long of beard, with pale skin and an eye-patch over his left eye. He is loathed by his former patron and nemesis, Narrheit, with whom he often matches ego and wits. Aristobulus and his followers constantly work and war against Nuluk-Kiz-Din.

Aristobulus is mostly worshiped by sorcerers, wizards, and other arcane spell-casters, including a number of humanoids and intelligent beasts. Various demi-human races also incorporate his worship into their pantheons. The Wild Elves pay homage to him in the form of a white eagle. The Halflings see him as a great white wolf, watching and protecting them from the black wolf, Nuluk-Kiz-Din. He typically appears in each of the pantheons of the Gnome clans as a wizened old sage.

**AUGUSTUS: The Warlord**

**ORDER:** Val-Tulmiph  
**PROVINCE:** Command, Strength, War, Brotherhood, Mercenaries  
**ALIGNMENT:** Lawful Neutral  
**HOLY DAYS:** None  
**SUPERSTITIONS:** Treachery  
**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Any sword  
**MISSIONARY:** "War is not the foulest of things. Far more foul are cowards."

Augustus is a god of strength and war, warriors of all creeds, especially mercenaries. All members of the Cult of the Sword pay him homage. Almost all the various armies of the nations of Aihrde pray to him, especially before battle. His worshipers also include the wild halflings, dwarves, and wild elves. He is a master of all weapons, and his clerics often outfit themselves in heavy armors. Augustus' clerics tattoo his symbol upon their body, and often incorporate it into their armor, helmets, and shields. He will not tolerate any sycophant or creatures that would bribe or otherwise flatter him, his respect and attention is given only to the brave and stalwart men and women of action.

Augustus wears a red tunic, arm and leg grieves, with shaped leather armor. He bears a broad shield in battle, wears a Romanesque helm and prefers a pilum and gladius in battle.

**CRATEUS:** The Sword Ruler  
**ORDER:** Val-Austlich  
**PROVINCE:** Chaos, Destruction  
**ALIGNMENT:** Chaotic Evil  
**HOLY DAYS:** None  
**SUPERSTITIONS:** None  
**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** A broad sword  
**MISSIONARY:** None

Crateus strode Aihilde as an almost invincible anti-hero before the Age of Winter Dark. He was the first champion of Narrheit, and he wrecked nations with abandon. The wizard Zoas was also a protege of Narrheit and he saw Crateus as competition for his master's favor. He laid a trap for Crateus and imprisoned him within his own sword. The cursed sword still remains in Aihilde, and Crateus is ever seeking escape from his prison. The worship of Crateus is kept alive by those who deal in treachery and chaos. His holy symbol is a cracked helm.

**DALADON LOTHIAN:** Lord Protector of the Forest, Keeper of the Great Oak

**ORDER:** Val-Tulmiph  
**PROVINCE:** Air, Earth, Plant, Feast and Drink  
**ALIGNMENT:** Chaotic Good/Neutral Good  
**HOLY DAYS:** First day of each month  
**SUPERSTITIONS:** None  
**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Two-handed sword, battle axe  
**MISSIONARY:** From the wood, nourishment.

Daladon Lothian walks the forests of Aihilde meeting evil with contempt, but always seeking to maintain a balance in the natural order of things. He maintains some command of all the elements, but particularly earth and air. Daladon is the consort of Wenafar and father of Utumno, and worship of those deities incorporates some prayer to Daladon as well. He always wields a great, two-handed sword.

Because the High Elves fled at the sound of Unklar's coming this god has no love for the High Elves. He cursed them with the need to sleep, and thus dream, forever more. His followers are often the same, only tolerating their presence. Daladon is beloved by most commoners as his priest hood, the Lothians, is one of the most active in the world, building refuges, orphanages and the like throughout Aihilde.

Daladon is worshiped by rangers and druids, particularly those members of the Watchers in the Wood and the Order of the Oak, as well as by all denizens of the forests. To them, he appears as a stern elf with flowing copper hair, encased in plate armor and a living cloak of leaves. While High Elves pay him no heed as expected, most all Wood Elves, Wild Elves, and Half-Elves call upon him. Their image of Daladon is more rustic and wild, generally conforming to the typical dress of their culture. In some instances, he appears fully bearded. Many Halflings incorporate Daladon into their family pantheons in the form of a wild halfling with a flaming red mohawk, covered in tattoos, who slays giants with a single swing of his sword.

Daladon's holy symbol is a representation of the Great Oak with branches representing the two circles of life, Mordius and Wenafar. His clerics typically display the symbol on the end of a staff.

**DOLGAN (DWARVES):** The Forge King, Fist Born, The Undaunted, Furchtlos, Dead Beards  
**ORDER:** Val-Tulmiph  
**PROVINCE:** Earth, Knowledge, War, Iron, Craftsmen  
**ALIGNMENT:** Chaotic Neutral  
**HOLY DAYS:** 4<sup>th</sup> of Frostig (Battle of Gotzenburg)  
**SUPERSTITIONS:** Broken Weapons  
**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Battle Axe  
**MISSIONARY:** By the Mountains roots.

In Dolgan the dwarves see the pinnacle of what they strive to be: a master of stone and metal, a mighty warrior strong of spirit, hearty of fortitude, and quick to action. For this, he is sometimes called Dolgan First-born. He commands the realms of the earth, knowledge, and war. He wields Havoc, a great axe and weapon of revenge that he forged in the pits of Aufstrag while a slave to Unklar. Dolgan's other followers include gnomes, halflings, warriors, and those who work with stone or metal. A representation of Havoc serves as his holy symbol.

He is stout, even for a dwarf and wears a full beard that is specked with gray. His face is weathered and beaten from years bent over the flames of his burning forge. His hands are thick, gnarled roots of muscle and bone. He is often grinning and filled with mirth. He disdains armor unless in battle, wearing little more than a chain shirt.

**FALKENJAGGER:** The Hanging God  
**ORDER:** Val-Tulmiph  
**PROVINCE:** Destruction, Law, Travel, Revenge, Contemplation, Stars and the Heavens  
**ALIGNMENT:** Lawful Good  
**HOLY DAYS:** 7<sup>th</sup> of Winterdark, 4th of Erstdain (birth)  
**SUPERSTITIONS:** Spikes  
**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Hand to hand combat,  
**MISSIONARY:** The Cult of the Hanging God

The foundations of his worship lie in that ancient pantheon of Ethrum gods that were once worshiped in the Kingdom of Kayomar, of which only Tefnut and Toth remain. With Tefnut and Toth, Falkenjagger heads a triumvirate whose worship overlaps one another. An enmity exists between Falkenjagger and Dolgan, but it is not one of open hostility. He bares the open hatred of the deity, Nuluk-Kiz-Din, who bound and tortured him for a thousand years. It was also there that the worship of Jaren Falkenjagger began, in the form of the Cult of the Hanging God.

His worshipers include all seeking revenge, those interested in planar travel, and paladins, warriors, and monks. His clerics prefer loose fitting raiment, but are not slow to don armor and wield mighty weapons in combat.

Falkenjagger appears as a human, often dressed as a monk. Tattoos litter his body, and within his chest burns a glowing palm-sized jewel. In combat, he wears a great helm shaped like a hawk's head, and he commands gigantic hawk wings to spring from his back at will. Legend holds that Falkenjagger guards the Books of Toth in a floating city on the edge of Time.



**NULUK-KIZ-DIN:** Mongroul, The Troll Lord, The Walker

**ORDER:** Val-Tulmiph

**PROVINCE:** Evil, Magic, Plane Travel

**ALIGNMENT:** Lawful Evil

**HOLY DAYS:** 17<sup>th</sup> of Trocken (date of his passage on the Paths of Umbra)

**SUPERSTITIONS:** None

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Staff

**MISSIONARY:** "These Paths of Umbra, of Power."

Nuluk-kiz-din rose to prominence in the Age of Heroes when he summoned Unklar to Aihrde via the Paths of Umbra. There are few followers of this dread diety. Most who do pay him homage are in fact adherents of Unklar who wish to bring the horned god back to the plane through Nuluk's sorcery. Their greatest strongholds are in the United Kingdoms, those lands where the wizard-priests of Unklar were long established. The exceptions to this are the Crna Ruk assassins who pay only Nuluk worship, and the trolls and other fell beasts of the Gottland and Moravan plains. Some wizards and sorcerers worship Nulak for they find Aristobolus a distant deity.

Nuluk is sometimes called The Troll Lord by those who wish not to speak his name. He often takes the form of a huge black wolf or a vulture and roams the lands keeping an eye on all his enemies. His holy symbol is the crescent moon of Unklar pointed downward, with five chimes hanging from it in the position of a wolf's paw pad. The dreaded tingling of the chimes heralds the coming of the Troll Lord.

Nulak is tall and stygian colored. His balding pate is adorned with a thin beaten wire of woven platinum. His voluminous cloaks cover his frame and trail the ground behind him. He carries a staff, which he uses as both weapon and comfort. Within the folds of his cloaks are many illusions and gates to other planes. By shifting the cloak he can change appearance or travel to distant realms.

**ST. LUTHER:** The Gallant, The Confessor, Dreaming Paladin, Lord of Dreams, the Confessor

**ORDER:** Val-Tulmiph

**PROVINCE:** Confession, Dream, Good, Forgiveness, Penance

**ALIGNMENT:** Lawful Good

**HOLY DAYS:**

**SUPERSTITIONS:**

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Longsword

**MISSIONARY:** Purity through Confession

In Luther burns the magic of Corthain and the power of the Holy Flame. He wielded the god Durendel with impunity and strength of will against evil in all its forms. He cloaks himself in the righteousness of Corthain and became Luther the Confessor. In Kayomar, he is worshiped as a saint. As the Confessor, St. Luther does service to Corthain, showing a side of justice that that supreme deity lost long ago - redemption. As the Gallant, St. Luther is a beacon of law and good for knights and paladins to follow.

He lords over the Dreaming Sea with Utumno, the Lord of Nightmares. It is in dreams that all who pray to St. Luther can most easily reach their patron. All races incorporate this incarnation of Luther into their pantheon in some form.

St. Luther's holy symbol represents Corthain's rules of law. The three swords stand for retribution, confession and judgment, all intersecting upon the plane of goodness.

The Confessor Knights serve St. Luther upon the Dreaming Sea. More, they travel the land seeking to bring forgiveness through confession to the wanting. In battle he wears the Cloak of Confession and wields a +5 sword of sharpness.

**UTUMNO (TWILIGHT ELVES):** Horse Lord of Nightmares

**ORDER:** Val-Tulmiph

**PROVINCE:** Dream, Travel, Trickery

**ALIGNMENT:** Neutral

**HOLY DAYS:** Night time, The False Dawn

**SUPERSTITIONS:** Sunrise is prayed against as it reveals all

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Long bow

**MISSIONARY:** "Shades of Cold, like fire, burn."

Utumno is the son of Wenafar the Faerie Queen and Daladon Lothian. He is the darker shade of St. Luther, and together they lord over the Sea of Dreams as the Dreaming Lords. The Twilight Elves revere him, and his other worshipers include lovers of the night and mages. All make prayer to him to keep nightmares away.

He moves through the night in a misty form, and he wears an alien armor. He rides an other-wordly horse across the planes, and sails the Dream Horn, upon the Dreaming Sea. His holy symbol is a square pegged between two crescents, representing the two faces of the Dreaming Sea and the two ships that sail upon it unimpeded, the Dream Horn and the Evening Swan. He is not cruel, though he is uncaring.

Utumno is dark, thin and tall. His lithe form, more like to a shadow than a body, is crowned with a shock of short silver white hair. His eyes belie his dark nature and they are black, with no pupil or iris to speak of. He can see into all planes at any time he wishes.

**KAIN:** The Abyssal Duke, The Red Duke, Duke of Altengrund

**ORDER:** Val-Tulmiph

**PROVINCE:** War, Chaos

**ALIGNMENT:** Chaotic Evil

**HOLY DAYS:** None

**SUPERSTITIONS:** Sleeping

**PREFERRED WEAPONS:** Broadsword, battle axe

**MISSIONARY:** None

Duke Kain is an oddity in Aihrde. His origins are unknown, coming somewhere from the multiverse. For centuries Kain has struggled to carve himself a kingdom in the Abyss. In that respect, he rules a vast sprawling realm upon the abyssal planes from his great fortress-city of Altengrund. Kain is merciless, having no love for family, friend or foe. He rides a nightmare, Sadowa, and in battle he carries the black-edged vorpal sword, Omdurman. Kain came to Aihrde in the service of Unklar, and has been known to travel the lands of After Winter Dark for plunder and war. Those that lust for war and chaos sometimes call him patron. It is believed that demons in the abyss actively worship him. It is said that he can only be killed while sleeping.

# AHRDIAN HISTORY—THE DAYS BEFORE DAYS

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## OF THE BEGINNING

In the beginning, the Void existed without shape or form, and the All Father moved across the face of the Void, pondering the great emptiness. He saw the great Dragon Inzae, and realized there was life apart from himself. The All Father wondered at this and sought to master meaning in existence. To this end, he set about creating all manner of things.

He fashioned creatures from his thoughts for the All Father knew the Language of Creation, and he understood that life begets life. These creations were slivers of himself but they failed to embody what he imagined, so he lay them aside. In this way, a great many beings came into existence, some small, some powerful, but all manifestations of the All Father's memories or imaginings. Most of these creations were benign, but some few possessed great intelligence, and they knew the difference between good and evil.

The All Father then saw that the dragon Inzae hung in the emptiness, spinning upon herself, creating a maelstrom of chaos about her. She split the fabric of the universe in her thrashing, opening rifts, portals and doors to other planes. Unbeknownst to Inzae, the All Father settled upon her chaos and shaped it in his mind's eye. And lo, the All Father made the world from the Maelstrom. He named it in his voice and it became the crucible of his mind. He pounded substance from the Maelstrom and bound fire, earth, air and water into the mix. He fashioned these elements into the world, binding them together. So the flat plane of Aihrde came into being in the Void, and from its edges spilled the substance of his creation and it mingled with the Maelstrom.

The substance of creation fell upon Inzae and she marveled at it, for she knew nothing of the All Father's presence in the Maelstrom. Surrounding herself with the heat of fire, the rush of wind, the cold hard earth, and the liquid blanket of water, she began to form and mold. From these elements, and others whose nature passes all knowing, Inzae configured her own world, one which lay upon the underside of Aihrde, bound to it and a part of the whole. With it she caused the mountains to grow, the seas to pool, the skies to dash, and the warmth of the day to radiate.

Thus, there came to be two worlds in the Void, one astride the other, bound together. This is the tale of Aihrde, however, and the stories of Inzae have little to do with the making of the All Father's world, hung flat and empty upon the back of the Maelstrom.

For many aeons the All Father labored. He created the Twin Sisters of himself and set them to racing across the heavens and he fashioned the rock and shape of the world. He made water to spill across its surface and he watched the world blossom in an age that saw no creatures but the flora and fauna of his mind. In time the fire of his labors drew the creatures of the Void to Aihrde. And some slipped into the world in the darkness. In time these were called upon as gods by men, dwarf and orc. These gods settled throughout the land and they vied with one another for the

attention of their father and the power of his forge. They fought one the other and horrible wars were waged in the world's early dawn. Thorax was accounted greatest of these, but others, like Corthain and Mordius were powerful as well.

## THE COMING OF THE TREES, THE DRAGONS AND DWARVES

The All Father lingered in the world for many ages, and laughed and reveled at the racing of the Twin Sisters. He marveled at the seasons and marveled even more when he saw the world take shapes of its own accord. Grasses grew, and strange plants as well, rising from the soils of the world. There were other things, creatures which lived as memories of his original thoughts and them who stole into the world before the Wall of Worlds was made whole.

But then the All Father grew lonely in his world. The Twin Sisters paid him little heed in their race, and the gods and other figments hid themselves for fear of being banished to the Void. So he sat upon the highest peak in the world, what the dwarves and men call Mount Thangondrim, the "throne of the sky," and pondered this new dilemma. His beard and hair grew to great lengths until he knew at last that he was older than he had been, and that his moods were less hasty. This knowledge gave him insight into the shaping of Life.

He brought the Trees into the world, and gave them life and knowledge of all the makings of his creation. In this manner they knew his mind and loved the All Father like none before nor any ever after, for they knew the Language of Creation.

The first Trees lived as sentient creatures and moved across the land. They never hurried, but moved slowly, methodically, reveling in the world of the All Father's making. Some settled in places and stayed there ever after, and in the space of many years, great forests of these sentients grew across the world. 'Tis said that the All Father loved the sentients more than all of his creations. He walked amongst them, talking of the world in the early days of its making, and he knew joy in their company.

The sentients lived long, being mirrors of the All Father, but in time of years they settled, the bark of flesh decayed, and they withered back into the earth from which they came. The seedlings they dropped proved less than the elders, some could not move, some could not speak, and others were simple trees, rooted to the ground.

In time the All Father grew incurious with his world and wondered what next he could create. He thought upon the Dragon Inzae and the beauty of her form. She came unbidden to him for she too sought more knowledge of creation. So in exchange for a gift of a tree, Inzae laid a great clutch of eggs. And the All Father was pleased. He took the eggs, laid warm earth upon them, and sat over them singing the Language of Creation across their leathery shells. When at last they hatched, he was amazed. Their serpentine forms slid forth and into the world. They bore many colors, but the first was more striking than all the others. And it was Frafnog and he was ever the greatest.

In this way the dragons came to be. They carried the intelligence of Inzae and the wisdom of the All Father, and so, many possessed an

understanding of the Language of Creation that no other creatures could command. In those days, they were powerful beyond imagining and plentiful in number. They soared upon the heights, commanding the wind, or they plunged to the deepest of the seas, breathing water. They fought terrific duels in the clouds and across the lands. And had there been any but the gods to see them, they would have stood in awe at the ferocity of their battles with fire, ash, acid and lightning, and they would have seen great storms of wind, rain and ice, as well as other things beyond knowing.

At times the dragons made war, singly or in pairs, upon the gods, driving Thorax, Mordius and Corthain before them. Thorax fought one such duel with the blue dragon, Ineltex, to great loss. He sought to drag the beast to the underworld and wrestled with her. But she tore from his grasp and ripped his left eye from its socket. She took the eye to the heights of the world and swallowed it. There it burned within her, solidified, until she vomited it forth. The jewel has ever been sought by man, dwarf, and beast, and is said to be filled with wondrous power.

Frafnog, First Born, ruled his kin in these early days and like the sentients, he knew the mind of the All Father and spoke the Language of Creation. Even now, nestled in the heart of the Kolkrab Mountains, he alone, of all Aihilde, remembers the Days before Days.

The All Father looked upon the sentients and studied them. They had spread throughout the world. He saw how they settled in the earth and devoured time as food. He brought his attention to the beasts of the field. They remained simple, if beautiful. He then looked to the dragons. He wondered at them, their grace in flight, their rage in battle, and how they moved across the world searching for the joy of life. He looked upon all these things in awe. And at last he returned to his labors, shaping the greatest and most fell of his creations. For after the dwarves the world would never be the same.

The All Father labored long and hard upon his forges, pounding upon the substance of creation. At first he could not shape his vision and he became angry. As his anger rose so did the speed with which he worked. He shook the stuff in his hands, bellowed it, and finally broke his great hammer, Iergild, the shards of which fell to the earth as great metal slabs and were used ever after in the shaping of magical weaponry. He howled then in rage and he shaped the substance with his own hands, bending it to his insurmountable will. At last, tired and spent, the All Father brought the dwarves into being. They were odd to him, not filled with the beauty of the world, but rather its strength and his anger. He looked upon them for a great while, until at last he scattered them across the plains and mountains to see what they would do.

The dwarves were different from all his other creations, for they did not know his mind and they sought to shape the world for themselves. It is written in the Mammoth Scrolls that some dwarves stood as giants amongst their kin and that these, forged before the Iergild hammer broke, possessed much of the knowledge of the All Father. They set themselves apart from the others for they believed in their own greatness.

The dwarves traveled everywhere, into the forests, across the seas, and atop mountains and hills. They did not propagate quickly like the trees, but slowly like the dragons. And, they built things. They

could not master the Language of Creation, but they used pieces of it in their labors. And indeed they were the last, apart from powerful sorcerers, who ever used the language.

Unlike any of his other creations, the dwarves surprised the All Father in their desire to fashion things from the world. This bemused him for a great while and he watched them build homes from wood and stone. He watched as they entered the cavernous worlds beneath the mountains to make halls and as they fashioned boats to cross the open waters, an idea that never occurred to the All Father. He saw them as different from all his other makings. He saw in them desires not his own, wonders that he had not placed within them. He watched them grow. And because they did not know his mind, they feared him at first and fled from him.

The dwarves became plentiful, and they occupied the whole of the world but for the skies and soon they learned of the All Father's true nature and sought to understand his knowledge and they listened to his teachings.

## THE AGES OF THE DWARVES

### OF THE DWARF KINGDOMS AND THE ORIGINS OF MAN

As is told, the dwarves labored with the All Father, learning what craft he would teach of the Language of Creation, casting it into form and shape. They founded kingdoms under mountains. The greatest of these, Gorthurag, First Home, they carved from the stone of Mount Austrien, which is in the vulgate, "God's Forge." Here, their greatest Kings ruled, springing from the line of Argrind, called Darkeye. The pains of his labors upon the forge brought the dwarves into a new age.

In the days of the first kingdoms there was peace. The dwarves called themselves "the Folk," and with an ever increasing population, the Folk spread throughout the lands building towns and villages. They discovered that they enjoyed the underground most of all. There, they were protected from the elements, rain and snow affecting them little or not at all. Too, they found protection from the fancies of the dragons, some of which hunted the dwarves. So the dwarves tunneled beneath the hills and mountains, making halls of stone. They crafted all manner of things great and small, yet they were young in their craft and spent many years perfecting it. Few artifacts remain from these early days, and those that do are prized, not for their perfect shape, but rather because they are relics from a time when the dwarves were young in their craft. From these early craftsmen arose dwarves of great skill and the Axe of the All Father, shaped from Iergild metal, was made in those days. It was then and still remains, the most holy of items in all the dwarven hordes.

When King Agrind "returned to stone," as the dwarven folk style death, his people, filled with the wonder of his memory, began migrating further from the spires of Mount Austrien. These days are termed the Great Migrations in the Mammoth Scrolls. The Kingdom of Grausumhart, Grimjaw in the Vulgate, was founded beneath the Crusp Mountains. In the space of a few centuries this great kingdom rivaled Gorthurag in all but its history. Her line, under the Uthkin Kings, challenged that of Argrind for rule over the Folk.



Some dwarves turned their craftsmen to the construction of boats, and these mastered the art of sailing the waters of the world. Upon their great ships they plied the oceans, exploring the whole of the world and settling in distant lands. Yet only the eldest of the dwarves remember, for after the Great Goblin-Dwarf Wars, when so many of the Folk drowned, the passage over water became anathema for the dwarves. To this day, they hesitate to even cross broad streams. But in those days, they possessed no fear and battled the seas with vigor. The outposts they founded became dwarven kingdoms in later days, of which Grundliche Hohle and Alanti were but two. The latter of which, in time, became the most wondrous of all Dwarven Kingdoms before its loss beneath the oceans of Aihilde.

#### ON MEN

As is told, some dwarves settled far from the mountain homes of their kin, even before the coming of Argrind. These folk lived wholly above ground, preferring the light of day and open spaces to the deeps of the world. In time, before the first kingdoms arose, they grew in stature and numbers. Thirteen tribes of these men spread across the lands, living mostly in the north, where the cold ruled. But they slowly moved into the southern lands as well. And for the most part they lived with the dwarves in harmony.

These men faced a different world than their dwarven kin. Living above ground they fought the elements, as well as animals and dragons. They became superstitious and began to call upon the powers of nature, and in doing so, they captured the attention of Mordius. She walked amongst them, guiding them and giving them aid where she could. She learned to love men as she loved no other. They became dedicated to her worship, and ever after did man become enthralled with the words of gods.

#### OF THE COMING OF THE GOBLINS

It was in these early days that the Thorax first grew interested in the dwarves. Thorax, who had settled in the deeps, followed the evolution of the dwarves and in time of years he approached Argrind in his halls of stone. Argrind Darkeye, young and full of power, faced the scar-faced god and heard his words. Thorax wove a spell around his language, using his tongue to bemuse and fool Argrind King. But the King laughed him off and forbid Thorax the right to remain in his halls. In rage, Thorax fell upon the King and the two fought a great battle. Dwarves aplenty hurled themselves upon Thorax, and the halls ran with blood for days after.

Though lo, Argrind King, cased in iron, used the Axe of the All Father to drive his foe from the room. Thorax, encased in armor of his own design, fell beneath the strength of the Iergild, seeing in it the fire of the All Father. He fled the halls in fear and rage, cursing the Dwarves, the world, and the All Father.

During the long age of peace, the dwarves perfected their arts, becoming masters of construction and the forge. They built ever deeper halls and their cities sprawled along the flanks of the great mountains. Their halls stretched out beneath the world like the roots of a great tree. In Alanti, the dwarves built their homes upon the sea. The streets and buildings, carved from beautiful marble, stretching between island realms, were a wonder to behold. It is told that

the Alanti dwarves became more learned than their fellows in the Language of Creation. And in time of years all the massed knowledge of the Folk was gathered there and placed in monumental libraries.

And then goblins came into the world and the age of peace ended forever. The memory of those days lingers only in legend and dream.

From where the goblin's originated, few understood. Many whispered of dwarves turned evil, corrupted by the dark of deep places and greed. There is truth in this tale. As is told, the dwarves were plentiful and tunneled beneath the world. They became scattered far and wide, so much so, that many lost contact with their fellows, living out their days in solitude far from their Kingdom's Halls. They became removed from the discoveries of other dwarves, lingering in the past as their cousins moved into the future. Thorax, still brooding from his encounter with Argrind, found them thus, and made easy prey of them. He taught them new things and convinced them that their brethren had kept these secrets from them in spite. He twisted their thoughts and buried their memories with twisted tongue, and made them hate their kin. Over time he gathered them, until there was a small host of several tens of thousands.

Thorax taught them a vile brand of sorcery. And when they mastered it he revealed his true nature. He sung the song of how he was not of the Void, but rather a memory of the All Father come to life, equating himself to unlimited power. He told of how he stole away into the world of Aihilde and hid himself in dark places. He was not like them, for they were made of the Language of Creation, pounded from the substance of the Void. In rapt attention they listened, all the while wondering on the memory of the All Father which stood before them. In doing so they changed. Their own spite corrupted them, and their bodies shriveled, and their hair fell out. They lost the form which the All Father had cast for them, and adopted one which resembled nothing the world had seen before, a malevolent version of the dwarves. They became goblins and they hated the dwarves and all that they had made.

#### OF THE GOBLIN DWARF WARS

The wars began in the 5590th year, dwarf reckoning. In their early days they wrought terrible havoc on Aihilde, for countless dwarves fought powerful goblins heedless of the destruction of war. They fought long horrid battles beneath the earth in dark tunnels far from the light of day. Who may say what acts of heroism and treachery went unrecorded, what desperate characters lived and died in those deep places. Who may say indeed, for not even the dwarf histories, as told in the Mammoth Scrolls, record those years. They speak only of terrible times in which many a dwarf lost his beard.

But, in war, the dwarves learned to forge weapons of iron and steel and mastered the shaping of rock and mountain. The goblins fought insantly to unmake all that was made. The greatest of their Chieftain Sorcerers was Ondluche, and he was named their King.

For 4000 years the two great peoples warred upon one the other. Alanti, with her great fleets and island cities, the most wondrous and beautiful of all dwarf realms, suffered being thrown down as were many of the Great Homes of the early Kings. The war consumed the world that existed in the Days before Days, its glory lost forever.

And Ondluche used all his fell might to warp the world. In working a great spell to unmake the dwarves, he splintered the mind of the All Father, opening gates into the All Father's imaginings. Thus, the multi-verse came into existence. The All Father lay beneath the world and died.

But from that fell magic, faerie came into the world, with its beautiful Queen and goddess and all the magic that it promised. The immortal elves, sprung from the purest of the All Father's thoughts, came to life in the deeps of the great forests. But there were other things as well, dark things, orcs and demons and many more beside. And worst of all was the Unklar, the All Father's nightmare. And the world was never the same.

The Age of Dwarves ended soon thereafter, for the great Stone Wars between dwarf and goblin shattered both peoples and left their halls in smoking ruin and the twin folk so broken that they never again came to rule in Aihrde.

## THE AGES OF MEN

### THE RISE OF THE TRIBES OF MEN

For 10,000 years the dwarves dominated Aihrde, but with their fall, the Age of Man began. From their shallow roots in the distant north, the thirteen tribes of men grew. In the Days before Days men changed so that some of the tribes did not resemble men or dwarves at all. Some were plentiful, others were not. The Aathuk enjoined themselves to the dwarves and learned from the gods magics and powers as did the Oanthuil, but these latter were snared in the nets of Thorax and made to be evil creatures. But as the dwarven power waxed under the Twin Sisters, the fathers and mothers of men begat sons and daughters, and they multiplied and spread across the land. More adaptable than dwarves they settled in the forests, deserts and plains. And in the space of many years, their kingdoms grew upon the face of Aihrde. In many instances they served the dwarves as slaves or mercenaries. They were superstitious and ever became the tools of the gods.

Of all the tribes of men the greatest were ever those of Aenoch and they flourished upon the coasts of the Amber Sea.

### THE CORRUPTION OF THORAX AND THE JUDGMENT OF CORTHAIN

Thorax learned then of the people of Aenoch, and he sought them out for his wars with the dwarves. He took the guise of a large bull and traveled to the lands of Aenoch and spent a great while amongst those people. He saw their power, their greed for life, and began to twist it. He gathered those people together and taught them knowledge beyond their wildest imaginings. They lusted for it, and waxed in strength. They began to learn of the memories of the All Father, and sought to adopt immortality.

The folk of the tribe of Aenoch rose to overwhelm the world of Aihrde. Led by their sorcerers, with the Bull at their head, they gathered their armies and conquered the other tribes. They styled themselves gods over men, dwarf and goblin. Their Kings called themselves God Emperors, and they ruled as such. All bowed to them, but for the Great Sorcerers whoever after have plagued the rulers of man. They cut down the trees of Mordius, burnt the temples of Corthain and drove out many of the lesser powers.

And ever were these people the tools of Thorax, for he saw that with the fall of the dwarves and the power of men, he could rule in Aihrde where his brother could not.

Corthain watched in dismay as his brother set to corrupting another race upon Aihrde, and he saw the memory of the All Father corrupted as well. He judged this wrong and made war upon the Bull of Thorax. His power was not spent, but was much as it had been when he stole into the world in the Days before Days. And he set to fashioning a great spear. Its haft he took from a fallen oak fed by the blood of Mordius, who Thorax had cruelly slain, its point he crafted from his own mind and coated it in the silvery bark of a birch of Mordius. With this spear he came to the worlds of the tribes of men, even to the tent where the Great Sorcerer reigned. The one eyed Bull was there and the gods knew each other.

The battle of Thorax and Corthain jarred the world to its foundation. The Bull gored Corthain time and again, but in turn, Corthain lanced the beast in the chest, side and neck. They trampled the sorcerers to death, crushing the tents of the army and scattering it far and wide. The battle raged for weeks and months and the blood flowed in rivers. The Men fled in terror, hiding in caves and dark places to await the battle's outcome. In the last, Corthain slew Thorax, breaking the spear in the Bull's heart. When at last Thorax died, Corthain commanded the body to rot and it seeped into a morass of tar and ichor, never to be seen on the plane of Aihrde again. Tis true that small cults of his followers survived, as they do to this day, but his power was forever broken by the rage of Corthain and existed only in the glass eye forged by the great blue Dragon, Ineltex, in the Days before Days.

Corthain turned then to the hosts of men and cast judgment upon them. "In your greed, you sought the gifts of immortality. You sought to become what you are not and for this I strike you and place upon you the curse of mortality. Forever more your days on Aihrde will be short and your lives spent in hurried vanity. Forever more."

The Judgment of Corthain left man in the shells of mortal being, and but for a few, they lived ever shorter lives. The god broke the Wall of Worlds and left Aihrde to its own devising. He dwells still, or so it is said, in the heavens of the world, a star in the midnight sky.

So the first kingdoms of men ended, and with them, much of their power and glory. But Aenoch rose again upon the banks of the Udunilay River.

### THE RISE OF AENOCH

In time, however, man recovered from the judgment and began rebuilding. They possessed the range of knowledge given to them by Thorax, the dwarves and the goblins. They used it to build ever greater cities. The worship of the gods resumed, though for the most part they avoided the name of Thorax and his worship. Man rebuilt the Kingdoms of old, and the greatest of these, as they had been before, were in the lands of Aenoch and Ethrum.

These peoples thrived where two continents touched at the Straights of Ursal, once more in the shadow of the Dwarven Kingdoms. Here, the tribes of Aenoch and Ethrum permanently settled, the former in the east and the latter in the west. They

turned the soil, built villages along the rivers and castles to overlook them. They built ships, plowing the waters in trade. Ships need ports and soon, great walled towns stood upon the coasts as they did before the fall of Alanti many years ago. In time, large cities grew in the interior and the people of Aenoch and Ethrum spread across the land. They began to reckon time, and they learned the travels of the stars through the heavens. They relearned most everything set aside since the Judgment of Thorax.

The lands of Aenoch grew in strength and number, greater than those of Ethrum. Their people were far more industrious, adopting to the new world and the new races far more readily than their neighbors to the west. Foremost amongst their dealings were the gnomes. A small industrious race filled with the merchant's craft, they soon aided in Aenoch's economy, so much so that the realm waxed in wealth. The nine gnome clans grew in stature and benefitted by their dealings as well, and in time of years, their clans split again and again until they eventually numbered 47, each ruled by a Thrushbeard, (chieftain).

The Kings of Aenoch waxed in wealth and power. As they outstripped their neighbors to the west, they soon began to seek out new lands. They conquered the peoples in the distant east and across the south seas. In the 207th year of their recorded history, King Olivier IV of the House Golden, proclaimed himself Emperor. He became Olivier I and he ruled his Empire from the stone halls of Al-Liosh. The Empire became fabulously wealthy, her nobles as rich as the Kings of Ethrum, the Emperor's wealthy beyond description. They derided their neighbors as weak and foolish, and invited them to become a province of the Empire. This insult did not go unanswered in the west and those people spurned the easterners as tools of evil.

In the western lands of Ethrum, near the Eldwood, the noble family of Tarvish, who rose to prominence in the fur trade, called for the King in the far off capital of Ruthan to make ready for war. When the King proved reluctant, Tarvish rose in rebellion and overthrew the dynasty. The Tarvish eventually proclaimed themselves Kings of Ethrum.

Olivier II, marshaled all the forces of the Empire of Aenoch, gathering them near the western span of the Ursal Bridge. The Tarvish gathered the Ethrumians but to no avail. In the war that followed, the wealth and power of sorcery of the Empire destroyed the westerners. In a series of set-piece battles, Olivier II overwhelmed the west and destroyed their armies. Olivier II crowned himself God-Emperor after his distant ancestors and set to conquering the world.

For five centuries the lords of Aenoch ruled a sprawling empire that stretched from the Marl in the distant east, across the straights, and into to the Rhodope mountains in the west. They moved north as well pushing their frontiers to the Sea of God and they crossed the Amber Sea and overwhelmed the struggling empire of the Inklu and settled along much of the coastline. They conquered the Madrui and the deserts of the south and drove the remnants into the far east. In truth, they did not rule completely for few dwarven lands came under their thumb, nor did the elven tribes who lived in the forest's deeps. And the orcs from the Marl made constant war from their fortresses in the swamps, hills, and mountains.

During the rule of the Aenochian Emperors a host of new gods came into the lands. Powerful imaginings from the splintered mind of the All Father still roamed the world. In many cases, men adopted them as their gods and fell to worshiping them. Some stole away to the forest deeps and worshiped the trees from the Days before Days, returning to the druidic worship of Mordius. It is said that a singular sapling, the last living remnant of the Trees of the Mordius Grove throve in the Eldwood. This tree, called the Great Oak, became a god to many. Others worshiped the darkest imaginings of the All Father, horrid memories, of which Narrheit was the greatest. Within the Empire there existed a strange mixture of good and evil, slavery and dominance, a plethora of powers feeding off the collective imaginings of man. For ever had it been so. From the earliest days of the worship of Mordius to the present, the gods waxed in strength the more men worshiped them. The rule of the Emperors of Aenoch was marked by Chaos and so it reigned in all of Aihrde.

The magnificence of the Empire is marked well in the annals of that land. Some Emperors ruled with a genuine concern for the welfare of their subjects, some ruled with malice in forethought, and some with indifference. But so great was the wealth of the Aenochian Empire in those early days, that the Emperors could squander it. They built magnificent cities and fortresses, roads crisscrossing the land, and walled towns and castles along their length. In general, there was peace. They waged sporadic wars with the tribes of orcs and beast-like hobgoblins, and fought an occasional rebellion. But overall the Emperor's rule went unchallenged.

After 550 years of rule, the Empire of Aenoch came to an end. Nomads, the Madrui, from the distant east settled upon the frontiers; orcs pushed back the outposts and threatened constant war and the Engale, wild North men, came from Gal-land and laid waste to the northern border countries. Other men, barbarian descendants of the Ethrum raided and attacked in the west. The Emperor had not the strength to combat these foes and so the people of Ethrum rose in revolt. So began the Wars of Liberation. The outposts in the north and east were quickly stripped of troops and the colonies in Inklu-Naid were left to fend for themselves and they soon were swallowed by the jungle kingdoms of those people.

The Wars of Liberation caused much devastation on both sides of the straights. Imperial armies marched to and fro attempting to crush the rebellious subjects, and mercenary troops looted, plundering towns and villages. The land burned and her people were despoiled. After many long years of intermittent war, the Empire fell and is marked so with the assassination of the Emperor Marcus Owen I and the line fell into obscurity.

## THE AGE OF HEROES

The Middle Kingdoms rose in the Empire's place and an age of magic dawned upon Aihrde. For the first time, Sorcerers rose to prominence, separate from the seats of power, and men were not ruled by Kings alone. The magic of the Old World lingered in dark places, dungeons and abandoned cities. Great artifacts surfaced and were lost again. Men mastered the spells of old, remade them, and cast them anew in different forms. These wizards and sorcerers gathered in guilds, secret enclaves from which they master-minded the world's currents. There were many such societies, only a few of which are named here. These men and women bent their minds to



unraveling the magic of the world, searching for the Language of Creation and attempting to make greater and greater spells.

But evil has ever plagued the lands of Aihrde. And so it was during the Ages of Heroes. As is written, the mage Trigal, who served under the last Emperor in Al-Liosh as a court scribe, rose to power. In 449oy he founded the White Order, or as it came to be known, the Ice Wizard Guild. Here he trained men and women in the arts of sorcery. Trigal used the White Order, a seemingly peaceful order dedicated to unraveling the mysteries of the world. He put many of its scholars upon the search for the Paths of Umbra, an ancient spell of the Goblins, said to have been used by Ondluche when he broke the Wall of Worlds.

Trigal was eventually exposed and driven from the Order, he discarded his name and adopted one more fitting his person. He called himself Nulak-Kiz-Din, but in later years he was known by a different name, Mongroul, the Troll Lord. He continued his quest for the Paths long after the demise of the empire and finally met success in 676oy.

He breached the Wall of Worlds and discovered creatures in the Void, some extraordinarily powerful. Nulak thought to himself that he could bring such a creature to Aihrde and it would rival any of the gods of men. And he thought that it would be his to control. So came to the world another tragedy. With the power commanded by the wizards of the White Order, Nulak cast himself into the Void questing for a host to bring home. He searched for many years until at last he found a dark sliver of the All Father's nightmare. He opened the mind of that great horned beast and prepared it for entry.

Nulak discovered and enticed Sebastian Oliver I, last of the House of Aenoch, an apprentice of the Wizard Aristobolus, to join him, promising him to return Aenoch to glory. Sebastian was convinced and supported the wizard in all that he did. In this war returned to Aihrde. War consumed the world and the power of the sorcerer and Sebastian seemed unstoppable. In 718oy, Sebastian, having conquered most of Aenoch, placed the Cuna Mundus Usquam, the ancient crown, upon his brow, proclaiming himself God Emperor of Aenoch and Lord of Ethrum. With these proclamations, he brought upon himself the wrath of the Council of Patrice and the Kings in the west, most notably Luther in his high towered halls of Du Guesillon.

It was in these years that the Elves began to quietly leave their homes. The dwarves bound their halls in iron and the other free peoples turned a blind eye to the ever rising power in the east.

As war rolled across the great straights, the remaining kingdoms gathered in a Holy Alliance and plunged themselves on a mad crusade against the enemy. Luther had, by this time, abdicated his throne in favor of his son Robert Luther, and taken the Durendel Sword into the east in an attempt to slay the Sorcerer Nulak, or the Emperor Sebastian, whichever came near him. With him traveled his old companions, Aristobulus and Daladon. Their task proved fatal, and Aristobulus fell to a Demon Lord from the Abyss before they reached the east and Luther, that greatest of heroes, called by the gods, carried the Durendel from the plain into the Dreaming Sea, there to guard and hide it from the enemy.

## THE WINTER DARK

### THE COMING OF THE DARK & THE GREAT WAR

As the last breath of the Days before Days blew across the land the Emperor Sebastian Oliver I sat upon his throne with the Cradle of the World upon his brow. Behind him stood his councilor, the High Priestess, Nectanebo, servant of the goddess Imbrisuis. Before them both stood Nulak-Kiz-Din. Folds of sorcery wrapped the Arch-Magi, clothing him in power. He called upon this fountain of magic and lay the Incantations of the Paths of Umbra to summon the horror from the Void. Sebastian used vile sorcery learned from the Wizard Aristobulus, to aid him and Nectanebo lent her considerable weight to the spell's undertaking. The Paths of Umbra split the Wall of the Worlds, opening a gate to the beyond. Unklar, wrapped in shrouds of the substance of creation, stepped into the world of Aihrde.

As is told, this was in the year 748oy, that the long days of the Feast of Death began.

Nulak failed to understand that the creature he found was not a simple dark minded creature. Rather, it was the All Father's greatest terror. It was a nightmare; a horrid thought conjured in his youth, cast aside as soon as it rose to the surface. The black thought lay buried in his mind until the spells of Ondulche gave it freedom. It passed through the Maelstrom and into the Void. When Nulak came to it in the Void, it pretended to be amazed and enthralled, and so secretly it bound the sorcerer to him.

So Unklar set to destroy the known world. He slew Sebastian and cast aside his sword and crown. He slew Nectanebo as well and placed his own creature in the post of High Priest. Nulak he broke and made his slave and he became the horned one's mouth on Aihrde, and together they waged war on the Middle Kingdoms. He made the unger, the children of the dark, in the deeps of Al-Liosh, the capital, and let them loose upon the world. He bound many people to him and made war upon all the lands. The people fell to him, destroyed or driven into hiding. For 40 years he waged his war and wherever he went the clouds of winter lingered ever after.

He cast down the gods in a great war and slew, enslaved or banished them. And his minions spread across the world to all the distant places and the free peoples there bowed to him or fought alone in the dark places of the world. The orcs were taken with the ecstasy of his conquest and issued forth from their holes in the Marl to create a world of their making.

In the last, the Kingdom of Kayomar stood alone against him and his vile folk. But in the Catalyst Wars, they too were thrown down and their last King, Robert Luther, slain, and with him Jaren the monk. The Great Tree avoided Unklar's touch for it hid in the deeps of the Eldwood, on the edge of the world. There, servants of the Oak under the ranger lord Daladon struggled on through the long years of the millennial darkness.

Some refugees like Mourilee Lothian Pendegrantz, Luther's child, fled with many other refugees of Kayomar into the far distant west. A great victory of Prince Erik Aristobulus Euryance over Unklar's navy in 789oy left the temporary command of the sea to the folk of Kayomar. They gathered what ships they could and

in the company of Luther's bastard son, Morgeld, set sail for the Wall of Worlds. For years they sailed, the journey a legendary trek fraught with countless horrors. The voyage sent them to the far edge of the world where they founded a colony. Later, this colony became the Solarium Empire, the Empire of the Sun.

So the Age of Heroes ended, and so the Winter Dark began.

#### THE LONG DAYS OF THE WORLD

Unklar the Black, the horned god, settled within the Halls of Aenoch and made that place his fortress. He named it anew, calling it Aufstrag, and in later years molded his castle into the shape of a tree to mimic the Great Tree which defied him. From Aufstrag he ruled Aihilde for over a thousand years.

Unklar's power waxed great in the early days of his rule, and he set himself the task of reshaping the world. Foremost, he enslaved or destroyed the gods of man and dwarf. Some he bound to him, and they became his Captain Kings and ruled Aihilde in his name. Others he made to serve his grim purpose. Beneath Aihilde he found the bones of the All Father and he lent himself to bending the world, wrapping its form around the All Father's skull so that the corners met. He tore lust from the All Father and ignited it so that it burned with the heat of a billion fires, and he cast this fire into the void. And Aihilde he spun through the cosmos, making it turn around the sun (*see above page 34-35*). He devoured the Wall of Worlds and vomited it forth as a darkish cloud of snow and storm and this cloud spread across the world as a shroud and covered all in perpetual winter. He surveyed his work and deemed it good, and upon his thrown in Aufstrag he slept for a hundred years. In truth, Unklar spent his power in shaping the world, and never again was he the being he had been.

But he ruled Aihilde for a thousand years, and in that time his minions fought many wars against those who defied him. He rooted out the dwarves of Grundliche Hohle. He released the Hounds of Darkness to find the elves, but they failed. Wars uncountable were fought between and with the Captain Kings and ever and anon did Unklar spend himself and leave vestiges of his power in hidden places. In his later years, with the aid of the enslaved son of the last King of Grundliche Hohle, Unklar forged splinters of his own mind and made the mogrl, great spirits of fire and ash. He fashioned twenty four of the beasts and he set them to watching the world. But they took from him more power and thus diminished him even more.

In the 1019th year of Unklar's reign the Winter Dark Wars began. Unklar's power had waned and those survivors who had hidden themselves for many years gathered around the spirit of the Great Tree. Aristobolus the mage returned from the Land of Shade and Chaos, and Luther from the Sea of Dreams. They gathered dwarves and men and heroes, and they made war on Unklar for twenty years. Daladon half-elven and Dolgon, last king of Grundliche Hohle, Jaren, freed from a thousand years of imprisonment, Albrecht the River King and others, joined them. This alliance, a Council of Man and Dwarf, fought the Winter Dark Wars to glorious end. And in the 1030th year of Unklar's reign, they stole into his throne room and with the aid of Setiva, an elven warrior maid, cast him from the plane.

The -- which held the world in winter's grasp broke with Unklar's passing, and the Winter Dark ended. Aihilde now stands, however, as at its creation.

#### NEW BEGINNINGS

In the void left by the fall of Aufstrag, a host of Young Kingdoms arose across the land. Some, such as Kayomar, modeled themselves after the Middle Kingdoms, others developed anew. In the west, Kayomar, Anglamay and Maine dominate Ethrumania. In the east, vestiges of Unklar's empire remain, haunting vast stretches of the land. Here, only a few warlike kingdoms, such as Augsburg and Eisenheim, live under the shadow of the stain of Unklar. In the south, the Empress Pryzmira, last of the line of old Aenoch, vies for power with the Confederation of Innocent III.

And new gods spawned new religions. The church of Ore-Tsar became the most powerful. The god of crops and labor is worshiped by most common folk, and everywhere throughout the realms, his churches are rising. Already they have grown powerful in the See of Avignon and at the court of Anglamay.

Some dwarven kingdoms, at last recovered, traded with the peoples of the world. The bearded folk are not uncommon travelers on the road. The greater part of the High Elves remain in Faerie, but some have returned. They live in wondrous palaces and brood upon the shame of their hiding. Those elves that remained and endured the Winter Dark, lived in the wilds and have changed. The wood and twilight elves linger still in the forests and wilderness. Gnomes and halflings build towns and villages, seeking to claim a stake in the new world.

And yet the world bears the imprint of Unklar's thousand year rule. The roads and calendar, and the bureaucracies of his imperial rule all survive. Many of his servants still crawl the earth in search of vengeance and a way to bring back the Dark Age. But the distance of time removes the pain of his rule and the horror of the Winter Dark is only recalled by the very old.

Aihilde is filled with promise of adventure and glory, of lost treasure and power arcane, and battle against dark things that linger in dark places. . . .



# Index

## A

Aachen 20  
Aathuk 4, 13  
Aatuck 4  
Adrius 40  
Aenoch 13, 49, 50  
Aenochia 4, 9  
Aenochians 4, 5  
Aenochian Forest 9  
Aenoch Valley 9  
Aenocia 18  
Aenouth 40  
Aesperdi 20  
Aetherfred II 22  
Age of Heroes 24, 50, 52  
Aggersholm 30  
Agrol 18  
Al-Aihrde Cun 35  
Al-Liosh 51  
Al-Liosh 21  
Alanti 4, 5, 48  
Allis 21  
All Fathe 46  
All Father 31, 34, 47, 48, 49, 52  
Alpa 9  
Amber Sea 6, 50  
Amenexl 40  
Anglamay 21, 52  
Angrim 41  
Angrod II 25  
Arbel 26  
Ardeen River 8  
Argrind 47, 48  
Aristobolus 51, 52  
Aristobulus 51  
Aroyo 5  
Ascalon 20  
Athria 41  
Aufstrag 21, 26, 35, 52  
Augsberg 22  
Augustus 43  
Austrag 19  
Avignon 22

## B

Baldwin III 20  
Barachia 20  
Bergrucken 8  
    Saddleback Range. *See* Cold Mist  
Bergrucken Mountains 7  
Bleached Hills 8  
Books of Toth 39  
Borgundullum 26

Brindisium 22  
Burasil 41  
Burnevitse 23

## C

Calendars 11  
Capidistria 26  
Capua 23  
Carteris 28  
Castle Augsburg 22  
Castle Nacht 25  
Castle of Spires 17  
Catalyst War 22  
Ceeana 21  
Ceenaa 23  
Channel Lakes 4, 14, 16, 18  
Coal Range 8  
Coburg the Undying 21  
Cold Mist 3  
Confederation of Torrich 30  
Corthain 31, 37, 46, 47, 49  
Council of Man and Dwarf 52  
Cradle of the World 2, 7, 51  
Crateus 44  
Crna Ruk 30  
Cult of the Hanging God 44  
Cult of the Sword 43  
Cunae Mundus Usquam 51

## D

Daladon 7, 17, 44, 51, 52  
Danau River 8  
Darkenfold 7  
Days before Days 11  
Day Star 35  
    Al~Aihrde Cun. *See* Cold Mist  
Deeps 8  
Dimensional Matrix 32  
Dolgan 25, 26, 44  
Dolgon 52  
Dragons 46  
Dragon Cult of the Kath 6  
Dragon Throne 26  
Dreaming Sea 32, 51  
Dulzdine 6  
Dundador 20  
Durendel 41, 51  
Du Guesillon 51  
Dwarves 11, 46, 49  
dwarves 47

## E

Ea-Lor 32, 38  
Ea-Raena 34, 39  
    Moon. *See* Cold Mist  
Ea-Vette 34, 39  
    Sun. *See* Cold Mist

Eichstatt 22  
Eisenheim 23, 26  
Eldritch Goblins 15  
Eldwood 50, 51  
Elemental Planes 31  
Elis 5  
Elithian Wood 7, 9  
Eloria 24  
Elorisia 24  
Elves 16  
Engale 4, 6, 14  
Erik Aristobulus Euryance 51  
Ethereal 32  
Ethrum 4, 7, 13, 16, 18, 49, 50  
Ethrumenians 5  
Evening Star 35

## F

Faerie Queen 16  
Falkenjagger 44  
Feast of Death 51  
Fell Swamp 10  
    Grausamland 10  
Fields of Dead 30  
Fields of the Dead 9  
Firmament 31  
First King 18  
Fiume 26  
Flintlock 10, 18  
Fontenouq 16, 17, 24  
Four Corners 2  
Frafnog 34, 35, 37, 47  
Frozen Salt Flats 9

## G

Gal-land 50  
Gal-land 6  
Gelderland 24  
Giants 12  
Glorianna 41  
gnome 50  
Gnomes 52  
Goblin-Dwarf Wars 48  
Goblin-Dwarf Wars 29  
Goblins 15, 48  
God's Forge 47  
Gokstad 26  
Gokstead Deep 19  
Gorthurag 12, 47  
Gottland 25  
Gottland trees 11  
Graugusse 27  
Grausamland 10, 21  
    Fell Swamp 10  
Grauschvoll 24



Grausumhart 12, 47  
 Grausumlands 19  
 Great Northern Forest 7  
 Great Oak 7, 50  
 Great Shroud 2  
 Great Tree 51, 52  
 Great Wall 7  
 Greenwood 7  
 Grimjaw 12, 47  
 Grossewald 9  
   Great Forest. *See* Cold Mist  
 Grotvedt 42  
 Grundliche 10, 19, 26  
 Grundliche Hohle 25, 48, 52

## H

Halflings 17  
 Haltland 26  
 Hanse City States 26  
 Heimstadt 20  
 High Elves 17  
 Hlobane 18, 30  
 Hollmgrad 8  
 Holmgald 26  
 Holy Defenders of the Flame 26  
 Honorius II 22  
 Horned One 33  
   Unklar. *See* Cold Mist  
 Hounds of Darkness 52  
 Humans 12

## I

Ianuk 4  
 Illumbrian Plains/Coast 9  
 Illus 31, 35  
 Imbrisiu 42  
 Ingtou River 8  
 Inklu 13  
 Inklu–Naid 5  
 Inner Planes 32  
 Innocent 30, 52  
 Inzaa 7  
 Inzae 31, 33, 46  
 Iulaine 6  
 Ivangorod 29

## J

Jaren 52  
 Judgment of Corthain 16, 19, 36, 49

## K

Kain 45  
 Kareelia 26  
 Kath 6  
 Katha 12, 14, 15  
 Kayomar 24, 26, 51, 52  
 Kellerwald 9

Klarglich 19, 26  
 Kleaves 23  
 Kleberock Pass 8  
 Knights of Kayomar 7  
 Kolkrab 10, 18, 47  
 Kourland 20

## L

Lake Orion 9  
 Lamps of Heaven 34  
 Land of Faerie 32  
 Language of Creation 19, 33, 46, 47, 48, 51  
 Limnule 21  
 Lithanian River 9  
 Logn–Kor 19  
 Long Centuries 3  
 Lund 23  
 Luneberg Plains 27  
 Luther 51, 52  
 Luxor 23

## M

Madriu 13  
 Madrui 50  
 Maelstrom 31, 34, 51  
   maelstrom 46  
 Maine 27, 52  
 Mammoth Scrolls 47  
 Mange 21  
 Material Plane 31, 32  
 Melius 17  
 Melius the Wise 16  
 Merdieal 27  
 Meteira 20  
 Milo 22  
 Misty Sea 6  
 Mist Elves 17  
 Mithlon Eves 7  
 Moon 31, 34, 39  
 Moravan Plains 27  
 Mordius 12, 14, 38, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50  
 Mordun 24  
 Morgeld 24, 52  
 Most 25  
 Mount Austrien 47  
 Mount Norlling 8  
 Mount Tur 29  
 Mourilee Lothian Pendegrantz 51  
 Mundus River 10

## N

Naida 14  
 Narrheit 38  
 Nectanebo 19, 51  
 Nehian 13  
 New Aenoch 20  
 Nexus 31, 35

Ngorondoro 28  
 Nia 4, 13  
 Nicoleigh Hills 10  
 Nigold 7  
 Norgorad–Kam 8  
 Norgorod–Kam 28  
 Nostian River 10  
 Nulak–Kiz–Din 33, 51  
 Nulak–Kiz–Din 25  
 Nuluk–Kiz–Din 44, 45

## O

Oanthuil 15  
 Obsidian Book 33  
 Oddine 6  
 Oddine Ocean 15  
 Odovakar 26  
 Og–Aust 33  
 Ogden 21  
 Ogoltay 42  
 Olbrich 26  
 Olgdon River 10  
 Ondavar River 10  
 Ondluche 33, 48, 49  
 Ondorog Helgostohl XIV 29  
 Onwaltig 28  
 Ore–Tsar 20, 22, 27  
 Ore–tsar 42  
 Ossford 25  
 Othines 24  
 Outer Planes 33

## P

Paths of Umbra 33, 51  
 Philip the Guileless 22  
 Pits of Woe 19  
 Poseidon 38  
 Pryzmira 20  
 Punj 29

## Q

Quest Knights 16

## R

Raven Heights 10  
 Red Hills 10  
 Red March 9  
 Rhealth 43  
 Rhuneland 29  
 Rilhwood 9  
 Rings of Brass 33  
 Robert Luther 51  
 Rodope Mountains 8  
 Roheisen Hohle 29  
 Romia River 10  
 Rot–Tor 10  
 Runelords 31

Runestones 33  
Rune Marks 33  
Rykaard 5, 13

## S

Saarbrucke 30  
Saddleback Range 8  
    Begrucken. *See* Cold Mist  
Saline River 9  
Sav 30  
Seas of Austun 6  
    Sea of God. *See* Cold Mist  
Sea of Shenal 9  
Sebastian Oliver I 51  
Shadow Mountains 8  
Shadow Realm 18, 32  
Shindolay Elves 17  
Shroud of Darkness 31, 35. *See*  
    *also* Cold Mist  
    Cold Mist 3  
shroud of darkness 52  
Solarium Empire 22, 52  
Sorgon River 9  
Spells 36  
St. Luther 45  
Stone Fields 32  
Stone Wars 16  
Straights of Ligon 10  
Straights of Ungara 9  
Straights of Ursal 49  
Sun 31, 34, 39  
Surne 5, 13

## T

Tagea 29  
Tefnut 39  
The Detmold 9  
The Drab Sinks 8

The Eldwood 7  
the Great Forest 9  
    Grossewald. *See* Cold Mist  
The Inner Sea 8  
The Massif 8  
The Shelves of the Mist 8  
The Soup Marsh 9  
The Straights of Ursal 9  
The Toten Fields 30  
The Wild 9  
The Wilds 7  
Thorax 15, 38, 46, 47, 48, 49  
Thrace 21  
Thrushbeard 50  
Tildune 21  
tone Wars 49  
Torrich 30  
Toten 9  
Toth 39  
Trees 46  
Trolls 11  
Trondheim 30  
Trotigen giants 12  
Twilight elves 7  
Twilight Wood 7, 17  
Twin Sisters 34, 35, 39, 46, 49

## U

Udunilay 10, 21  
Ulgars 24  
Umbria 30  
Unklar 3, 9, 13, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 27, 31,  
    33, 34, 35, 39, 51, 52  
    Horned One. *See* Cold Mist  
Unk Oalbone 24  
Urlnarch 35  
Urnus Gregaria 43  
Ustracan 15

Uthkin 47  
Utumno 7, 45

## V

Val-Austlich 37, 40  
Val-Eahrakun 36, 37  
Val-Tulmiph 37, 43  
Val-Austlich 19  
Val-Eahrakun 19  
Varucks 25  
Vilshofen 20  
Vistenodge the Mad 23  
Void 31, 32, 46, 48, 51  
Voralberg Mountains 10

## W

Wall of Worlds 2, 3, 31, 35, 46, 51, 52  
Wars of Liberation 22, 50  
Wenafar 16, 31, 34, 35, 40  
White Order 7, 8  
Wild Elves 17  
William III 21  
Wilston Sea 6  
Winter Dark Wars 27, 52  
Winter Runes 31, 33  
Wodonhohle 6  
Wood Elves 17  
Wulfad 43

## Z

Zeitz 30  
Zernius 40  
Zuala 4, 14



IN DEFIANCE OF VNKLAR, FRAFNOG THE GREAT DRAGON STOLE THE HEART OF THE ALL FATHER AND GAVE IT TO THE FAERIE QUEEN, WENFAR. VNKLAR RAGED AGAINST HER AND HATED HER EVERAFTER.