




Glorantha

THE SECOND AGE



RuneQuest



Glorantha

THE SECOND AGE

credits and contents

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Contents

Credits & Contents	1
Welcome to Glorantha	2
The Two Empires	15
Major Cultures	32
Major Races	65
World Gazetteer	82
Campaign Setting:	
Safelster, Cities of Intrigue	125
Index	158

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WELCOME TO GLORANTHA

This book contains everything a roleplayer needs to launch an epic *RuneQuest* campaign set in the classic setting of Glorantha, a world of mythic adventure. Glorantha puts its own distinctive spin on the classic themes and images of the fantasy genre. This chapter gives both the Games Master and players a grounding in Glorantha's essential concepts, cultures, races and history.

Myth and Adventure

Glorantha is a world permeated by magic and shaped by myth. Its heroes achieve power by questing for runes, physical manifestations of the eternal abstract forces that shape its destiny. Eventually they graduate to even more powerful magics, learning to gain power by emulating the deeds of the gods, mastering the arcane formulae of the sorcerous arts, allying with spirits, or achieving meditative awareness of life's unknowable secrets. In doing so, they draw on one or more of the mythic Otherworlds surrounding their everyday material world. With the right magic, they can travel to the realms of the gods, become participants in their ancestral myths and

return with wondrous new abilities. Those who fail these daunting tests may be diminished, destroyed or eternally lost in the mythic realms.

Explorers, adventurers and kings are not the only ones who wield magical power here. Ordinary people practice their own spells and charms, helping them to feed, clothe and shelter themselves in what would otherwise be a hostile environment.

Glorantha is a world of clashing cultures, where good and evil are not always easy to sort out. Though cursed with more than its share of tyrants, monsters and villains, no single one of its cultures maintains a monopoly on virtue. Two warring cultures can be, from their own point of view, equally right — or equally ruthless and brutal. Cultures differ on the correct way to live, the true events of myth and history, and the very purpose of existence. And that is just the humans: Glorantha's inhuman races follow their own alien agendas, as laid out from the beginning of time.

In its glorious Second Age, Glorantha is the prize of warring Empires. Two Empires, more similar than they would like to admit, vie for ultimate dominance. The **God Learner Empire** seeks to crack open and lay bare the very secrets of the gods, manipulating them to their own ends. The **Empire of Wyrms' Friends** works to transform its land and people into a gigantic, mystical dragon, which will take flight and reshape the entire world.

The Second Age is a time of unprecedented discovery and exploration. For the first time, trade and travel allows the interaction of far-flung cultures. Both Empires innovate feverishly, unveiling new forms of magic, new devices, new modes of perception.

Against this backdrop of unfettered progress, dark omens gather. Men have pushed the Glorantha's eternal laws of myth and magic to the breaking point. How long will it be before the world strikes back at them, punishing their unprecedented hubris?

A Classic Setting, Revisited

Greg Stafford's world of Glorantha has been thrilling and inspiring gamers since 1974, with the appearance of the board game *White Bear and Red Moon*. *RuneQuest*, the original Glorantha roleplaying game, debuted in 1978, published first by Chaosium and later by Avalon Hill. Since then legions of fans have plumbed Glorantha's depths and puzzled over its secrets. It supports a thriving convention scene and robust Internet presence. Subsequent Gloranthan games include the *King of Dragon Pass* computer game and *HeroQuest* roleplaying game.

The new Mongoose Publishing edition of *RuneQuest* is the first to lift the veil on Glorantha's Second Age, which has previously been presented as a murky past of wonder and mystery.

Gloranthan Themes

1. Everything is magical.
2. Myth is real.
3. The past shapes the present.
4. Myth is true, even in its contradictions.
5. Forgetting Number 4 can get you killed.
6. Truth is a matter of perspective.
7. He who embraces materialism at the expense of the spirit can become temporarily powerful but courts ultimate disaster.
8. War can be heroic and glorious but is always devastating and cruel.
9. Ordinary lives are sustained by the idealism of communal sacrifice, of love for family and clan. The grand sweep of history is fuelled by greed, aggression and pride.
10. History is cyclical. The world rises from the ashes of catastrophe, recovers and prospers. People becomes proud and complacent, tampering with cosmic forces, visiting catastrophe upon themselves. The world rises from the ashes of catastrophe...

The World

At first glance, the world of Glorantha seems to be much like our own. Land masses rise from a vast ocean. There are mountains and valleys, rivers, lakes, and streams. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west. Coniferous forests cover its colder expanses; jungles and deserts carpet its hot zones. Objects fall to the ground when you drop them. When not otherwise stated, assume that the basic facts of humdrum reality are the same in Glorantha as they are in our world.

A Moonless Sky

During the Second Age, Glorantha has only one moon, the Blue Moon, which is hardly ever seen, though its movements through the sky can be plotted indirectly, by marking the action of the tides. It briefly appears every six days, as a blue streak dropping into Magasta's Pool.

Keep this in mind during night adventures. Players hoping their characters can navigate via moonlight must be reminded that in this world, there is none to be found.

The Dragon is everything. Soon, everything will be the Dragon.

— *Ervaling Scalemaker, Wyrmfriend Priest*

Always keep in mind, though, that these resemblances are superficial, if not coincidental. Glorantha is a place governed by the laws of magic, not physics. Vegetation patterns exist because gods put those plants there, back in the time when deities and men mingled in the everyday world. The world's terrain was shaped by divine action. Objects fall because the laws of magic decree that they should.

This can sometimes prove dangerous. Unlike like the reliable, repeatable laws of science, the rules governing magic are mutable and can change. And when they change, everything is up for grabs.

Geography

Gloranthans believe that the world is flat. They are absolutely correct.

Our world is a globe spinning in space, orbiting around a sun, which is part of a galaxy of other stars. Glorantha is an enormous earthen cube, floating on an infinite sea, with only one of its surfaces ever so slightly exposed. Swirling in the centre of this exposed surface is a devouring whirlpool, Magasta's Pool, which continually draws the world's water down into it.

The sky overhead is literally a dome. Attached to the dome are Glorantha's stars. Other celestial bodies, including Glorantha's sun, move around the dome but are not firmly affixed to it.

Other supernatural realms surround the material world of Glorantha, also called the Inner World. Beneath the cube and its enveloping sea is a realm of Darkness.

The world's major land masses are the temperate, heavily populated continent of **Genertela** and the tropical, less hospitable land of **Pamaltela**, where grass does not grow. A major island called **Jrustela** serves as home base to the God Learner Empire. Other, less sweeping civilisations are found on smaller islands like **Brithos** and **Vithela**.

Calendar

Before the rise of the God Learners, most cultures of Glorantha used their own calendars or no calendars at all. The God Learners chose the most popular calendar, that of a First Age culture called the Theyalans, and have popularised it throughout the world. Anybody who does business with the Jrusteli, even their enemies, knows how to use their calendar of choice.

Each week is seven days long. The days of the week are, in order, Freezeday, Waterday, Clayday, Windsday, Fireday, Wildday and Godday (in areas where more than one god is venerated, the last day is called Godsdays).

Eight weeks make up a season. The seasons are named after the elements of Sea, Fire, Earth, Dark and Storm. These correspond to climactic changes: roughly speaking, Sea Season is like our spring; Fire Season is summer; Earth Season is fall; Dark Season is like winter. Think of Storm Season as an especially lengthy and turbulent transition between winter and spring. After Storm Season comes a two-week period outside the seasonal boundaries called Sacred Time, where ceremonies of rebirth are performed and the level of magical energy runs high.

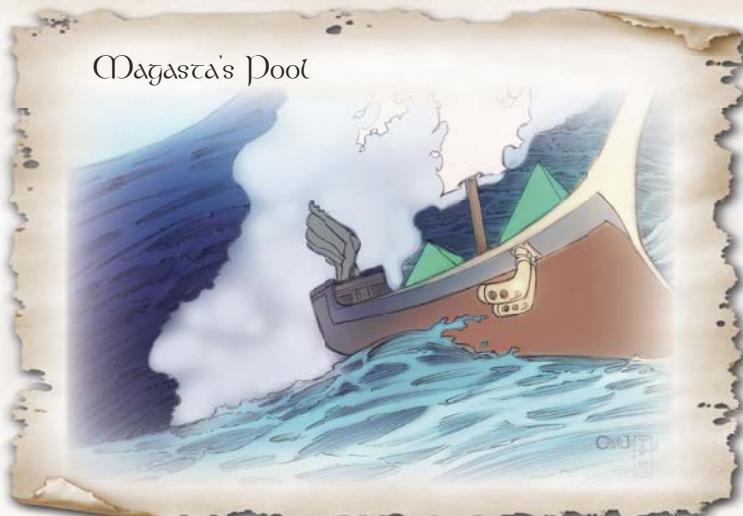
Cultures and Peoples

Glorantha has always been a place of clashing peoples, where differences in belief and spiritual practice lead to confrontation on the battlefield. The Second Age is a time of cultural cross-pollination and consolidation. Both major Empires attempt to fuse previously incompatible beliefs into a new political and commercial unity. As traditionalists and innovators clash, old enemies have become new allies.

Me and my adventuring comrades call Sacred Time 'Trouble Time', on account of there's so many ways to get into trouble during it. Take my advice. Go to a nice peaceful ceremony somewhere, or stay home and pull the covers up over your head.

— Curek Runespear, Mercenary of Safelsjer

Magasta's Pool



The Old Ways

Theist cultures access their higher magic through emulation of multiple gods. Though priests may dedicate themselves to a single deity, these cultures are pantheistic, deriving benefits from their adherence to an entire pantheon.

Orlanthi, Worshippers of the Storm Tribe
Orlanthi people worship the tumultuous gods of the Storm Tribe, led by the warrior deity **Orlanth** and his wife, the earth mother **Ernalda**. The popular image of an Orlanthe is that of a cattle-herding hill barbarian who lives in a clan-based society. Although pure Orlanthe are likelier to be found in a few remote, hardscrabble areas, plenty of Storm worshippers can be found in towns and cities, practicing an urbanised version of this boisterous, freedom-loving creed. Orlanthe's myths describe him as a violent, wandering troublemaker who is somewhat tamed by his bountiful, nurturing wife, whom he stole from the Sky Gods.

He and others of his rowdy, uncompromising pantheon remain highly popular with adventurers. His divine allies include **Issaries** the trader, **Lhankor Mhy** the scholar, **Humakt** the slayer, **Yinkin** the cat and **Chalana Arroy**, the healer. Followers of Orlanthe's even more violent brother, **Urox** the storm bull, are hard to find these days. Urox was famed as a fighter of the dread corrupting force known as Chaos, but Chaos is not much in evidence in the current Age of Empires.

Orlanthe will fight nearly anyone, counting trolls, dragons and Chaos creatures among their roster of foes. Those

of central Genertela have always warred against the Pelorians, whose gods they call the Fire Tribe. Nowadays, conservative Orlanthi of these parts find themselves with more in common with haughty Pelorians than the weird, dragon-loving wyrmfriends. Together, these beleaguered theists have joined forces under the banner of the Old Day Traditionalists, determined to bring down the oppressive and blasphemous Empire of Wyrms' Friends.

PELORIANS, WORSHIPPERS OF THE SKY GODS

Pelorians, native to the land of Dara Happa, worship the sun god, **Yelm**. They rank themselves in a strictly hierarchical society, in which all people, from the lowliest farmer to the Emperor himself, fulfil the roles handed down to them by their stern paternal deity. An urbanised people, they place the family above the clan.

Dara Happans consider their Emperor to be a divinely-inspired carrier of Yelm's mantle. Things are right in the world when a descendant of Yelm sits on the Dara Happan throne and woefully wrong on those few occasions when the lineage is broken. Now they are conquered and a dragon from the Empire of Wyrms' Friends shockingly occupies the Emperor's throne! Once disdainful of the rude Orlanthi barbarians to the south, they have covertly united with them to wage a harrying insurgency against their draconic occupiers.

Pelorian adventurers do not derive their power directly from the imperial god of the sun, but from the pantheon's fiery warriors and staunch attendants. These include: the volcanic **Lodril**, lusty god of the common man;

The blows we have struck so far against the accursed wyrmfriends will seem but a prelude. Wait until we unleash the destructive power of the dread god Shargash!

— Varusfori Gold-Beard, Exiled Noble of Dara Happa

Currency

While Glorantha in the Second Age uses gold, silver, copper and lead in their currencies, the coinages are referred to differently. Gold ducats are instead referred to simply as gold or sometimes gold pieces. Silver pieces are more commonly referred to simply as silver. Copper pennies are called coppers or occasionally copper clacks. Lead coins are mostly only used by the uz (trolls) and are referred to as lead bolg.

Gloranthan Metals

Bronze: An alloy of tin and copper, this is the standard metal of Glorantha and grants no specific bonuses or penalties.

Iron: Iron interferes with a bearer's spellcasting ability. Every ENC point of iron carried by a bearer reduces his Magic Point maximum by one. In essence, the bearer's POW is considered lower than normal, for the purposes of determining maximum Magic Points and regaining Magic Points only.

Any damage dealt by an iron weapon against aldryami or uz is doubled. Iron weapons will also affect creatures normally unaffected by non-magical weapons.

Silver: Too soft to be formed into a sharp edge or tip, only crushing or bludgeoning weapons can be made from silver. Silver weapons will affect creatures normally unaffected by non-magical weapons.

Lokarnos, god of trade and travel; and **Yelmalio**, hot-tempered warrior and defender of the faith. Other deities of great importance to their society, but lesser import to adventurers, are Yelm's consort, **Oria**, the aloof star god **Dayzatar** and the fertile river goddess **Oslira**.

Other Sky God worshippers include the **Horse Nomads of Pent**. These fearsome warriors of the steppes to the east of Peloria worship a sun god called **Kargzant**, who is as harsh and uncompromising as the lives they lead.

New Empires

The simmering revolts of the theist cultures have been stoked by the growth of two disturbingly innovative Empires. Neither worries as much about the threat posed by their beleaguered subjects as they do about each other. The God Learners and Empire of Wyrms' Friends see themselves as locked in a battle for world supremacy.

God Learners

Though properly known as the Middle Sea Empire, most people simply call the far-flung Jrusteli seafaring

Empire the 'God Learners Empire'. The Jrusteli follow the **Malkioni** religion, a monotheist faith venerating the **Invisible God**. The faith is named after Malkion, the great deity's defining prophet. Malkioni accept that other gods, like Orlanth and Yelm, exist, but see them as lesser beings, or even demons.

The Invisible God grants little magic to his followers. They must secure their own supernatural powers, through logic and scholarship. Expert practitioners of Sorcery, the Jrusteli discovered a secret called **RuneQuest Sight**, a means of perception allowing them to detect the flow of magic and belief. It allows users to see connections between the myths and practices of unrelated cultures and, by venturing into the magical Otherworld called the Hero Plane, to change the details of those primal stories. These changes then radiate to the material world of Glorantha. For example, half a century ago, the God Learners went so far as to switch the grain goddess of two different cultures.

The second prong of the God Learners' power lies in their defeat of the seafaring Waertagi people nearly two centuries ago. Until that day, the Waertagi controlled all sea traffic in the world. The Jrusteli rapidly filled the gap and now control cities and outposts throughout the world's coastal regions.

Wyrmfriends

Central Genertela used to be the cradle of theism but has now given birth to a new blend of old-style worship and dragon magic. The Empire of Wyrm's Friends, or EWF, are former Orlanthi who have formed a mystical sect devoted to the pursuit of dragon wisdom. They owe their origins to their rivals, the God Learners, who stole the secret of dragon speech and began to teach it in the central Genertelan city of Nochet. Those who learned the language called **Auld Wyrmish** were able to communicate with dragonewts, a cryptic race of reptilian humanoids related to true dragons. From them they learned a new mode of mystic worship. It caught

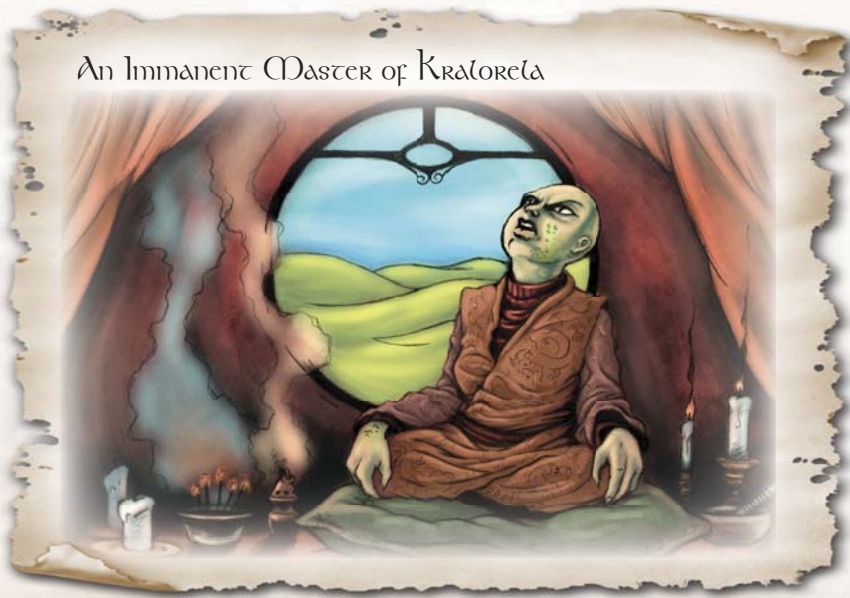
on like wildfire, transforming local Orlanthi society within a generation. Followers of the new wyrmish way persecuted conservatives determined to cling to the time-tested traditions.

The mystic sect quickly transmogrified into a political movement, declaring itself an Empire over three hundred years ago. Along the way, they have weathered repeated incursions from the God Learners, who are intent on capturing the secrets of dragon magic for themselves. Riding into battle on the backs of dinosaurs, they have expanded militarily, conquering their neighbours, including the proud Dara Happan lands. These occupations serve their final goal: they want to transform the land and people into a new form of dragon, bigger than any ever seen before on Glorantha. This is no minor ambition, given that existing Gloranthan dragons can be as big as mountain ranges.

Dragonewts

Dragonewts are reptilian humanoids who progress through a series of forms as they hone their state of mystical attunement with their draconic natures. This transformation occurs via reincarnation. When a dragonewt dies, its soul migrates into a new egg. If it has progressed spiritually, its new form is more dragon-like than the one before it. It begins as a **scout**, or crested dragonewt, onward to the **warrior** (beaked dragonewt), **noble** (tailed priest) and finally the **ruler** (full priest). Although their motivations and perceptions are thoroughly

An Immanent Master of Kraloreta



alien to the average Gloranthan, mastery of their language allows one to understand them. The dragonewt does not seem more human – instead, the speaker of its language becomes more alien.

Kraloreli

The Empire of **Kralorela** occupies the eastern third of the Genertelan continent. The people of this large, heavily populated nation used to practice an older, less overt form of dragon mysticism than that promulgated by the EWF. They teach that dragons created the world and heavens, and that the ultimate goal of worship is to become a dragon oneself. Now a new, flashier tradition, imported from the God Learners, has upended the Empire's sense of order. Called the **Path of Immanent Mastery**, it rapidly accelerates the process of draconic transformation. Followers of the original draconic mysticism have fled to the benighted **Kingdom of Ignorance**, leaving ShangHsa, a long-lived Immanent Master, to rule Kralorela.

Teshnans

In the tropical land of **Teshnos**, dozens of mystical traditions compete for the attention of spiritual Questers. Seers and yogis congregate with God Learner scholars, refining meditative techniques and mixing incompatible cosmologies. Most of these paths partake of **sublime mysticism**, in which the practitioner seeks to perfect himself over many cycles of reincarnation. God Learner insights have greatly speeded this improvements, which can now take place during a single lifetime and are often outlandish in outward effect. Multi-armed warriors sip chai tea with thieves and charlatans. The beasts of the jungle achieve third-eye consciousness. In the mystic hothouse that is Teshnos, all has become possible.

Vithelans

In Vithela, or the Eastern Isles, magic derives from **ascetic mysticism**, a process of denial and self-sacrifice. Vithelans believe that the everyday world is an illusion meant to disguise a true, more perfect reality of spiritual oneness. By denying themselves pleasures, comforts and sensory stimulation, Vithela's austere monks attempt to emulate the **Great Refusal**, in which they reject the illusion, achieving the blissful state of **Durapdur**.

Many routes lead to Durapdur, all of them established by various gods. Those favoured by adventurers include the paths of **Kabalt**, patron of martial artists, **Hensavara** the bowman and **Karkal**, god of fire and war.

Nomads of the Waste

Between the fertile lands of Maniria and Kralorela lie The Wastes, a vast and hungry desert. Only fiercely independent nomadic peoples survive there. The shamans of **Prax**, following ways of spirit knowledge handed down to them by the **Waha**, god of survival, help them to bond with their mounts. They herd surprising array of riding animals, from sable to bison to rhinos and zebras.

Pamaltelans

On the grassless savannah dominating much of the southern continent of Pamaltela, shamans aid their people by contacting the spirits of the great giants and heroes of the original paradisiacal days before death stalked the land. Even more essential to their survival are the good graces of local spirits of vegetation, earth and water.

The Inhuman Races

The inhuman or elder races claim a much longer ancestry in Glorantha than mere humans do. Each remembers an age more favourable to their primal natures and seek to return to it.

Aldryami (Elfs)

Glorantha's so-called elfs, who refer to themselves as aldryami, are mobile, intelligent plant beings in humanoid form. Some appear quite human, with only the odd vegetable feature, like vines for hair. Others are covered with bark or thorns. Each elf is the human-like manifestation of a particular type of tree: there are birch elfs, oak elfs, ash elfs and so on. **Brown elfs** spring from deciduous forests. **Green elfs** are found in coniferous forests; **yellow elfs**, in jungles.

They enjoy a sense of mystic harmony with the woods and jungles around them. In place of gods and goddesses, they commune with several life forces found within the Song of the Woods, most notably the lovely **Aldrya the Grower**.

Chaos Creatures

The destructive and corrupting force of Chaos, a terrible threat originating from before the dawn of time that terrorised the First Age, is today in deep retreat. Chaos has been beaten back to the most haunted corners of the earth. Only the most determined explorers encounter its monstrous exponents, whether they be the diseased, mutant goat men called the **broo**, or more exotic creeping things like **walktapi** or **scorpion men**.

Hsunchen (Beast Men)

Hordes of Gloranthans dwell between the state of man and animal. **Hsunchen** are disparate tribes of hunter-gatherers worshipping a totemic ancestor, who can switch form between beast and man. They include the **Telmori wolf men** of Ralios, the **bat people** of the Fethlon Jungle and the **Basmoli lion men**, found both in the Waste and in Pamaltela.

Other beast men remain permanently in one state, mixing sapient and animalistic features. These include centaurs, minotaurs and the militant duck warriors.

Mostali (Dwarfs)

The stout, broad-shouldered humanoids who call themselves **mostali** are creatures of stone and stasis. They dwell underground and eschew emotion and personal identity to pay homage to their stony creator god, **Mostal**. Masters of technology, they cast a jealous eye on the bizarre devices of the innovative God Learner Empire. They view Glorantha as a broken machine running amok and aim to fix it by hammering away all of its distressingly unpredictable moving parts.

Timinits (Insect Men)

The wonders of the Second Age have brought a previously obscure race of inhuman beings to the forefront. Carried about the world by God Learner ships, the timinits, or Insect Men, have won fame as explorers, warriors and sorcerers. Bizarrely diverse in form, timinits blend humanoid morphology with various features of the insect kingdom, from antennae and mandibles to chitinous natural armour. Some live the attenuated lifespans of ordinary insects, while others carry on long after their human friends have succumbed to old age. Though most exhibit fierce devotion to the God Learner agenda, a schism in their native Pamaltela has led others to rebel, hoping to establish a civilisation of their own.

Uz (Trolls)

Uz, or trolls, are tusked, bestial humanoids feared for their warlike behaviour and insatiable appetites. Uz break the world into two categories: that which can be eaten and that which cannot. Almost nothing falls into the second category. Creatures of darkness, they mourn the light that returned to the world as history began. They have paid a heavy price for their dedicated opposition to Chaos. At

the end of the First Age, a Chaos demigod of struck them with a dread curse. As a result, the vast majority of uz children are stunted wretches called **enlo** (trollkin).

Uz are known for their affinity with worms, insects and other crawling things.

Gods and Heroes

The conflicts of the Second Age are fought using magic, for magical reasons. As the God Learners and EWF grows more powerful, the rules of magic continue to change.

All magic comes from higher realms of being surrounding the world, most notably a place of continually enacted myth called the Hero Plane. Eventually the battle for the destiny of the Second Age will be fought there, too.

Runes (Common Magic)

The objects of magical essence called runes, from which adventurers wring their Rune Magic, are physical manifestations of the **True Runes**, symbols of cosmic power. All beings capable of dispensing magic are tied to one or more of these cosmic forces, whether they be gods, demigods or great spirits.

The current techniques for using runes, to gain powers and learn spells (also called **common** or **battle magic**) were codified by the God Learners about 200 years ago.

Some say that their disruptive explorations of the Hero Plane have caused a dramatic increase in the quantity of rune objects leaking through into Glorantha. If the God Learners fail, or their techniques stop working, it is likely that adventurers of future ages will have go back to older, more difficult methods of acquiring common magic.

Folk Magic

Magic in Glorantha is not confined to the flashy, martial spells adventurers favour. Nearly everybody has access to a little bit of magic, used to aid in everyday life. Users of folk magic may gain these powers as part of a community of worshippers, receive them from their sorcerous masters or gain them by propitiating local spirits. These effects are economic or survival-oriented. Folk magic blesses crops, mends broken items, ensures fertility, eases childbirth and predicts the weather. It is simple, undramatic and does more for people than the thunderous magic of a thousand freebooters and troublemakers.

So you can twist a man's innards up or wreath a blade in cleansing fire. But can you protect mother and child when she lies in the birthing hut? Now that, proud adventurer, is useful magic.

— Kenna Harthstaling, *Talking Woman of the Blue Bull Clan*

Higher Magic

Rune Magic is sometimes called common magic because any adventurer can do it. To move beyond these basic spells, one must embark on a form of higher magic. For the vast majority of Gloranthans, the form of higher magic open to them is not a matter of choice but of culture. You do what your father did and his father's father before him (or mother and grandmother – many powerful magics are matriarchal in nature).

The Second Age changes all that. Now new forms of magic are open, to those brave or crazy enough to grasp them. Traditions are raided, altered, mixed together and spit back out again.

All higher forms of magic also draw on the True Runes, though they can tap directly into them, without having to find and attune to essence objects.

Divine Magic

Practitioners of Divine Magic draw power into the world through ritual. In performing these rituals they re-enact the great deeds of their patron gods or heroes. To practice magic they must steep themselves in the great myths of their culture, so that they can think and act like their patrons. Although theist priests may speak of communing with their gods, or being granted powers by them, these statements must be seen as poetic, not literal. It is the act of mythic imitation that brings the magic.

Theists who come to doubt their relationship with their gods may lose access to their magic. This is a rare occurrence; these people spend their entire lives making themselves more like Orlanth, Yelmario or whoever their patron might be.

Spirit Magic

Shamans derive power directly from minor supernatural entities called spirits. These beings embody abstract concepts, usually elements of nature. Spirits give shamans particular powers to use, which they place in charms and fetishes. Being a shaman means learning, often through direct and sometimes bitter experience, the specific means of approach one must take to a given spirit. Most spirits give magic after being **propitiated**, or given gifts. These sacrifices may take the form of food, performance, items of value, or sincere pleas. A shaman needn't feel affection for the spirit in question. He may propitiate fearsome entities to stop them from doing bad things.

Certain shamanic traditions are aggressive and dominating. The shaman defeats the spirit, binding it to his will. The bound spirit must then supply magical services on demand.

Sorcery (Book Magic)

Popular in the west, most especially among the God Learners, Sorcery derives its power from the rote repetition of pre-established formulae, presented through speech, gesture and the manipulation of objects. These are recorded in magical tomes, called **grimoires**, so that others of the same school can later learn them, too.

Sorcery is the gift of the Invisible God, who does not give his followers magic directly but instead grants them the tool of logic, so they can discover the underlying powers of the cosmos for themselves.

God Learner magic is parasitic; it draws on the power flowing from the Otherworlds to practitioners of other forms. It twists these energies to its own purposes, sometimes even changing the Otherworldly landscape. God Learner Sorcery is only one style of Sorcery, though – many other schools draw power harmlessly from the True Runes without hijacking it from other sources.

Mystic Magic

Mystic magic draws power into the world by establishing a connection of inexpressible awareness between individual and cosmos. Although it can wreath a martial artist's fist in devouring fire or guide an arrow to an impossible target, true masters of mysticism claim

that these worldly effects are a by-product, or stepping stone, to the true goal of personal transformation. Worse, they may be a trap, a test to see who is truly capable of separating himself from material distractions. That said, many mystics are perfectly content to stop at the fiery fists and inerrant arrows.

Mystic techniques have been established by great yogis or seers of the past but they are cryptic and puzzling. The practitioner must use them as tools in an individualised inner quest, to find the truth hidden between the lines.

The Otherworlds

A number of magical dimensions called Otherworlds surround, overlap and permeate Glorantha's Inner World. They are where magic comes from. Characters may draw magic from the Otherworlds, or travel to them, to gather even greater power. The five primary Otherworlds are as follows:

The Saint Plane



See that cowed fellow, huddling and drooling by the university steps? He was once the greatest sorcerer of us all. Then he went to the Essence World.

— Vansfigos Evermead, Tutor of Umathela

The Sky World is overhead and can be reached by going up through the Dome and into a place where massive, marvellous beings exist. They are generally hostile to outsiders but not always.

The Underworld is beneath everything and can be reached by going up down through Magasta's Pool or other holes in the world, into a place where gigantic and terrible beings exist. They are always hostile to outsiders.

The God World, also called the God Plane, is the realm of divine beings. There exists the stead of Orlanth and his storm tribe, the blinding throne of Yelm and the homes of every other being receiving theistic worship.

The Spirit World resembles a foggy negative image of the mortal world. Glowing spirits caper and prowl there, watching the mortal world as through a shroud. Shamans travel there to find, propitiate, transact with and battle spirits. It exists in pockets between the various tableaux of the Saint, Hero and Magic Planes.

The Essence World is a place of pure energy, where forces underlying the True Runes interact in their constant state of cosmic balance. Sorcerers draw on its power but rarely go there, because it is hard to navigate or even perceive. The Essence World is subdivided:

☑ **The Magic Plane** is a more accessible manifestation of the Essence World. Sorcerers travel there to test and perfect new spells.

Many Worlds, Many Terms

In common parlance, the term 'Hero Plane' is used to describe any or all of the Otherworlds. 'I went to the Hero Plane' might mean just that, or it could describe a trip to the Saint World or, among Irusteli, even the God World.

Some theist scholars call the Hero Plane the 'Gods War'. More poetically, the various Otherworlds are sometimes called the Other Side. In this conception, the Spirit World is a veil, or boundary zone, between the real world and the higher Otherworlds. In other words, you can be forgiven for referring to the whole collection of Otherworlds as the Hero Plane. Most adventurers do.

- ☒ The **Saint Plane** is part of the Essence World. The heroes of monotheism eternally repeat their great deeds of piety, smiting unbelievers and proving their holiness. Malkioni priests, who receive theist-style magic from these historical intercessors, travel there to pray for additional powers.
- ☒ The **Hero Plane**, or Gods War, is the prehistoric world where mythological actions occurred.

HeroQuesting

The power of the God Learners lies in their mastery of HeroQuesting. This is a procedure by which adventurers transport themselves into the Otherworlds, interact with the great myths and claim new powers for themselves.

These began as theist religious rites. In a typical religious HeroQuest, worshippers undergo a challenging ceremony in the Otherworld to acquire magical powers.

They travel to their god's home in the Gods World, then through that and onto the Hero Plane. They then re-enact a myth from their religion. Each Quest is made up of **stations**, or stages of the story, in which the god (represented by the Quester) faces a difficult test. If the Quester overcomes all of the obstacles, he gains a power corresponding to the nature of the myth. For instance, a re-enactment of a myth in which Orlanth ends a drought by slaying a dragon might give you a sword to use against dragonewts or the power to bring rain. Myths about groups of gods are the best to recreate, as they allow multiple Questers to face the tests together.

The God Learners have discovered that they can go into other peoples' myths. The first person in history to HeroQuest was a mysterious figure named **Arkat**, one of the great heroes (or perhaps villains) of the First Age. He learned how to travel into the Otherworld and enhance his powers. After his death, his followers secretly preserved his methods, allowing only a few mighty heroes follow in his footsteps. They did so exactly and fearfully.

When the God Learners conquered Ralios, home to the dark Empire Arkat left behind him, they seized the documents laying out his HeroQuesting methodology. At first they simply copied his HeroQuests of their own Malkioni religion. But in their usual bold and heedless inquiry, they soon found themselves able to forcibly enter the myths of the theists, going onto myths of the Gods. They found connections between traditions. They discovered they could step off the beaten path, moving from one myth to the next, and so found they could gather great magic from all over the mythic world. In the course of these inquiries they developed their notorious RuneQuest Sight and stumbled across the **God Learners' Secret**.

A law of HeroQuesting is that nothing can be brought out of the Otherworlds except what is brought in. Thus if the object is to get a great sword of myth, a sword must be brought on the quest and transformed, in the Otherworld, to the magical one. The God Learners have brought back so many strange new abilities from the Otherworld that other cultures have had to master the art of HeroQuesting to keep up with them. But none are as skilled.

Novice adventurers should leave the difficult and dangerous art of HeroQuesting in mightier hands. However, even when they are too green to go to the Hero Plane themselves, their world will continue to be transformed by it.

History in a Nutshell

According to the Dara Happans and Kraloreli, history started over a hundred thousand years ago and they have the documents to prove it. Everybody else knows that period of prehistory as **Mythic Time**. Real time began just over nine centuries ago and before that Glorantha existed in a timeless and immeasurable era of myth.

Prehistory (The God Time)

Theists know prehistory as the **God Time**. During this period, gods and people walked the earth together. Cultures disagree on the details, but if you look at their myths together, as the God Learners are doing, it is possible to sketch out a general **monomyth** tracing the events of Prehistory.

First, there was the **Creation Age**. The **Prime Runes**, the most central of the True Runes, come into being. These gain consciousness and become the original gods. A central pillar of earthly existence, the **Spike**, forms and the world coalesces around it.

Then follows the **Green Age**, in which life as we know it appears, populating the world.

It precedes the **Golden Age**, one of civilisation and order.

The **Storm Age**, or **Lesser Darkness**, an era of war and death, begins when the sun falls from the sky.

Chaos enters the world. It brings the **Age of Terror**, also called the **Greater Darkness**. Misery reigns. Dread gods of evil and entropy, **Wakboth** (also called the Devil) and **Kajabor**, attempt to destroy Glorantha, nearly succeeding. The surviving gods rally to fight them, winning victory at great cost.

In the mortal realm, all of the world's cultures unite to combat the forces of Chaos, in the battle called **I Fought We Won**.

The era of gods ends upon the striking of a **Great Compromise**, creating Time and constraining their ability to intercede in the mortal world. Gods retreat to the eternity of the Gods Realm, leaving mortals to forge a new world as the sun returns to the sky and the **Dawn Age** begins.

The First Age: Recovery and Catastrophe

Glorantha's First Age, also called the Dawn Age, lasts for five hundred years. A spirit of cooperation, fostered by the unified battle against Chaos that brought the sun

Our brave god, Orlanth, inadvertently started the Storm Age, when he rashly struck the haughty sun, Yelm, with the new weapon called Death.

— Enlirath Casting, God Talker of the Brown Deer Clan

Yelm was never slain. Especially not by a rude and dirty barbarian deity. When the sun fell, it was his Yelm's grandson, Khorventos, who died, killed by corrupt rivals within the Sky Pantheon.

— Thestravhentum, Sun Priest

back into the sky, reigns for its first few decades. Then the disparate human cultures fall to fighting among themselves. Not long after that, the elder races resume their ancient feuds.

The **Waertagi**, a green-skinned, sea-faring people descended from the prophet Malkion, rise to power through their monopoly over ocean travel.

In the West, the seer **Prince Hrestol** experiences joyful revelations of the Invisible God, establishing the New Malkioni Church. The institution spreads quickly, superseding more dour and oppressive forms of monotheist belief.

Eastern cultures retreat into themselves, quietly rebuilding their ruined civilisations.

In central Genertela, elder races and theist cultures form the **World Council of Friends**, which sends out missionaries to spread their secrets of survival to lands still shattered by the Great Darkness. They stay unified for a century and a half; then the elder races and other allies begin to desert them.

In the year 350, their heirs, the **Second Council**, perform world-shaking experimental magic, creating a new god, **Nysalor**, who is not bound by the Great Compromise and can therefore walk among mortals. His creation coincides with an event known as the **Sunstop**, wherein the sun

halted its position in the sky. Throughout the world, other cultures undergo simultaneous metaphysical upheavals. Each finds a local reason to explain this cataclysmic event.

It is the era of **Gbaji the Deceiver**. Depending on who you ask, either Nysalor transforms into the monstrous Chaos god Gbaji the Deceiver, who is laid low by the brave and innovative hero **Arkat**; or Arkat becomes a traitorous identity-shifting magician, who eventually murders Nysalor. The devastating Gbaji War rages across central and western Genertela, ending with climactic hand-to-hand combat between demon and hero in the year 450.

The victor, Arkat, founds the **Stygian Empire** in the land of Ralios. He ascends to the God World somewhere around the year 500, ending the Dawn Age.

To end the Dawn Age with the so-called apotheosis of the traitor Arkat is absurd. We should reckon it as ending in 450, with the woeful slaughter of beautiful Nysalor.

— *Pormodor of Raint, Archivist, Cult of the Shattered Eye*

The Modern Age: Empire and Adventure

Two interconnected revelations of the Sixth Century drive the history of Glorantha to the present day.

On the island of Jrustela, Malkioni magicians found the first God Learner study groups. Recognising the power unleashed by Nysalor/Gbaji and other false gods, they research ways of accessing and manipulating their might. They learn to conduct **spirit raids**, attacks on foreign cults that steal magical knowledge instead of treasure.

A cult of Orlanthe dragon mystics arises in Dragon Pass. They learn to speak to the draconic tongue and then how to become them. They establish the Empire of Wyrms' Friends and quickly prove themselves to be hostile to the Jrusteli.

The God Learners' Secret

God Learners gifted with RuneQuest Sight have perfected techniques allowing them to punch back through the Hero Plane into the God World, permanently changing what they find there. This is how they pulled off the notorious Goddess Switch.

It is the ability to permanently change the Gods World. The God Learners can go into the Theist Otherworld and do things that have consequences in the ordinary world. Normally these are little things, but lately they effected the Goddess Switch, proving they can do more powerful things as well.

They are certain that these changes are good, permanent and have no subsequent effects. They are wrong but will not discover this for a long time yet to come.

Aided by God Learner magic and carried across the sea by the Waertagi, the Jrusteli colonise portions of Pamaltela. More than a century later, in 718, they turn against the Waertagi, breaking their hold on the seas. A wave of conquests follows. The Jrusteli conquer the West, their ancestral homeland, and establish ports and strongholds along the coasts of the entire world. In 789 they declare themselves the Middle Sea Empire.

In 823, the Empire attacks Brithos, isle of immortals, and is devastatingly repulsed.

Meanwhile, the Empire of Wyrms' Friends expands into much of central and northern Genertela. They conquer the vast land of Dara Happa, then the savage lands of Pent beyond.

The two Empires go to war. In 842, they clash over control of a troll land called the Shadow Plateau, to the south of Dragon Pass.

A greater threat to the EWF rises from within. As the sacrifices required of the people to create the great dragon escalate, the reactionary Old Way Traditionalists gain popular support in the Empire's theist heartland. Priests band together against mystics.

Discontent rumbles in the Middle Sea Empire too, as scholars quietly publish papers warning of supernatural catastrophe, if the God Learners continue their heedless

A Quick Note on Pronunciation

Most Gloranthan names are simple and easy to pronounce. As long as you and your group are pronouncing each name in the same way, it does not really matter if you conform to an official pronunciation. That said, when in doubt, Gloranthan words, unlike English ones, tend to place the emphasis on the penultimate syllable of a word. So Issaries is Iss-AR-ees, not ISS-ar-ees. Ernalda is Er-NAHL-dah.

tampering with the Otherworlds. Rebellion begins in distant lands. By 901 the God Learners have lost their holdings in Pamaltela, as rebellion destroys their vassal, the Six-Legged Empire, and the United Fonrit Alliance and the Umathelan Confederation seize their independence.

Current Events: Year 908

It is now the Year 908, when the strain of imperial expansion begins to chip at the facades of God Learners and EWF alike.

The Two-Year Winter

Dragon Pass is now well into its second year of a terrible winter. Some blame the God Learners; others, the heavy cost of the Great Dragon Project. Famine threatens the land. EWF leaders have ordered massive transfers of grain and other foodstuffs from the provinces, stoking discontent in its occupied territories. Old Way Traditionalists avoid attacking food caravans while escalating raids against other imperial institutions. Rancour between ruling factions grows, as debate rages over the correct response to the traditionalist threat. The fearsome **War Dragons** militate for a scorched-earth policy. The **Above and Beyonds** loftily dismiss the seriousness of the rebellion. The idealistic **Converters** sacrifice their own purity to engage with the people and attempt to alleviate the suffering.

DARA HAPPA STIRS

Murmurs of rebellion against the wyrmfriends circulate most strongly in the Pelorian land of Dara Happa, home to the hierarchical solar culture. Leading its Old Ways faction is a bold, handsome and fast-thinking young man named **Karvanyar**. He claims to be the son of the deposed Yelmite Emperor **Urvanyar**, whose heart and eyes were taken by the **Golden Dragon** who sits on the Solar Throne.

To combat the growing alienation of the people from their rightful draconic Emperor, a contest of adventurous deeds has been announced, for the hand of a wondrous being, the **Daughter of the Golden Dragon**. Adventurers from across the land line up to claim this prize.

Assault on the Clanking City

A massive siege has begun against a God Learner city, Zistorwal, located in God Forgot, in the heavily contested land of Kethaela. This massive edifice, known by its enemies as the **Clanking City** or **Machine City**, is ruled by a steaming, clattering hybrid entity of flesh and metal called **Zistor the Machine God**. His city is considered an abomination and a threat to the Compromise because it mass produces items of magical power. Dwarfs lead the assault, but others, including trolls, Old Way Traditionalists and even champions of the EWF, have also joined the struggle.

Ordeal Omens on the Sea

On the seas, Jrusteli sailors increasingly note signs of turbulence and supernatural trouble. They return to port with tales of inexplicable waterspouts, sea dragons and ghost ships. Increasing numbers of God Learner vessels fail to return at all or are found derelict, their crews vanished without trace. Of all the setbacks facing the God Learner Emperor, this is the most worrisome of all. If it loses its hold on the sea, the Empire will surely fall.

THE TWO EMPIRES

This chapter takes a closer look at the two hungry Empires carving up the Gloranthan Second Age: the Empire of Wyrms' Friends and the God Learner Empire. Whether the Player Characters are for them, against them, or avidly switching sides as shifting winds dictate, their relationships to these vast powers will undoubtedly affect or even determine their destinies.

The God Learners

No one hires more adventuring parties, or rewards them more lavishly, than the God Learners. Well-funded and perennially anxious to increase their knowledge of the world's mysteries, they pay huge sums each year to mercenary bands. These groups, called Knowledge Questers, explore the world's obscure reaches and provide detailed reports to their scholarly underwriters. About half of all Knowledge Quester groups work full-time for a university or God Learner order. Others freelance, picking up new missions on a contract basis. Others work speculatively, finding treasures and then auctioning them

How To Act Like A God Learner

- ☒ Behave as if you have all the answers.
- ☒ Pretend to respect the traditions of other cultures while in fact regarding them as treasures to be plundered.
- ☒ Accept that the ability to meddle in the traditions of others is your birthright as a follower of the only true religion, Malkionism. Foreign gods are false gods, so there is nothing wrong with changing their myths around or taking their powers from them.
- ☒ Believe that every experiment that leads to knowledge is a good thing.
- ☒ Dismiss possible ill consequences of magical experiments. Pay no heed to gloomy doomsayers!

The Middle Sea Empire



off to the highest bidder. Some, but not all, members of a typical Knowledge Band (as Knowledge Quester groups are called) are practitioners of God Learner magic.

God Learner patrons may also hire adventurers to safeguard their commercial enterprises, war against their political enemies or advance their political agendas.

The Middle Sea Empire makes an excellent enemy for an adventuring party. They blaspheme against the theist traditions and happily steal the sacred secrets of all traditions other than their own. Arrogant, avaricious and heedless of boundaries, they sow disorder wherever they go. A cosmic comeuppance awaits them and adventurers who wish to strike a blow against tyranny can take a righteous, violent hand in bringing it about.

A Short History of the Empire

The Jrusteli people hail originally from the land of Seshnela, in western Genertela. At the end of the Dawn Age, after the destruction of Gbaji the Deceiver, his slayer, Arkat, established in neighbouring Ralios a dread trollish regime called the Stygian Empire. It exploits Seshnela as a vassal state.

The blasphemous Arkat did much damage to Seshnela but never reduced it to vassalage. When King Nralar launched his victorious war against the Stygians in 578, it was because their autarch refused to pay him tribute!

— Ombast Slope-Treader, Pedant of New Frowal

During the Fifth and Sixth centuries, refugees from the Seshnela migrate, with the aid of Waertagi sailors, to the island of Jrustela. The first waves seek political freedom and the right to practice their Malkioni faith free of what they see as Arkat's meddling strictures. They discover the timinits, the insect races, and generally work with them peacefully. They are alarmed to discover other humans there and seek more immigrants, who are delayed by more interesting opportunities.

On the mainland, Seshnela wages successful war on the heirs of Arkat, stealing the secrets of HeroQuesting and sharing them with scholars in Jrustela. The migration recommences soon afterwards, as defeated factions in a Seshnegi war of succession depart, vainly hoping to defuse a looming civil war.

In the original Jrustelan settlement, Hredmorinos, the pioneers establish a republic where all free men vote for their leader. At first the settlers work together for mutual survival. Schisms erupt, as they always seem to do. Factions fight one another and finally split off to found other settlements. As these new places prosper, tempers cool and reconciliation binds the burgeoning cities into a new nation. Included in this new political unity are the pre-existing colonies settled during the Dawn Age by migrants from Slontos.

The logic-minded Jrusteli value scholarship above all other pursuits and encourage the creation of various schools of magical inquiry. They remember the story of the dreaded Arkat, who accrued enormous personal power by discovering the technique of HeroQuesting. They work to understand this power, so they can one day defeat those who might use it against them in the future. Thus the first God Learner study groups are founded, around the year 500.

By 580, the colonies on Jrustela are so settled that a new generation of restless seekers decides to plant their feet on a new frontier. Again with Waertagi help, they sail to Pamaltela, setting up colonies in the land of Umathela.

Religious fervour sweeps the island in the late 640s. Although there is only one Invisible God, revealed by a sole prophet, Malkion, various sects disagree fervently on the practical applications of the prophecies to everyday life. Theological dispute becomes political grievance, then boils over into sectarian violence.

These tensions instantly dissipate upon the miraculous appearance of the *Abiding Book*, a volume of theological guidance written directly by the hand of the Invisible God (see page 45 for more details on the *Abiding Book*).

The clear and certain revelation of religious truth fosters a renewed spirit of unity. In 650, the colonies of Jrustela officially bind themselves together as the Jrusteli Confederation.

A generation later, the certitude of Jrusteli, armed with their *Abiding Book*, turns outward. Devout Malkioni create the Return to Rightness movement, meant to spread the single valid orthodoxy to other Malkioni lands. It finds a martial vanguard in the Order of the New Iron Staff, a squad of militant missionaries equipped with powerful combat magic. The urge to proselytise sparks territorial ambitions but they are frustrated when the Waertagi refuse to go along with them and carry armies abroad.

Jrustela now wishes to be an Empire. To accomplish this, it must turn to its God Learner sorcerers. The island's Sorcery schools are given the task of finding a weapon to use against the Waertagi, so that the Jrusteli can sail the seas unmolested.

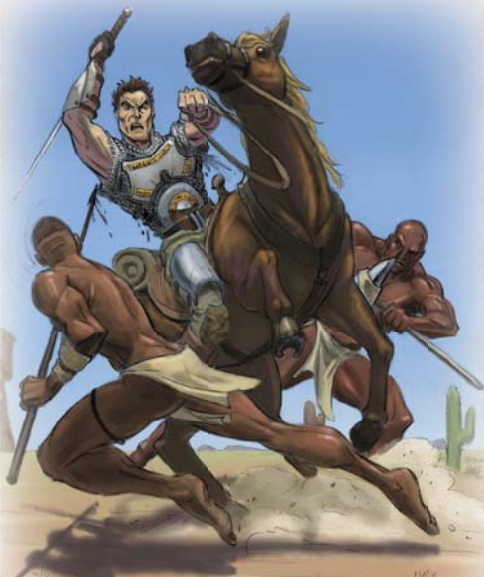
The term 'God Learner' arose three and a half centuries after the work of the early researchers they claim as the progenitors of their movement. He who uses it to describe sorcerous schools prior to 849 engages in forgivable simplification.

— Toranalt the Abider, Sage of the Segurane Knowledge Market

In 718, decades of research come to fruition. Jrusteli sailors set forth bravely in their little wooden ships against the kilometre-sized dragonships. Then the sorcerers ignite the waters! Firebergs, floating mountains of elemental flame, boil the briny waters and destroy the Waertagi. This secret weapon gives the victory to the Jrusteli at the Battle of Tanian's Victory.

Their navy, dubbed the Free Men of the Sea, bears liberating armies of righteous soldiers over the seas. A rapid series of military victories follows, carried out in the name of Return to Rightness Crusade. They fall on Seshnela to drive out the invaders, heathens and heretics. It is difficult and natural allies refuse to help, so in 725 the Jrusteli conquer the western coastal kingdom of Loskalm. Nine years later they achieve their most fervently desired goal, liberating their ancestral homeland of Seshnela from barbarians. The Jrustelan leader, Saval, defies the democratic principles of Jrustela and becomes king of Seshnela; later that year, his son Annmak the Peacemaker succeeds him. From this point onward, the leadership of Jrustela and Seshnela is for all intents and purposes combined under the ancient crown of Seshnela.

Expelled from Pamaltela



In 740, the Jrusteli defeat the Stygian army and finally destroy the last of the long-hated Cult of Arkat. HeroQuesting secrets now reside only with the God Learners.

Islands across the oceans are conquered and occupied. The outposts in Pamaltela are overtaken. The few ports of Slontos are conquered. In 768, through its sponsorship of the crazed adventurer-mystic Gillam D'estau, creator of the Path of Immanent Mastery, the nascent Empire captures control of vast Kralorela. D'estau's adventurism places a Jrusteli puppet Emperor, ShangHsa, on the Kralori throne, sending the old leadership into self-imposed exile. ShangHsa, an Immanent Mastery practitioner, remains on the throne to this day. Other Eastern outposts soon follow, as the Jrusteli commercial fleet comes into its own as the world's dominant economic power.

When lost and starving in the canyons of Kong Jian, the mad hero Gillam D'estau severed and ate his own left arm. Then he re-grew it as a dragon arm and used it to slay those who'd left him there to die.

— Songling Hu, Annalist of the Temple of Immanence, Ting Shui

In 789 the Middle Sea Empire comes officially into being and immediately reaches the height of its financial prosperity. In 818, the formerly Brithini land of Arolanit becomes a duchy of the Empire. During this period the rest of the land of Slontos is also slowly annexed.

The pendulum swings against the Empire. The EWF sends hurricanes to lash Slontos, wreaking devastation there from 818 to 825. In 823, after the immortals of Brithos rebuff an attempt to establish a worldwide orthodoxy of Malkioni belief, Emperor Miglos launches a gigantic invasion attempt against their island nation. The whole fleet and army are destroyed. Brithos remains free. Licking its wounds, the Empire expands further into Pamaltela, intervening in warfare between the various city states of Fonrit.

In 842 it invades the trollish Shadowlands of Kethaela, for the first time waging full-scale, head-on warfare against the EWF. Dragons range the skies and some even fall upon distant Seshnela and Jrustela.

In 849 the various magical schools we've been calling God Learners formally congregate under that title. Four years later, they perform the infamous Goddess Switch (see page 21).

Over the next 20 years, Zistorites, an order devoted to the mass manufacture of magical and technological items, spreads throughout the Empire. The Pamaltelan region of Jolar becomes the subject of a lengthy, draining occupation. There, Knowledge Questers seek a legendary City of Iron, where deep secrets of surpassing interest to the Zistorites would supposedly be found. The Jrusteli introduce horses and cavalry tactics to the region for the first time. At first thinking that horse and rider are the same terrible creature, the central Pamaltelans dub their conquerors the Six-Legged Empire. However, no grass grows in Pamaltela and the horses are short-lived and the advantages of cavalry are lost.

The end of the Ninth Century is a time of magical experimentation on a mass scale. God Learners perform the Four Dukes Folly, a disastrous incantation that accidentally lays waste to an entire neighbourhood in a Loskalmi city. But they acquit themselves spectacularly with other experiments, most notably the Green Waves, the Slag Movement and Erastis' Poison Vapour.

Ducal Wars

Ilotos' need to re-conquer territories bordering Seshnela from his own supposed vassals reveals his present state of weakness. Emboldened by his failures in Pamaltela and themselves pressed by EWF mountain raiders, the dukes of Arolanit and Ralios withhold portions of the tribute owed to Ilotos. This loss of revenue would be galling at any time but represents a special burden when Ilotos must rebuild his army and navies. His forces, inflamed by accusations of pagan tendencies on the part of the rebel dukes, lay waste to their fortresses and put their militias to rout. However, especially in Ralios, where the deposed dukes had ingratiated themselves to the local populace, grumblings persist. The most popular of the dukes, Vamargach the Red, has gone underground in Vesmonstran, where he is sheltered by malcontent clan leaders. Some say that he intends to launch a challenge to the Imperial throne. Others claim he has gone native and will lead a fight for Vesmonstran's independence.

In 901, the current Emperor, Ilotos, ascends the throne. Before the paint has dried on his ceremonial seals, the Empire loses all of its Pamaltelan holdings. Umathela revolts and the Pamaltelan hero Hon Hoolbiktu drives the Six-Legged Empire from Jolar. Expeditionary forces sent to recapture it are lost.

Ilotos responds by sending survivors of the southern war to depose the rebellious dukes of Arolanit and Ralios, placing those lands under his direct control.

In 908, the Empire faces an assault on the Zistorite Clanking City of Kethaela and growing omens of disaster on the high seas.

What God Learners Do

The God Learner's Empire exists by fulfilling multiple agendas. They usually complement one another, cementing alliances between disparate power groups, but sometimes come into conflict.

Its most famous agenda is **magical**: its sorcerers wish to expand their knowledge and power through exploration into, and exploitation of, the so-called pagan religions of Glorantha. The God Learner Sorcery schools and Zistorites pursue this aim.

Despite their notoriety, sorcerers compose only a fraction of the Empire. For most ordinary people, its central goal is **religious**. Its duty is to continue the work of the Rightness Army, to promote the orthodox practice of Malkionism and to stamp out heresy.

For the Empire's growing mercantile class, the Empire's central goal is the expansion and protection of **trade**.

Its noble classes seek **military glory**; for its high-born war leaders, any of the above agendas are fine and good, so long as they provide opportunities to win distinction in combat. Fortunately, all of them do. If given a choice between wars, landless nobles militate for **territorial expansion**. They hope their conquests will win them duchies or lesser vassalages, as their ranks demand. The middle classes may honourably trade their way to riches but for the high-born, land is the only fitting route to wealth.

As Sorcery is the gift of the Invisible God, it is eminently possible to be both Missionary and sorcerer. To be a Missionary and a God Learner sorcerer, now that is not so comfortable a fit.

— Brother Aran, Monk of Pombric

Faith and Magic: A Conflict of Interest

Some religious orders seek the wholesale conversion of pagan worshippers to the Malkioni way. They subscribe to the Doctrine of Conversion and are called **Missionaries**.

This agenda conflicts with the interests of God Learner sorcerers. If the pagans were to be converted en masse, the God Realm might go away and, with it, the source of the magic they have been perfecting for centuries.

Some sorcerers concede that the pagans ought to be converted – but only after their secrets have been thoroughly plumbed. The false gods are part of the Invisible God's creation and he must surely intend for his followers to make use of their gifts before eradicating their worship. This is the Doctrine of Judicious Use; its proponents are nicknamed **Postponers**.

Other sorcerers argue that, while wholesale conversion is ideal in principle, the pagans are so truculent and mired in their false beliefs that the goal is unrealistic in practice. One should instead work to bring light to the few good and receptive souls among the pagan horde and allow the rest the perdition they so fervently seek. Those who espouse this school of thought are called the **Realists**.

Yet another doctrine has it that pagans are cursed by the Invisible God and do not deserve his light. To attempt to convert them is to disobey his will. One should

instead give thanks that one was lucky enough to be born a Malkioni and thus be eligible for God's Solace. This is the doctrine of Inherent Selection; its exponents are called **Inherents**.

Finally there is a school of fence-sitters who lament that this controversy was not current in the 7th Century, so that it might have been addressed by the *Abiding Book*, which conclusively settled all doctrinal disputes active at that time. To avoid error, they say, one must do nothing on the matter, except pray for revelation in the form of a new chapter of the *Abiding Book*. This is the Doctrine of Inerrant Delay; its exponents are the **Delayers**.

Of the Empire's four driving agendas, the one providing the greatest opportunity for adventurers is the accumulation of magical knowledge. The God Learners hunger for information about pagan gods, mystical traditions

What's Your Faction?

When playing a character from the Middle Sea Empire, decide which of its agendas you are most involved in. You can pick more than one but the more choices you select, the more your character will be pulled in multiple directions. Are you mostly interested in:

- ☒ **Magical exploration?**
- ☒ **Religious proselytising?**
- ☒ **Trade?**
- ☒ **Military Dominance?**

Also decide where your sympathies lie in the conflict between sorcerers and missionaries. The schools of thought on this issue are as follows:

- ☒ **Missionaries:** The pagans must be converted immediately.
- ☒ **Postponers:** The pagans must be converted – but not now.
- ☒ **Realists:** Mass conversion will never work and is not worth trying.
- ☒ **Inherents:** God wants the pagans to remain mired in ignorance.
- ☒ **Delayers:** The Invisible God to resolve this controversy in a time and manner of his choosing. Until then, let us not rush to judgment.

Even if you believe in no doctrine beyond your own immediate self-interest, you probably pretend to a sympathy for one or the other of these justifications, just to keep up appearances. Like any great power, the Middle Sea Empire abounds with cynics, but they are expected to pay lip service to some sort of piety. When in doubt, the Doctrine of Inerrant Delay is always a safe choice.

and shamanic practices. As far as they are concerned, knowledge is treasure. This pertains especially to the myths of pagan cultures. To the God Learners, stories are power.

Zistorite sorcerers pay handsomely for previously unknown magical artefacts, even when you can't tell what in Malkion's name they're supposed to do.

— Curek Runespear, Mercenary of Safelster

Looting the World of Myth

If the Otherworlds are the ultimate source of power, myths are their treasure maps. In the theist tradition, when you go on a HeroQuest, you venture into a well-known myth of your culture. You always encounter surprises, which may give you new insight into your gods, but the essential outline of the experience is pre-established. You become part of the story, with yourself in the role of the god you worship. You are tested as the god was tested in the original tale. If the story tells you that your god first fought a troll, then an ill-wind, and then bedded a mysterious woman, before finally battling the dragon, you expect to do the same when you enter the Hero Plane. If you do all of these things successfully and in the proper way, you win a great reward, either for yourself or your community. You might come back with a magic sword, gain a Divine Magic spell, end a drought or increase your clan's birth rate.

If you fail to overcome an obstacle, you are in big trouble. If you are lucky, you will simply be injured or diminished in some way and then get ejected from the Hero Plane, back to the place of ritual where you entered the divine realm. If you are unlucky, you will get lost in a world of myth. You might encounter other gods of your pantheon, engaged in activities you are familiar with from their stories. If you know enough of their stories, you may be able to enter one of them and improvise your way to a proper conclusion, safely exiting from the Otherworld. Otherwise you may be destroyed or trapped forever.

God Learners enter the Other Side to win magical powers for themselves but often do it by moving from one myth to another. They are not the first to engage in this sort

of experimental HeroQuesting; Arkat did it before them. Their innovation lies in creating new hybrid stories where none existed before. Once a new story is established, they send in HeroQuesters, armed with RuneQuest Sight and the God Learner's Secret, to repeat it over and over. Thus they cement their new tale as part of the God Realm. The myths become permanent, changing not only a temporary Hero Plane, but the God's Realm itself. When the stories change, so do the gods. In the material world, the people who worship the altered god accept the alterations, eventually coming to believe in the newly established myth.

God Learners have collected the major myths of the largest cultures but it is in the minor stories known to only a few communities that they have the greatest freedom to move freely through the Otherworld. Adventurers bringing back useful new myths will be fulsomely rewarded as if they had found fistfuls of gems or ancient crowns of gold.

Politics

As an old Seshnegi proverb says, 'the troubles of kings are a boon to swordmakers'. Work opportunities abound for adventurers in times of political unrest. The Emperor's ill luck has emboldened his foes to intrigue against him. His enemies within the Empire include:

- ❑ The deposed dukes of Ralios and Arolanit, and their supporters.
- ❑ The Emperor's erstwhile allies in Ralios, who now recoil at the oppressive taxation he has levied on them, to pay for the cost of their own conquest.
- ❑ Noble families whose sons were lost, or reputations tarnished, by the stunning defeats in Pamaltela.
- ❑ Certain Zistorites, who feel he has not sent enough support to lift the siege against the Clanking City of God Forgot. Others remain touchingly hopeful that their pleas at court will eventually be heard.
- ❑ Nobles of Jrustela, under the banner of the Back to Glory movement, who seek to wrest the imperial throne from hidebound Seshnegi kings back into the hands of a Jrustelan.

In Safelster, they've got a new nickname for the Emperor: 'Ilofos the Unlucky'. He'd better hope it don't stick.

— Curek Runespear, Mercenary of Safelster

Legally, possession of the imperial throne is not hereditary. Nor is it supposed to be exclusively a Seshnegi privilege. When the Middle Sea Empire formed, it was thought that the throne would pass from region to region. The High Council, a collection of religious and secular advisors to the crown, gathers after the Emperor's death or abdication, to select the new ruler. In practice, the Emperors have always been able to stack the High Council with allies and cronies, who will vote for their sons when they die. Since the Empire's formation, the throne has yet to leave Ilotos' family. This increasingly rankles the Jrusteli, who see themselves as the Empire's intellectual inspiration and as Seshnela's liberators. Maybe things would be different if Ilotos were a successful or inspiring leader.

The Jrusteli-based Back to Glory movement schemes to quietly win over members of the High Council, so they elect someone other than his son, Daros. On the other hand, Daros is a dynamic and charismatic young man, arousing greater personal loyalty than his father.

Courtiers lobby ferociously for coveted appointments to the High Council. Although loyalty to the Emperor, who

appoints them, is an essential prerequisite, candidates must also triumph within the groups they represent on the Council:

- ☒ The High Sorcerer is usually also head of the God Learners Alliance.
- ☒ The High Ecclesiast is pontiff of the Malkioni Church.
- ☒ The Head of the Mercantilist's League is generally made Lord Treasurer.
- ☒ The Admiral of the Navy is traditionally a Jrusteli nobleman.
- ☒ The Minister of War is a Seshnegi noble with past experience as a field general.
- ☒ Regional leaders make up the rest of the council. These include the Arch-Duke of Loskalm and the Ministers for Kralori and Vithelan Affairs. Positions formerly held by the Arch-Dukes of Aralonit and Ralios are now filled by Ilotos' brothers, although they do not actually administer those territories. Chairs for the Duchies of Fonrit, Umathela and Jolar remain empty, pending the re-conquest of those impudent Pamaltelan territories.

The Goddess Switch

The Empire's greatest achievement in new myth creation is clearly the Goddess Switch. God Learner sorcerers of Pythos University devoted many years of research to finding two pagan deities of separate cultures who had similar myths. They also needed low-powered deities who were incapable of retaliation. They chose the respective Grain Goddesses of Wenelia and Slontos: Inica, goddess of wild rice and Einkorn, the goddess of grassland wheat. Their adventurers, who blended in with the wild grazing and foraging peoples of both lands, learned two similar myths: 'Inica Feeds the People' and 'How Einkorn's Bounty Filled the Land'. Squads of HeroQuesters journeyed into these myths, playing the roles of the goddesses' attendants. Over many iterations, they slowly altered the stories, until finally Inica and Einkorn were drawn into the same story. A few minor deities proved resistant and were slain during this process. Eventually, prompted by HeroQuesters with RuneQuest Sight, the grain goddesses were forced to admit that they had to be long-lost sisters. Then the sorcerers enacted a new story in which the two goddesses, to stave off a world-eating famine, traded husbands.

The god-talkers of the Slontan gatherers experienced visions of their new grain goddess, as did those of Wenelia. In their dreams, they learned new myths, which were not so much different from the old ones.

At first the switch appeared to be a great success, proving that the pagan gods were false and essentially interchangeable. A few flowers stopped blooming in each place, but so what? Then the crops failed. Inica's delicate grain could not be cultivated in Slontos and Einkorn's grass-wheat was damp and blighted in Wenelia. Fruit stopped growing in Wenelia and in Slontos no marriage lasted for more than a year.

In 908 these changes are apparent to the experimenters of Pythos University and to the cultures affected, but word has yet to spread across the Empire. Battalions of mercenaries prevent travellers from entering the worst-hit areas. Assassins are dispatched to silence those who try to tell the tale.

How Do I Scheme?

God Learner politics might draw the Player Characters into the following adventures:

- ☒ Destroying damaging evidence against a patron or a patron's political ally.
- ☒ Recovering damaging evidence against a patron's rival.
- ☒ Gaining a treasure or myth to win the friendship of a desired ally.
- ☒ Couriering sensitive communications between political allies.
- ☒ Rescuing a political figure held by enemies.
- ☒ Assassinating enemies.
- ☒ Investigating assassinations of allies.
- ☒ Temporarily kidnapping rival politicians to prevent them from taking undesirable action.
- ☒ Negotiating an alliance between political figures.
- ☒ Raiding rivals' lands, draining them of operating resources.
- ☒ Protecting allies' lands from raids.

How Do I Trade?

Commercially-oriented groups may wish to set up trading Empires of their own. To start, they will need to acquire a ship. They might inherit a derelict vessel during an adventure or win a ship as reward from a grateful patron. More likely, they can lease a barely seaworthy knorr for 2,000 to 3,000 silver per season and a 20% share of revenues, calculated before profit. If they go this route, an expendable lackey of the ship's owner accompanies them on their journeys, tallying up their transactions.

Adventurers are more likely to get involved in trade-based exploits on a one-off basis. They might serve as ship or caravan guards, launch raids against pirate ships or outposts, explore new potential trade routes or broker trade deals between imperial merchants and isolated cultures.

Commerce

The Empire's seafaring mercantilists conduct a bustling trade throughout Glorantha. Even their sworn rivals, the EWF, benefit from their movement of goods across the world. Jrusteli trading houses dominate trade, benefiting from their early start in the establishment of shipping fleets. Other colonies and outposts play catch-up, building their own competing fleets.

Where treasure-laden ships fill the ocean, piracy follows. Pirates from the Eastern Isles and the northern coast of Pamaltela grow increasingly bold. The Imperial Navy allocates a small number of ships to the battle against piracy. Other anti-pirate operations are staffed and underwritten by the Mercantilist's League. Adventurers and mercenaries, including many ex-pirates seeking a steadier income, man these fast, cheaply-built and highly expendable vessels.

Any trader, whether based on land or sea, can join the Mercantilist's League, provided that he can present invoices showing at least 10,000 gold pieces of business conducted in the past year. Once eligible, members need

not reestablish their credentials. In addition to its role in anti-piracy efforts, the league represents commercial interests to the Emperor, controlling a seat on the High Council.

War

The nobility's demand for land and glory necessitates constant war. Although the Empire maintains its own standing army and navy, and is augmented by volunteer forces such as the religiously-motivated Rightness Army, it never has as many men under arms as it wants. Mercenaries fill the gap, travelling to areas of conflict to sign on with the highest bidder.

Although few Player Characters want to join armies and fight in mass engagements whose results they have little control over, they can find gainful employment in support or mop-up operations. Martial-themed adventures might include:

- ☒ Bandit suppression in backwater areas.
- ☒ Sabotage or reconnaissance missions.
- ☒ Military espionage.

- ❑ Stealing myths and secrets from rival powers.
- ❑ Thwarting other adventuring parties working for rebels or foreign powers, whether their objectives are magical, political, commercial or military.

Notables

A list of God Learner notables must start with **Ilotos, Emperor of the Land and Sea**. His ill political fortunes have turned him into a beleaguered, short-tempered man. He petulantly distrusts his courtiers, officers and functionaries. He is notorious for shuffling them in and out of their posts at the least provocation. Ilotos vindictively punishes his enemies and shows only temporary gratitude to his friends. He maintains his rule through fear; his sudden action against the dukes of Arolanit and Ralios have given pause to other would-be foes.

His son, **Daros**, contrasts sharply with his ill-humoured father. Handsome, athletic and naturally charming, he is surrounded himself with the Empire's next generation of political leaders. Against his father's advice, he took part in the failed defence of the Empire's Jolari possessions and was one of the few military leaders to acquit himself honourably there. The main interests of this lusty 25 year

Ilotos, Emperor of the Land and Sea



Who Do I Fight?

Adventurers fighting on behalf of the Empire enjoy the widest possible selection of fascinating and deadly enemies. These include: EWF forces; Arolaniti backwoods people; Brithini; internal rebels; Kralori exiles; Loskalmi insurgents; mostali; Orlanthe traditionalists; Pamaltelans; pirates; trolls and Waertagi remnants.

old lie in carousing, brawling and cementing his alliances with the Seshnegi nobles who will make up his court.

The Empire's most famous magician is **Lurghalos**, High Sorcerer and head of the God Learner Alliance. Moody and capricious, he makes a good match for Ilotos, who trusts him above all others. A scar across his lip, gained during a magical experiment, blemishes his coldly beautiful face. Colleagues whisper of his over-fondness for brandy and the drunken rages that arise from it. These days Lurghalos chiefly concerns himself with the concealment of the Goddess Switch's ill effects.

Heading the Malkioni Church is a bold and intimidating cousin to Ilotos, the High Ecclesiast **Vesharios**. A first-class intellect, he can recite the *Abiding Book* inside out and argue the meaning of any passage from the viewpoint of every school of theological interpretation. In the matter of pagan conversion, Vesharios is a hard-headed Realist. He bullies other members of the High Council with a mixture of wit, agile sophistry and confrontational body language. His primary goal is the diversion of hot-headed Missionaries to harmless pursuits which will not threaten the Empire in time of crisis.

The unassuming, chameleonic **Sylark** chairs the Mercantilist's League and serves the High Council as Lord Treasurer. Good-looking in a generic and unremarkable way, this Jrusteli-born trader has mastered the skill of seeming to be all things to all people. Everyone on the council thinks he agrees with them and works for their interests, when really he cares only for his own. He wants more money spent on anti-piracy efforts.

Sylark's long-faced, self-doubting cousin **Kenthiliu** was, at the treasurer's urging, recently elevated to office as Admiral of the Navy. Though successful in his youth in several sallies against piracy, Kenthiliu had withdrawn

God Learner Tolerance

Despite its fervent monotheism, the Middle Sea Empire shows a surprising degree of tolerance for practitioners of other faiths. While you cannot say that the God Learners respect theist, mystical or shamanic ways, they are anxious to discover more about them and gain from their secrets. Traders encourage contact with other cultures, who provide both products and markets. While non-Malkioni cannot rise into positions of high authority, neither are they harassed while going about their daily business. Especially in occupations open to adventurers, the vast majority of employers care more about a person's capabilities than his beliefs.

Especially conservative Malkioni may insult or condescend to pagans. When times get bad, riots may break out. Unbelievers may be chased, roughed up or even slain. Such occasions are rare, especially in ports and major centres. A Malkioni heretic, who is expected to know better, faces much greater prejudice and risk of harm than a mere pagan.

from political life to serve in a monastery at New Froalar. He wants to please both the Emperor and his cousin but is mostly afraid he will humiliate himself and bring shame on the family name.

Filling the position of Minister of War and High Commander of the Middle Sea Army is the darkly brooding **Gaskaros**, famed for his epic poetry, his swift and ruthless victories against the former Duke of Ralios, and his sword, Even-Hand. Once drawn, this legendary blade cannot be sheathed until it kills an even number of victims.

Everyone agrees that most influential individual outside the High Council is **Pompalic**, who heads the Rightness Army, a volunteer force of warriors and sorcerers who fight alongside imperial forces wherever the Malkioni faith is threatened. An annoying thorn in the side of High Ecclesiast Vesharios, he foments passions on the streets, urging crusades against heretics. A vociferous Missionary, he advocates forced baptism of pagans. He has secretly allied himself with sorcerer critics of the God Learner project, who argue that it has gone too far and will bring disaster upon the Empire. Pompalic feels that God Learnerism smacks of crypto-paganism and is

anxious to shut the whole discipline down, once and for all.

His niece, **Vissala**, is sweet on the Emperor's son, Daros, and believes she has a shot at becoming his empress. Pompalic encourages her to pursue this dream, hoping to influence his unformed ideology.

Empire of Wyrms' Friends

Where the God Learners control the coasts and much of western Genertela, the Empire of Wyrms' Friends has expanded up and into the continent from their base in Maniria.

The EWF is both more and less inclusive than their rival Empire. As a relatively new transformative religious movement, they are willing to accept anyone who embraces their mystical dragon way. Adventurers of any culture can come to the EWF and find a path from their old worship to the revealed draconic insights. On the other hand, the EWF expects everyone within its borders to join the cause and become part of the Great Dragon To Come. They harshly repress the old faiths and only grudgingly tolerate the long-term presence of foreign unbelievers. Adventurers can visit it from time to time without provoking pressure to conform. Those who put down roots here must appear to follow the draconic versions of their core faiths, or face confiscations, physical intimidation or exile. Open and unregenerate agitation for the old ways can get you killed.

The wyrmfriends may not hire as many adventurers as the God Learners but adventurers still find opportunity galore within EWF borders. Adventurers favourable to the Empire can:

- ☒ Fight the reactionary forces of the Old Ways traditionalists.
- ☒ Aid the Empire's efforts to transform the landscape into a living dragon.
- ☒ Put down local rebellions.
- ☒ Suppress banditry.
- ☒ Quest for artefacts of draconic transformation.
- ☒ Battle the magic-stealing raiders of the God Learner Empire.

The Dragon Sun



Adventurers opposed to the Empire can:

- ☒ Harry, rob and assassinate blasphemous EWF oppressors.
- ☒ Rescue captured heroes of the resistance.
- ☒ Sabotage draconic installations.
- ☒ Intrigue to separate the human dragon mystics from their increasingly distrustful dragonewt helpers.
- ☒ Establish alliances between otherwise hostile cultures under EWF control.
- ☒ Hunt for magical secrets to counter draconic dominance.

What Wyrmfriends Know

Followers of Orlanth the Dragon and the other new religions of the EWF know that the world was created by draconic forces. The following passage from the *Hunting and Waltzing Scroll of Sikaranth Dagger-Tooth* explains the wyrmfriend faith to potential converts:

Misery, hunger, confusion and desire are part of the world because it isn't perfect yet. The violence and treachery of the human condition can also be attributed to this lack of perfection. The dragons made a cure for this when they

created the world. They gave men the potential to perfect themselves and at the same time, to complete creation. This final act of completion will occur when all the people of the Empire perfect themselves and also create the conditions for the land itself to transform into the greatest dragon of all. All of the people will then be transformed, too, into the collective consciousness of this new dragon. Thus will they achieve eternal bliss, as the world emerges from its egg to finally achieve its ultimate, perfected form.

Although the struggle for perfection will be long and difficult, it is not without its rewards along the way. It grants its adherents powerful magics to use against its enemies, both from within and without. Some people cling stubbornly to their imperfections, to the old forms of worship which were meant only as stepping stones to transcendence. These must be shown the way of truth, to have their third eyes opened. Sadly, some are incapable of making the essential transition and must be snuffed out, lest their imperfections prevent blissful attainment for everyone else. To bring misery to the miserable is not a good or righteous action, only a necessary one. Those who perform these acts of oppression sacrifice greatly, marring their souls with hate, greed and violence. They must fast and meditate to return to a pure state. Some of these will be corrupted and must also be extinguished. This is sad, but sadness is also a trap, as are all of the ordinary human emotions. They bind us to the reality around us, which is false, and prevent us from perceiving our Ultimate Dragon Natures, which are cold, analytical, inscrutable, yet partaking of a higher joy than any ordinary sort of human happiness can prepare one to understand.

Those who participated first in the revelations will gain most from the shared energies. If you join us now, you will be more powerful than if you do it later. If you bring in others, you will gain from that, and then gain again when they do the same.

This higher, mystic joy is worth all the hard spiritual work required to attain it. If we suffer deprivation, sorrow, war and doubt, it is only to fulfil cosmic destiny.

The human mystics of the wyrmfriend way seem very sure that they know it all. But I see the dragonewts look at them, doubt pooling in their reptilian eyes.

— Jorudanth Silverhand, Trader of Jansdown

A Short History of the EWF

The Empire of Wyrms' Friends begins in Dragon Pass, in central Genertela, a place where the dragonewts have lived since before the beginning of time. Before this time, the dragonewts, or people of the dragon, had always been difficult to interact with. Their actions are peculiar and no one except for the followers of an Orlanthi hero named Drolgard can speak or understand their hissing, trilling language. Misunderstandings often result in deaths on both sides.

A new school opens in populous Nochet. There they are teaching Auld Wyrmmish to whomever wants to learn. Knowledge quickly spreads outside the school, spreading with the rapidity of a disease. Those who learn it are transformed by it. To speak the language is to receive mystic insight.

But everyone who learns has a different personal experience. Factions spring up throughout Esrolia and Hendrikiland, enveloping ordinary people into violent metaphysical dispute. 573 is a year of severe unrest.

Vistikos Left-Eye, an Orlanthi convert to Malkionism, learns Auld Wyrmmish directly from the school at Nochet, and achieves a conclusive understanding that eventually brings peace to the competing factions. He does this by gaining an audience with a mystical entity called the Cosmic Dragon and then asking the right questions. Equipped with these revelations, he forms the Hunting and Waltzing Bands, groups of missionaries who use dance, drama and fasting to convert influential figures to the new mystic way. This is the start of the new, organised draconic religion. Vistikos and his swelling coterie of followers works from the top down, winning over political leaders, who command their people to follow. Other ordinary people rise suddenly to prominence.

Society in Dragon Pass is quickly reorganised along draconic lines. Those who openly resist the effort to infuse their old religions with dragon symbolism are exiled or killed. Others take the original worship underground, pretending to be sympathetic to wyrmfriendism while forming the roots of the Old Way Traditionalist movement.

In 578 the Empire of Wyrms' Friends establishes itself as a formal political entity.

For 300 years, the EWF slowly progresses toward its goal of building the Great Dragon, weathering occasional raids from God Learners intent on stealing their secrets. Later incursions prove less successful than the strike that took Auld Wyrmmish from the Drolgardi. The new wyrmfriend belief is sufficiently alien to the God Learner mindset that their secrets prove difficult to integrate with HeroQuest-based Sorcery.

Forming the unstoppable dragon armies, aided by dragonewts and dinosaurs, the Empire expands. Through a mixture of conquest and Hunting and Waltzing conversion, it encompasses Prax (first incursions in 620), Pent (675), Dara Happa (780) and Fronela (852). In 875, it reinforces Ormsland, a dragonewt-inhabited region of northern Ralios, against incursion by God Learner forces.

Dara Happa falls completely to the Empire in 878, when a dragon, known alternately as the Dragon Sun or Golden Dragon, ascends its throne. This action eventually triggers an unforeseen alliance between traditional enemies, the Yelmite sun worshippers of Dara Happa and the unreconstructed Orlanthi of Dragon Pass. Their alliance revitalises the Old Way Traditionalist insurgent movement, which grows steadily bolder as the dawn of the tenth century approaches. They preach the Last Chance, a doctrine which states that the theist peoples must unite immediately or witness the end of the world when the Great Dragon ascends. Ambushes and guerrilla raids flare in the borderlands.

The Dragon Sun should not have been able to pass the ten tests that make a Solar Emperor. But, woe of woes, even though it had no hands, it magically grasped the divine regalia!

— Varusfori Cold-Beard, Exiled Noble of Dara Happa

EWF leaders, increasingly attuned with the realm of mystic consciousness and cut off from the everyday needs of the people, react to the insurgents with cold brutality. Their tactics, sweeping in friend with foe, drive more people into the Old Ways camp.

Now the EWF heartland is well into its second year of winter. Starvation looms. To alleviate famine, the leadership forces the outlying provinces to export food to Dragon Pass, spreading discontent. They blame these hardships on the God Learners but a hungry, freezing populace grumbles that they have devoted too much magic and worship to the Great Dragon project and too little to ordinary survival.

Magic

The EWF project works as a vast magical pyramid scheme. The first to join the dragonspeaker cult gain power from everyone they recruit and everyone those people recruit, and so on and so forth. Thus the first members of the original Hunting and Waltzing Bands who arose in the sixth century still live today, as the leaders of cult and Empire. Under the ultimate leadership of Vistikos Left-Eye, they dwell in a self-generated serpentine castle at Dragon's Eye, home of the dragonewt Inhuman King. Each has amassed great personal power, which is rarely expended. If they cared to, they could work great wonders at will, felling entire forests, changing the course of rivers or obliterating entire platoons of enemies with a blink of an invisible third eye. They are the Wyrms' Eye Ascendants. In their political capacity, they are referred to as the Original Twelve. In typical confusing dragonfriend fashion, their numbers now far exceed a dozen.

The second generation of dragonspeaker mystics, who served as the first attendants, companions and bodyguards of the Original Twelve, comprise the political entity called the Guiding Council. Each is mightier with draconic power than any individual Runelord or God Learner sorcerer. They hold the mystical rank of Wyrms' Tongue Masters.

The third rank of draconic accomplishment, usually held by local war leaders, officials and functionaries, is that of the Wyrms' Hand Triumphant. This is the dragonspeaker equivalent of Runelord or Rune priest status.

Below them, mustering small quantities of draconic power, are Wyrms' Claw Initiates.

Wyrms' Face Believers are like lay members. Their cooperation is needed to secure the ascension of the Great Dragon. They give power to the hierarchy but receive no magic in return.

Draconic Powers

Draconic powers often centre around temporary personal transformation. They include: gaining dragon-like hide, strength, speed or weaponry (claws, tail or horns); the ability to command reptiles and dinosaurs; extrasensory perception; resisting/disPELLing magic; instilling fear; causing earthquakes; avoiding detection and rapid self-healing.

The more powerful an EWF figure is, the more reluctant he becomes to exercise these outward abilities. To do so is to bind oneself to the mundane world, retarding transcendent progress.

Highly advanced dragon mystics seem beautiful, serene and magnetic to wyrmfriend believers and creepily distant and alien to outsiders.

Wyrms' Face Believers may still gain magic from other theist cults, provided that their worship has been draconised. A draconised cult replaces traditional symbols with dragon images and interprets the myths as mystical parables of ascendance.

Dragonspeakers above the rank of Wyrms' Face Believer may practice only Rune Magic and Dragon Magic.

To move up a rank, a candidate must not only achieve inner perfection but earn responsibility for a certain number of initiations. Initiations made by others one has initiated into the cult count both toward one's own total and that of one's initiate. Given the nature of the pyramid, it is now all but impossible to ascend to its highest two ranks.

Rank	Initiations Required
Wyrms' Eye Ascendant	100,000
Wyrms' Tongue Master	10,000
Wyrms' Hand Triumphant	1,000
Wyrms' Claw Initiate	100
Wyrms' Face Believer	Self

Building the Dragon Wyrmfriends claim that the Great Dragon will arise in both the physical and spiritual planes. Its physical manifestation will ascend from the earth, the core element of draconic nature. The dragonspeaker cult has incised an outline of this dragon in the earth, starting in a place they call the Imminence Valley. As the Empire expands, they increase the boundaries of the outline, which now extends far into Dara Happa. Entire troops of guardians patrol the outline, which is often the target of sabotage by Old Ways insurgents. Ultimately the dragon outline will extend all the way to Ice Bay, in northern Dara Happa. The Oslir River is its spine; the Rockwood Mountains, its wings, and the volcanoes of Caladralland represent its crested head and fiery breath.



Dragon Secrets

As their Empire frays at the edges, the Guiding Council has come to suspect that the dragonewts are holding out on them. The Inhuman King resists further inquiries. Vistikos Left-Eye's recent attempts to contact the Cosmic Dragon for needed clarifications have gone unanswered.

To fill the gap, the hierarchy seeks old draconic artefacts, especially those with writing on them. They hope that these will contain insights hastening the completion of the Great Dragon project. Adventurers who secure them are generously rewarded. The wyrmfriends do not personally quest for such items, in fear of offending the dragonewts. If mercenaries unaffiliated with them burst into and desecrate hidden dragonewt temples, the EWF can hardly be blamed for that, can they?

Politics

The Original Twelve rule the Empire as detached and disinterested figures of authority. Completely disinterested in governance, they spend their waking days and sleepless nights in meditative contemplation, staring into the transcendent dragon heart.

On the next step of the pyramid stands the Guiding Council. These second-generation leaders have mostly crossed over into the realm of metaphysical contemplation but still run the Empire, distractedly, through assistants and functionaries. They make policy and delegate the details to underlings.

It is this third group, unknown to the people and sealed off from their complaints, who act on their superiors' demands for a quick and ruthless to the Old Ways rebellion. They call themselves the Throne Hands.

As the Two Year Winter continues, dissension builds within the Throne Hands group. The military leaders among them, known as the **War Dragons**, advocate rule through terror and the display of devastating force. They currently enjoy the favour of the Guiding Council. A second group, consisting mostly of administrators, bureaucrats and trade officials, argues for inaction. Called the **Above and Beyonds**, this faction believes that the rebels are mere vermin, who are best ignored. Effort spent combating them will attach the Empire to material falseness, when it should be speeding up its leap into universal transcendence. Finally, a group called the **Converters** maintains that the leaders have a duty to go out and personally alleviate human suffering. This group arises from the Empire's missionary arm, who maintain the closest contact with the people. Their stance is unpopular, because of the toll it demands from the leaders. If they use their powers in the mundane world,

even for a good cause, they become embroiled again in its false reality. The emotions of altruism and sacrifice are as potent a trap as hate and violence.

Lower down on the pyramid are the field and local leaders. They include warriors, missionaries and administrators.

Commerce

Though EWF leadership takes little interest in worldly matters, its people must still feed, clothe and equip themselves as they wait for the Great Dragon to rise. Famine in Dragon Pass has merely intensified the importance of the makers, sellers and transporters of goods. Following draconised local trader gods, most importantly the Orlanthi deity Issaries, they build commercial networks throughout the greater Empire. In so doing, they cement relationships between previously disparate peoples.

Merchants see the indifference of the Guiding Council to trade as a good thing. They care passionately about religion and magic and so interfere strongly in those realms of life. Commerce flourishes without their careful management. Traders, who thrive on innovation and

bridges built between cultures, generally support the EWF and hope for its continued stability.

Most of them treat the Old Ways traditionalists as a dire threat. Their insurgent raids often target trade caravans. If they win, the far-flung imperial provinces will break away into constituent nations once again. Rebels of incompatible cultures may think of themselves as allies now but victory will set them to fighting again. Existing trade routes will crumble. Traders use what political influence they have to protect the status quo. Money cares about the Empire, even if the Empire does not care about it.

War

The Empire fields war bands big and small to combat insurgents, fight off enemy invasions and to conquer new territories. Politically the military faction is primarily made up of War Dragons, who believe fanatically in the ruthless suppression of dissent.

As their harsh measures feed a backlash among the people, a new generation of warriors, the **Clean Cutters**, has arisen to argue for a more careful application of armed

How Do I Scheme?

Political intrigue within the EWF plays out between the three factions within the Throne Hands or between insurgents and government. Roleplayers typically prefer the role of scrappy rebels sticking it to The Man over that of oppressive occupier. These groups can:

- ☒ Lobby tribal leaders to abandon draconised cult trappings and return to the old ways.
- ☒ Set rival EWF factions against one another.
- ☒ Convince dragonewts that the wyrmfriends are perverting their mystical truth.
- ☒ Act as envoys to insurgent groups in other occupied lands.

Or groups can play dragonspeakers, struggling to protect the Empire from its foes and from destructive internal forces. They can:

- ☒ Find, fight or subvert insurgent groups.
- ☒ Curb the power of rival factions.
- ☒ Protect supply trains as famine mounts.
- ☒ Seek out undiscovered dragon secrets.
- ☒ Convert outlying peoples with Hunting and Waltzing magic.

How Do I Trade?

An overland trading campaign set in the Empire of Wyrms' Friends provides copious opportunities for adventure: establishing new trade routes; suppressing banditry; dealing with insurgents, either fighting them or striking deals for safe passage; transporting draconic artefacts; finding new food sources for a starving heartland and getting those goods to hungry mouths; discovering local products which will fetch high prices elsewhere in the Empire.

force. They ally with local tribal leaders, gather intelligence and seek to infiltrate and suborn Old Ways groups. Some are more underhanded than virtuous. They stoke anger against traditionalists by committing atrocities in their name.

While the Empire used to restrict the use of mercenaries to mass-scale engagements in the outlands, they have lately come to rely on them as anti-insurgent forces. Paid foreigners are less likely to become double agents than supposedly draconised locals. Adventurers with a taste for blood will find a lifetime of employment as contractors for the War Dragons.

The War Dragons evoke quaking terror on the battlefield, thanks to their draconic troops. In addition to fielding platoons of dragonewts, they employ a variety of dinosaur shock troops. **Crushers** (brontosaurus) knock down walls and topple towers. **Thunderers** (triceratops) stomp through enemy lines, goring soldiers on their sharpened horns. **Renderers** (velociraptors), guided with precision by wyrm magic, leap into foes with bloody tooth and claw. **Death kings** (tyrannosaurs), screaming for mouthfuls of flesh, take a huge bite out of enemy morale before they even reach the frontlines. EWF forces dominate the sky, with wyrms, dream dragons and pterosaurs, piloted by trollkin slaves.

The EWF also fields a variety of beast man units, including centaurs, durulz and tusk riders.

Who Do I Fight?

Enemies of the EWF include: God Learners; Old Way rebels (Pelorians, Orlanthi, Pentans); elves, who object to their transformation of the land; Kralori, who oppose their perversion of draconic mysticism; trolls, who used to rule Dragon Pass and want it back (though other uz may be EWF allies).

EWf Thunderer



Notables

The Original Twelve, who interact not at all with the common people, are now chiefly known only as names. Chief among them is **Vistikos Left-Eye**, who once was known as a quick-witted, brilliant and restless man but is now an eerily contented shell of a man. His body remains but his consciousness has gone elsewhere. It is said that if he ever left his fortress at Dragon's Eye, that the earth would transform itself under his feet, to a perfect representation of itself.

The Chief of the Guiding Council is **Arene Whisper-Hush**, who was a lowly indentured sheep-herder when the dragon eye awakened to her in 587. Famed for her humility and the skill with which she uses it to silence and intimidate others, she heads the Above and Beyond faction. She wants stability above all else and does not care which faction delivers it.

Whether under the sun or illuminated by lanterns, **Inganna Willowhair** attracts light wherever she goes.

She is the Guiding Council's most eloquent Converter and as such has threatened to resign to walk among the people, healing them, nurturing them and returning them to the true draconic path.

Hargrath Golden-Scale, conqueror of Pent and slayer of the Zistorite Shovel Beast, heads the Guiding Council's War Dragon faction. Like Inganna, he is considering a temporary abandonment of his meditative routines to reassume an active role in EWF affairs. In his case, this is so he can destroy the Old Ways traditionalists, capturing their leaders and subjecting them to unprecedented tortures, so that the masses might be properly instructed.

The real work of government is headed by **Tarkala Wyrmsdottr**, senior official among the Throne Hands. A grey-faced and ink-stained administrator, she wearily tries to balance the three factions, so that internal conflicts do not steal focus from the Empire's true foes. Though scarcely charismatic, she is a master of behind-the-scenes manipulation. Rumour has it that she hatched from an egg.

Delecti the Inquirer, a Malkioni convert to the Dragon Way, serves as consultant on western affairs to the Guiding Council. A mighty sorcerer, he works to perfect his western magic in a draconised fashion, so that the materialistic God Learners might be awakened to the great truth. These inquiries have led him to experiment with sorcerous form alteration and hybridisation. He aims to create new, perfect forms of life which will come into being with mystical awareness already fully attained. These can convert the West and then perform the mysterious final rituals required to activate the Great Dragon.

Varankol the Mangler heads a War Dragon band dedicated to the destruction of the God Learners, whose sorcerers slew his wife and children. He leads the EWF contingent at the siege of Zistorwal. While there he has developed a perverse admiration for the rebel Orlanthi King Androfin, whom he one day hopes to do the honour of personally dismembering. As his honorific suggests, he attacks his opponents with savage ferocity.

Enemies of the EWF

The shadowy Old Ways insurgency continually throws up new internal enemies to bedevil the Empire. Some may be more rumour than reality.

I count no man dead until he is also torn limb from limb.

— *Varankol the Mangler*

Fogarth Toothaxe leads the insurgency in Fronela. He leads his Knights of the Wood, exiled Malkioni nobles schooled in hit and run combat by Orlanthi guerrillas from distant Hendrikiland. Some say Fogarth, once famed for his poetry and erudition, has become more barbaric than his barbarian mentors.

Dijaar and his Five Friends are former dragon mystics who have returned to their childhood traditions as Pentan barbarians. Each has mustered a troop of fervent Kargzant worshippers. Dijaar, also known as the Sun Scorchers, is as brutal as any War Dragon. He is infamous for burning captured enemies alive.

The golden-haired hero **Karvanyar** is the Dara Happan's shining hope. Claiming to be the son of the deposed Emperor and the lowliest commoner, he has surrounded himself with an underground network of fearsome Yelmadio followers. Attempts to arrest him have been repeatedly thwarted; a 10,000 gold piece reward awaits any adventurer who brings him to EWF justice, dead or alive.

King Androfin of Hendrikiland has re-established open worship of an Orlanthi shorn of draconic symbology. The earth magics of his wife **Shordala**, a priestess of Ernalda, have kept his people fed despite the Two Year Winter. The rebel king proclaims the chill as a gift from Orlanth's frosty brother, Valind. He also opposes the God Learners, having sent troops to the siege of the Clanking City. Androfin is a hearty, back-slapping leader, generous with both gold and compliments.

Perhaps the wyrmfriends' weirdest foe is the **Man of Five Stones**, from the Pelorian hinterland. A self-taught mystic of the wilderness, his nakedness protects him as no armour could. When he speaks, his enemies hear only growls, where his friends hear exhortations that infuse them with Otherworldly power. He is raising an army of wild men to attack the Empire.

MAJOR CULTURES

Whether you want to play a passionate Orlanthi barbarian, a logic-driven Malkioni sorcerer, a haughty Dara Happan noble, or any other human character, this chapter is for you. Use these culture write-ups to immerse yourself in your character's myths, history, magic and reasons for adventure.

Remember that a person who adheres to all of the stereotypical qualities of his culture is just as much an oddball as the eccentric outsider. Most people fit some of the traits commonly associated with their nations and faiths, while departing from that standard image in other ways. Glorantha claims its full share of effete, urbanised Orlanthi, wildly emotional Malkioni spellcasters and touchingly humble Dara Happan nobles.

These cultural descriptions are written from the point of view of a so-called typical member of each culture. Attitudes may vary by locality or be influenced by the proximity of other faiths. For instance, a draconised Orlanthi will tell many of the same stories as the baseline Orlanthi narrator but will use them to illustrate the virtues of EWF mysticism.

Kraloreli

We are the Kraloreli, heirs to a hundred thousand years of sublime tradition. We dwell in the Kingdom of Splendour. For most of our history, we have isolated ourselves from outsiders, pursuing our perfection without looking to backward foreigners. Now we have been changed by the outside world, which has brought our ancient wisdom back to us, in a new form. Some of us have embraced it. Others – your humble correspondent among them – have fled in horror from this insane innovation, taking to the hills, to preserve our time-honoured traditions from outside taint.

My Myths

There is a time before our land existed but that is not interesting. There were entities that were bigger than gods but without inner understanding, for they were too simple to have an outside and an inside. They just were.

Uld Man

The first of these entities changed when she developed pity. She was All Encompassing She of the Before, who the peasants call Empress Earth. She saw the mortal being called Wild Man roaming across the rocky face of her then-infertile earth. He had been created by the other gods, perhaps as a sort of jest, or as an ineffable expression of their collective nature. It does not matter.

Wild Man's nature was to pair with whatever he saw. He mated with stone and metal, and made dwarfs. He mated with plants and foliage, and produced elves. With animals, he made the hsunchen races. With sea monsters, he sired the undersea races. All of his couplings were unsuitable and brought him dissatisfaction and suffering. So Empress earth took pity on him and made the serene goddess Allgiver.

KRALORELI



Aptanance the Sage

Allgiver tamed Wild Man. Their first child was Aptanance the Sage. When other people came along after – and soon there were very, very many – he was ready for them, as he had already created a perfect civilisation for them to interact in. This was Kralorela. It was correctly organised from top to bottom, from the imperial throne to the bureaucrats to the craftsmen and peasantry.

While creating civilisation, Aptanance needed light to work by. Metsyla came and shone down upon him, brightly illuminating the world (the God Learners tell us that this entity must also be the foreign god Yelm but it cannot be so, for nothing good ever came from a foreign place). Metsyla was bright and true and clear but lacked wisdom and inner searching.

Aptanance saw this as another absence in his plan and so Daruda came, bearing the knowledge of dragons and their inner magic. Aptanance placed him on his empty throne, which had been waiting for such a worthy. Daruda invented calligraphy, so he could inscribe the secrets of draconic transformation for the Emperors that would come after him.

All pre-Time mythologies display chronological variance from one account to the next. This is especially true of the Kralori mythos, which makes less effort to arrange itself into an over-arching narrative than the equivalent cycles of central Generfela.

— Vansfigos Evermead, Tutor of Umathela

The Perfect Age

The first Emperor who was not a god was Shavaya, Emperor of Splendour. It was not until his ascension that Aptanance's plans were realised, for a mortal had always been envisioned as the eventual ruler. Immediately Shavaya felt what a god could not: that bureaucracy and inner dragons and calligraphy were all well and good, but ordinary people needed food, or they suffered terrible pangs.

So Shavaya sent out his clever daughter Unyamor, who was good at finding things, and she found a solution, in the form of Rice Mother, the generous one, and she fed the people. Prosperity reigned for what seemed like forever.

Dragons

The people learned of the dragons and the wise found the reflections of these celestial beings within themselves.

There was **Thrunhin Da**, the Blue Dragon of the Sea, whose wisdom runs as deep as the ocean. It was she who gave Unyamor the Rice Mother, as a gift for her serenity and cleverness. Thrunhin Da can be bountiful or wrathful, depending on how wisely one approaches her.

Also there was **Smor-Eel**, the Night Dragon, also called the Helldragon, who held the nightmares that mirrored people's fears.

And there was **Azba Gar**, the Earth Dragon, who perfected the hills around Kralorela, so that they might express a cosmic harmony.

Also there were many more. But people had trouble understanding them, so the dragons invented gods, who had dragon wisdom within them but were more capable of expressing matters in ways that made sense to human ears.

The Mystic Gods

First they made the Emperor a god, out of respect for Aptanance and Daruda.

Second they constructed heaven and appointed an archexarch, Tanchun Kaii, to rule it. Then they left the task of making human gods to him, as he understood men better than they.

From his thoughts he made Han Majang, the first minister, to whom men petition for boons from the gods. From his need for sustenance he made Miyo, the farming goddess. From his sternness the archexarch created an inferior opposite, Udam Bagur, the archexarch of Hell. He judges the wicked, sentencing them to cleansing torment performed by devils. Folk belief tells us that he is susceptible to bribery and the living often burn sacrifices to him to lessen the course of misery suffered by their dead relatives.

Foreign Monsters Invade

The perfection of our civilisation was disrupted and all but destroyed by the invasion of grotesque monsters from the west and from the sea. They were heralded by the sudden arrival of death, which came like the tides upon the rocks but did not fall away. Thalurzni, the Emperor,

Ascended Gods

During the Perfection Era, the lines between gods and mortals could be blurred. Especially evolved individuals began as humans and ascended to heaven as deities.

Thalurzni was one of these. His wife, Halisayan, is another. Her humility so impressed Thalurzni that he married her and gifted her with the Pill of Immortality. She epitomises the good and dutiful woman. Mothers pray that their daughters will be like her.

Her sister, Bodkartu, became Goddess of Secrets and Forbidden Lore. She protects her sister, which is necessary, but employs alarming means (such as assassination, poisoning, disease and strangulation), so in normal times her worship must be tightly restricted. Her sinister adherents spearhead the secret fight against the so-called Immanent Masters.

created Calm Waiting Beyond Light and Waters, a place for the dead, where they would wait until his demise. It was first called Winter Heaven, for only the leaderless confused souls were there. Then he would guide them into the beyond. He waged war to expand the imperial boundaries and filled this afterlife with loyal soldiers.

Thalurzni battled the quartet of monsters remembered as the Gang of Four: the Shadow Eater, the Earth Eater, the Star Permutator and the Secret Waters. They slew him and he ascended to the Winter Heaven, taking the first crop of dead souls with him.

He was replaced as Emperor by Vayobi, whose origins were humble. Not long after his triumphant investiture came the worst of all invaders, Sekever the Anti-Dragon. She was beautiful and serene and did not seem like a monster at first, until she devoured the sun, striking Metsyla from the sky. Then she overthrew Vayobi and took the throne for herself.

The Perfect Time ended and the Worst Time began. Its horrors are best not dwelt upon. But this is when order was upended, rice stole nourishment from those that ate it and anyone who wrote in the accepted way burned from the inside out. And it continued for a very long time.

Return to Splendour

The horrors ended when Voyabi arose from centuries of contemplation under the tutelage of the Blue Dragon and transformed himself into the War Dragon. He went to the Winter Heaven, where the gods and god-Emperors had hidden themselves from Sekever. He shone new insight into the hearts of the gods, which had been infected by Sekever's furious despair. Released from inner bondage, they returned to fight:

Daruda brought true dragon wisdom back to the people.

Thalurzni drove the Gang of Four into the Kingdom of Ignorance, returning balance to the elements.

Voyabi mustered armies, scoured Kralorela of Sekever's forces and entered into personal combat with the enemy, dragon versus anti-dragon. The dragon won and then ascended.

The Emperor Mikaday saw that Sekever had burned all the law books and rewrote them from memory. Mikaday ascended, making way for Vashanti, whose practical wisdom matched Mikaday's theoretical weight.

The Emperor Vashanti completed their victory by weaving together the broken elements of governance. When he completed the last of the banners necessary to proclaim the return of splendour, Metsyla returned to the sky. Vashanti ascended. What the foreign devils call history began.

My History

The first and only rightful Emperor of post-Time Kralorela is Yanoor, whose inner light shines from his throne like a mirror reflecting Metsyla. He rules at the dawn, wisely putting into practice the precepts of society laid down by Mikaday and Vashanti. A new Age of Splendour begins. So successful is Yanoor's early reign that historians are left with little to write about. No greater tribute can be paid to a leader than to say that the Kralori are dull and contented. A hundred spiritual schools flourish, each seeking draconic transcendence in its own way.

In 350, Yanoor's state of meditation on the Dragon's Eye reaches such a state of sublime insight that the sun halts in the sky, waiting for his conclusion. Foreigners say this had something to do with the creation of a barbarian devil-god but naturally this is nonsense.

The next four centuries are occasionally marred by invasions and civil disturbances, which Yanoor always settles with serenity and only the precise degree of force required. These include periodic incursions from Vormain and Teshnos.

From 727 onwards we are subjected to the depredations of the foul-smelling One God Believers. They call themselves the GodLearners but their invading freebooters and exploitative traders do little that is godly, even by low standards of foreign dogs. They set up coastal outposts in our land, as if it is theirs. Every time their settlements are destroyed by imperial forces, they come back in greater numbers, with stronger magics.

From 739 to 741, they come each spring to bombard our coasts with green fire from their humming ships. Yanoor responds by writing a banner refuting their Six Effronteries. Festivals of celebration are held to note this triumph. The God Learner outposts continue their infiltration unmolested.

In the year 762 the first whisperings of a dangerous new cult circulate through the southern part of our land. The Darudic monk ShangHsa fails to achieve contact with the Cosmic Dragon, distracted by the frenzied whisperings of the masses. So, aided by the foreign devil Cham Dao (called Gillam D'estau in his own unspeakable tongue) he designs a new, wrong course of dragon mysticism allowing quick progression from novice to master. Its practitioners assume the outward features of dragons but irreversibly cripple their true spiritual progress.

The cult rapidly spreads. Followers of the Mikaday school, then the dread Bodkartu Society, fight its growth but are overwhelmed. The common man loses his bearings and seeks easy dragon transcendence. By 766 the Immanent Masters deploy armies of draconised fighters near the cities of Wah Hua and Sha Ming.

ShangHsa marches on the forbidden palace in 768 and murders Yanoor. Thousands of good people commit suicide to express their distress. The officials of his beheaded government flee to the benighted Kingdom of Ignorance. ShangHsa becomes false Emperor two years later.

In 862, a God Learner ally, the Ogre King, uses his Legion of Red Bones to conquer the metropolis of Chang Tsai. ShangHsa initially objects and sends forces to expel this

How To Play A Kraloreli

- ☒ Contemplate carefully before acting.
- ☒ Deny the value of all foreign thought.
- ☒ Refer to outlanders as barbarians or foreign devils. All of them are barbarians, even if they come from cities larger than yours.
- ☒ Speak in poetic aphorisms.
- ☒ Defer to rightful authority.
- ☒ Give respect to elders; expect respect from juniors.
- ☒ React with dismay when tradition is challenged or altered.
- ☒ Refer to dismaying events indirectly, if at all.

mercenary marauder from the municipal palace. Dark intrigues by the accursed one's western masters allow the ogre to remain in place. Chang Tsai earns its grim nickname as Cannibal City.

Two years ago, in the Fire Season of 906, a string of poison murders fells nearly a dozen of ShangHsa's foreign conspirators. He announces reprisals, first against the presumed killers, the Bodkartu Society, and later against all sages who oppose him. He invades monasteries and private libraries throughout the kingdom. All books and scrolls, no matter how ancient, recording any dragon path other than his own, are piled up and burned. The outrages continue...

My Life

An outsider might think that little has changed in Kralorela since superior men were forced to flee to the Kingdom of Ignorance. We who know our land can see the fault lines form, like cracks which mar and will eventually destroy a vase of sublime beauty.

When we ruled, everyone understood that individualism is an empty and dangerous creed. Social harmony was blessed; personal fulfilment, a disruptive illusion. Foreigners were held at arm's length. Leaders sought to establish their refinement, manners and subtlety.

Now the School of Immanent Mastery preaches base, outward fulfilment through the deceptively quick attainment of magical power. Spiritually untrained men and women, flush with draconic powers they do not understand, fight for personal glory. The humble have become avaricious. Riots break out at the slightest provocation. Persons are elevated to high position by

caprice or on the demonstration of new dragon powers. They vie with one another to show who among them is the greediest, mightiest and most brutal.

The Empire still has 15 provinces, whose institutions are still ruled over by officials called Xia Ko, or exarchs. True exarchs have spiritually progressed to dragon status but rarely manifest as such, as it retards their transcendence. ShangHsa's so-called exarchs are his false dragon masters, who parade around in their reptilian hides. Some are, unbelievable as it is, foul foreigners!

A well-ordered society maintains itself as follows. Exarchs guide the wisdom of mandarins, the sages of peace who rise to administer public offices by passing the ancient exams handed down by Daruda himself. Martial artists, the sages of conflict, protect us from our enemies. Patricians own land or large urban businesses but are too unwise to rule. Beneath them are the peasants and workers, and then the soldiers who man our army. At the lowest level are delinquents. Anyone else is outside the system, from the beast men of the hills, to devils, to foreigners.

Now Immanent Masters pose as exarchs, anybody can be anything, all as ShangHsa and his dog Cham Dao decree.

My Magic

Our magic is mystical. It comes from long contemplation of the true dragon secrets. Inner transformation begets outer transmutation. Those of greatest accomplishment are least likely to show base outward manifestations, as these tie them to the falseness of the world. Immanent Mastery falls into precisely this trap. It is mysticism practiced with the impatience and materialism of a foreign devil. All other magic is foreign and thus unworthy of contemplation.

Why I Adventure

A wise man does not adventure. A good servant of Kralorela may selflessly struggle to defeat enemies or gain wealth or information of benefit to all of society. Troublemakers and rebels use their abilities for personal aggrandisement, seeking status in the world of martial arts.

Orlanthi

I am of the Storm Tribe. I follow Orlanth, God of Kings. He is the storm who shelters me from foes, striking them down with electric bolts from a blackened sky. I follow Ernalda, Queen of the Earth. She fattens our cattle, strengthens our grain and makes our children grow up strong and bold.

We fight as Orlanth did, against sterile authority, against the forces of Chaos, against those who would steal our freedom. We delight in the stories of his victories. Yet it is in the tales of his failures, his overreaching, that the true measure of a man is found. Anybody can win all the time. Greatness is tested when you act foolishly and ruin things, and then must make matters right.

My Myths

Creation: Orlanth was not the first god. There were many others before him. First came the goddess Glorantha. She birthed other gods, who are big and distant. These early, rigid gods made up the Celestial Court. Then came another generation of gods, including Yelm the Emperor. The distant gods made a range of perfect plants, animals and people. The Young Gods made copies of them and they populated the world we know. The first person like us was Grandfather Mortal. Orlanth didn't make him, either. He didn't exist yet.

Umath, Father of Orlanth: Into the peaceful but stifling world came Umath, the first storm, his entrance announced by thunder and hailstorms. He went to pay respects to Emperor Yelm, who dismissed him like he was nothing, because he did not fit the rules they had back then. So Umath seized divine territory for himself and jealous Yelm did not like this. When he invented the laws of hospitality, which we still use today, Yelm said his rules bound kings as well as men and were therefore out of order. Even when Umath saved the gods from

The brothers of Orlanth were Kolat the Big Wind, Urox the Hot Bull Wind, Vadrus the Violent Wind and Humakt, who later wielded the sword called Death, making it part of his nature.

— Enlirath Casting, God Talker of the Brown Deer Clan

Orlanthi



destruction by the first enemies, the Predark Demons, Yelm turned up his nose. Umath fought the enemies until he was tired and wounded, and finally fell.

Orlanth the Hero: Umath's five sons took over the fight for him. The youngest and cleverest of these was Orlanth. Other gods attacked them but they won, and Orlanth made them stronger by forging them into a ring, like the ring of elders that runs our tribes today.

Orlanth Challenges Yelm: Orlanth wanted his position recognised, as any hero would and so went to Yelm and challenged him to a series of contests. They danced, performed magic, and played music. Each time Yelm did the old boring thing, as his rules required. Orlanth was fresh and innovative each time. He did a war-whoop, unveiled the magic of change and played on a new instrument. The old gods hated these new things and blindly awarded the challenge to Yelm each time.

The final contest was of weapons and now Orlanth was angry. So he accepted a sword from the crazy trickster,

Eurmal, who can be useful but always in a troublesome way. This sword was a new thing called Death and when Orlanth struck Yelm with it, Yelm died. And then the sun went out.

The Storm Age: As the name suggests, this time was good for our people. The skies were always grey and stormy. Instead of imperious Yelm, the sky was lit by Elmal, a brave hero from the Emperor's Fire Tribe who pledged unbounded loyalty to Orlanth. At this time Orlanth and the other heroic gods of his tribe had many big adventures. He slew a dragon, Aroka, ending a drought by pulling the rain god, Heler, from its gullet. He tussled with gods of all kinds, from elf gods to dwarf gods to troll gods. And of course he won against all of them.

Most importantly, Orlanth rescued the beautiful Ernalda from the Emperor's palace, where she'd been imprisoned. Yes, this sounds like it takes place before Yelm was slain. Remember that Time did not exist then, allowing the stories to jumble together. Don't worry about this. It means that each story tells the right lesson without getting sidetracked by unneeded detail. This is the difference between a myth and an ordinary tale you tell down at the ale-house.

Anyway, Ernalda tested Orlanth, giving him many tasks. He passed them all but most of all he had to learn her lesson. His lesson was: 'Violence is always an option'. Hers was: 'There is always another way'. Together these make up the two big rules of Orlanthi life. Peace and war exist in harmony and each is only used when it should be.

Armed with this knowledge, Orlanth learned to make justice. And he and Ernalda made babies, starting with Barntar, god of farmers.

The Great Darkness: One awful day, the Storm Age gave way to the Age of Horror, the Great Darkness. Orlanth led the fight against the corrupt gods of Chaos, especially Wakboth the Devil. Even though he was never beaten, they slowly destroyed everything. They killed Ernalda, and Barntar, and the grain goddesses, and the animal mothers. Everybody starved. The world nearly died.

The Lightbringer's Quest: This would not stand, so Orlanth entered the Underworld to bring Ernalda back. He accepted gifts from his surviving thanes, to help him on his quest. Heler the rain god gave him weapons and

All the cultures tell the story of the world's plunge into darkness and say it was their own gods who finally brought an end to it. This is the monomyth. When we God Learners merge it into just one story, all the might of the Otherworld will be harnessed.

— Vansfigos Evermead, Tutor of Umathela

armour. Elmal the Loyal Sun gave him a fiery mirrored shield, to light his way. Mastakos the speeding god gave him a chariot.

He journeyed for a long time. He met friends, like Lhankor Mhy the Knowing God and his friendly rival, Issaries, the silver-tongued Talking God. He fought many terrible foes along the way. More allies joined him: Chalana Arroy, the healer and Flesh Man, a mortal who'd been driven mad by all the death he'd seen. When they found Eurlan the trickster in trouble, Flesh Man begged Orlanth to save him, which he did, reluctantly. This turned the tide, because the trickster could lead them where they needed to go. Finally they met Ginna Jar, and if you know who she is, you are privy to an eternal mystery and shouldn't tell the God Learners about it.

They journeyed across the world, where the sorcerers and immortals were, and then descended into the land of the dead. They wandered for a long time there, until unreliable Eurlan guided them to the Hall of the Dead, where Ernalda and Humakt and Barntar and all the others were. There was Yelm, also. And Orlanth saw what he had to do. He had to atone for what he had done and save the Bright Emperor, too. They tested each other again and finally were reconciled.

Their new cooperation spawned the last rightful god ever to be born, Arachne Solara, the spider. She wove a net, which was the Great Compromise. It started Time and separated gods from mortals.

The Great Darkness was ended. Orlanth saved the world.

My History

Orlanthi took an important role in the unity battles that drove off Chaos when the world began, including

the decisive one called I Fought We Won, fought near Dragon Pass.

Our people took part in the First Council. We were called the Theyalans then. We took the lessons Orlanth had given us and went out into the world looking for people still suffering the effects of the Darkness. We taught them the skills they'd lost. They learned to plant and to raise herds. Also we told them of our Orlanth stories and these were embraced. The weak gods who'd failed to help them were discarded.

Traditionalist Orlanthi hate us God Learners, but in the Dawn Age no one did more to spread the monomyth than their missionaries.

— Vansfigos Evermead, Tutor of Umathela

Orlanthi have always taken risks and created new things. So, to our shame, many of us participated in the creation of the riddling god, Nysalor, who turned out to be Gbaji, a Chaos god in disguise. So then the Orlanthi who hadn't been driven mad by his strange worship rose up and fought him.

Arkat, the hero who destroyed Gbaji, was an Orlanthi, too, sort of. He accumulated power by joining one cult, then another, changing his identity each time. He was like the God Learners in that way and it is no surprise that their blasphemous raiding of the divine realms is based on his secrets. As wrong as he was, he was for some time a follower of Orlanth's brother, Humakt. Also he was helped considerably by a great hero of our people, a man named Harmast, who was the first to complete the entire Lightbringer's Journey as a HeroQuest. As such we can take credit for the destruction of Gbaji, whenever the time for a boasting contest comes.

Again our love of innovation proved our undoing in the Second Age, when good people were beguiled by the dragon and worshipped an imaginary god called Orlanth the Dragon. Those who spoke up were killed or driven off.

We will bring down both the God Learners, who loot our myths like we raid each other's cattle and the wyrm-talkers, who think that you can worship anything,

Foreign Gods

Orlanthi recognise the existence of gods other than their own. Those who follow them are not deluded, though they may harbour false beliefs about the Storm Tribe gods and how they fit into the pre-Time stories as they really happened. Certain Orlanthi gods are considered defectors from other pantheons: Elmal came from the Fire Tribe and Heler from the Water Tribe.

The gods of many other cultures appear in Orlanthi mythology, often as enemies or adversaries of the Storm King himself. They include: the uz warrior god **Zorak Zoran**, known to the Orlanthi as the God of Hate; the elf mother spirit **Aldyra**, personified as a primal forest goddess; **Dayzatar**, the sky god, high priest of the Fire Tribe; **Lodril**, the consuming volcano god of the Fire Tribe; **Magasta**, hostile king of the Water Tribe and the werewolf god, **Telmor**.

Other enemy gods are specific to Orlanthi mythology. These include **Daga**, god of drought, as well as the Unholy Trio of malign deities: **Mallia**, goddess of disease, **Ragnaglar**, god of evil and **Thed**, goddess of rape.

even a crawling snake, so long as you call it Orlanth. We are not just people who make new things. We are a people who fight for what is right.

My Life

Traditional Orlanthi life occurs in good grazing land, where it is possible to do a little planting, too. We herd cattle and sheep. We raise horses and consider them a precious commodity. We harvest grains, the exact varieties depending on local conditions. Wheat and barley are best but in some places we have to settle for wilder grasses. We supplement our larders with game and forage.

We organise ourselves into bloodlines, then clans, then tribes, then kingdoms. Of these associations the most important is the clan. Clans control their own pieces of territory. They are governed by chiefs, who may be male or female. Each chief appoints a ring, a council of seven worthies who provide advice. Wisely chosen rings are balanced between worshippers of the various Orlanthi deities, so that their counsel draws on life's many spheres.

You can tell much about a clan from the nature of its ring. A ring filled with priestesses of grain and cattle seeks

prosperity, valuing a full belly above all else. These are called peace clans. One staffed by warriors seeks success through tribute and conquest and are known as war clans. Most clans seek a middle ground. If a ring includes a follower of the crazy outlaw trickster god, Eurmál, count on its magic to be both potent and unpredictable.

Though we worship gods, we gain knowledge and power from spirits, too. The most important is our clan spirit, the wyter. We also revere our ancestors and gain magic when we honour them by behaving as they did, back when the clan was founded. For this reason older clans therefore have more powerful magic, including folk magic, than newer ones.

Each clan is made up of a half dozen to several dozen bloodlines, households of close blood relatives. In most places they live together in large single-room houses called steads.

A tribe is a group of clans gathered together for mutual prosperity and protection. Tribal leaders are called kings, and are advised by tribal rings. They settle disputes between clans in a judicial process called a moot. Clans of the same tribe don't go to war against each other — not unless they want to break up the tribe.

When Orlanthi are not battling foreigners or crazy oppressors, we fight each other. We fortify our lands against our neighbours' raids and arm ourselves to conduct raids of our own. Raiding for cattle is not considered warfare; it is a normal way of life. Orlanth was a thief before he was a king and ordains that clans who cannot protect their cattle deserve to lose them to cleverer, bolder neighbours.

The number of warriors a clan can field is called its fyrd. This includes all able-bodied individuals, not just its great heroes and war priests.

Serious wars can break out between clans, usually as a result of feuds. We are a people of honour. If a person allows insults or injuries to go unchallenged, he shames not only himself but his family too. Though it is possible to make peace and lay feuds to rest, often with the payment of gifts, many of us prefer to solve them with Orlanth's favoured tool, violence. We go out and do harm to the one who wronged us, or one of his bloodline or clan. This can escalate, because these acts of redress are themselves subject to reprisal. It is a woman's duty to remind men

I am here in the city, making my way as a petty adventurer, because I fled my clan, to avoid a feud. I brought dishonour on myself but no one cares about that here. And back home, my friends are still alive.

— Tarnvarth Fleeffoot, Freebooter of Lustria

of their honour and to encourage the shedding of blood for it.

Unlike other people, like the arrogant Dara Happans, we know that men and women are equally important. Men fight and women egg them on. Women attend to the fertility of the land and the safety of children and men protect them. We allow people to make exceptions for themselves. If a man wants to devote himself to fertility magic, he can do it. He worships Nandan, the housekeeper god. Women drawn to the sword and spear devote themselves to the martial goddesses. These include Vinga, Orlanth's red-headed daughter; Maran Gor, mother of earthquakes and the dread axe avenger Babeester Gor.

The Imperial Age is a time of travels and of prosperous cities. Many of our brothers have left their clan lands to live in those cities or traverse the world in search of fortune and trouble.

City Orlanthi still value their clans. Assuming they have not been outlawed, they return to their ancestral lands when they can. Most go at Sacred Time, to participate in ceremonies and renew their ancestral connections.

All of us hold generosity as a cardinal virtue. City Orlanthi show their generosity by bringing home gifts of silver and trade goods. Their welcoming brothers cannot be outdone and shower them with food, ale and the other signs of hospitality, even when they cannot afford it.

In the hill country, the word of chief and ring governs the behaviour of individuals. They maintain little practical influence over their citified brethren. A city Orlanthi must answer to the local authorities, who may also be of the Storm Faith, but it is not the same. They must find their own way, like Orlanth did when he was free and journeying. Old clan rivalries fall away in the city. It is better to embrace a fellow Orlanthi, even if he hails from

Æn Orlanthi Tula



the hated Blue Deer clan, than to trust a foreign sorcerer or dragon mystic. In the towns we must restrain our sense of honour. Foreigners cannot take away our honour, because they have none of their own. So while you can threaten to strike them with your sword, which is often a satisfying thing to do, such actions occur by choice, not obligation.

After generations in the city, ties to the old clans may fade. Cityfolk of the same tribe associate together in organisations called far-halls. Each maintains a drinking

At the Adyrli far-hall, I met my great friend Baravalos, who can drain a keg before another man can tap it. He has promised to introduce me to his daughter, for it is about time I wed. If I am lucky, the girl resembles her mother.

— Tarnvarth Fleeffoot, Freebooter of Lustria

It is the universal Orlanthi dread of Sorcery, more so even than his innate propensity for violence, that marks him forever as a supersifious primitive.

— Spolorfal the Arranger, Dean of Pythos University

house, often reminiscent of a homeland clan hall. Members of a far-hall help each other out with business connections, knowledge, magic and, most importantly, comradeship. None of these gifts, however worthwhile, substitutes for the guidance provided by a chief and ring or the soulful feeling of solidarity with one's ancestors.

Orlanth has always brought in strays and exiles and, when they proved their value, given them full status in his tribe. Heler brought the rain from the Water Tribe. Elmal was once a member of the enemy Fire Tribe. Even Ernalda was of another people, that of the Earth. For this reason converts to Orlanth and Ernalda are always accepted. Without ancestors to lend them magic, their path may be difficult. But Orlanth himself always made it up as he went along and for us it is more important to have the storm in your heart than to follow a list of musty old rules. These days, though, you have to be careful that a convert is sincere before sharing your rituals and secrets. He might just be a God Learner agent trying to swindle you out of your clan's obscure myths. We Orlanthi have another word for 'blind faith' – we call it stupidity.

Adventurers like Orlanthi gods because they were wayfarers and therefore grant powers useful to mercenaries, freebooters and fortune seekers. It is not insincere to join us for these reasons. It means that thunder beats in your chest, and that your feet are as restless as those of our god.

My Magic

Like anyone, we can practice Rune Magic. We know it as a gift from Orlanth. Anyone who says otherwise is just fooling himself. You gain it by going out and raiding for it, so it must be from him.

Our truly powerful magics are divine, gained in the theist way.

We get a little bit of magic from spirits, especially folk magic that benefits a clan, but is not much use to individual warriors or adventurers. Clans draw on their wyter spirits and their ancestors. Also, one of Orlanth's brothers, Kolat, is master of wind spirits. An Orlanthi who walks his path is a shaman, not a priest.

Sorcery is very evil. Wizards will tell you that not all of them are God Learners, who seek to cut off the connections between us and our deities. Don't believe them. Better to distrust all of them than to be fooled by a single one.

If you asked a Dawn Age Orlanthi about mysticism, he would shrug his shoulders and wonder what you were talking about. Now we have learned to hate this word and all it stands for, because it is what the wyrmfriends use to suppress and pervert our worship. Gbaji, the Chaos

Draconised Orlanthi

Draconised Orlanthi will tell you that the extreme distrust and loathing their traditional brothers feel for them is entirely misplaced. The EWF does not stop you from being Orlanthi. It merely adds new revelations to pre-existing belief. Draconised Orlanthi still derive their powers from Orlanth, Ernalda and all the rest, in the old-fashioned theist way. They even tell the same myths — just with the previously hidden dragon elements pointed out. It is simply a matter of interpretation. Orlanth and Ernalda are reflections of the universal dragon and give their power to us so they can complete its earthly representation. Mystic revelation brings you closer to your gods, because they are part of the dragon. And that allows you to access not only the overt powers granted by the gods but their esoteric draconic gifts, too.

It is certainly true that the power one would normally give to the ancestors or clan wyter is instead gifted to the Great Project. There is no shame in this, the wyrmfriends say. Good followers of Orlanth the Dragon understand the need to donate energy to the project. Old-way worship is nothing but a mystic form of tax evasion. It selfishly keeps power that should go to the Great Dragon, diverting it to the wyter and ancestors.

And that is the only real difference, which is scarcely worth all this fuss and rebellion. Or so the dragon Orlanthi say.

god that walked the earth and called itself Nysalor, also had suspiciously mystical qualities. Mystics of other traditions may be acceptable but why risk contaminating yourself?

Why I Adventure

Orlanthi went out into the world to take what riches awaited him, so we do it, too. Treasure is a good thing, especially when it benefits the community. The same holds true for magical abilities. Many of his Storm Tribe companions also went out to face the dangers of the world, making it a better place. So by hitting the adventurer's trail, we emulate the divine actions of our gods.

Malkioni

We Malkioni worship the Invisible God. All other gods are false. We believe in logic and scholarship; these are the tools he gave us to make our way in a hostile world. The false gods hook their benighted followers on improper worship by doling out spells and charms. The Invisible God is not so vulgar. With the discipline of logic, we can figure out magic for ourselves. By applying its precepts, along with the divine principles outlined in the *Abiding Book*, we can govern all aspects of our daily lives in the correct and holy manner.

My Myths

Through recent scholarship we have refined our knowledge of prehistory, breaking it into the following eras.

I object most strenuously to the categorisation of Malkion's sacred narrative as 'myth'. Pagans have myths. We have only truths.

— Ombast Slope-Treader, Pedant of New Frowal

The First Action: Creation

The Invisible God is everything and has always existed. Before there was logic, or anything that we mortals could understand, the Invisible God existed in an ineffable state of One Mind. When One Mind perceived everything, everything came into being. Thus occurred the act of Primal Creation that began the world as we know it. The act of creating everything transformed the Invisible

Simple people must understand this story in a simple way. To them, I say: 'God made the world. God made you. Obey God. I will tell you how'.

— Brother Aran, Monk of Pombric

God into a new state of being. God became Malkion, an entity mortals can perceive and relate to. During the First Action, He was Malkion the Creator.

Then He had to transform himself again, to give shape and regularity to His creation. So He became Malkion the Law.

Malkion the Law made space, to contain the world. Then He placed necessary limits on it, writing the physical rules that make life consistent from one day to the next. Thanks to these rules, water is always wet, air is consistently breathable, and objects fall down, not in a random direction, when we drop them. He made lifeless matter into useful shapes. He took formless energy and transformed it into the animating principles behind existence.

The Second Action: Manifestation and Perception

By mixing His pure thought form with shapes and principles, Malkion remade himself again, into Malkion the Seer. He left his Palace of Intellect, perceiving the world, altering it through his perceptions. Thus were the abstract shapes, principles and runes translated into concrete forms. First He made the elements: Earth, then the Sun, then Water and Air. His thoughts became the Power Runes: Harmony, Disorder, Fertility, Death, Stasis, Movement, Truth and Illusion. His presence became the Form Runes: Plant, Beast, Man and Spirit (later Form Runes were a corruption of His original, like Chaos, or are not really Form Runes at all, like the foolish Dragonewt rune).

The Third Action: Multiplication and Identification

The Forms and Powers mixed. Beasts and plants appeared and flourished. The original animal was a unicorn; the primal plant was a tree with roots spreading invisibly throughout the world, in emulation of the breath of God.

The First People were created. These were the original Malkioni. At first everyone was a Malkioni. But some were not content or worshipful. They used Malkion's logic in a perverted way, seizing the runes for themselves. First they only claimed they created the runes. Later they said they *were* the runes. These rebels became the first of many False Gods. They built their own home in imitation of Malkion's palace. Some people went with them. Most stayed to worship Malkion properly, worrying little about the False Gods. One who remained true to Malkion but fought their power was the mighty sorcerer Zzabur the Sage. He studied them and wrote their secrets in a bronze book.

No treasure is more avidly sought by God Learners than Zzabur's Bronze Book. We would give anything for just one page of it. It is probably in Brithos; our desire for it inspired our ill-fated invasion against that island. It is important to distinguish it from Zzabur's Blue Book, a vile tome inscribed on the skins of his enemies.

— Spolorfal the Arranger, Dean of Pythos University

Zzabur established the Kingdom of Logic, to protect his followers from contamination by the False Gods. All that remains of it today is the island of Brithos, where Zzabur slumbers in his tower.

THE FOURTH ACTION: DUPLICATION AND PRESERVATION

Malkion could no longer stand still as the false gods deluded good people with fraudulent worship. So He left his refuge, now called the Castle of Logic, and in so doing invented Reason, a new way of understanding the world. He would use this to convince the gods of their falsity and bring them back to honour him.

Reason changed everything, making the world more complicated. Peoples split off from one another. They divided themselves into Us and Them. Elder races became distinct from ordinary humans. It is in the Fourth Action era that the cultures we recognise today began to form.

Malkion went to each of these peoples to inform them of the truth. The good peoples welcomed his new

Malkioni



revelations and reformed themselves as he demanded. Each culture retains its own story of this glorious day. The bad, ignorant and wilful peoples remained mired in false god worship.

Those who accepted Malkion as their prophet were given his holy social order. He divided his peoples into commoners, soldiers and leaders. This period is the same as the Golden Age recognised by theists. The land of the Malkioni Golden Age is called Danmalastan.

Then a Great Error arose among the people who worshipped Malkion. It was so bad that we are no longer sure what it was. It may have been an act of physical immorality or a selfish way of thinking. Our scholars are hard at work finding out what it was. Rediscovery of this essential truth will doubtless increase the potency of God Learner magic.

At any rate, the Great Error, whatever it was, led to the next, disastrous era.

The Fifth Action Era: Decay and Doom

As the effects of the Error radiated through Danmalastan, life grew increasingly worse for the good people. They were attacked by their foes. False gods fought each other, but also invaded Danmalastan. Devils were born, and haunted the land.

To prove He was the only god, Malkion did what no false god could do. He made himself a man. He walked among the people, healing and giving guidance and providing concrete proof of his superior divinity. At this time he was called Old Malkion, or Malkion the Man.

The miracles of Old Malkion were many. He misted enemies with the Hollow Stone, drowned unbelievers in the Emerald Lake, told the Roaring Bridge to cast off pursuing lion men and sliced his tormentors in the River of Blades.

— Brother Aran, Monk of Pombric

Then Malkion was murdered. There are many stories explaining how. The version in the most reliable source, the *Abiding Book* is maddeningly cryptic, saying only that he was torn apart by enemy gods, including Zzabur. We Jrusteli scholars have concluded that the more detailed truth is as follows:

Old Malkion was killed not by the purposeful actions of his foes but an unforgivable transgression on the part of his friends. His followers Vadel and Zzabur travelled with him one day, urging him to settle an argument. Vadel said that the false gods existed to serve the good people and should have their energies extracted from them. Zzabur said that only his methods for extracting obedience from the false gods could be deemed theologically correct and that all others would lead inevitably to corruption. The two proud demigods could not constrain their dispute and rather than wait for fragile Old Malkion to tell them what was true, they fought. Vadel used energies he'd tapped from the gods, while Zzabur summoned several of their number to wage his battle for him. Zzabur tossed a stray bolt of Blue Perdition, which struck Malkion the Man, wounding him. The other enemy gods seized their opportunity and broke away from Zzabur, tearing Malkion to pieces.

Vadel was so horrified by the sight of Malkion's death that he went mad and turned to torture and evil. Zzabur was shameless. He picked up Malkion's mantle and wore it, saying that His death was right and necessary. Malkion had to die, so that Death could come into the world, allowing the completion of creation.

The death of Malkion brought on the Great Darkness. Zzabur, his murderer, led the fight for Danmalastan. He fought false gods. He fought against other Malkioni, who split off from each other and blamed each other for Old Malkion's murder. Mad Vadel turned his people to organised depravity. Floods buffeted Danmalastan. The grinding glacier Valind came from the north to crush it.

Zzabur proved the supremacy of Sorcery over divine power. He humbled gods, beating them in tests and battles. He motivated the supporters of the sun god, Ehilm, to slay their own master. The world got darker then but this was a necessary step to bring about an eventual return to light. Zzabur destroyed the Devil and exiled the wind god, Worlath, to the Ultimate Resting Place. He sank the lands of Vadel's depraved people.

Finally he ended what he started, atoning in part for his careless murder of Old Malkion. He gathered with all the world's puissant sorcerers to work a ritual of unprecedented scope. Even practitioners of other magics, from cultures that were usually enemies, contributed support from afar. This ritual ended the Ice Age, bringing a Tamed Sun back to the sky. Thus the Dawn Age began.

My History

At the Dawn, worship of Malkion is still not right. The Brithini, led by Zzabur, insist on a sterile, uncompromising worship which exists mainly to extract obedience from people. 'All men must stay in their places' is the chief rule of Zzaburism. Most everybody else has fallen into the sin of henotheism.

Henotheists recognise the Invisible God as the ultimate divinity but treat false gods as His intermediaries, drawing Divine Magic from them. They must be pitied but also firmly suppressed, for the good of all.

— Brother Aran, Monk of Pombric

Prince Hrestol

A year after the First Dawn, Hrestol, heir to the first Seshnelan king, experiences a religious vision. He encounters an angel called Ferbrith, who reveals Joy and Solace to him. Joy is a momentary contact with the divine, as he is now experiencing. Solace is the permanent version of this, which occurs after death. The souls of good Malkioni go to Solace, where they reside forever in bliss. It is impossible for the living to contact those who reside there but it is eternal, an ultimate reward for a life lived without sin.

Armed with this truth, Hrestol renounces his claims to the throne to become a missionary. He and his converts travel through the west, spreading news of Solace. They demonstrate this with the Joy Touch, a worship technique allowing them to initiate momentary Joy in congregants. His new personalised version of the faith wins out against both henotheism and harsh Zzabur-style belief. Hrestol acknowledges the reality of saints, heroes of Malkionism who can provide aid when petitioned with prayer. He also creates a new caste, the knight, which combines elements of the warrior and the leader. An offended Zzabur has him murdered in the year 33.

The Hrestoli doctrine's emphasis on personal revelation allows its adherents to go off in a hundred different directions in the wake of his martyrdom. Within generations, countless sects have sprung up, each with its own idiosyncratic dogmas.

The Sunstop, Gbaji and Arkat

In the late fourth century, the false god worshippers try to upset the balance of power between pagans and believers, by creating a new earthly god, Nysalor. The sorcerers of the West band together for a demonstration

of power, stopping Ehilm the Sun God in the sky. This seemingly cows the pagans. But not long afterwards, they create a chaotic god, Gbaji, to wreak vengeance. Much of the West converts to Gbajism. Arkat, at first a good Malkioni, fights the Gbaji heresies, but later damns himself by converting to paganism and even trollishness. Still, his HeroQuesting experiments are interesting and worth emulating, albeit in a holier manner.

The Abiding Book

In the late 640s, Jrustela is a hotbed of sectarian dispute. Since the revelations of Prince Hrestol at the beginning of the Dawn Age, a multiplicity of Malkioni faiths, many of them contradictory, have sprung up. A scholarly conference in the city of Erandinthanos, meant to reconcile various offshoots and heresies instead provokes sectarian violence when an image of Saint Dromol is supposedly desecrated. Bloodshed follows, as factions fight in the streets to defend the truth of their own theologies. With tensions reaching a fever pitch, the Second Erandinthanos Conference is held in 646.

Sorcery Schools of the Dawn Age

The now-dominant God Learner schools arose from several branches of Sorcery practiced during the Dawn Age. All of these schools are still extant, though they have been eclipsed by the wielders of RuneQuest Sight. Many hew to the harsh Zzaburite code, denying the innovations of Hrestol and the truth of the *Abiding Book*.

The **Debaldans** are masters of water magic. Their school is unaffiliated with any church and arose with the Waertagi. As associates of the vanquished sea people, they are in retreat. Rumours suggest that they are up to something big.

The **Telendarians** learn spells assisting them in exploration. As masters of territorial expansion, they are one of the few old schools to prosper in the new Empire.

Fearsome on the battlefield, sorcerers of the **Barmalan** school practice combat magic. To retain their powers they must avoid impurities, especially contact with spilled blood, including their own. They wreath themselves in veils of force to prevent contamination.

Also invaluable during warfare, the **Furlandan** school derives its power from the domination of spirits, especially those that lend combat magic.

Other schools include the **Zendamalthans**, who work Sorcery through application of pure will, gaining formidable mental powers; the **Ekozite** school of Alchemists; the **Malvonians**, who specialise in defensive magics and the **Orgethite** air magicians.

The Abiding Book



The most controversial of these unreconciled faiths is that of the visionary priest Serozos. He claims to have contacted an entity called Makan, reaching him through extended prayer. This turns out to be an expression of the One God. Serozos introduces a practice called veneration, in which ordinary worshippers give their energy to God via their priests, in an organised ceremony. It does not supersede the obedience of Zzabur or the personal quest for Solace of Hrestol but adds to it. The Dolphin Guild, a local conference of sorcerers, captures Serozos. After trying and failing to break him with torture and interrogation spells, the guild drags him before the Second Erandinthanos Conference to answer to the theologians there.

Conference attendees, later celebrated as the Church Witnesses, look on as a hand materialises from nowhere. A pen appears in the hand. The command 'Write' is issued by a disembodied voice. At a pace both feverish and stately, on indestructible paper, the hand proceeds to write the entirety of the *Abiding Book*. This is the guiding volume of the Malkioni people, telling them how to live,

how to worship and what to believe. It reconciles heresies and separates truth from false conjecture.

Return to Rightness

Top members of the Dolphin Guild prostrate themselves at Serozos' feet. His doctrine has been objectively proven. Now that it is no longer a heresy but a rediscovered form of Fourth Action worship, they resolve to assist in spreading it wherever Malkioni dwell in lamentable ignorance. The Dolphin Guild restyles itself the Rightness Army, the spearhead of the Return to Rightness movement. In tandem with the God Learners, many of whom are also members of the former Dolphin Guild, they spread both the Malkioni new orthodoxy and God Learner magic, building an Empire in the process.

The One-Codders claim that all of the answers are in their Abiding Book. If that is true, why do they still argue with each other?

— *Ervaling Scalemaker, Wyrmfriend Priest*

My Life

The demands of Empire have taken us far away from our caste-bound roots. In our hearts, we still believe in the social order as laid down by Malkion the Seer in the Fourth Action. To be practical, we must acknowledge the need for many other classes of people, if we're to retain the prosperity we've won for ourselves over the last centuries. The God Learners have taught us that flexibility is a virtue, even in the spreading of an omnipresent and infallible faith.

Most people are still commoners working on farms. They toil on plots of land belonging to the nobility. Agreements of indenture bind them to their land. They must provide specified amounts of produce to their lords. After that, they may keep what is left. In turn the landlords must provide for their security and fairly administer the law. Commoners may be pressed to fight in militias, though more often they face extra taxes in time of war, to pay for knights and mercenaries.

The cities are full of commoners, too. They toil in their own way. Some are menial labourers. Others fill their purses as practitioners of specialised professions. They are artisans, craftsmen and officials.

Malkioni Saints

It was Prince Hrestol, at the Dawn, who taught us pray to saints, who intercede on our behalf with the Invisible God. These are the holy heroes of Malkionism, whose deeds grant us magic, if we possess the grace and fortitude to emulate them.

St. Gerlant, the Flame King: Contrary to what the pagans say, it was not the accursed Arkat, but the holy warrior Saint Gerlant, who slew the Chaos god, Gbaji the Deceiver. Gerlant and Arkat fought side by side until Arkat fell into error. Gerlant's followers wield flaming swords and cast spells that thwart Chaos and pagan magic.

St. Talor the Mad: In Fronela, the forces of Gbaji were hewn down by the Laughing Warrior, Talor. A sensitive soul buffeted by the brutality of war, Talor lost his sanity, so that he cried at happy times and wept joyful tears in the face of death. Warriors who accept his patronage move about the battlefield in sudden, surprising ways. Laughing like their crazy saint, they are useful but dangerous friends.

St. Xemela the Healer: When Prince Hrestol shucked off his earthly responsibilities to spread the word of Solace, his gracious mother dedicated her life to holy pursuits. She sacrificed her own life and soul to save her people from a plague known as the Black Swelling. Afterwards she was redeemed and carried to Solace by Hrestol. Her followers practice prodigious healing magic.

St. Serozos, the Revealer: The Jrusteli scholar Serozos discovered veneration and withstood torture. His display of faith prompted the manifestation of the *Abiding Book*. He is the patron saint of scholars, sages, theologians and librarians, providing gifts of knowledge and holy perception.

St. Volanc the Righteous: Volanc headed the Dolphin Guild and was Serozos' primary tormentor, prior to the appearance of the *Abiding Book*. Subsequent to this, he was a changed man, and founded the Rightness Army, to bring the newly revealed word to Malkioni everywhere. Volanc's followers are missionaries, inquisitors and holy warriors. His magics reveal virtue, smite sinners and expose heretics.

St. Hwaros the Bender: Hwaros founded the Jrusteli school of Sorcery that discovered RuneQuest Sight and laid the foundation for God Learnerism. An ascetic, close-mouthed figure, he never said an unneeded word, depending on curt hand gestures for the bulk of his communications. He is venerated by sorcerers, who gain additional powers to manipulate theist magic.

In these times of unprecedented opportunity, ambitious commoners can rise quickly to prominence as traders. Members of the great trading houses, especially those of Jrustela, may now be wealthier and more influential than nobles. Those who wish to attend the Emperor at court in Seshnela must recognise that they are nothing without ties to an ancient title. They gain these through intermarriage, wedding their children to the scions of impoverished nobility.

It used to be that sorcerers came exclusively from the noble classes, but God Learner schools welcome anyone educated enough to demonstrate promise as a student. As plunder of the Hero Plane continues, good sorcerers are urgently needed. Within their monasteries and universities, it is accomplishment as a magician that wins the respect of one's fellows. Caste counts for little.

Adventurers who fight for Malkioni societies may be appointed to the knighthood. The knight class was originally invented by Prince Hrestol as a way of rewarding initiative and talent in an otherwise stratified society. Now it is no longer necessary to win formal knighthood to be allowed to go around the world accomplishing great deeds. Knight status is still coveted though, as certain magical abilities are available only to ordained wearers of the Hrestoli garter.

Many Malkioni still follow the traditional life of the soldier, though these do not make good adventurers. A soldier follows the commands of a leader, who is either a landlord or a commander in the field. He may fight in the army or sail in the imperial navy. The holiest soldier is one who obeys without question, and sacrifices his life joyfully, in Malkion's name. Some soldiers grow

The Jrusteli are freer of castes and classes than their Seshnegi brothers. In Hredmorinos, men are not indentured to the land. Every man is a freeman, even if he works a farm.

— Vayalin Calf-Skinner, Councilor of Hredmorinos

disenchanted with their lot as followers and go off and become solitary knights, swinging their swords in pursuit of their own individual destinies. Lately it has become more common to promote soldiers into leadership positions, especially during battles. Very traditional priests consider this a blasphemy but the Empire retorts with its famous slogan: 'Competence is holy'.

Atop the ideal pyramid of Malkioni life are the leaders. In old Seshnela and environs, leadership has always been hereditary. If you cannot trace your lineage back before the Dawn, your family line is unworthy of rule. Jrusteli cities were founded on more egalitarian lines, where leaders were chosen by the people, based on merit. Many thus elevated were knights. But then they started lineages of their own and it is hard to rise to the top in Jrustela now if you cannot trace your family line back to the early settlement days.

Malkion teaches us that man is master and woman is his helpmate. How stringently this principle is enforced varies by location. In Seshnela, women who seek power must work through men, scheming at court and behind the throne. In Jrustela, Umathela and the various outposts of the Middle Sea Empire, the spirit of expansion and experimentation allows competent women to step into the roles of leader and knight. They may still face prejudice, especially from the hidebound, but generally find that

The Malsk say our gods are false and our ways of calling magic from them superstitious and blind. But they call on their threadbare saints for magic. You tell me how that is different.

— Enlirath Casting, God Talker of the Brown Deer Clan

a fat purse or a sharp sword can silence all manner of critics. Even the crusading Rightness Army counts female knights among its most fanatical warriors.

My Magic

Appeals to faith magic are foolhardy. Simple logic shows us that Sorcery is the best form of magic. And why would we use anything but the superior form?

Sorcery is better than all other types of magic because it alone can be used to dissect, pre-empt, dominate and control the all of the others. God Learner Sorcery allows us to steal back Malkion's power from the false gods, to bind spirits and command their obedience and even to render efficient and streamlined the muzzy-minded ways of mysticism.

Why I Adventure

When Malkion made the world he made it for us, his believers. Everything that the monsters and false god worshippers have is rightfully ours. We must spread out through Glorantha in tribute to the glory of God and take back what belongs to Him. Everything we do to enrich ourselves or to steal power from the pagans is a kind of prayer. And let me tell you, we of the Middle Sea Empire pray fervently and often.

Nomads of the Waste

We are the nomads of the Waste, the vast desert between Dragon Pass and the eastern kingdoms of Teshnos and Kralorela. Our lives are the harshest in the world. We survive through the bounty of Waha, who taught us to bind ourselves to the spirits of the animals we ride: sable, antelope, bison, camels and others.

My Myths

Our land was a paradise once. Giants ruled it. Food was plentiful. There was no death.

That lasted for a long time, well into the time of people. When Death first came, it slew one of us. His name was Daka Fal. He is the ancestor of ancestors, who helps us gain magic from our ghostly forefathers. That was bad, but before long we accepted Death as a part of Life.

The gods fought each other. Storm Bull fought the fire god, Oakfed, chasing him to Prax. We gave him forests to eat, so he would not burn us. This made the elves angry with us.

Then the devil came and destroyed our land, killing the foolish giants.

The great god Storm Bull blew across the land and defeated the devil, pinning him beneath a great column of stone called The Block.

He was too hot and harsh to help people directly, so he sent his son, Waha, to do it. He freed Eiritha, the Cow Mother, the goddess of fertility. He taught us new ways to live, off herds of animals. He sired mortal bloodlines and scourged the land of Chaos remnants. When he'd made the world safe, the yellow-bellied sun emerged from its cowering place and shone on us again.

My History

Waha is no ordinary god. When other gods retreat at the beginning of the time, he continues to oversee his dusty land as a great spirit.

For over 200 years, we are left alone by our neighbours. Our land is too scorched to covet. We raid each other and are raided in turn. Eventually our martial prowess is too great to be ignored, and outsiders hire us as mercenaries. We fight for the World Council from 230 onwards.

The World Council makes a new god and we do not care, so long as we are paid. The new god becomes Gbaji, a Chaos creature. Only outlaws stay to take his coin. The rest of us retreat to our homeland. Gbaji is killed, far away from us, in 450.

The despised Pure Horse People invade us in 620. They are Pentans, sent by the wyrmfriends of Dragon Pass, who hate us because we raid them. The horse people become the biggest tribe in Prax. They win but we are not destroyed.

In 720, God Learners show up, looking for the magic-filled cradles giants use to sent their babies downstream to the sea. They found a town, Feroda. Traders and others come here. The Horse People like it because they get rich. We like it only because we raid the traders.

Our raids against the Horse People grow so strong that they have to send dragons against us. In 740, they defeat us. Our anger festers.

A history by the scruffy raiders of Prax! How amusing! One might as well present a chronicle of Cloranthan life from the point of view of its ants.

— Ervaling Scalemaker, Wyrmfriend Priest

The God Learners build another town, Robcradle, to better loot the secrets of giants. Waha does not like this. The giants are his friends. He goes to the giant Paragua and proposes a war. We fight with Waha, all of us tribes together, which hardly ever happens. The giants fight, too. They smash Robcradle. They drive off the God Learners. They drive off the Pentans.

No feud stays settled for long. 30 years later, a human hero called Pavis, who wielded elf magic, leads a battle to retake Robcradle. His weapon is a giant stone statue he brings to life in troll country. Waha fights the statue; it beats him down and slashes his tendons. A dragonfriend magician, Varajiia Nopor, hurts him with wrongful magics.

Pavis declares victory, then comes to Waha and heals him. Waha acknowledges him as a son and agrees to retreat from the world, like other gods did 800 years before. We weep. Waha assures us we can still draw on his magic and protection, so long as we follow his laws.

Pavis rules Prax for the wyrmfriends. With dwarfish help, he erects a bigger city on Robcradle's ruins and greedily names it for himself. We raid its caravans.

In 860, Pavis retires permanently to his palace. He selects the Arrowsmith Dynasty to run the city. We all know it's really the wyrmfriends in charge, behind the scenes. We raid their caravans.

Our raiding grows too potent and about eight years ago the wyrms send more Horse People to put us all down again. We are on the run now. Our fury sustains us. Eventually the feuds will again turn in our favour.

It is the way of the desert. One day's king is the next day's slave.

My Life

Our lives are lived in concert with the animals we ride. They are our mounts. We feed from their blood and milk. When it is time, we butcher them, according to Waha's laws. He invented the Peaceful Cut, which allows the animal's soul to detach painlessly from its body and return to the great spirit herd. From there it will be reborn to us, perhaps as early as the next calving time.

Animals can have their spirits awakened inside their bodies. They become as intelligent as you or I. They can cast spells and obey complex instructions. They are like family to us. You do not butcher an awakened animal, just as you would not butcher your son or brother.

Each tribe feuds with the others. We are all Waha's children but he wants us to be strong, and to be strong, you have to be willing to take food to fill your bellies.

Men are men and women are women. To mix roles is against Waha's commands. Women are life keepers. They own the basic herds, cooking implements, tents, and household tools. They tend herds, heal people and raise children. Men are death keepers. We get to own only the beasts we capture from others. We run the herds and perform the butchering, raiding and defensive fighting.

Waha arranged us into families. Families travel together as clans. All the clans of a single herd animal constitute a tribe. When in doubt, favour your family over your clan and your clan over your tribe. You may raid other clans of the same tribe but should expect to be ill treated if you steal from other families of your clan.

The leader of the clan is the khan. His wife is the queen. The tribal leaders are High Khan and High Queen.

Waha decrees a terrible punishment for wrongdoers. They are banished from their tribes. They may no longer gain nourishment from the meat of their tribal animal and are left alone in the desert to shift for themselves. Only the toughest survive banishment.

You can know much about a Praxian by the animal he rides:

Sable riders are political and opportunistic. They make overtures to the God Learners and wyrmfriends alike. Their only true ally is themselves.

Morokanth Nomad of the Waste



The **Bison** people are bluff and surly. They are the opposite of the Sables, always getting into trouble with whoever's in power.

We **High Llamas** are said to be arrogant and, like our animals, prone to spit on those beneath them. We say, it is hard to spit and not hit an inferior.

The **Impala** riders are pygmies who swarm their foes. They are demanding and obstreperous. It's plain to see that they're making up for their minute stature.

Everybody hates the blunt, unsentimental **Morokanth**. They are not human but plump quadrupedal animals with fat, in-curving snouts. When Waha held the first lottery to see who would ride and who would be ridden, the Morokanth cheated. Thus they marshal a herd of unintelligent humans. You can tell it is wrong, because they can't ride the humans and must walk beside them.

There are smaller, oddball tribes: the plodding, short-sighted **Rhino**; the fleet, elusive **Zebra**; the female-only **Unicorn** tribe. The **Bolo** riders herd bipedal dinosaurs. The **Ostrich** riders are the most foul tempered of any of us. And that is quite the statement to make.

My Magic

Waha does not give us magic. He teaches us to get magic from spirits. We do Rune Magic, like everyone else, but our great workings are spirit summonings.

Some shamans say that Waha could still be brought back. All we would have to do is destroy the city of Pavis, rooting into its depths to slay its founder. With Pavis dead, Waha's pledge to him would be nullified.

— Ozar Peltbread, High Khan of the Impala Tribe

Why I Adventure

Our spirit powers are uniquely suited to our inhospitable land. When we wander, it is in search of wealth for our people.

Sometimes we go a long way to raid. Favourite targets are Dragon Pass, Teshnos and the troll land of Dagori Inkarth. A Praxian left behind after a disastrous raid may continue to wander before coming back.

The banished often leave Prax entirely, seeking their way as mercenaries or freebooters in far-off lands. They often secretly yearn for the home clans they've been forever severed from.

Pamaltelan

We are the Agimori. In our language, this means 'We Who Die and Come Again'. We are the people of Pamalt, the god who did not fall when the Chaos monsters came. He protected our tropical continent. Its lands were ravaged but not so badly that they could not recover quickly. We count ourselves more blessed than the northern peoples and are grateful to Pamalt for his strength. We live in the idyllic grassless savannah at the centre of the continent.

My Myths

Earthmaker made the world. You can tell that from his name. He made everything in it. You can tell that by looking around you, smelling the goodness of the earth and the plants. There are terrifying things in the world but they are not his fault. They came after.

Earthmaker got tired after a while, with all his making. So he made giant spirits to shape the world for him. The first and best of these was Pamalt, who was brave, kindly and clever. He is our ancestor. It's his job to keep the land alive and our job to help him. We benefit from this, of course, but it is our joy to preserve life.

The time when Earthmaker lived was the best. He'd do anything you asked him. If you wanted a cooling lake where the animals could drink, he would reach down, scoop it out, spit into the hole and there you were. A cooling lake. If you got tired of eating boar, then he would make antelope, too.

The best request Pamalt ever made of him was to create a family. And just like that, Earthmaker did it.

There was Aleshmara, who was like Pamalt's mother, although she was made afterwards and did not give birth to him. She's the matriarch of his family, keeping the goddesses in line and telling Pamalt what to do, when he needs it.

For his wife, Earthmaker made Faranar, and she is the wife of wives. She rules the domestic realm, owning the living quarters, containers, tools and ovens. Her most important job is in looking after the babies.

To aid Pamalt with wisdom, Earthmaker provided Cronisper the Rememberer. His job is to keep track of the songs, the paints and the location of the wisdom roots. He was like Pamalt's uncle.

To give Pamalt strength, but more importantly comradeship, Earthmaker made Balumbasta, who is very strong, so strong that he could make himself a range of mountains overnight, but not so smart. He is like Pamalt's youngest brother and shows us how being smart doesn't matter so much if you are good-hearted.

Pamalt's next youngest brother was Rasout, the hunter. His job was to chase animals across the veldt and bring them back as food. To keep him from being too proud, Earthmaker created the Runthing, the prey Rasout could never catch. His worshippers see this at least once in their lives. They never catch it, either.

The oldest brother next to Pamalt was Vangono, the warrior, master of the spear. Earthmaker said his job would come later.

Pamaltela's Non-Pamaltelans

This land is Pamalt's but not all who live there worship him as we do. The cities of Fonrit worship Ompalam, the god of slavery. These people call themselves the Torav and are blue-skinned. A few of them rule the others, reducing them to abject subjugation. The God Learners conquered them. Their common people were better off than under their own leaders. But a few years ago, they revolted against the God Learners and drove them out. They are hard to understand! They say that their god is all-powerful and rules all the others but he does not rule Pamalt, this is for certain.

In the north, there are elves in the forests and trolls, untamed by Pamalt, in the mountains. We live amid all manner of bug men or timinits.

God Learners live in the cities of Umathela. They are fighting some sort of war with each other. The locals have kicked out their distant rulers. But they're all the same exploiting Malkioni, who've killed off many ancient races here. We do not care to make sense of this.

Also Earthmaker made Naruma, who could see something that didn't exist at the time. Nobody knew what his job was but Naruma and he wasn't saying yet.

When he was done, Earthmaker sat down on a tussock of soft vines, tired out. He farted and out came Bolongo the Fool. He was Pamalt's cousin, who could never remember the difference between right and wrong.

Seeing him, Vangono said, 'He is stupid. Stupid people get you killed. Earthmaker, let me pierce him with my spear.'

But Earthmaker went to sleep, saying that even wrongness had a purpose.

Of all the pagan myths, it is the stories of the Pamaltelan Agimori that give me the greatest pleasure. It is almost a shame to reshape them.

— Vansfigos Evermead, Tutor of Umathela

Much later Bolongo took a knife and slit his throat. He did not mean to kill him. He didn't even know what death was. No one did. Earthmaker's was the first death. After that death could not be kept from the world and we all die, when our time comes.

As he died, Earthmaker's last words were to Vangono: 'Now you and Naruma will see what your jobs are.'

Earthmaker's death emboldened the bad beings at the edge of the world, who had always wanted in but were afraid to cross him. Now they poured in and made war on Pamalt and his people. Vangono took up his spear and found he could now breathe three types of fire. He leapt on the monsters, slaying them. But many more came.

The worst of these was Vovisibor, the filth that walks. Each of the giants tried in turn to beat him. Finally Pamalt explained that they had to fight all at the same time, under his direction. They did this, forming Pamalt's Necklace, and the awful Vovisibor was torn back out of the world, banished to wherever he belonged.

'I thought I would contribute by doing my job,' said Naruma 'but I was not required. I see ghosts all around me, wandering and sad.'

'That is your job,' said Pamalt, 'to see the dead. Now lead me to Earthmaker.'

So they journeyed through the deepest, sharpest foliage, which they'd never tried to penetrate before. Naruma showed the path and Pamalt made it, stomping it down. He threatened the thorn trees and the grab-bushes, making them promise never to block the path again. They found where Earthmaker was, now that he was dead.

The path was still too long, though, so later Naruma made new, shorter paths, connecting people to the spirits of their dead relatives. The spirits could talk to their living families, then carry messages back to Earthmaker. Eventually no one alive could remember Earthmaker, except from stories. They stopped sending messages to him, but kept in touch with their dead relatives.

My History

Aided by our memory canes, marked off with notches, we remember elaborate histories of our families. These tell of food supplies, of carvings made, of births and stomping songs sung.

The Destroyed Peoples

The God Learners have ruined several peoples we used to co-exist with, stripping them of their gods and magic. They did this by meddling in the Other Side. We Agimori have been protected from this, by and large, because although we learn about the world from our stories of Pamalt and his family, most of our magic comes from local spirits.

Others were not so fortunate. You see the few survivors, wandering the veldt, bereft and bitter. Parts of their souls are missing now and they seek murderous revenge on the God Learners for doing this. We cannot blame them. The destroyed peoples include:

- ☒ The **Jolosi**. Their skins are dark like ours but they are less than a metre tall. They strike with weapons made from solid honey and are friends with the bees. Jolosi teeth are very sharp.
- ☒ The **Grinel**. They are animal men but the God Learners removed their totem animals from the world. They have big yellow eyes, are striped and wear antlers on their heads. The very old ones say that their totem animals were carnivorous antelope.
- ☒ The **Pernosi**, or Grape People, had soft green skins, like those of grapes, and grew inside soft plant pods until they were big enough to walk and talk. They were not elves but were friends with elves. We used to kidnap their women when they were nursing, to get drunk on their milk.
- ☒ We called the **Hobintam** the Spicy People, because their pleasant smell announced them from a thousand metres away. They would come to rub our food for us, to make it taste better, and we would pay them with a portion. They paid homage to a giant spirit called Tenpor, who communicated with them by changing the scents they gave off. Tenpor's motto was 'Help and be helped'.

We do not imagine you are interested in any of that. Are you?

Peace had reigned for dozens of generations when we were disturbed by the God Learners, who invaded our land of Jolar (they heard its name wrong and called it Kolar). They established the Six-Legged Empire to rule us, with the power of men on horseback. A few years ago we drove them out again, piercing horse and rider alike with the tips of our spears. Our hero Hon Hoolbiktu led us in this war, finding surprising new ways to fight them. With his magical manoeuvres, he made their heavy armour and fast horses into impediments.

We feel no joy in this deadly accomplishment but they were Bad Strangers. They were hurting us in this life and the next. They rounded up our ancestor spirits to use as slaves. So we armed ourselves in Vangono's hard-hearted wisdom and killed until they fled.

whenever we can. On those rare occasions when we need shelter, we build houses of hardened mud, in imitation of the termite. Each time we make sacrifices to the termite spirit, Gawala, and promise to knock down the huts after 14 days.

We settle disputes between tribes or families with shouting wars, where the winners are the best stompers and yellors.

The Six-Legged Empire tested our cordiality to others but our spirit-talkers say we lose our magic without it, so we warily persist in it.

— Kiwamka Kisho, Family Matriarch of Jolar

My Life

We belong to three tribes: the **Arbennan**, the **Doraddi** and the **Tarints**.

All of us spring from the same wise roots. We live by Pamalt's rules, which ensure that our extended families live in happy tranquillity. We extend this courtesy outward, and are welcoming to strangers.

The Arbennan

We Arbennan are the Agimori of the Jolar Plain. Hon Hoolbiktu is one of us. We roam and hunt. Our cousins, the Doraddi, call us the Walking People. Our plain is mild all year round and well populated with beasts which provide us with meat, hides and bones to make into ceremonial tools. The metal tools made elsewhere are better for ordinary use and we try to trade for them

Pamaltela



We trace our descent through the female line. During the bad times, Aleshmara hid our women by turning them into pools of clean drinking water. So each of us returns during the ceremonial days to our ancestral pool. Our spirits are those of the drinking pools and of the blowing seeds that fly through the air and of the wandering beasts.

The Doraddi

The Doraddi live in the eastern lands of Kolar. We Arbennan call them the Staying People. They stay put in villages along the life-giving rivers flowing toward the continent's interior. Some of them never stray more than a few miles from their homes. They hunt a little but cultivate more. Their houses are clay cylinders wearing rich wigs of living ivy.

Doraddi families are matrilineal. Each traces its ancestry back to one of the Original Women, who, when the filth monsters came, protected themselves by becoming plants. Each family is thereby related by blood to a particular food plant and is especially skilled at planting and harvesting it.

They settle disputes by sending out their wisest women to compete in lore contests. Plant spirits ask them questions; the first to miss an answer must yield to the other.

In addition to plant spirits, the Doraddi gain magic from the rivers and the earth.

The Tarint

We call the Tarint, who live in the arid and difficult west, the Thirsty People. Their land is dry, without many rivers, and inhabited by giant animals, who emerge every year from caves there, trampling everything in sight. The west has no ordinary animals to hunt, so every attempt to gain some meat requires combat with a huge and deadly beast. Worse, the Tarint are hard pressed by reptile men called slarges, who hide a lost civilisation inside the earth. They treat the Tarint as game animals, hunting them with magic and strange devices.

It is shocking to say it but the Tarint wage genuine war on each other, fighting for food and wives. There the spirit talkers of Cronisper are strong and those of Aleshmara are weak. Descent is traced down through the male line. To become a man, one must participate in the slaying of a giant beast, a slarge or an Agimori from an ancestral enemy family.

The Tarint take what they can from whatever spirits they find. They are as likely to capture an enemy's ancestor as to gain the peaceful cooperation of a nature spirit.

My Magic

Pamalt and his family show us how to live. Smaller spirits aid our survival, by giving us our higher magic. They are our ancestors or the local spirits. We also practice Rune Magic. Runes can be found all over Pamaltela, if you know how to look. And we do.

Why I Adventure

Most of us care only about feeding and protecting our families. A so-called life of adventure does neither of these jobs.

A few of us get infected by the wandering sickness, which impels us to go far from our homes to gain foreign knowledge and see distant places. We call these people *mwalish*. These are the Agimori who go out into the world to do great or risky deeds. When the sickness leaves them, they come back to us, bringing odd treasures and telling all sorts of entertaining lies.

Pelorians

We are the people of the Peloria, the Dara Happans, worshippers of the only important god, Yelm, the sun. Our history is longer than anyone else's. Our god is higher and brighter than anyone's. He has ruled us for a hundred thousand years. We value obedience and order. Our earthly Emperor is a descendant of Yelm and can prove it by passing the ten tests and handling the imperial regalia without damage to himself.

Dara Happa is in eclipse now, conquered by dragon people. A false ruler, a dragon, perches upon our throne, grasping the regalia.

But that will not last for long...

My Myths

Our culture worships Yelm. Because Yelm is an Emperor, it is fitting that only Emperors and nobles may worship him. Other lesser sorts may worship gods of lower status, such as Yelm's attendants and family members.

The important myths of our culture are therefore known only to nobles. We of the upper classes are reluctant to talk of our myths, now that the wyrmfriends pollute them with dragon nonsense and the God Learners want to steal them outright. But truth must be told, so here it is. Try not to be blinded by it.

Yelm did not create the world, nor was he among the first gods of the Celestial Court. But the world was created and then the Celestial Gods formed spontaneously. They ruled together for a time but could not prevent change from coming. Change demanded that the best and brightest of the newer gods be appointed to sit on a heavenly throne and rule all below it and of course it was Yelm that was chosen. His brothers went out to attend him. His older brother, Dayzatar, went above. He became the sky and retreated to the heavens, where no one can worship him. Yelm's younger brother, Lodril, went below. He touched the earth, became dirty and gross, and burrowed into it.

Yelm ruled atop a five-tiered ziggurat, on top of which was his golden throne. Harmony persisted; it was the perfect Golden Age.

One day an icy snake monster came down from the north. Lodril could not defeat it. The thundering god of violence, Shargash, was overwhelmed and had to run. Naturally

Yelm could not personally contest with the thing, because his purity was too great. Finally it was Muharzarm, son of Yelm and the mother goddess Dendara, who stepped forward and defeated it. Yelm rewarded him by giving him Ten Tests of Empire to perform. When he completed this, Yelm told him that he was now Emperor of Men, just as Yelm was Emperor of Gods. And Muharzarm ruled Dara Happa.

The original Ten Tests of Empire were: 1) defeating man-eating creatures; 2) feeding souls as well as bellies; 3) humbling the tall birds of Rinliddi; 4) dividing a herd of 38 animals evenly between two sons; 5) the invention of record-keeping; 6) forbidding polygamy; 7) solving a dispute by building a bridge; 8) inventing marriage; 9) knowing which way Truth pointed and 10) correctly identifying and handling the secret regalia.

— Varustori Cold-Beard, Exiled Noble of Dara Happa

Yelm's order was too perfect and beautiful to last. Various new gods came before him and suddenly some of them refused to submit to his grandeur. Eventually an evil god, Rebellus Terminus, came and made war on Yelm and the Solar Court. The bad-smelling barbarian worship him as the god Orlanth and say that he is a good god. They cannot know him, then, that Muharzarm was slain by him and Yelm was stricken to the core. Sorrowing for the loss of his son, who was the first victim of a shocking new force called Death, Yelm disintegrated. He shattered into many parts, including Vrimak the All-Seeing, which the foolish bird people of Rinliddi still worship as a separate entity.

Yelm's son Antirius was left to fight for Dara Happa as the world went dark and was scoured by monsters. Bad solar courtiers reigned as false Emperors. The world was flooded and creatures and people were saved from the raging waters by a great boat, built by Anaxial the Sailor, descendant of Muharzarm.

Emperors lived for a while, protected by Antirius, but eventually he fell, too. Only the most violent of solar gods, Shargash and Kargzant, were left. The world was all but dead. The god called Son of Evil held sway across

the land. He passed the Ten Tests and befouled the sacred ziggurat with blood and filth.

It was a man called Avivath, outwardly humble, badly maimed, but with the lost imperial drumbeat thrumming in his veins, who found the last trace of Yelm's power — a shaft of gold called the Sunspear. This he used to slay the Son of Evil, after purifying himself so that he was not really killing the legally ordained Emperor but instead passing his own Ten Tests.

It is the precedent established by Avivath when he felled the Son of Evil, that will allow Karvanyar to slay the Sun Dragon, even though it passed the Ten Tests and is in some technical sense our rightful Emperor.

— Varustori Gold-Beard, Exiled Noble of Dara Happa

With this action, Avivath laid the way for the Glorious Reascent of Yelm. After more tribulations and more improper Emperors, the blessed hero Khordavu, who had shown signs of greatness since childhood, passed the Ten Tests and could not be stopped by his horse-riding enemies. Finally Yelm's scattered parts were reintegrated. Khordavu became Emperor.

The other gods who make daily life possible in Peloria were reawakened by the righteous rays of the sun. First to recover was Lokarnos, the wagon god, who invented the wheel and is the patron of traders. He went out and gathered the others in his cart. The last one waiting for him was Oslira, goddess of the River Oslir. She was tamed by Muharzarm to feeds the people with her rice paddies. She made the rice return and with it, our great civilisation could flourish again. The Dawn Age began.

My History

At the Dawn, Khordavu unites the Dara Happan people and expels the Pentan nomads who have overrun Peloria. Contacts with the Theyalan Orlanthi people to the south lead to a sharing of lore. The Dara Happans lend their wisdom to the First Council. Over the next three centuries, Dara Happa slowly reclaims and subjugates the regions of Peloria.

In 375, Emperor Khorzanelm participates in the God Project, which results in the creation of the new deity Nysalor. Yelm stops in the sky to gaze in wonder at this new transcendent being. At first all is well and for nearly half a century Nysalor's teachings aid the Empire's growing prosperity. But then a dread creature escapes from Nysalor's shadow. This is the Chaos deity Gbaji. In 423, the Empire's greatest hero, Palangio the Iron Vrok, casts him into a deep hell. In 440, Gbaji comes back and eats him. He then proceeds to the land of Dorastor, cursing it with Chaos and, in 450, destroys beautiful Nysalor.

Dara Happa recovers quickly from this debacle. Relative peace and prosperity continue until the seventh century, when internal rebellions flourish and the Empire battles the Spolites, an underground movement of darkness opposed to the light of the sun. In 690, the Spolites are defeated, then superseded as a foe by the Carmanian dualists, who conquer Dara Happa in 725. The Carmanians are driven out in the 760s but by this time the wyrmfriend cult has begun its insidious spread throughout Peloria.

In 772 the Emperor Elmexdros the Conqueror welcomes the Golden Dragon Society. Through alliance with the EWF he hopes to expand the shrunken borders of Dara Happa throughout greater Peloria, as they were in the glory days. The wyrmfriends respond to his invitation by subverting Dara Happa from within. They become a powerful shadow government. In 850, they murder Emperor Dismatryan. For the next 28 years, the EWF makes war on Dara Happa from within and without, until a dragon passes the Ten Tests and ascends the throne in 878.

Under the Old Sun, I was a lowly tenant farmer and doomed to toil forever in obscurity. Under the Dragon Sun, I have grown mighty, both in spirit and in fame.

— Snospolin Redworm, Sun-Scale of Jillaro

My Life

Clan ties are primitive. We are better than our neighbours, because we believe in the family, which is sacred and right and more advanced. Each family is led by a Patriarch. His authority derives from Yelm, whose blood runs through

Other Pelorian Cultures

The Dara Happans have dominated Peloria for most of its history but there are other subject cultures within the region's rough borders who worship gods outside Yelm's solar pantheon.

The **Darjini** worship a pantheon headed by the great goddess SurEnslib, who manifests as a heron. They offend the staunch, repressed Yelmites with their orgiastic worship and their egalitarian culture, in which everyone is supposedly a noble.

The **Pelandan** pantheon of seven high gods is headed by Jernotius the Liberator, who is alternately male and female and preaches the necessity of cosmic balance. His people are notable for their art production and their six-tiered class structure.

The culture of **Carmania**, on Peloria's western edge, bears the stamp of Malkioni religion, with its emphasis on class structure and its patriarchal outlook. Carmanians are dualists, believing that events are governed by two entities created by the Invisible God. Idovanus, the good god, engages in eternal battle with the evil god, Ganesatarus the Deceiver.

The people of **Rinliddi** ride giant birds, paying homage to a pantheon headed by an avian deity, Vrimak the All Seeing.

All of these cultures have been to some degree penetrated by EWF mysticism. So there are draconised dualist, worshippers of Jernotius the dragon, scholars who identify SurEnslib with mystical principles and so on.

Women are chattel, though we would not like to do without them.

We had cities before anyone else, and our cities were better back then than any that exist today. Our rulers know how to rule cities. Our bureaucrats, called the Tenth, know how to administer them. Our commoners know how to live in them.

Dara Happan cities are wonders of architecture, dominated by straight towers reaching confidently into Yelm's bright sky. We strongly desire symmetry. Wherever possible, our city streets are designed as series of concentric rings, moving ever forward into the centre, where the main families and governmental buildings are located.

his veins. He rules over his own family with benevolent rigidity. When they transgress, he may punish them as he sees fit, including by death. The Patriarch designates his heir among the men of his family. He chooses which son succeeds him; the first-born enjoys no guarantee of favour.

To be truly Dara Happan, one must belong to a family. Eligibility depends on the ability to prove patrilineal descent within four generations to the ancestors of a Patriarch. If you cannot prove this, you are not a Dara Happan, not even a commoner. You are just a rustic peasant, a mere Pelorian. You should go worship Lodril and tug at yourself and roll around in the dirt, as he does.

Hierarchy is a blessing from Yelm. When everyone knows his place and does his job, life is golden. Our nobles descend from Yelm himself. A few dozen great families control our nation's wealth and power. Professions are likewise inherited.

Our military might is well known. We are masters at fighting in tight formation. Our commanders are called Polemarches and draw their magic of striking and smiting from the pole star.

Administrators are called tenths, short for the Ten Sons and Servants, the name given to Yelm's original courtiers. When all was right in the Empire, they collected taxes for redistribution to the nobility. In exchange we gave them the powerful magic needed for their jobs.

— Varustori Gold-Beard, Exiled Noble of Dara Happa

Our ultimate goal as a people is to bring back the Golden Age, when Yelm and his people ruled all of Peloria in a state of warm and shining perfection. This is why the Golden Dragon was originally permitted to flourish here,

Detoria



because the Emperor thought it would drive away the Spolite darkness witches and assist in rebuilding our glory. But the Dragon turns out to be a deceiver and a betrayer of our principles and sacred magics, so we must rise up to destroy it. All traces of its influence within our peoples' hearts must be burned away, with the light of wisdom.

My Magic

Only the highest, the Emperor and top-ranking patriarchs, may directly worship Yelm. All others commit effrontery by even considering it. The sorts of people you might actually meet draw magic from his relatives and intermediaries, such as his martial son, Yelmadio, the great defender Antirius, or the rebuilding Emperor, Khordavu.

Why I Adventure

Dara Happans do not adventure. This sounds disreputable if not outright criminal. We would not sully ourselves with it.

How To Play A Yelmite Noble

- ☒ Straighten your spine, balance your shoulders and stick out your chin.
- ☒ Speak in bold, declarative sentences.
- ☒ Never admit to uncertainty.
- ☒ Be offended.
- ☒ When in doubt as to what to be offended by, select any of the following: insults to the Sky gods, darkness magic, sexual license, disrespect for tradition, presumptuous women, irreverence toward rightful authority, the Orlanthi 'Lightbringers Quest' story.
- ☒ Fight bravely for what you believe in.
- ☒ Obey rightful authority.
- ☒ Think rigidly.

We do engage in acts of legendary heroism, however. These are all waged in protection of the Empire and its proven righteousness. He who does not follow a patriarch or commander is a filthy outlaw and not to be trusted.

Exiles may travel about the rest of the world seeking trouble. They tell themselves they're toughening themselves for the day when they come home, subjugate themselves to their patriarchs and reassume their seemly positions in life. I suppose what they tell themselves is even true, on occasion.

Teshnan

We yearn to see the celestial flame. We are the people of Teshnos, the steamy jungle land to the south of Kralorela. Lifetimes are nothing to us; we achieve spiritual perfection through cycles of reincarnation. We live, learn, progress, die, are born again and continue to perfect ourselves. We will still be doing this long after your so-called Empires have vanished into half-forgotten history.

It is difficult to get a Teshnan to tell you whether he believes in his myths at all or views them merely as parables. Their imprecision is maddening. In my darker moments I suspect it is a plot to thwart our inquiries.

— Spolorfal the Arranger, Dean of Pythos University

My Myths

Those of us who have seen the celestial flame are revered as teachers and leaders. They are called the zitr. There are only a few hundred zitr in our densely populated land.

The greatest of zitr propound their own system of enlightenment. They are called Seers. Each tells different stories of the gods. Some recognise different gods than others. The details don't matter too much, because the gods exist only as exemplars, to teach us. The magic exists not within the gods but in what the gods teach us about themselves.

A Seer's teachings usually consist of a few simple sentences. These are so packed with meaning that they take several lifetimes to fully understand. The god stories they tell provide the tools to understand the teachings. For instance, one great teacher is **Chal**. His teachings are:

- ☒ Teaching the First: *At the heart of everything there is flame.* To learn this, one must live several incarnations as a farmer or herdsman.
- ☒ Teaching the Second: *The individual life-flame is not a fire that burns in a form but the fiery form itself.* To learn this, one lives more lifetimes as a red-robed priest, making sacrifices to a chosen god.
- ☒ Teaching the Third: *Each of the fiery forms is one celestial fire.* Here one has become a noble, living in opulent luxury, smothered in jewels and layered in silk.

When one has fully assimilated the Third Teaching of Chal, one becomes a zitr. Other Seers are:

- ☒ **Elat**, of the Four Tough Survival Teachings. His followers begin as naked woodsmen and find the flame within the aldryami song.
- ☒ **Zon**, of the Ivory Mask Teachings. He tells us that behind the fire is a mask, behind the mask there is a soul and behind the soul, there is us.
- ☒ **Jrudai**, of the Gold in Fire Teachings. His followers begin with enormous wealth and must slowly dispose of it over multiple incarnations. They are few now.
- ☒ **Sankusa** of the Five Weapon Teachings. His martial followers come ever closer to the flame by mastering five weapons over the course of multiple incarnations: knife, spear, bow, sword and strangling

Of all the foreign invaders, the most vicious, the most deserving of the cleansing touch of our five flaming weapons, are the Pentan horse people. The feeling is mutual; they have sworn the annihilation of all followers of the Sankusan teachings.

— *Kothiflian Wall-Leaper, Sword of Sankusa*

cord. Teshnan warrior prowess is often mocked but not in the presence of Sankusites. They are our first line of defence against invaders.

The most recognised gods, by the teachings of Chal, Zon, Jrudai and others, are:

- ☒ **Zitro Argon**, the primal fire. His devotees meditate, fast and sometimes burn themselves but do not make sacrifices to him.
- ☒ **Somash** is the Sun, the mightiest of the gods. His adherents dedicate themselves to purity, fidelity and truth. Warriors, poets, healers and administrators follow him.
- ☒ **Calyz** is the friendly fire. He burns in domed kilns, cooking our food and heating metal for shaping into useful forms.
- ☒ **Solf** is the decadent, burnt-out volcano. His worshippers seek to destroy themselves through dissipation. To follow him, one must apply for a license from the king. Otherwise too many people would take his path, die all at once and have no bodies to reincarnate back into.
- ☒ **Furalor** is the destroying fire. She is the funeral pyre on which all worldly things, including souls, are burnt, so that they may then be recreated.

Some schools recognise other gods who work in balance with the fire gods. Others proclaim such recognition as wasteful error, calling these entities half-gods. The best known half-gods are:

- ☒ **Huand**, the cooling water. She is the force of moderation, into which Somash dips each night, lest his fire burn so bright as to burn his people.
- ☒ **Dakkad**, the infusing air. She flows into Calz's kin, adding flavour to foods and strength to swords.

Other Peoples of Teshnos

Amid the Teshnans live several sub-cultures who regard the celestial flame with profound indifference. They are known collectively as the unflamed, although they have little else in common.

Babadi are beardless, dark-skinned dwarfs. Their status as variant mostali have made them an object of fascination for the God Learners, who hope to crack Mostal's secrets by exploring their myths. They are artisans, making devices of mystical import, from spinning prayer wheels to floating daggers. They won't touch iron or diamonds and know nothing of explosives or gears.

Fethloni are yellow elves from the jungle depths. Their jungle priesthood maintains close ties with the Teshnan government, especially those of the Elatian Teachings. They steer the hungry forest spirits toward the mutual enemies of the two peoples.

Goondas are naked, orange-haired tree dwellers notorious for rowdiness, vandalism and drunken excess.

Thoskali hunter-gatherers co-exist with the Fethloni elves, emerging occasionally from the jungle to perform unclean tasks for the Teshnans, including tanning and the preparation of corpses for the pyre. In exchange they receive the fruits of civilisation, most notably beer.

- ☒ **Umalon**, the fruitful earth. When Furalor has destroyed something, she plants it in her daughter's infinite womb. Umalon births it back into the world, adding a fresh element each time.
- ☒ **Arshmolod**, the bringer of death. Furalor's pale daughter appears to the dying, to conduct their souls to the consuming fire. Her belly is round and swollen; her pregnancy represents the dying individual's next incarnation.

Here is a parable of creation and devolution. After many lifetimes you will know which parts of it burn true. Do not tell it to the God Learners, or they'll use it against us.

First there was nothing. Then there was the celestial flame. It could not burn forever without something to consume. So it let parts of itself fly out and these made the gods, followed by their land, and then people, followed by their land. Diminished but at the same time fuelled, the Celestial Flame became Zifro Argon.

This god was too far from the new land, so it invested the god Somash with a solar halo and sent him spinning into heaven.

The people were cold and hungry, so he made Calyz for them.

The world became too full of ignorant people who lacked interior ambition, so Furalor decreed herself the destroyer and laid waste to them.

Solf joined her campaign, because it looked like fun to him. In his selfishness he perverted what was hallowed and necessary about destruction and in so doing invited in the demoness Makbonella. She was both destruction without purpose and creation without restraint. Makbonella polluted exuberant young Solf and knocked Somash from the sky.

Only the people were left to find the flame again and so then the first zifrs generated themselves from their memories of the gods. They were Chal, Elat, Zon, Jrudai and the others. They fought the monsters of Makbonella's horde not with swords, but with the magic of their thoughts – Sankusa's thoughts were like knives and cut through her ropy hide as if aflame.

Eventually the competing zifrs agreed to harmonise their philosophies into the One Thought. This was not sustainable, because it contained everything, but while it existed it was enough to exalt Somash back into the sky and free Furalor from her prison inside Umalon. She came out of the prison and visited Makbonella's own destruction upon her. Umalon rebirthed the monster queen as the self-devouring jungle which surrounds our land. Now she serves us, by consuming foreigners who come to conquer us. Chal taught us to tame her spirits.

My History

Our history is of little interest to outsiders and this is how we like it. Our change is inward-directed, manifesting hardly at all in the realm of mere politics. Encased by

Teshnan



haunted jungles full of cooperatively fierce spirits, we have kept to ourselves and bothered no one. Please do not find us fascinating.

On occasion we invade Kralorela. Mostly this happens symbolically, in a snowy mountain pass, when one of our great war elephants contends with one of their serpents. The winner gets good luck for a year.

Our history recounts many raids by Praxians, Pentans, hsunchen or amazons from the Trowjang. These scarcely qualify as invasions and are barely worth mentioning. We dealt with them with Sankusan fire weapons, burning magic from the sky and the strategic payment of tribute.

We traded little with the outside world before the God Learners rose. Sometimes goods would come to us on Waertagi ships and we would ship out ivory and mahogany in exchange for them. The God Learners want us to buy more from them, to become accustomed to their trade as a drunkard is to ale. They hope to learn from us. We are

not afraid of outsiders, as the Kralori are. We invite any to come and observe our holy ways. Those who pay us the cold coin of disrespect will contend with our fearsome jungle spirits.

My Life

We are ruled by the Pentapartite Dynasty. Kingship rotates between adherents of the Five Seers who brought back the sun: Chal, Zon, Jrudai, Elat and Sankusa. When one king dies, the zitrts of that tradition go forth among the people looking for an orphan whose soul has been reincarnated into the desired tradition. Today we are ruled by King Kasinslian, a highly evolved follower of Sankusa. Flames leap in the pupils of his imperious eyes.

My Magic

Our five main gods teach us to manifest mystical powers by looking inward to the celestial fire that burns in all of us. Other deities provide Rune Magic and folk magic to the people who need these for their everyday lives.

Why I Adventure

Most teachings tell us that the desire for adventure is a spiritual trap. It speaks of a desire for a outer variety, as a distraction from the need for inner purity. Such temptations retard progress through your incarnation cycle.

The Sankusans differ on this point. To achieve mastery of the five weapons, one must go out into the world and locate worthy enemies. Sankusans sometimes wander far and wide in search of appropriate conflicts. Although they fight for fighting's sake, they take care to enlist only in ethical causes. Otherwise one risks pollution and a fall into accidental Solf worship.

I have travelled for many years searching for a worthy enemy to test myself against. I have yet to locate a foe that proves my mastery in even one of the five of the sacred weapons. Though I enjoyed defeating a God Learner arch-duke, he was hardly a challenge worthy of my skills.

— Kothiflian Wall-Leaper, Sword of Sankusa

Vithelan

We are the people of Vithela, also known as the Eastern Isles. These were once a great land mass, greater even than Genertela, but the land was shattered into thousands of pieces during the great disaster that preceded the dawn. We follow the ancient path of mystical knowledge, which originated here and only later migrated to the Kraloreli and Teshnans, who corrupted it with misunderstandings.

Many nations span our scattered islands. There are the seafaring Haragalans, the demon-fighting Hanfarador and the cheerful cannibals of Homago. Most famous of all, since so little is known about them, are the ever-mysterious Vormaino. Inhuman races also flourish here.

Although local customs vary, in matters of faith we are much the same: practitioners of the only true mysticism, that of the great refusal.

Vithelans know that theirs is the true mysticism, because of all of these confounding modes of religious thought, theirs is the most impenetrably baffling. I recommend study of their faith only to students with a limitless appetite for self-punishment.

— Spolorfal the Arranger, Dean of Pythos University

My Myths

First there was the Great Beyond, the primal state. Every instance of creation that followed was a bitter estrangement from this ideal condition. We strive to refute creation and return to harmony with the Great Beyond, which is still reachable through fasting, meditation and self-denial. A mortal who achieves this oneness with the Beyond has reached the ineffably blissful state called Durapdur. This is what all great mystics aspire to.

The first instance of creation brought into being the High Gods and that was not so bad, for they were just one step removed from the ultimate. They were:

- ☒ **Vith**, the Highest God, the Original Father. He ruled wisely until the end of the High Gods Age. Then he

saw that another, poorer version of life was about to commence and so departed with his two wives to dwell as far east as it is possible to go.

- ☒ **Gebkeran** is the Dark Mother, who birthed the anti-gods, along with hordes of inhumans, from mermen to demons, who cannot attain Durapdur. Because of this, they are angry and seek our destruction. She lives in Vith's secluded palace and also moves deep in the ocean waters.
- ☒ **Laraloori**, the Bright Mother birthed other gods, who are all immortal. She lives in the sky and her thoughts can be seen in the stars. During the High Gods Age, Laraloori birthed many gods. Foremost among these were **Yothernara**, Goddess of Love, giver of life; **Karkal**, Lord of Burning, a popular war god and patron of mankind; **Hensavara** the Bowman, warrior protector of his divine race and **Kabalt**, the Liberating Bolt, the bringer of sudden mystical enlightenment.

The children of the High Gods in turn produced many more offspring. These are the Little Gods, of whom there are hundreds. Their worship is localised to particular islands or peoples. Some are unremarkable national gods; others seem bizarre to all but their adherents. They include:

- ☒ **Lumavoxoran**, patron of the Haragalan people, who honour him by keeping a bowl of his sacred water aboard their boats at all times.
- ☒ **Hobimarong**, god of jewelled Mokato, whose priests proclaim his infallibility. A voluble god, he pays close heed to the activities of his people, relaying unusually precise instructions to them. Hobimarong steadfastly opposes the God Learners.
- ☒ **Saliligor**, the cannibal god, who spurs the people of Homago to raid their neighbours for victims to devour in his rites of gluttony.

The children of the High Gods also made people, along with other beings like the duck-folk and mermen. Humans created such a cacophony, with their chattering and jostling, that the High Gods retreated to the edge of the world. Lacking wisdom and mired close to the ground, the people caused controversies and instigated wars. At first their Little God patrons were dragged into their conflicts, then the bigger gods, too. Thus began the first of the five cosmic wars that destroyed the original paradisiacal continent of Vithela.

The distractions of war prevented the gods from observing the birth of the anti-gods. Antigods are beings of divine power without accompanying insight. Most are entities of darkness, violence, pain and selfishness. They cannot reach Durapdur or help others to reach it. Some are as powerful as great gods. Others are like little gods or heroes. The races they spawned are also sometimes called antigods. Their names include:

- ☒ **Ezran**, the Evil One, creator of Sorcery and Chaos.
- ☒ **Hesezjagu**, keeper of the drowned, who sends ghosts out to answer vague and misguided prayers.
- ☒ **King Bandan**, leader of the demonic Andin race.
- ☒ Venperesha, benevolent antigoddess of sea animals and patroness of sailors.

The last four cosmic wars were fought between gods and antigods. Karkal led the fight for mankind. Hensavara battled Akorgat, who blotted out the sky, and was defeated by him and cast down into humiliation.

Victory came in the end through the embrace of mysticism. The great teacher Darja Danad was born in harmony with its principles. His triumph was in finding the techniques to teach them to others. He had three great pupils, each of whom approached his thought in different ways:

- ☒ **Mashunashan** founded orthodox mysticism. His method was Unrealisation; one neither seeks nor fails to seek Durapdur.
- ☒ **Nenduren** founded the unorthodox mysticism principles. Stillness is his technique. Nendurenite mystics mediate with a series of entities on their way to Durapdur.
- ☒ **Larn Hasamador**'s technique is Immotion; his followers seek Nothing. The lucky ones find it.

Hensavara studied under Darja Danad and learned how to cast Akorgat out of the sky. When Oorsu Sara, the World Destroyer, came for Mashunashan, his meditation summoned up Kabalt, the great bolt, which destroyed the arch-demon. At the same time, it attacked Nenduren, whose profundity of understanding nullified it utterly. The land was broken into tiny fragments but the dawn had come.

My History

Isolated on our separate islands, we Vithelans share no sense of joint history. At the Dawn, we develop separately. It is only when the Malkioni come, well into

Vithelan



the Second Age, when we see what we have in common. We know the same gods and practice some of the same mystical philosophies. Until we discover that there are others in the world who believe none of this, we take these commonalities for granted.

Vithela is rife with inhuman peoples: the Arandinni demon folk, the Keefish fowl men and the Rafuki shark hsunchen of the northeastern isles.

— Balthar Broaddeck, Malkioni Missionary

The first years do not speak of our spiritual side. They are a time of jostling and conquest. Strong peoples dominate, assimilate or destroy the weak.

The Mokatans, whose island is a ruined city of the gods, try to rebuild it but can only approach a fraction of its divine splendour.

The humans of the Hanfarador discover that their neighbours are demon-folk, the Arandinni. So begin the raiding wars that continue to this day.

All attempts to contact the Vormaino, a people who secluded themselves from the rest of us even during the

five cosmic wars, are greeted with death. No one who goes there ever comes back.

In the second century some of us sail out into the greater ocean in search of a wider world. We are attacked by the green-skinned Waertagi people, who claim to own the seas. They destroy every large boat any of us make. Most affronted by this are the Tamanjary, ambitious shipbuilders who dwell on a large island and eat no flesh except that of marsupials.

Only in tiny vessels do our explorers reach the shores of Teshnos and Kralorela. They discover that wrong mystical beliefs are already present in these places. Fragments of our philosophies had arrived there during the disaster, borne by refugees from the cosmic war. The jungle and city peoples had both taken the seeds of true mysticism, and grown them into strange and twisted trees of harmful practice. When we try to correct them, they do not listen. When we remain silent, they come to take our secrets by force.

Because the Vormaino are the most secretive of us, the Kralori Emperor decide they must have the best mystical techniques and send fleets to penetrate their mist-swathed isle. These are all destroyed, by means unknown.

In the fourth century, the Vormaino respond by conquering all the islands around them. They call these the Hinter Islands. Their proud warriors subjugate the natives of these places, treating even the kings as wretched commoners. On the Hinter Islands they build naval outposts to intercept any new invasions. After losing several fleets the Kralori give up. Afterwards they send only solitary heroes and explorer bands. These all die, too.

In the seventh century, the Mokato god Hobimarong orders his people to ally with the Tamanjary to defeat the Waertagi, breaking their hold on the sea. He tells them how to make ships made of pure mystical energy, which they use to shatter many Waertagi ships. In 716, the Waertagi ally with the Vormaino, contacting them on the Hinter Islands. Together they launch a devastating assault on Tamanjary, sinking it below the waves, killing almost everyone. They are about to do the same to Mokato when the God Learners strike against the Waertagi in 718. The Waertagi withdraw to deal with — and be defeated by — this bigger threat. The Vormaino give up and leave Mokato alone.

In 763 the first God Learners arrive. They are missionaries, explorers, traders and myth-stealers. The Mokatans welcome them at first, until their god designates them as implacable foes of Vithelan thought. Their Zistorites launch spirit raids, plundering the secrets of magical ship making.

Other islands embrace their goods and magic. The Haragalans, previously obscure, tether their boats to the God Learner cause. Malkioni belief spreads through the islands. The Haragalan sage Saburang undergoes a vision and announces his discovery of the Invisible Vith. He identifies this as the higher form uniting the Malkioni and Vithelan gods, and shows how to achieve Durapdur by meditating upon Invisible Vith, in the Nendurenite path.

My Life

For every culture there is a different way of life. You will have to come here to learn them all. The Hanfarador have a queen, who decrees what the people will wear. The Mokatans are ruled directly by their god. Homago's cannibals govern by consensus. Who knows what the Vormaino do?

My Magic

The gods can be worshipped in two ways: high and low. Low worship is like that practiced elsewhere in the world, by people of limited mystical perception. They join cults, pray to these gods and receive magic in return.

To worship in the high manner, one seeks mystical oneness with them. When they offer powers in the low way, the practitioner must refuse. Otherwise he sacrifices ultimate awareness for fleeting power. As you refuse them, you gain mystical magic, unlike the theist magic received by low worshippers.

Kabalt, as patron of mystics, can only be approached through mystical techniques. As he seems to offer nothing, no ordinary person would pray to him.

One can also pursue mystic awareness without reference to gods, as do followers of Mashunashan and Larn Hasamador.

Why I Adventure

Every one of us lives in a tiny nation. To escape our island borders, we ply the seas, seeking knowledge and the wealth to feed our people.

MAJOR RACES

Here we survey the inhuman races, looking at their myths, history, magic, outlook and attitude toward adventuring from their own point of view. Both players and Games Masters alike can use this chapter to help delineate specific Player or Non-Player Characters.

Aldryami (Elfs)

We are the plant people, grown from the seeds of Aldrya. Her song runs through us like the sap in our veins. We protect the forests and fight the burners, choppers and the bringers of disease, of whom there are all too many in this world. Humans call us elves.

My Myths

Our stories are not told in words. We hear them as song, whenever we are in the forest. The God Learners try to fit them into the stories of foreign gods, adding Ernalda and Eurmial and others to them. They cut it up and what they do not care for, they burn. Here is the real song.

The song starts with Grower. He made everything green and spread across the entire world.

To abet his fecundity, Grower grew allies. There was Eron, the waters we drank from, Gata, the earth we rooted in, and Halamalao, the sun who shone into our leaves, giving life.

This is not the real story at all. Aldrya is better understood as a pagan god than as some vague and slippery half-spirit entity. Flamal and Ernalda gave birth to Aldrya. The frickster discovered Death and gave it to the elfs, who used it to kill dwarfs. Then the froll death god, Zorak Zoran, took it and used it to slay Flamal. A modified Lightbringer's Quest brings him back.

— Spolorfal the Arranger, Dean of Pythos University

With conditions so prepared, Grower himself grew into a new being, first as a seed, then as a tree. This was Falamal, the great tree at the centre of everything. From Falamal sprouted Aldrya, our greatest mother, and Seyotel, the song that forms our spirits.

You'd think this was the ideal time for us, and in a way it was, but there was no balance. Grower's roots dug deep into the world and threatened to break it apart, as there was nothing to stop his expansion.

So naturally the Taker, Bebestor, came into the world to counter these faults. All green things became brown. Water dried up, stone crumbled and the air whipped around so fast it caught fire, burning the papery-dry trees. Nearly everything was destroyed. This was no balance.

Grower could not stand it and defied Taker by sending out more shoots. These were the defenders, Bergara and Vronkal. She was angry and he was swift. They fought back against Taker, forcing Bebestor into balance with Grower. By way of submission, Taker spawned Trigora. She became the dark place beneath the earth where the dead go. At this time, most of us were already inside her.

Grower responded by making Bengara's sister, Veratha, who was the utter purity of fresh growth. She kissed the aldryami inside Trigora, including Aldrya herself. We formed new seeds, germinated and our sprouts appeared above the ground, to be warmed again by a returned Halamalao.

Our armies overran the creatures of Taker, who were doomed by their intrinsic paradox: they were created by a destroyer.

In Dragon Pass, we participated in the I Fought We Won battle, led by the hero Fwalfa Oakheart. Our usual enemies were our allies. The harmony gave us joy and we prayed that it would last.

One part of us that could never be regrown entirely was Gata. She had been broken up into many local goddesses, one for each land. They were rich and fruitful but were only a reflection of what Gata had been.

Still, the dawn had come. The Green Age was long gone but we had much growing to do, if we were to reclaim the world.

My History

At the Dawn, the earth is barren and in need of our growth. In most places we retreat to our ancestral places. In Dragon Pass, inspired by the I Fought We Won battle, we help found the Unity Council. We cooperate with our ancient foes, the trolls who want to eat us and the dwarfs who want to chop us down and turn us into buildings.

After many seasons it becomes apparent that we have an opportunity to reconcile the world and oblivion, just as Grower and Taker were brought into harmony, bringing about the Dawn. Thus can we all return to a better version of our favourite ages. It would be like the Green Age for us, the Dark Age for trolls and the Stasis Age for dwarfs. With reconciliation, our different requirements would not harm each other. The trolls and dragonewts balk. This is sad; the improved world would be slightly less ideal without their seeds in the garden.

The god Nysalor is born, shining his nourishing White Light on the world. The trolls hate him and declare war. Nysalor burns the troll king, Ezkankekko, nurturing his hate. The devouring trolls make the Gbaji to fight him. Eventually they get their wish; Nysalor and Gbaji fight each other in the west and are both taken. Neither will reseed.

The death of Nysalor emboldens the dwarfs and trolls, who set about punishing us by attacking our forests.

How To Act Like An Aldryami

- ☒ Unfocus your eyes; look off into the distance, past the person you're talking to.
- ☒ Talk so quietly others must strain to listen.
- ☒ Bring a few dried leaves to the game session in a plastic bag; occasionally take them out and rustle them.
- ☒ Speak in plant metaphors.
- ☒ Tremble with quiet fury when the woods are threatened.
- ☒ Have your character detour to forests. Once there, it lingers, listening to the song of Seyotel. Require sustained prompting from other Player Characters before you move or pay attention to pressing matters at hand.

Errinoru ruled until 60 years ago, when he asked to be planted in the earth. 11 new kinds of healing plant sprouted where he lay.

— Ilionafar, Yellow Elf of the Errinoru Jungle

In the Second Age, humans start their insupportable expansions, in both the west and centre. Throughout the world our forests are under threat. Both of the major Empires are like infestations of chewing bugs.

The God Learners come to Pamaltela and try to take over our jungles there. Certain of their minions, the timinits, are *literally* wood-chewing bugs! We repulse their onslaught but they are persistent and must be pushed back constantly.

In the eighth century, the elf hero Errinoru founds a mighty Empire in Pamaltela, battling God Learner lumber cutters with first weather magic, then disease and finally an animal army. When his successes there are solidly rooted, he allies with the seafaring Triolini and sails to Genertela. Errinoru razes several God Learner ports, in retaliation for their deforestation campaigns on the northern continent. His point made, he sails the best of his fleet into the Underworld itself. He and his sailors emerge years later, strengthened and strange.

In central Genertela, the wyrmfriends are so hypnotised by their envisioned next world that they heedlessly expend resources in this one. Their attempt to summon a Great Dragon from the earth will destroy many forests, if allowed to happen.

We sharpen our thorns and exude our poisons, to protect the wood.

My Life

Each of us is closely related to a particular sort of tree. We can live for hundreds of years. For this reason we are more cautious than our short-lived foes. When we go into battle, we have more to lose.

As we age, we gradually become more treelike. Our elders gradually lose their mobility, putting permanent roots down into the soil.

Aldryami



Some of us are only male and must pollinate with tree spirits, called dryads, who are always female.

We have no need for rulers or government. The song of Seyotel enables all of the aldryami of a forest to make decisions by harmonising with one another. God Learners call this a group mind, but it is not so. You would have to feel the song inside you to understand. We are individuals, with personalities like our trees. None of us are forced to do what the song tells us. We *want* to do it. When away from the forest, we are on our own. The sudden, crashing silence can be powerfully dispiriting, especially when suffered for the first time.

My Magic

Ask a God Learner whether Aldyra is a goddess or a spirit and you'll suffer through a hair-splitting disquisition explaining that she is neither or both at the same time. The short answer is that the magic she grants works like Divine Magic but feels like a spirit encounter to the aldryami.

Why I Adventure

Through bitter experience we aldryami have learned to mistrust most other races. A few humans live in harmony with us but most of them are like insatiable termites. We go out into the world when our own forests are safe but others are threatened.

Ever notice that nearly every adventurer you meet is an outcast from his people? Why, it's as if the profession of killing people and taking their stuff has fallen into disrepute or something! Who cares? Renegades have more fun, anyhow!

— Mavlen Madthing, Elf Mercenary of Ralios

A tiny fraction of us suffer a severance from our home forests. These pitiful souls are the rootless. They often become renegades, who go out adventuring to ease the pain of their separation from Aldrya's song. We think of them as maniacal but those of you who adventure with them might find them usefully violent. They may or may not continue to uphold the sacred duty to protect the woods.

Dragonewts

We are the dragonewts. For most of time you humans have been unable to understand our speech. Now you can hear what we say but do not always choose to listen. We will not reveal all of our secrets here. We have learned to be wary about that.

My Myths

I will try to say this in a way you will understand.

The Infinite Dragon was the dragon biting its tail, Ourobouros.

It became the Cosmic Dragon, which is everything that is. This was a devolution, because as soon as there is everything that is, there is its opposite, everything that is not. This opposite force was Orxili, the six-legged disruptor of meditations.

The Cosmic Dragon tamed it, tore off its limbs and made it into the Cosmic Egg. The Grand Ancestral Dragon

Dragonewt myths are more abstract expressions than stories. This is why we God Learners can barely exert power over them.

— Spolorfal the Arranger, Dean of Pythos University

hatched from it and made the knowable world and also six offspring. They were the guardians of silence, secrets, being, experience, thought and spirit – the Ancestral Dragons.

Orxili's missing limbs came back as Chaos and attacked. The Grand Ancestral Dragon used its own disorder against it, driving it back. The by-product of this interaction was Darkness and the beings that live in it.

Once the darkness element existed the devolution had to continue, so that its inevitable counterparts would be created. The Grand Ancestral Dragon committed utuma, the ritual self-slaughter of making. From its loins spilled the liquids, the waters and the beings that live in it. From its belly came earth and its beings. From its head came fire powers and creatures.

The Ancestral Dragons met in Dragon Pass to dance and mate. When these eggs hatched, they were the True Dragons. These are the highest dragons that exist in the material world. They are as big as mountain ranges. When a human or elder race myth mentions a fight between a god and a dragon, it is a True Dragon that is referred to.

When True Dragons dream, their projected thoughts reverberate in distant hills and valleys, manifesting as Dream Dragons. These are the dragons we can meet. Sometimes you humans try to fight them.

When first born, the True Dragons were full of life yet bereft of ultimate perception. They mated too early and from their eggs we dragonewts hatched. Thus we were incomplete at birth. The Ancestral Dragons explained that we would have to finish our souls over many incarnations and laid the receptacle eggs. Our souls migrate into them at death and we are reborn. If we have progressed in the previous incarnation, we are born at a new stage of physical development. More often we have evolved slightly since the last form. At the end we can become True Dragons, too.

Our civilisation thrived during what you call the Green Age. But we were unwary. To progress spiritually, we turned away from the world. Outsiders came and ate our eggs. We were ruined.

Dragonewt Existence

The dragonewt stages are, from lowest to highest: crested, beaked, tailed priest and full priest. Outsiders call these scout, warrior, noble and ruler.

Crested dragonewts are the most common of us. This shows how hard it is to achieve spiritual progress. Crested dragonewts perform the labours and do back-up duty in battle. They build, repair, gather and toil. A natural reluctance shields them from undue contact with humans.

The hides of warriors gain thickness and detail over many incarnations, until the become beaked dragonewts. They are the heroes of the battlefield. They are bold but over-ready to engage with the ordinary world. They face constant spiritual peril.

Tailed priests lose the armoured padding of the warrior in exchange for brightly coloured ruffs and frills. They confine their interactions with humans, even wyrmfriends, to a minimum. Their potential for transcendence is too precious to risk. Full priests sometimes force them to interact but provide them with strict scripts governing the possible discourse. Thus neither full priest nor tailed priest is really enmeshing himself too deeply in the world.

Full priests gain massive wings and can work truly miraculous outer magic – but risk spiritual stasis or even devolution if they use any of it.

Dragonewts live in oddly constructed settlements called nests. The largest of these are as big as human cities. Their architectural forms are baffling to the untrained human eye but make spiritual sense to wyrmfriends. The cities are made from stone, including a form of crystalline jade grown in vats and carved to specific shapes.

The dragonewt hero Falling Forward decreed the doctrine of Limited Participation. We would shape the world to the minimum extent necessary, to prevent it from again shaping us. Falling Forward paid the ultimate price to save us. As he performed his feats of protection, he devolved in form. He fell from highest dragonewt to lowest, then to a mere earthshaker, and finally to a green-eyed human. Now called Fallen Backward, he committed utuma so we would not have to slay him. Nothing good came from his belly.

Chaos came back into the world. This was a threat; it would shape us. In Kralorela, dragon beings commanded the mortals, teaching them how to survive. In Dragon Pass, the dragonewt Heart of Weakness assisted the other beings, joining in the I Fought We Won battle.

My History

What you call history, we call existence. We do not die. Yes, our fleshly forms wear out and expire. Our souls migrate to eggs and we gestate and are reborn. If we have progressed spiritually, we hatch in a higher form. It can take many lifetimes to progress from one stage to the other. Unlike the human reincarnators of Teshnos, we retain full memories of our previous incarnations at all times. Your ancient past is our memory. We could answer many questions of your peoples' murky past – if we were capable of understanding the world in your terms.

You humans have always been poisonous to us. The other elder races leave us alone, more or less. But you cannot abide a mystery and have always tried to get inside us, like weasels breaking into an egg. You are so tied to the material and practical realms that every interaction with you is an invitation to cement our souls to this plane. It is not that you mean ill. Not necessarily. It is simply that our ways of thinking and being are incompatible.

Sometimes we have mutual needs and interaction is required. In the old days, if we tried to speak directly into your minds, you would stagger away, suffering confusion and bruised souls.

In the First Age, the human place that hurts us least is Kralorela. Because of what we taught them in the Chaos Time, people there retain a form of dragon wisdom understandable by human minds.

Dragon Pass, our homeland, is a different matter. There other peoples all want to shape the world. We must help shape or be shaped.

An intermediary is required. In the year 34, an Orlanthi named Drolgard comes to us and returns a fragment of the Dragonewt rune, which had been stolen during the Chaos Time. He is from the Council of World Friends. We entrust him with the secret of our real speech, which is made not only with tongue and teeth, but with smells, gestures and projected feelings. To allow him to speak in this tongue, which you call Auld Wyrnish, we must give him a magical secret. Drolgard is trustworthy and respectful and teaches the secret to no one. When he dies, he allows his spirit to transmit it to others of a similarly responsible bent.

Our efforts to shape the First Council fail. Through Drolgard's heirs, we tell them that their plans to create a new earthly god will mire them in false reality but the Wind and Sun worshippers do not listen. We withdraw from the council. They create the new god anyway and, as we warned them, it is a Deceiver.



We stay out of the fight between the identity-shifting hero Arkat and the Deceiver, so as not to be shaped by them.

In 571 the God Learners raid Drolgard's temple and steal his secret. They do what we cannot: teach our language to humans. All across Dragon Pass, people come to us for answers. They seek draconic ascendance with apparent sincerity. We are shaken by controversy. On one hand, we do not wish to be shaped. On the other, our wisdom has aided the Kraloreli, without ill effect. Also, we have already shaped these spiritual Questers with our language, wittingly or not. Surely we are duty-bound to control the nature of that reshaping as best we can.

When I first gazed upon the leathery visage of the Inhuman King, my knees gave way beneath me. Tears of joy obscured my vision. For the first time in a lonely, wayward life, I was whole.

— Ervaling Scalemaker, Wyrmfriend Priest

So we give the answers. Our leader in Dragon Pass, the Inhuman King, shows Vistikos Left-Eye how to commune with the Cosmic Dragon.

The Orlanthi are reshaped by us. They go forth and reshape the world. We fight alongside them, sending our wyrmlings and dinosaurs, too.

Every 33 years we gather in secret colloquy to ask ourselves: are we the shapers or the shaped? The next colloquy is due two years from now.

My Magic

There are two magics: inner and outer. Outer magics shape the world and are gross and visible in form. Rune Magic is a kind of outer magic. Inner magics shape the self, making it more like a True Dragon.

The more outer magic you work, the harder it becomes to work inner magic. Even so, it is at times necessary to work outer magic to resist even greater changes being forced on you by other beings in the world.

Why I Adventure

Dragonewts who become irreparably enmeshed with the concerns of other races face exile. Most of us see this coming and voluntarily separate from our nests, lest we retard the spiritual purity of our fellows. These are the eccentric loners who tend to join mixed adventuring bands. They seek diversion, an outlet for their frustration and an end to loneliness. Many look for alternate religious practices, joining the few outsider cults that will accept them. For that reason there are a surprising number of Malkioni dragonewts, mostly crested, working for the God Learners. They will act as traders and mercenaries but refuse to aid Hwarosian or Zistorite sorcerers in penetrating dragon secrets.

We also adventure together, or with dragon-friendly allies, to shape the world in a spiritually favourable manner. We fight for the EWF and against the Immanent Mastery movement in Kralorela.

Mostali (Dwarfs)

We are the mostali, the people of the Primal Stone. We dwell in mountains, make ingenious devices and keep their secrets from the rest of you. The world is a machine, which once worked perfectly by doing nothing at all. Our goal is to repair it so that all the broken, uncontrolled pieces stop doing what they're doing and come to a complete and final halt.

A good mostali follows orders, gets the job done, does not ask questions and – most of all – gives no answers.

I shouldn't be telling you any of this.

Most races claim their gods came before all others. In this case, we know for certain fact that Mostal descends from the Celestial Court deities Acos the Law and Cata the Earth.

— Spolorfal the Arranger, Dean of Pythos University

My Myths

Myths are just that. Stories. Gods are not real. We talk about Mostal but he is a personification of an abstract quality we work toward. So just know this up front: the accursed Zistorite scum cannot get a hold of us and shake us by our own mythologies, because it is all just parable.

Mostal made things. That was his function and purpose. If he made things, logically it follows that he was the first entity, for thereafter he made everything else.

He made Helper, the first tool. He made the nine mostali races. Most of all, he made the Spike, the central hub of the World Machine.

His co-worker (and brother) was Stone. As a material, Primal Stone was infinitely superior to that known today: pliable, ductile, beautiful, ever-changing.

Mostali Origins

Mostal constructed the Rock Mostali first, scooping stone into a container, the Rock Bowl. It tumbled until they were smooth and formed. They came out sound and ready to help him.

They made the Leaden Pot. Into its molten womb they poured raw materials. Lead Mostali came out, cooling. When they were no longer hot to the touch, they were ready to work.

Lead Mostali were more sensitive than their Rock co-workers, so they could help Mostal mould the Quicksilver Alembic. In this they made the Quicksilver Mostali.

They built the Copper Kettle, and made the Copper Mostali, who made the Tin Dipper, from which the Tin Mostali emerged. These in turn constructed the Cauldron of Brass, producing the Brass Mostali, who made the Pan of Silver, from whence the Silver Mostali issued. They made the Ewer of Gold and thus the Gold Mostali. And the Gold Mostali made no others, as the task was complete.

The first mostali to emerge from each container became its permanent guardian. You might think of them as the gods of their respective metals.

The Spike

As useful as we might be, we are not Mostal's greatest creation. That would be The Spike, the ideally symmetrical edifice of the legendary magical substance called Truestone. It was alive then and was the physical manifestation of Law. The Spike held the world together. Mostal pounded it into the middle of reality like a nail, binding its layers together. From a distance it looked like a huge mountain. Wherever you went, whether it be sky, earth, primal ocean or Underworld, there was the Spike, for all to see. Each of the original gods received an appropriate palace within it. Of foremost interest was Mostal's own laboratory, where at this time all mostali dwelt.

Also at this time Mostal honed Truestone until it became the mythical metal Adamant.

— Sofancort, Golden Tutor of the Nidan Decamony

The Breaking of the World Machine

The disorder god Ratslaff laid the groundwork for destruction. He tickled Mostal's nose as our maker pounded the Spike deep into the layers of reality. Thanks to this mindless prank, a hairline crack appeared in the structure. From this tiny flaw emerged a new outlaw god, Umath the destroyer. With his howling winds, he aimed only to blow down the world. At first we withdrew from his nonsense, which hurt our minds. His band of vandal outlaws were only emboldened. They ripped the sky from its proper place, making it a thing of turbulence. The bowl of heaven tilted. The World Machine groaned, shrieked, spit out gears and belts, and shuddered to a smoking halt. It had been broken.

For this reason we went to war. Until the outlaw gods were brought to heel, there was no point repairing the machine.

Mostal Dies

The elves revealed themselves as foes then. Their goddess had always lived on the slopes of the Spike, fouling it with her unchecked growth. Now her gross fecundity

worsened, till every good stone was covered by smothering fronds and tendrils.

In the early engagements of the Gods War, our armies distinguished themselves with superior numbers, unflagging discipline and surprising weapons which burst onto the battlefield, felling foes in great numbers.

One weapon we did not make. It was Death and it turned the tide against us. What it broke was irreparable. The elves got hold of it and used it to slaughter us. Their war leader, High King Elf, burst into Mostal's place, murdering both Mostal and Stone.

Iron, Clay and Diamond

Next came the invasion of the trolls, who bubbled up from below to capture us. They boiled us down and drank us.

So we returned to the sacred containers and made another one, the Crucible of Iron. We devised this new metal to be especially hurtful to our enemies, the trolls and elves. They armed themselves with axes, swords, shields and helmets.

We rallied, but they killed more of us faster than we could quickly replace. So our ruling council formed the Tenth Container, the Clay Jar, from which the Clay Mostali clambered. These were lesser in every way than the other mostali types but were easy to produce. They were armed and sent to battle.

The lowest of us were now made but we needed the highest, to replace murdered Mostal. So our council gathered to sing the most puissant mathematical formulae and made the Last Container, the Diamond Goblet. From it emerged the regal Diamond Mostali, who wielded our magic and served as our leaders.

Return from Chaos

The Diamond Mostali made the Decamony, the structure of authority we subscribe to still. They allied with gods when necessary, guided our military engagements with calculating wisdom and hunkered down as prudence demanded.

They saved us even when the lowest point came and Chaos came to explode the Spike. Most of the old mostali were inside it at the time, which is why all but the Clay Mostali are rare now.

The struggle was long and terrible but we survived within our impregnable fortresses. As expedience dictated, we even allied with trolls and elves to stamp out Chaos.

With the deaths of most of the Original Dwarfs, the Clay Mostali took on their roles. The warriors styled themselves as Iron Mostali, the loremasters as Gold Mostali, the sorcerers as Silver Mostali and so on.

— Sofancor, Golden Tutor of the Nidan Decamony

This bought us time to effectuate the Temporary Repair. The most broken parts of the World Machine were restored. Our fixes were aesthetically displeasing and not meant to last but they worked well enough to hoist the Great Worklight back into the sky and restore a modicum of order to the world. We installed the Clock Dial in the machine. This innovation was strong enough to bar the meddlesome gods from poking their fingers into the machine, ever again.

With stability achieved, we could work toward a permanent renovation of the machine. What we did not reckon on was the spread of heresy.

My History

After the Clock Dial starts ticking, the malfunction of Openhandism spreads. Mostali in Dragon Pass had fought alongside trolls, elves and men, and were infected by a destructive spirit of comradeship. Openhandist dwarfs believe in the sharing of our secrets with others, in hopes of bending them to our way of thought. Orthodox mostali know this is folly.

The Openhandists join the First Council. They help spread the knowledge of survival to all who need it. The Decamony censures them and, in 182, finally expels them entirely. Persisting in error, they join the Second Council and participate in the creation of the new god Nysalor. They are so dedicated to this challenge to the integrity of the Clock Dial that they make war on the trolls when they leave the council. Their own break with it comes only when elves assassinate their leader and the heretics fall into factional fighting.

In the West, orthodox mostali see Gbaji for the Chaos manifestation it is and join in fighting it. They ally with Arkat in furtherance of a noble but hidden purpose. As they invade Dragon Pass, they hope to return its malfunctionists to established doctrine. The mission ends in bitterness; the heretics are not so much redeemed as destroyed.

Early in the Second Age, the minor heresy of Octamonism develops. This ultra-orthodox doctrine holds that only the original mostali of the Eight Minerals knew Mostal and are thus equipped to rule. It never achieves political power in any mostali community but gains small pockets of adherents in each.

In 700 a worse malfunction flourishes. Chark the Liberator, who was formed before the Clock Dial ticked, quests into the Hero Plane to find Mostal. Instead he encounters a young Arkat there. The meeting convinces him that a single dwarf has inherent value aside from his contribution to the work group. We have souls, Chark claims, and retain identity even after death.

Mostali



The Decamony was slow to react at first to the threat represented by Chark's unwisdom. We were distracted by our struggle against the Zistorites of the God Learner Empire and their obscene Machine God. These we opposed as soon as we heard of them.

— Sofancort, Golden Tutor of the Nidan Decamony

Individualists leave the community to seek their fortunes and make up their own minds about the purpose of existence. Many become disreputable adventurers.

In 850 the Decamony expels them. Two years later it launches a successful war on the Individualist leaders of the Iron Mountains in northern Seshnela.

Openhandism is generally unpopular in the Imperial Age, as mostali bristle at attempts by the God Learners and EWF to encroach on their secrets. The Greatway community of Balazar, near Dragon Pass, is an exception. The attack on the Iron Mountains reawakens their anti-Decamonic fervour.

Shortly thereafter, an invasion force from the Decamony, tacitly supported by the Middle Sea Emperor, attacks the Greatway. During its march, it is harassed by trolls and dragonewts, weakening it so that it is routed on arrival.

In the present day, the Decamony faces a quandary. Trolls, wyrmfriends and heretic dwarfs lay siege to the blasphemous Clanking City of Zistorwal in God Forgot. Controversy roils them as they decide whether to join their longtime enemies against an even worse foe.

My Magic

Our magic is that of alchemy and technology. We learn it from the ancient formulae laid down by Mostal. Humans think of it as Sorcery, but it is better than that. We would tell you more but then we would have to kill you.

Why I Adventure

Adventuring is a suspect activity, rightly confined to those units infected by the malfunction of individualism. These

Mostali Models

Mostali come in nine distinct models. These are Clay Mostali emulating the original dwarfs of the Nine Ancient Minerals:

- ☒ **Rock dwarfs** are stoneworkers, miners, and architects.
- ☒ **Lead dwarfs** are locksmiths, glassblowers, and plumbers. They make wards to keep out intruders.
- ☒ **Quicksilver dwarfs** are alchemists, pyrotechnicians and manufacturers of food products. (Dwarfs prefer their food tinned.) Other cultures covet their secret of gunpowder.
- ☒ **Copper dwarfs** make tools, containers, and certain weapons. Their energy conduits conduct magical forces throughout a well-stocked laboratory.
- ☒ **Tin dwarfs** manufacture tools and containers, as well as an array of animate constructs, such as the nilmergs and jolanti.
- ☒ **Brass dwarfs** are metallurgists and experts in high heat technology.
- ☒ **Silver dwarfs** specialise in enchantments and multi-generational magical workings.
- ☒ **Gold dwarfs** are teachers, scholars, archivists and logicians.
- ☒ **Iron dwarfs** are blacksmiths, armourers and warriors.

Diamondwarf is not a model but a rank of high achievement. A supremely skilled mostali of any model can become one.

mostali traverse the world in search of new experiences, to reinforce a false sense of identity. Some are also Openhandists, willing to share with non-mostali.

Agents of the Decamony undertake discrete assignments to stamp out mostali heresies and enemies, and to recover stolen secrets and technologies.

Timinits (Insect Men)

We are the timinits. You flesh men call us the bug people, or insect men. We are the most varied of the races, manifesting in as many forms as there are days in the hot season. The timinits come from the land of Pamaltela, dwelling in its jungles, on its coastlines and upon its idyllic, grassless prairies. We are also the newest of the races to rise to prominence. Once a backward and ignorant folk, we owe our vast strides in matters of trade and magic to the Jrusteli. They awakened us from our state of ignorance and taught us their secrets of Sorcery. Some of us are indebted to their spells of transformation for the changes in bodily structure that allow us to move about in a dangerous world. If the Middle Sea Empire were to dwindle or die, so would we. We would revert to a misbegotten existence in our steamy homeland.

Many of us have embraced their prophet, Malkion. The gift of logic is already natural to us. We are used to counting out our brief and dwindling days, and when hunger necessitates, eat of one another's bodies without sentimentality.

My Myths

Most timinits you meet will have given up their old spirit-chasing ways to cloak themselves in the glorious mantle of the all-wise Invisible God. I dare say that we love him even more than you men do, for we still remember when we were little better than animals. We credit his magic and teachings with our salvation. Still, it is not good to entirely lose track of one's past and so we still tell the tales of our old, false gods as pleasant fables. They while away a long night on a ship's deck or on guard outside a lonely trading outpost.

The world began as an egg and in that state it was nourished and perfect, so far as that went. But then the egg divided, becoming twin siblings, Phermaphor and Paskadala. Phermaphor was the masculine principle of warring and roaming. Paskadala embodied the feminine nature of breeding and eating. Life was good and the insect men existed in innocence, without knowing of others. Each spring and summer Phermaphor would scour the land for food, growing fat, while his sister-wife would starve. He would return and wiggle the Courting Dance and she would be pleased and eat his head and belly. Thus fed, she would allow hundreds of eggs to wriggle from her abdomen and each year one of these would be Phermaphor, reborn. And the cycle would repeat, forever.

Then came the giants and they smashed the eggs and ate the egglings. This upset the balance, for Phermaphor's hunting and Paskadala's birthing were not great enough to feed both our people and the heedless giants. So we warred with them and out of their spite and our righteous rage arose the awful Bong-Ga-Log, who ate all the eggs and the sun besides. Timinits joined with the giant's smaller kin, the fire people, and one day they found the biggest egg of all, which Paskadala had hidden deep within the loamy soil. And she was inside it and she burst

Types of Insect Men

The pink men think of us as all one race but our forms are extremely varied. Until recently, we viewed one another with hostility and thought ourselves quite different from one another. Only now that we've seen the rest of the world do our insectoid commonalities become apparent. I shall name only some of our questing horde.

I am proud to be an **arachan**, lithe and elegant. We of the Spider Assembly are the most learned and thoughtful of the timinitis. Though our mandibles drip with poison, our words are honeyed and eloquent. We make fine sorcerers and even finer merchants. We clothe our spindly forms in luxurious silks and drink deep of aphid wine.

Myrmidons are similarly slim and seemingly breakable, yet fight fiercely as warriors, instinctively knowing what is best for the whole at any moment. Different colourations of myrmidon abound; they used to go to war with one another but now fill the frightening ranks of Jrusteli armies.

Lucans are glossy black beetle creatures who root about in rotting logs. These intelligent but slow-witted herbivores protect their territories viciously. We have enjoyed middling success recruiting them as guards and sergeants. To keep them content requires a never-ending stock of timber.

The **ephemeræ** are the most melancholy and poetic of our kind. They reach maturity at the age of two weeks, achieve a sorrowful philosophy by the age of one month and are dead within a year. They travel peripatetically, in a frenzy to experience all they can before they expire.

Their cousins, the **cerebresites**, strike many as vile, for they have learned to lengthen their otherwise equally brief lifespans through parasitism. They occupy the forms of dozens of other insect men over their decades of acquisitive existence. No matter which other timinit body they occupy, they burn it out after nine months to a year. As infirmity encroaches, they alter their host's anatomy, so that, whether male, female or hermaphrodite, they produce a pearlescent, soft-skinned egg. With sharpened pedipalps, they insert this egg into the brains of their next hosts. Consciousness is transferred instantly. The host loses volition and the cerebresite gains new life and locomotion for another year. Although I would not want to give myself over to a drooling cerebresite, there are many who value their lives little and perceive the egg-gifters as bearers of spiritual transcendence. Some claim that the hosts experience ceaseless Hrestoli Joy for the entirety of their shortened lives here on Glorantha and are then transported instantly to Malkion's Solace.

forth with food for us again, although she was weakened and could not return with mortals to the ordinary world.

The spirits the ancient-ways timinit shamans cling to are the spawn of the first eggs of Paskadala, back before the bad times started. These were released again when the Biggest Egg opened at time's beginning (shamans draw power from or propitiate other spirits but those are the important ones).

As you can tell, it is a charming story, but not one to believe in, if you wish to walk among urbane people and impress them with your jewels and accomplishments.

My History

During the First Age, we kept to ourselves, leaving the soft-fleshed men to their own devices. A civilisation of

misery arose in Fonrit; we ate leaves and mice and each other. The Agimori, sons of the destructive giants, spread across the plains. We told them that our eggs were ours to eat and that we'd fight them with sticky webs and slashing forearms if they encroached on us. Sometimes they did encroach and then myrmidons slew them. Or were slain themselves. It does not much matter. As the Earthen Egg Mother Paskadala told us: 'I can always make more of you'.

But in at the end of the sixth century, when the Jrusteli appeared on our shores, wondering if there was nourishment for them too, a funny thing happened. Yes, some of them saw us as monsters and so we acted fiercely, in accordance with their provocations. Others, though, spoke to us of their Invisible God. They used the system of Cascading Logic, which was must like our

belief in the Necessity of Cause and Action. The words of Malkion made sense to us. The stories of their saints were filled with glory and sacrifice, and we liked that. We prayed for their intercession and were repaid with power and soul-solace.

When the Jrusteli established their colleges in Umathela, we insisted on being invited. By debate and mastery of cascading logic we proved our worthiness and were admitted. The sorcerers told us of other lands and we yearned to see them. When they put down the Waertagi and opened the seas, we were eager to sail. Once indifferent to coin, now we love it above all other things, as a hard-and-fast symbol of earthly accomplishment. Even more vital is the mastery of the rigid yet ineffable laws of magic. Love of Malkion's deeds is more crucial still.

Not everyone went along with the new life we were offered. We called the recalcitrant ones the Mouldy Sticks. They stuck to their spirits and the evanescent bounties of Paskadala's ever-bursting egg. This was no tragedy. Let them do what they want, our ancestors said. We were busy. Because Paskadala's realms were so simple and polluted by few other gods, they proved an ideal haven for early God Learner inquiries into the Questing Lands.

But then the Moldy Sticks called us the Mammal Eaters and ambushed us and sent crawling spirits to infest our God Realm sojourns. This left us no choice but to battle them. In 674 came the Battle of Fruit Reef, where we landed on them in great numbers during their spirit journeys to counsel the dead. Many on both sides died and human sorcerers too. By mistake Paskadala's egg was scorched. Though it recovered decades later, right then there was famine and it was at least half our fault. We tried to make peace but bitter war flared among the timinits for scores of years.

It is shameful that there has always been so much war within the Insect Tribe. Trolls don't fight each other. Nor do elves. The dwarfs hardly do, either. It is a dishonour we share with the humans.

— Yuthomban Crystalweb, Arachan Alchemist

How To Act Like A Timinit

- ☒ Regard death and loss with an inhuman detachment.
- ☒ Staunchly admire Jrusteli civilisation.
- ☒ Seek outward signs of success.
- ☒ Become agitated and vaguely ashamed of timinits who adhere to the old ways.
- ☒ Show a wide-eyed fascination with Sorcery and a greedy desire to prove your mastery of it.
- ☒ Favour motion over stillness and exploration over speculation.
- ☒ Prattle on endlessly about the joys of sea travel.
- ☒ Move jerkily.
- ☒ Make clicking noises.

In 729 came the wind that made the myrmidons smarter than before. It blew in from the coast and was a trick sent by dragons to divide us. The Myrmidon Rebellion cost thousands of lives, fleshy and chitinous alike, and made it hard for even the most fervent Jrusteli friends to prove themselves.

862 brought a wave of attacks against us, when the Gleaming Syndicate, a merchant league dominated by cerebresites, cornered the Slontos grain market. Word of our supposed perfidy spread throughout the trading coasts and even timinits who had nothing to do with it were chased by rioters.

At about this time the Umathelan settlers began to squirm under the yoke of their Seshnegi kings. The Umathelans were of original Jrusteli stock, adventurous, independent and questing. It was they we admired. The Seshnegi were related to them but lacked their spirit. They imposed heavy taxes on enterprise. These measures were prejudicial against us. The Seshnegi also said we should have fewer spots in the Umathelan universities, even when our merit warranted as many chairs as they could offer. So we joined with the Umathelan rebels in pulling away from the overseas kings. For the first time the rebels offered us equality with fleshy men if we would lend our Sorcery to their cause. This caused another schism, as some of us were now more attached to the greater Empire than to Umathela. The Trade Everywhere faction sent scourging spells against those of us who marched under the Freedom Is For Here banner.

In 901 the Umathelan Coalition formally drove out the Seshnegi masters. The Empire lost its other Pamaltelan holdings around this time, also. The Freedom Is For Here party helped to shove them out. We want to reconcile with the Trade Everywhere people but they have taken it as a personal insult, not to mention a knife cutting into their purses.

Don't get me wrong. Some of my best comrades have been bug men. But you got to admit, even at the moment they're saving your life, they're still just so... creepy.

— Gurek Runespear, Mercenary of Safelsfer

My Magic

Most modern timinits practice Sorcery. Maybe one in a hundred continues to keep up his shamanic propitiation of Phermaphor and Paskadala and their spirit spawn while also working spells from grimoires. Half of these oddballs do this out of sincere respect. The rest continue to see their discarded myth-world as an ideal place to

Timinits



Attitudes toward other Inhumans

We have always fought the elves. To us, loose vegetation is food. They treat it like it is their eggs or something. We do not hate them. We simply need to eat. They despise us for pursuing the necessity of survival.

The trolls look at us, see we are insects and think they should rule us, as they rule the blind idiot bugs and worms they herd. Also, they think we are good to eat – the same thing they say about everybody. We like trolls who follow the trader god, Argan Argar, but the rest are crude, violent and stupid.

Mostali are an enemy of the Empire, opposed especially against the Zistorites who manufacture so many valuable trade goods. Timinits who love the Empire loathe the dwarfs. Those who wish it ill may look kindly on them.

Dragonewts, like all of the EWF, are usually our enemies, as they are for all God Learners. It is sad, because in temperament they are more like us than any other creature. Although it must be said that they are clot-heated mystics, where we are hard-headed logical sorcerers.

conduct God Learner experiments. Even other timinits who are God Learners in good standing consider this radical and rash, given the horrible mistake of the Scorching, in 674.

The so-called Mouldy Stick traditionalists of the Pamaltelan wilderness still follow the shamanic paths. A few hundred timinits have defected to the EWF and pursue the mystical truth behind their passing similarities to dragonewts. They are full-blown mystics.

Why I Adventure

Timinits adventure for the following reasons: to find the solutions to vexing or illogical mysteries; to adorn themselves with objects of wealth and status; to exalt the glory of the Invisible God; to broaden their horizons; to put their mathematical

We show our esteem for our Jrusteli friends by taking names like theirs. Except their names often end in -os, -am and -yl, where ours end in -ik or -if, or both.

—Svalikit the Scrivener, Archivist of Garzanz

minds to good use, in the honest exchange of trade goods; to prove the value of their people to doubting outsiders; to atone for the regrettable scorching of Paskadala's egg; (cerebresites only) to find suitable new hosts.

Uz (Trolls)

We are the uz. Uz are the darkness people. The westerners call us trolls. The easterners call us dozaki. The nasty sun river people, what you call Pelorians, name us digijelm. Call us what you want. We are uz.

We are big and muscly and our teeth are bigger than yours, too. Tusks, you might say. All the better to eat you with. Or eat anything, nearabouts. Uz are very hungry and our gods made everything on this world for us to eat.

Things that are not so good to eat: droppings, rocks and air. Uz will eat everything else before we eat those.

All of us used to be big and strong and fat. So magically powerful were we that we could slay you with a sniff of our great snouts. These were the uzuz, the Mistress Race trolls, who hardly exist now. We have suffered over time and now there are spindly, stunted or stupid sub-types all around.

Ordinary uz, like me, are what you call dark trolls or man trolls. There are bigger, dumber uz: the uzdo (great trolls) and the bestial, cave-dwelling Romal. Most of our litters these days are small scuttling, nearly worthless individuals called enlo or trollkin. This is because we were cursed by the awful Chaos god, Gbaji.

We hate Chaos. We also hate light magic. We will eat elves, dwarfs, timinits, humans – you name it – but that does not mean we hate them. It is our favourite joke to say we like them very much, especially with greens on the side.

We love the night and hate the light. You maybe have heard that it hurts uz. It doesn't. Well, it hurts enlo and romal, but who cares about them?

Uz herd insects, spiders, worms and other squirming animals of the dark. Some of these beasts are very big in size.

My Myths

Darkness is not nothing. It is everything. So it had to come into being. It was Nakala, the primal darkness. At this time the other elements were personifying themselves as gods and even though Nakala was suspicious of it, it did it too. Nakala became Subere, who you could talk to and get help from.

God Learners identify Subere with Dame Darkness, who is depicted as a lifhe ebon woman covered in a swirling cloak of night. But everyone knows how stupid they are.

— Zoralak Kogan, Lorespeaker of the Shadowlands

Subere seized the Man rune from the other gods who'd been messing with it. She dipped it in darkness and it became Kyger Litor, our greatest spirit. She bore Korasting, mother of many, who gave birth to most of the early great uz heroes. Without any men getting involved, Kyger Litor and Korasting kept on birthing until they'd brought the Seven Sacred Ancestors into the world. We count Korasting as one of the them. The others were:

- ☒ **Karrg**, master of weapons, valiant protector, the first male. He is the good son, loyal to his mother and an example to all men.
- ☒ **Vaneekara**, called the Hurler, after her skill at throwing, is the first daughter, an example to all women.
- ☒ **Jakaboom**, Dancer in the Shadows, the first shaman, taught us to deal with spirits.
- ☒ **Jeset**, the ferryman, takes the spirits of the fallen across the river Adzurana, which leads to the land of the dead.
- ☒ **Hombobobom**, the great drum, invented our sacred sounds and accompanies us in dancing.

☒ **Boztakang**, the unformed. His brothers and sisters called him a layabout but he said: 'Just you wait. One day I will find a purpose and you'll all be sorry you mocked me.'

Together they dwelt in Wonderhome, a place of total darkness. And for a long time everything was good. Other races said it was bad, which shows you what they know. Other great spirits came along to aid uz: **Zong**, stalker of prey, showed us how to hunt; **Dehore** (not an uz but a shadow) contains all of the darkness spirits, who Jakaboom taught us to cajole and command; **Xiola Umbar** healed us when we were hurt and **Gorakiki** (not an uz but an insect) let us tame, ride and eat her giant bugs. Some bugs are for riding, others for eating.

Then Death came into the world. Subere created it so that Kyger Litor's lost children might be returned to her. It was necessary but terrible.

Zorak Zoran was a frightening uz, nearly as powerful as Kyger Litor. He took up Death and used it to fight not only enemies but also friends. He broke many taboos, wielding fire and raising undead.

Disaster came when the sun fell from your sky and burrowed deep into Wonderhome. It crippled our ancestresses and forced us from Wonderhome into what you call the surface world. We call it Komor, the Hurtplace.

In this awful land we struggled to eat and survive. We fought and ate the Orlanth wind people. Also the Aldrya plant people. Plus especially the Mostal stone people, some of whom are the tastiest of all. We fought and ate them all.

We learned to befriend new great spirits. Xentha (not an uz, but a force upon the world) was the goddess of night, who made the Hurtplace good for half the time, anyway. Himile (not an uz, but a snowstorm) gave us winter, which chases our enemies away, which is good. It buries our food but can be excused for that; uz are good diggers.

Uz Life

Women rule uz. Men strive to be good sons and husbands. They fight but the women command. They go out into the world to trade, but the women own the merchandise.

Although one in ten births is a proper uz, we make up about a quarter of a troll community. That is because the enlo don't last so long.

We treat enlo bad, like they deserve. We make them slave for us. If they wear out from overwork, there are always more to replace them. When we are extra hungry, we eat them. Sometimes the little worms betray us to our enemies. Maybe we should treat them even worse.

Caves and burrows are good places to live. We dig well but don't mine through solid rock the way dwarfs do. It is good to take over a dwarf place and live there. Deep dark fungal forests are very pretty and you can carve huts from the giant mushrooms there. When you get hungry, you just eat more of your house. When you run out of house, you find another.

Argan Argar, who was an uz, showed us how to live on the surface world. He taught us the customs and languages of the other peoples, so we could relate to them in non-eating ways.

The one foe we could fight but could not eat was Chaos, which would have corrupted us inside if we consumed it. Boztakang found his purpose then. He became the Chaos Killer, who did what his name says, battling the hosts of Arquong, who tried to scourge us even from the Hurtplace. And his brothers and sisters *were* sorry that they had mocked him.

The elves, humans and dwarfs came to us and said: 'Please, please, let us take the sun back up to the sky'. And we thought it was a trick, because there was nothing we wanted more than to get the burning bright eye out of Wonderhome. So we made them beg us. They said: 'Please, please, we will make sure it comes out only half the time. The night goddess Xentha will put a blanket over his head every 12 hours, or thereabouts'. So we said 'fine', thinking we would get Wonderhome back. But we

were cheated. We had to live in Hurtplace still and suffer the nasty half of each day when the Bright Eye was not covered in a blanket.

You call it the Dawn. We call it the Permanent Harm. Except we will fight to undo it somehow and make everything Wonderhome again.

Another useless version. A much more efficacious story is as follows: Zorak Zoran steals Death from Humakt and uses it to slay Flamal, the primal elf god. Meanwhile, Yelm has fallen into the troll Underworld, burning the trolls and robbing Korastling of fertility.

— Spolorfal the Arranger, Dean of Pythos University

My History

Throughout Glorantha we try to make the best of the new half-dark, half-lit world. Although uz have been cheated, we still cooperate with the elves and humans, joining the Unity Council in Dragon Pass. Uz help them bring the secrets of living back to the starving, scattered, huddling people hiding in the corners of the world. Our leader is the brave and wise Ezkankekko, who is the son of Argan Argar.

Among these are the sun people, the Dara Happans, who we loathe. The human Orlanth people don't like them much, either. Uz join in many good wars against the sun folk. But humans can't be trusted and before too long the sun and wind people have joined up against us.

The Unity Council becomes the First Council. They think up something stupid. They want to bring a new god into the world. It stinks bad to uz. We can tell it will be a god of nasty light and we leave the First Council, so that it becomes the Broken Council. The dragon men see that we are right and they leave, too.

The stupid humans go ahead and make their god, and sure enough, Nysalor is not only a god of illumination, but of Chaos, also! It is *twice* as bad as we figured! Uz name it Gbaji. We fight it wherever it goes.

Our first fights go very bad. We have yet to heal from them. We send the great spirit Black Eater against him. Gbaji erases the Black Eater from existence, then curses the wombs of all our mothers. After that, nine out of ten uz births are not proper uz but litters of lousy enlo.

A legendary hero walks among us to lead the crusade. He is Arkat Kortagi. He tricks the elves, the storm people and then the Sorcery humans, leading each in turn to think he is one of them. He takes their powers, combined with uz magic, and slays Gbaji. Then he sets up the Stygian Empire in Ralios. Uz are honoured there and have amazing food to eat. In the centre of the continent, Ezkankekko rules from his Castle of Lead.

In the year 500, Arkat goes away on a quest for Wonderhome. His departure ends the First Age.

Arkat will come back one day to show uz the way back home. It has been 400 years since he left. Uz will wait 400 more if need be.

— Zoralak Kogan

In the east, uz live in the kingdom of Ignorance. We fight the dragon humans there. Stupid dwarfs are our allies and they let us down. We get beat and must retreat to mountains, where food is less plentiful. This happens in 550.

In the west, the Stygian Empire gets slowly weaker. We fight for it even though the sons of Arkat are more like humans than uz, on the inside as well as on the outside.

In the centre, sun worshippers and then windfolk rebel against Ezkankekko's rule. Stupid enlo traitors help them out, because human healing women treat them good. The humans get free of us and soon after convert to crazy dragonewt worship. They start up the Empire of Wyrms' Friends. They invite us to join but uz take no part of it. Dragons are trouble.

Ezkankekko's territory is reduced to the Shadow Plateau, in Kethaela. They say it is theirs, uz say it is ours and that is that.

In 732, a Mistress Race troll called Cragspider, who lives in Dragon Pass and is left alone even by the wyrmfriends,

attempts a great experiment. She HeroQuests to end the Womb-Biter Curse laid on us by Gbaji. Instead she learns how to make Great Trolls, who are big but dumb. They are better than enlo, anyhow.

We are, in 742, among the bitter-enders who fight to save the last remnants of the Stygian Empire from God Learner invaders. Their weird Sorcery interferes with our ancient magics, as if they have stolen powers from Zorak Zoran and others. We get beat again and have to flee to caves.

In 768, the dragon people of Kralorela are driven out of their comfortable pagodas by the God Learners and their tricky friends. They storm into the place they pushed us into, the Kingdom of Ignorance. Uz are dispersed even further, into the coldest, tallest mountains.

In 842, the God Learners attack us in the Shadowlands. The EWF sends humans and dragonewts to help us beat them back. It is a big war. For once we do not lose. Ezkankekko is still in power there. Lately he is called the Only Old One, a name that shows he dates past further than the so-called Dawn.

My Magic

God Learners ask us: 'Your gods are sort of like gods and sort of like spirits. Please, please, please, tell us which it is'. We know they want to know this so they can steal more of our magic. So we say: 'In the winter and fall, they are spirits. The rest of the time they are gods'. And then the God Learners go and write this down and look all serious and we laugh and imagine them hanging on hooks in the meat-curing hut.

The real answer is, some gods give us Divine Magic and some give us spirit magic. And some give us both.

Why I Adventure

The world is full of good things to eat, if you go out to get them. Or you can get gold. Do not eat this, for you can trade it in for even more food. Well, eat it if you really want to.

Somewhere out there is the secret that will eliminate the Womb-Biter Curse. If you find it, you will be remembered forever, like Arkat.

Speaking of Arkat, he could come back any day to usher us back to Wonderhome. Maybe uz should go look for him to make it happen sooner. Could be he's trapped or something and needs our help.

Uz



WORLD GAZETTEER

Jrustela

The glittering isle of Jrustela gave birth to the God Learner movement. Sorcerous advances developed here still form the backbone of the Empire's power. The political centre of the Empire may have shifted back to Seshnela, ancestral homeland of the Jrusteli, but those wishing to master – or unravel – its magical techniques must come here.

Geography: A large volcanic island, Jrustela thrusts regally from the cerulean waters of the Dashomo Sea, about 300 kilometres from the northwestern coast of Pamaltela. Sharp peaks dominate its western half; at many points the western coastline is a sheer cliff face dropping into the sea. The isle's central basin comprises a lush sub-tropical forest, rising to shallower peaks along its eastern coastline.

Politics: Seshnegi migrants first settled the island around 250 years ago. Their city-states found unity as a Confederation, led by a prince (later styled a king) who was considered first among equals. Their descendants returned to Seshnela in 740 to free their land from the grip of the Stygian Empire. King Annmak united the crowns of Jrustela and Seshnela. His successors ruled from Seshnela and over time came to identify more with its traditionalist class structure. Jrustela was allowed to carry on in its questioning, semi-democratic spirit, under a traditionalist veneer. The city-lords of the various cities were made dukes of the Empire. Together they formed the Jrusteli Alliance, which gathers in conclave every four years to elect an Arch-Duke from among their number. They may re-elect the present Arch-Duke or replace him.

The current Arch-Duke is Norlantos of Jalanswal. He traces his descent through the first Jrusteli settlers all the way back to Nralar the Old, a great Seshnegi king from the end of the first age. He narrowly won his seat three and a half years ago, after a fierce lobbying effort underwritten by Emperor Ilotos. Norlantos attempts to tamp down resentment against the Emperor by reformist Jrusteli who feel that he is too hidebound and insufficiently appreciative of the role the green isle plays in maintaining imperial power.

As his term of office nears its end, Norlantos campaigns for re-election. He faces a renewed challenge from Valarger, Duke of Eradinthanos, the city where reformist rhetoric runs hottest. High-strung and easily rattled, Valarger lacks the current Arch-Duke's smooth, manipulative instincts but makes up for his lack of finesse with sincerity and passion.

Commerce: After Jrustela broke the Waertagi hold on the seas, its traders boldly fanned out across the world, establishing an unprecedented commercial Empire. Its greatest merchant houses are all located here, in their original home cities, as are its banking and financial institutions. Anyone seeking audience with the true masters of global commerce must seek them in Jrustela. They maintain branch operations in Seshnela but the true wealth remains here. The money men of Jrustela resent undue taxation by distant Emperors and lend support to the reformist tendency.

After he lost Pamaltela, the Emperor came to us for money. We said: 'Win them back with reform'. He took neither our money nor our advice. Instead he made war on his own nearby possessions of Ralios and Arolanif, to divert their taxes to his treasury.

— Valarger, Duke of Eradinthanos

Magic: Jrustela originated the schools of mythic studies that later converged as the God Learner Alliance. The *Abiding Book* manifested itself here. No sorcerer may call himself great until he has tested himself against the scholars of Jrustela, either in debate or in a duel of spells. The top universities are located in Eradithanos, Piskotol and Irenstos.

Cities of Jrustela

Though other cities exist, the largest are the surviving 12 colonies which comprised the original Jrusteli Confederation and now send their Dukes as electors to choose the Arch-Duke.

Arshu Phola

The people of Arshu Phola descend not from Seshnegi but Slontans brought here by the Waertagi before the end of the first age. Some say they were enslaved and taken here against their will; others, that they fled political turmoil in their homeland. When discovered by the first Jrusteli, they were assumed to be natives. They warred with the original migrants at first but then achieved harmony. Their barbarian theist roots can be seen in the symbology and ritual of their Malkioni worship.

Leadership: The stoic Duke Garolan maintains a tight rein on public order and tax revenues.

Reasons to come here: Looking for a theist priest to provide magic or spiritual guidance? They cluster here, where their traditions are respected and sometimes carried on under a thin veil of Malkionism.

Eradinthanos

Eradinthanos claims eternal glory as the home of the original Seven Explorers, the founders of God Learner inquiry, and as the site of the *Abiding Book* manifestation. This is a city of priests and sorcerers, who attempt to maintain mutual harmony but do not always succeed. A seat at the University of Eradinthanos stands as the most coveted post in western Sorcery. Pilgrims come from all over the Malkioni world to visit the awesome Cathedral of the Book.

Leadership: Duke Valarger.

Reasons to come here: For its repositories of religious and magical knowledge.

Evrowal

Located on a balmy promontory on the island's north coast, Evrowal is a bastion of reformism. According to long tradition, its Duke is chosen by lot from its coterie of eligible nobles and serves for a five-year term. When Ilotos tried to appoint a permanent Duke of Evrowal seven years ago, riots broke out in the streets, prompting an embarrassing withdrawal.

Leadership: Beels, a melancholy knight, postponed his intended suicide when fate chose him to rule the city. He has three years left at the end of his term, after which his friends fear he will go ahead and fall on his sword.

Reasons to come here: Intrigue-seeking adventurers can find patrons hiring for operations in furtherance of the reformist cause.

Hathinelthor

The cynicism of perverted ideals runs like a disease through Hathinelthor, a financial capital and wellspring of underhanded doings. Dukes of this city rule for life. Upon their demise, an elector's council of nobles convenes to choose a successor, who may not be related to the previous lord. Intended to prevent corruption, the rule encourages covert affairs between the duke and ladies of the court, to produce illegitimate sons to succeed the present ruler.

Leadership: Duke Miskos strives to build the highest tower in all of Jrustela, ignoring safety concerns in this chronically wind-swept city.

Reasons to come here: Political mysteries often lead to Hathinelthor, where bulging purses change hands under darkened tavern tables.

Hredmorinos

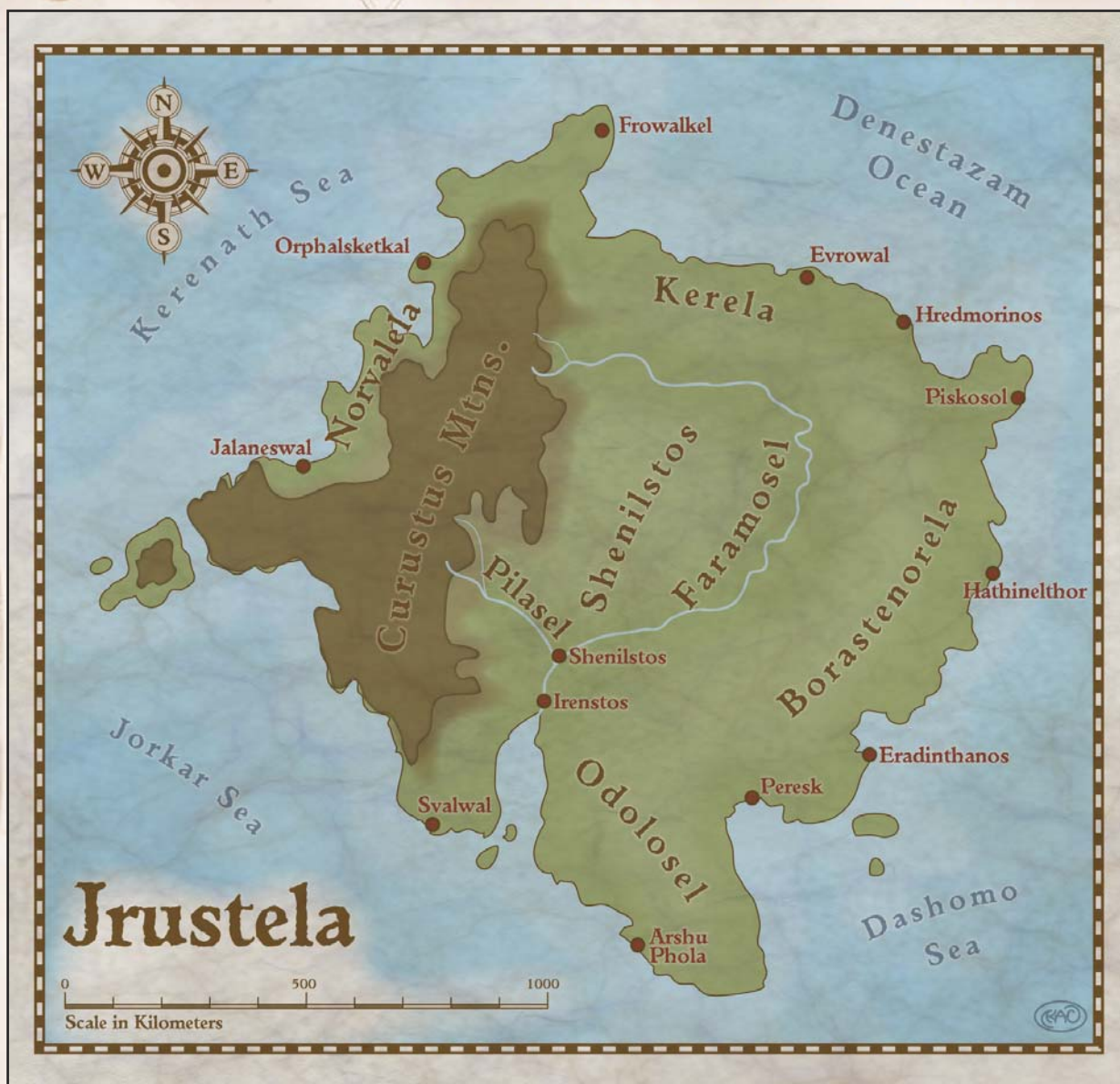
Ruled by a parliament, the people of Hredmorinos agitate for reform measures out of a long-standing commitment to democracy. Its first leaders warred against the island's timinits, who refuse to pass the through the city gates. They say it is haunted by the ghosts of their screaming ancestors.

Leadership: Tindryza the Geologist, a scholar-warrior expert in earth mythologies and mostali technology, recently won the dukedom by promising to press the reformist case all the way to Seshnela.

Reasons to come here: The University of Hredmorinos specialises in the artefacts and mythologies of the elder races, including timinits.

Irenstos

Like Arshu Phola, Irenstos' original inhabitants were Slontan. Their proximity to a river allowed them to outgrow that city. It also encouraged assimilation with the later wave of Jrustelan immigration. Under the charismatic early scholar Darangor, its people flocked to the sorcerous study movement. His institutions eventually grew into Irenstos University, a prestigious school that maintains a bitter rivalry with the University of Piskosol.



Leadership: Duke Yuthelmag the Hobbled rules by right of his seniority in an unbroken dynasty of city lords dating back to the original migration.

Reasons to come here: Irenstos is a centre of trade for the entire island and houses a substantial Pamaltelan population.

Jalanswal

The arch-conservative citizens of Jalanswal take overweening pride in the ancient, royal Seshnegi blood flowing through their veins. They cling to Seshnegi ways

and eagerly clasp new arrivals from Seshnela to their collective bosom. Imperial officials cluster here, as the city is the current Arch-Ducal seat.

Leadership: Arch-Duke Norlantos.

Reasons to come here: To do business with imperial officials.

New Frowal

New Frowal clings to its status as the first Seshnegi-settled city, despite its eclipse in wealth, knowledge and

Allegiances of Jrustela

City	Leaning of Populace	Leaning of Duke
Arshu Phola	Reformist	Loyalist
Eradinthanos	Reformist	Reformist
Evrowal	Reformist	Swing vote
Hathinelthor	Loyalist	Loyalist
Hredmorinos	Reformist	Reformist
Irenstos	Reformist	Loyalist
Jalanswal	Loyalist	Loyalist
New Frowal	Loyalist	Swing vote
Orphalsketkal	Reformist	Reformist
Peresk	Loyalist	Reformist
Piskosol	Reformist	Reformist
Shenilstos	Loyalist	Loyalist

influence by later settlements. Famously touchy, the people of New Frowal warrant its nickname, 'the City of Resentment'.

Leadership: The pious Duke Kontharan is scholar, magician and holy man, wrapped into one. On Godday he must concentrate to avoid levitating off the cobblestones.

Reasons to come here: Other Jrusteli suspect that New Frowal's proud Civic Union covertly hires adventurers to sabotage their festivals and public works projects.

Orphalsketkal (New Orphalsket)

The drydocks of this northern city turn out the Empire's fastest, largest and most splendid ships. The universities of Orphalsketkal turn out sorcerers of a practical bent, particularly those useful in maritime adventurer. Their captive sylphs power the wondrous ships of the Orphalsketkal fleet.

Ducal authority is hereditary but if the heir apparent fails to pass its Three Sailing Tests, the dukedom passes to the next eligible male in the ruling dynasty.

Leadership: In his wild younger days, Duke Bauratos captained a pirate vessel preying on the East Isles.

Reasons to come here: Adventurers sailing into or out of Jrustela most often pass through Orphalsketkal.

As a citizen of Seshnela, I find Jalanswal an odd place to visit. They've set slightly misremembered visions of our traditions in concrete and tell us they are more Seshnegi than we are.

— Spolorfal the Arranger, Dean of Pythos University

Peresk

Another of the Old Slontan cities, Peresk won a place for itself in the Confederation by force of arms. Its young men strive to prove themselves as warriors. Battle cadres hire themselves out to the lords of other cities to quell internal strife. Those with further-flung ambitions set sail for other imperial territories in need of fervent troops. Its Sorcery college specialises in martial spells.

Leadership: Duke Shordone returned in disgrace to Peresk after losing a legion in the Pamaltelan revolt. He has since soured on the Emperor whose bad judgment led to his humiliation.

Reasons to come here: Warriors at loose ends can find employment in its mercenary hiring halls.

Piskosol

Once famed as home of the first Jrustelan prince, Piskosol is now known chiefly as 'Timinit City'. The island's insect people have descended on the city en masse, filling its universities, guild halls, taverns, and factories. They strive to be more Jrusteli than the Jrusteli, whatever that means.

Each neighbourhood, or ward, selects an elector to choose the duke, who is reaffirmed in office every six years. Recent dukes have all curried the favour of various insect factions.

Leadership: The vacillating Duke Paptalor wreathes himself in black pearls and is attended by a retinue of arachan monks.

Reasons to come here: Adventures involving the timinit nearly always begin, pass through or end in Piskosol.

Svalwal, The Shattered City

Destroyed in a 665 tidal wave sent by the Waertagi, the city of Svalwal remains a swamped and shattered ruin. Hostile marine spirits roam its sunken, canal-like streets, preventing attempts at resettlement. Adventurers report a high concentration of runes here, particularly Water runes.

Shenilstos

This Slontan city maintains an old rivalry with Irenstos over trading territory. Where the Irensti sought to assimilate with the Jrusteli, the Shenilstosites stuck to their barbarian faith. Their dedication lasted until the miracle of the *Abiding Book*, at which point they converted in great numbers. Imbued with the unique fervour of fresh converts, they formed the core of the Rightness Army. The Order of the New Iron Staff headquarters here, wielding the Malkioni magic of smiting and retribution.

Leadership: The implacable Duke Sableros commands an elite unit of the Rightness Army.

Reasons to come here: Dealings with the Rightness Crusade invariably lead to Shenilstos.

Seshnela

Seshnela is the heart of the God Learner Empire. It stood as a beacon of civilisation even during the Darkness. It flowered early in the First Age, only to be subjugated by Arkat's Stygian Empire in the era's fading years. Refugees from Seshnela founded the fabulous cities of Jrusteli, liberating their homeland from the Stygians many generations later. Since then Seshnela rapidly entered a golden age, leading an Empire dedicated to trade, conquest and sorcerous inquiry.

Its capital, **Frowal**, sends soaring spires of bizarre God Learner architecture high into its sky. Its sunsets are brighter

and more colourful than anywhere else in the world. No blue is deeper than that of its fragrant summer skies. Ill weather scarcely troubles its shores. The Imperial Palace sits on a hillside overlooking the city, folding out in two sections resembling the *Abiding Book*. Other cities of nearly equivalent splendour include:

- ❑ **Arkwal**, a city of warriors. Built around a black fortress established by Arkat during his war of liberation against Gbaji, it served as a capital during the Stygian dominance of Seshnela. Ruined during the Jrusteli liberation, it has been reconstructed as a garrison town. Mercenaries flock here seeking places in the Empire's various foreign legions. It tolerates a high degree of disorder from high-spirited troublemakers and serves as a gathering place for war bands in need of fresh blood.
- ❑ **Damolsten**, named for its founder, a First Age hero. Its most famous landmark is the Hanging Tower, which descends from above instead of ascending from the ground (Brithini sneer that it is but a pale imitation of the original, found in their capital city). Indentured mostali, their wills sapped by the Unbendable Staff of Damolstan, toil on behalf of wealthy Seshnegi masters.
- ❑ **Estan**, a university town reinvigorated by the God Learners. The last few years it has been plagued by intermittent rains of squid and octopi, surely the result of an experiment gone wrong.

Emperor Itotos' Palace, Seshnela





- ☒ **Genertsket**, the wealthiest port of Seshnela, which makes it extraordinarily rich. Its courtiers advocate a program of peace and prosperity, opposing the excesses of God Learners and Rightness Army alike. They are in political decline now, having lost the Emperor's goodwill by trying to counsel him against the Ducal Wars.
- ☒ **Hrestolket**, a vibrant settlement celebrating free thinking and sorcerous innovation. Castigated by conservatives as Heresy City, its cathedral contains many relics of its namesake, the Great Prophet Hrestol.
- ☒ **Laurmal**, a settlement dedicated to trade and craftsmanship. Its Ironworkers Guild has mastered the art of working that difficult metal, making weapons and implements in demand throughout the world. Despite their brother's mistreatment in the city of Damolsten, mostali come here to trade with the Seshnegi. Delegations from both cities clash at the imperial court over relations with the dwarfs.
- ☒ **Neleswal**, a thriving port. Its Duke, Nelos V, encourages cultural expression, attracting the world's best actors and dancers to perform at lavish masques held at his estates. Pilgrims flock to Neleswal's imposing cathedral, where ornate reliquaries display the bones of the city's founders.
- ☒ **Orphalsket**, a port on the mouth of the Irier River. It boasts three marketplaces, the most fabulous of which, the Banquet of the Gods, is accessible only by dispensation of the Emperor. There the dukes and nobles of Seshnela stroll from booth to booth, dining on incredible magical foodstuffs. Some are merely augmented by culinary Sorcery but others are the spoils of Other Side raids or made with recipes liberated from various heathen hearth gods.
- ☒ **Pasos**, a south coast seaport. Its religious orders are known for their austerity and resistance to the primacy of the God Learner sorcerers. The Duke of Pasos, an impatient man named Ilondin, must forever mollify its popular religious leaders. The most

influential and troublesome is the monk Oriaba, who has maintained an uncomfortable squatting position ever since the days of his youth. He is carried to meetings on a strange thorny chair.

- ✧ **Segurane**, an old fortress and river port. Several stirring poems celebrate its virtues as a point of defence against the Stygian Empire of Ralios. The sages of its knowledge market are famed for their speedy responses and high prices, if not their punctilious accuracy.

Around the cities lie various duchies, assigned by the Emperor to favoured courtiers. The dukes enjoyed considerable influence until late, granting lands to subservient lords and withholding monies from the imperial treasuries. The Emperor's move to strip the dukes of Aronalit and Ralios of their holdings has chastened them dramatically.

The richest of the duchies is **Tanisor**, a bowl of fertile land surrounding the lower Tanier River. Its people descend from the Pendali, an ancient race of lion men, but long ago abandoned their hsunchen ways. Their comparatively dark complexions distinguish them from the pale-skinned Seshnegi. Rumours of an ancient vampire cult that haunts Tanisor by night are greatly exaggerated. Arkat fought a vampire legion in Tanisor hundreds of years ago but now the activities of its nocturnal blood-drinkers are almost entirely curtailed. Just ask the Duke of Tanisor, Langila, whose unearthly pallor is in no way connected to vampirism. His recent expeditions to the remnants of Tanewal, a shattered city also called the Red Ruin, are doubtless motivated by the purest of academic motives.

Jorestel's Forest, a lush tree belt on the northern coast of the Seshnegi peninsula, attests to an alliance with the local aldryami dating back to the Dawn. Every year the Emperor and King Elf Jorestel meet to reaffirm their mutual vow to protect the trees of Seshnela.

Friendship with the elves is one thing but the Seshnegi royal family takes it all a step too far. They and the aldryami sometimes intermarry! I don't know how that is even possible!

— Brother Aran, Monk of Pombric

Arolanit

Local powers have always fought bitterly to control the coastal territory of Arolanit, to the north of Seshnela. Known as the breadbasket of the west, the richness of its harvests outstrips even Tanisor. God Learner sorcerers, using fertility secrets gleaned from their study of the earth pantheon, have wrenched further bounty from its fields, filling the tables of Seshnela's ever-increasing population.

Haughty local dukes, enriched by its bursting grain bushels, aroused the wrath of Emperor Ilotos, who stripped them of their lands in the recent Ducal Wars. Unlike Ralios, a new order was quickly re-established here, with Ilotos' favoured courtiers filling old ducal seats and pliantly answering his demands for increased revenues.

The people of Arolanit speak a different dialect than their Seshnegi neighbours. They revere Prince Hrestol and his mother, merciful Xemela, above all other saints. Their worship ceremonies are noted for their ebullience, joyous music and ordinary congregants' spontaneous outbursts of giddy sermonising. The Arolaniti peasants, who consider scowling and pessimism as dreadful sins, are known as the Happy People.

Brithos

The grey and craggy isle of Brithos is home to a culture of isolationist, immortal sorcerers. Through unwavering obedience to a strict, caste-based social structure, they achieve immortality. Among the Brithini there is no room for error. Any instance of non-compliance, innovation or questioning of authority, no matter how minor, can begin an inexorable and irreversible aging process. In matters of faith, they worship no one and nothing but revere the impersonal forces of the universe. They live forever but have no afterlife.

They hold the highest respect for Zzabur, a quasi-divine immortal prehuman who slumbers in a vast mist-shrouded tower in the middle of the island. The Brithini attribute the invention of Sorcery to him and claim him as a brother of Malkion himself. He also participated in – some say masterminded – the death of Malkion the Prophet.

The death of Malkion the Prophet culminated a necessary progression of supernal states. In facilitating its fruition, I performed an essential action, without which the eventual emergence from Darkness could not have occurred.

— Zzabur, Immortal of Brithos

Hierarchy embeds itself deeply in the Brithini psyche. Every person knows his place in the chain of authority, reporting to a superior for guidance. The four castes are the Talar (officers), Holar (soldiers), Zzaburs (sorcerers) and Dronars (farmers and artisans). Each speaks a specialised dialect of the Brithini tongue.

Women belong to a quasi-caste of their own and may not wield public influence. Both men and women view the prospect of sexual contact with shuddering revulsion, engaging in it only when ordered to reproduce.

Children are all but absent from Brithos. Births are rare and accompanied by extensive sorcerous rituals to imbue the newborn with the capacity for immortality.

Brithini do not age or contract ordinary diseases but are susceptible to death by injury. They drop their usual reserve at funerals, which become lengthy, ritualised explosions of inconsolable grief.

The Brithini greet uninvited visitors to their land with harsh efficiency. Few adventurers who travel there without the patronage of a Brithini lord or wizard return with mind and body intact. Vigilant citizens report new arrivals within moments of their appearance on Brithini shores. Traps and alarms litter the island's borderlands.

Even authorised visitors may not practice their own faith while on the island.

Self-sufficiency rules the Brithini economy. Necessities are produced by the Dronars. What cannot be made here naturally is synthesised via Sorcery, or done without. Talar and Zzaburs occasionally import collectibles, books or magical implements. A handful of Waertagi traders discreetly conduct this business for them.

Sesupwal, the City of Circles, located in the centre of Brithos, serves as the island's capital. Its outer circle houses the labouring caste. Its next circle, guarded by miraculous engines of war, comprises the barracks for the military caste. It encircles the Talar Circle, where leaders and administrators live and work. Behind a canal of molten metal rise four towers, where wizardly orders are quartered. In the middle of these looms the tower of Zzabur himself; it can be seen from anywhere on Brithos.

If Sesupwal is the centre of a compass, the four great cities are arranged around it at its four cardinal points. Each is devoted to a caste: Zaaburket (sorcerers), Talarwal (leaders), Gwymirwal (soldiers) and Dromalwal (farmers). A women's city, Urusvensket, allows for birthing and other unseemly but necessary female activities to occur far from the gaze of men.

Waertagswal is the Brithini port city. It used to house the Waertagi fleet. Now that the Jrusteli destroyed that, the Brithini have been forced to build their own inferior armada, heavily staffed by Waertagi survivors.



Reasons to come here: The Brithini are deadly enemies of the God Learner Empire, who hire expendable adventurers to conduct intelligence and sabotage missions against them.

Hostilities between the two powers date at least as far back as 823, when the overreaching God Learner Emperor launched a disastrous invasion attempt against the grey isle. Ever since then the Brithini have schemed behind the scenes to undermine the Middle Sea Empire.

Fronela

The region of Fronela, north of Seshnela and Ralios, hangs in an uneasy balance between the two great Empires. The God Learners control the Malkioni kingdom of Loskalm, while the EWF encroaches into the area's eastern half. They confine military conflict to the occasional skirmish. Despite its mundane riches, both Emperor Ilotos and the Guiding Council regard Fronela as an afterthought. Neither wants to open a new front here.

Loskalm

Loskalm was the first Genertelan territory fully conquered by the Jrusteli after they broke the Waertagi fleet (they began the retaking of their Seshnegi homeland first but that war took longer to complete). Since Prince Hrestol's first visits here in the first century, Loskalm has withered under the influence of a dreamy utopianism. Its people, from kings and philosophers to criminals and mud-diggers, all subscribe to a notion of God-given egalitarianism. Throughout history they have tried to make all men equal in rights and property. Each dynasty of kings achieves power by proposing a new methodology to achieve this noble aim. These plans have merely served to render Loskalm unstable and vulnerable to outside influence. For centuries it laboured as a vassal to the Stygian Empire. They had shaken off its influence only to fall again into disarray, allowing their conquest by the God Learners.

Prince Ullmal, ruler of Jrustela at the time, divided its territory between cooperative locals and favoured sorcerers, whose descendants rule Loskalm as its dukes and grand dukes. They proceeded to conquer the lands to the east, subjugating the western Janube Valley. The utopian locals proved savage in warfare, razing enemy city states and putting their citizens to the sword.

God Learner magics have intensified the region's farming yields. Loskalmi commoners submit to their rule with apparent resignation. Hidden beneath Loskalm's placid face, rebellion brews. Most Loskalmi knights are now under God Learner lords. A few notables have maintained their ancient independence and perform great deeds under the gauzy ideals of a utopia to come. Idealists remain in the outlands, living like robber barons and resisting the Loskalmi God Learners.

Reasons to come here: Adventurers can participate in the political turmoil to come, either for or against the Empire.

Notables

Hernies, the Ivory Knight, rides through the countryside righting wrongs on the back of his silver steed, named Virtue. An eloquent advocate of utopia, he declines to criticise current leaders by name. Even more troubling to local authorities are the regular thrashings he delivers to overzealous tax collectors. Wary of any action that might make a martyr of him, Loskalm's dukes hire operators to tar his reputation with scandal, real or invented.

The sorcerer **Merasch** has recently retreated to his tower, where he says he will complete the Ultimate Thesis, which will categorise every being and entity on Glorantha in a tree of relationship. Adventurers who come across weird or uncategorisable creatures can sell them to him. They are best advised to go during the daytime, when Merasch sleeps, and conduct the transaction with the wizard's steward, Ithionius. At night, Merasch's valley echoes with unearthly screams and cackles.

During Dark Season the Loskalmi fear no name more than that of **Begotha**, the mummified leader of an undead bandit gang. Each member of Begotha's gang is an unliving revenant of Loskalm's wars on the Janube Valley. They repeat the acts of cruelty and rapine visited on them and their families but now with Loskalmi as their victims. On the day preceding an attack, the cold clacking of Begotha's teeth echo through the countryside.

Janube Valley

This fertile region is of competing city-states. Loskalmi God Learners subject most western cities to their punitive rule, with some outposts father east. Some cities are independent, ruled by exiled Hrestoli idealists. EWF missionaries have influenced many cities. Carmanian lords rule yet others and their knights have been making

When I fought Begofha, he rode a skeletal stag whose eyes burned like red coals. My skin still feels dead, where it licked me. If only someone had warned me that impaling weapons are useless against him, it would have saved me months of convalescing.

— Curek Runespear, Mercenary of Safelsfer

exploratory raids throughout this area. The powerful kingdom surely intends to expand here. The locals have not decided whether to fear them as occupiers or welcome them as liberators.

Cities destroyed by Loskalmi God Learners during their violent expansion of the mid-eighth century include the razed ruins of Ulichio, Paval and Kaldal. The cities of Perfe, Salisor and Einpor rebuilt under Loskalmi rule. EWF-influenced settlements include:

- ☒ **Mahan**, where draconised Orlanthi successfully proselytise disenchanted followers of pre-Hrestoli Malkionism.
- ☒ **Ikankos**, a city ruled by ghosts, who conduct eerie debate in their echoing Parliament of the Dead.
- ☒ **Frastoreal**, where murder warrants a fine but slander is a crime punishable by death.
- ☒ **Galstar**, an ancient city where Malkioni and Orlanthi exist in harmony, their oaths of peace reinforced by fiery wards.

Charg

Formerly draconised Orlanthi live in the hilly region of Charg, which is now occupied by the nascent Empire of Carmania. Here EWF mystics developed the rituals of Ernalda the Snake, boosting the fertility of fallow pastures. Until their forcible liberation by dualist knights, the barbarians lived under state-mandated, priest-run tribes. Now the Carmanians allow them old-style worship while forcibly forbidding draconic ceremonies.

Many of the old tribes have dissolved, leaving confused, dispirited clans to resume long-buried feuds. Two remain, each offering hit-and-run resistance to their new overlords. The Vosi, ruled by the defensively-minded Manoros the Old, occupy the southern reaches of Charg. They are happy to see the end of the wyrmfriends but

Sog City

The region's largest city sits on the borderland between Loskalm proper and its Janube Valley possessions. God Learner sorcerers flock to its University of Pure Logic, where the higher principles underlying Malkioni magic are elucidated as nowhere else. The school's founder, the aging Brithini Caseltenar, renounced immortality to bring his theories to the masses.

Aside from its status as a bustling port and centre of trade, Sog City is best known as an ancestral home of the Waertagi, who founded it under the name of Sogzanjio Malakumb. The city's God Learner overlords confine its remaining green-skinned population to their own quarter, heavily guarded and surrounded by unscalable walls.

seek autonomy from the knights of Idovanus. Occupying the northern hills is the Karnisi tribe, overseen by Brast the Thrush, whose unearthly singing voice still promotes the dragon way.

Reasons to come here: God Learners have offered a bounty for reliable reports of the Ernalda Snake dances, which are carried on in secret huts and guarded by Maran Gor earthshaker squadrons.

The Golaros Lowlands

Between Charg and the Janube, in the shadow of the Nidan Mountains, lie the Golaros Lowlands. Its rich, dark fields are farmed by two Orlanthi tribes, the Kerseni and Spral, who have renounced raiding to strengthen their fertility magics. EWF missionaries have converted the Spral but made few friends among the Kerseni. The two tribes unite to fight off incursions by the crop-trampling Galininni horse folk, the remnants of a nomadic Ralian tribe dating back to the Dawn times.

Reasons to come here: Adventurers with connections in Lankst may make trade journeys to Golaros, conspire against the EWF or join to suppress the horse nomads.

Maidstone Mountains

God Learners fund periodic expeditions to these frigid peaks, to confirm or deny legends of the Grotarons. These bizarre titans have three arms, the third of which replaces their head; and an eye on the back of each hand.



One large yellow eye sits atop a gasping, snaggleteethed mouth, both planted in the middle of the creature's torso. Armed with gigantic composite bows, they hunt the spirit creature known as the mountain mammoth.

Rathorela

The Rathori Bear People, a nomadic hsunchen tribe, prowl this coniferous forest under the protection of their Great Spirit, the White Bear. It allows them to remain active even when the winter sends other animals to slumber underground. Their other gift, a longbow that can shoot an arrow through the trunk of a thick tree, comes from their aldryami allies from the land of Erigia. The elves climb under the earth into protective seed pods when winter envelops the land.

Reasons to come here: When the snow hides their food supply, the Rathori take prisoners from Charg and the Janube to exchange for cows and pigs. The locals hire adventurers to drive them off.

Tastalar

This tundra zone is sparsely inhabited and then only by hsunchen. The Uncoling reindeer people drive their

Rathori Bear Shaman



reindeer in a vast annual migration. In Sea and Earth seasons they congregate in massive tent settlements. Other animal people prey on them, including Telmori and the Sabadari wolverine folk.

Reasons to come here: God Learner scholars interested in hsunchen myths and magic hire adventurers to do the dangerous research. They are also interested in rumours of an aldryami lichen people.

Slontos

The large and heavily populated region of Slontos wields undoubted economic influence within the God Learner Empire. An arch-dukedom ruled by inherited nobles, Slontos presently labours under a cloud of anxiety. The Emperor's wars against the dukes of Arolanit and Ralios have left its proud ruling class carefully tempering its usual belligerent streak.

If this text were a proper geography, as opposed to a travelogue for ragged freebooters, it would devote a chapter to the pivotal region of Slontos and naught but a footnote to Kethaela.

— Brother Aran, Monk of Pombric

Slontos consists of three main regions, Wenela, Ramalia and Maniria, and is adjoined by the ungovernable border territory of Kotersland.

Wenela

Independent-minded barons who yearn for a return to their former autonomy oversee this large eastern peninsula of rugged hills. They encourage eccentricity and experimentation, offering havens to unorthodox God Learner schools. Its few deep and sheltered harbours support a robust shipping industry. Its notable cities are:

- ☒ **Rothor**, a trade and fishing port. Lately its fishing vessels have been beset by a long-necked, devouring sea-beast. Allegedly the screams of its past victims can still be heard echoing in its gullet. Authorities blame its appearance here on the Empire of Wyrn's Friends. The Fisherman's Guild has posted a reward for its killing or capture, with a bonus if any of their eaten members are recovered alive.

I would not trouble myself to hunt the Sea Devourer of Rothor. The one-eyed seaman Ullansaf has announced that he will kill the creature or anyone else who beats him to it. And I once saw him split a man nearly in twain with the hard edge of his left hand.

— Ofs Toderau, Chronicler of the Green Cobra War Band

- ☒ **Eenlor** serves as a base of the imperial navy. Its fleets guard the coastal waters of Caladraland and the Rightarm Isles and launch raids against EWF outposts accessible from the sea. Herable, the base's gluttonous, greasy-faced admiral, has thoroughly intimidated the local duke and rules Eenlor as his personal fiefdom. Many of his own men, as well as

The Sea Devourer of Rothor



his wyrmfriend adversaries, would pay to see him dead.

- ☒ **Narilor**, once a busy port frequented by the Waertagi, is now a largely deserted ghost town, where only pirates, smugglers and hardscrabble fishermen dare to launch their boats. When the Waertagi fleets were shattered, the ghosts of their dead washed up here and have haunted the place ever since. Waertagi survivors sometimes pull up here, perhaps to commune with the spirits of their slain ancestors.
- ☒ **Thanor**, the provincial capital. Hilly but fertile land surrounds it. Known as the City of Tricksters, it houses Vilblane College, a God Learner-affiliated school specialising in the study of the various pagan fool and troublemaker deities. As its founders should perhaps have anticipated, it has become a magnet for events both surreal and inexplicable. Thanor is a prime spot to capture runes and madness spirits, especially during one of the city's sudden Food Rains.

Ramalia

The fertile western plains of **Ramalia** feed its peasants and enrich its noble landowners.

Though now we owe vassalage to the Seshnegi, we were once the site of mighty kingdoms. Oh, the songs I could sing to you of the glorious wars between Sish, Soster and Wesluk, which were always lit by sunset and firelight!

— *Efroze de Vekmail, Troubadour of Ramalia*

Its important settlements are:

- ☒ **Annor**, the only good deepwater port along hundreds of miles of coastland. Its underground Ashen Cathedral houses the relics of St. Domb, who allowed all of his bones to be broken, rather than denounce a wretched heathen tribe he sought to convert. Unrest swirls around their disposition: the new baron, Vorell, has ordered them moved to his private chapel in the surrounding countryside. Though of a local lineage, Vorell spent most of his life in the Seshnegi capital and is unpopular here. He blames his younger brother, Sogcros, for whipping up discontent against him.

- ☒ **Veakmal**, an island base of the imperial navy. Independent until the God Learner invasion, its headstrong natives are now outnumbered by foreign sailors. Brawls between locals and seamen comprise the island's most popular off-duty pastime. Mostali fund raids against its drydocks, on the grounds that Jrusteli magical ships use secrets stolen from them.
- ☒ **Soster**, a thriving city in amid a fertile belt of farmland. Known as the Sleeping City, its pleasant meadow scent and lackadaisical household spirits sap the ambition and martial fervour of all who tarry here. High officials exile potential rivals to administrative posts here, blunting their sharp edges.
- ☒ **Wesluk**, an unloading point for river trade. Its spectacularly palatial villas have tempted thieves throughout the generations, prompting the foundation of the Trap Maker's Guild, a confederation of artisans guided by a fugitive Openhandist dwarf named Dunge Erro.
- ☒ **Ravin**, a shabby port bordering on the Tarinwood, which trades chiefly with the aldryami. The elves of Tarinwood show an unusual appetite for human trade goods, including fripperies and luxury items. God Learner specialists in aldryami culture want to know why; the Ravin Merchant's Association is anxious to divert any troublesome inquiries that might upset their profitable applecart.

Maniria

The wild northern reaches of **Maniria** challenge the dominance of its figurehead barons. Orlanth-worshipping former hsunchen battle outsiders and each other, fiercely resisting tribes and rebuffing EWF missionary incursions. God Learner sorcerers are despised here, due to their catastrophic meddling in womens' magic. The region's grain goddess was one of the objects of the notorious Goddess Switch. Despite barbarian hostility to both Empires, their thanes sometimes assemble mercenary bands to fight for the Arch-Duke. These melt back into the hills at the first whiff of non-payment. Three largish cities were once states unto themselves:

- ☒ **Guglar**, the westernmost Manirian city, sits on the banks of the upper Noshain River, where it serves as break of bulk point for caravans headed overland through the nearby wilds. Nomadic deer people wander its surrounding territories. An otherwise nameless mystic called the Denier prowls both woods and city, robbing imperial officials of their



greatest skills. Several adventuring parties have tried and failed to claim the bounty for his (or her) head.

- ☒ **Bemelor**, a seaport and centre of shipbuilding. Its Shipwright's Guild have announced a new marine propulsion system even better than the captive sylphs used in the imperial navy. Spies have filled the city hoping to steal the plans for this new engine, whatever it is.

Bejance, baron of Bemelor, is notorious for his addle-headed leniency. He will cancel nearly any imperial warrant for an outlaw's arrest, so long as the defendant executes a whimsical task, such as the climbing of an oil-slicked wall or the disarming of a trapped cabinet.

— Ofs Toderau, Chronicler of the Green Cobra War Band

- ☒ **Herolal**, a competing centre of shipbuilding. High walls attest to a history of invasion from Esrolia. Because it has so long been attacked by that nation of women, the men of Herolal fiercely uphold Malkion's proclamations of male superiority. Women may not adorn themselves with jewels or bright colours. Nor may they hide their identities with veils. During each summer's Herolali Festival, female priestesses risk being hunted down and burned at the stake as witches.
- ☒ The smaller centre of **Kaxtorplose** earned fame for holding out against the Gbaji invaders until Arkat came to rescue them. Its weird hexagonal shrines, attributed to Arkat, reinforce the magic of any worshipper, no matter what his faith or style of magic. God Learner attempts to dismantle them for study have been fiercely resisted by proud descendants of Kaxtorplose's historic warriors.

Kotorsland

This fallow abandoned region between Maniria and the Kethaealan land of Esrolia, provides a proving ground for the opposing forces of the God Learner and EWF Empires.

Carmania

Extremes of temperature buffet the hills and plains of Carmania, a nation in northwestern Peloria which is fast becoming an Empire to rival the EWF. Its people combine the pride of Dara Happans with the theological certitude of westerners. Landed men of influence are either knights or wizards. Lesser nobles bind themselves to superiors through vows of vassalage. Hardcore adherents of the dualistic Carmanian faith have set aside a long-running internal feud to focus their hatred on the wyrmfriends, who once aided them against the region's previous overlords.

Carmanian lords rule over the Pelandan peasants of the Orinin Valley. These artisans, craftsmen and farmers worship Jernotius, who oversees a cosmic balance of forces. The gods of his pantheon correspond to common occupations and their positions in the six-tier Pelandan class structure. The Carmanians approve these deities as acceptable for worship, though of course not for themselves.

The Carmanians heavily fortify their capital, Kitor, a forbidding city of walls and towers. The region of Spol, home of the darkness witches, sits north of Carmania like a choking cloud.

An Empire in the Making

The Carmanian religion and nation are both comparatively new. Carmanians descend from Malkioni who fled Loskalm after its conquest by God Learners in 725. Led by a charismatic knight named Syranthir the Wanderer, they migrated east, to what is now Carmania but was then the Empire of Gloom, a nation ruled by the Spolite darkness witches. Syranthir carved out a portion of its territory for his people, called the Pasture.

At this time, the Spolite Empire threatened the Dara Happans, forcing them to recruit allies in defence. Among those allies were the wyrmfriend cultists of Dragon Pass. They sent War Dragon detachments to fight alongside Dara Happan infantry.

EWF adventurers and missionaries infiltrated Spol, disrupting their rituals. There they found the Spolites troubled by a new internal foe, calling themselves the Carmanians. They approached Syranthir's grandson, Surandar the Warleader, seeking alliance. Their offers of a new path to mystic awareness fell on deaf ears. A new dualistic faith founded by Surandar's father, Carmanos, had already taken strong root among his people. Carmanos, a warrior-visionary whose mother was the mysterious local lake goddess Charmain, had returned from her legendary Castle Blue bearing stone tablets of revelation. These outlined the laws governing the new dualistic faith of Idovanus.

Wyrmfriend priests tried to compete with these wonders by offering up draconic secrets, but were greeted with stern disinterest. Even so, the warriors of the two cultures found a common zest for battle against the Spolites. Several War Dragon detachments stayed on to support Surandar as he conquered the Spolites, who by this time had been weakened by their failed invasion into Dara Happa.

After the fall of the Spolites in 780, Carmania's War Dragon allies melted back to Dara Happa, certain they had secured their interests in Peloria.

The assistance of the wyrms against the darkness witches was not entirely useless. During this time, we learned the location of the dragon's mystic underbelly, which we used to fashion our first secret of dragonslaying.

— Sir Polasoran, Knight of Sforal

50 years later, the Carmanians were invading Dara Happa, taking special pleasure in attacking units fielded by draconic secret societies. Under their Black Shah, Asacar, Carmanian armies earned a reputation for ruthlessness, using terror tactics and atrocities to strike fear into Dara Happan hearts.

In 864, the warlike Asacar was murdered by rebellious generals, who replaced him as shah with his half-brother, Carmandar the White, ushering in a period of schismatic jockeying between the two halves of Carmania's royal family. The White dynasty descends from Carshandar, son of Surandar, and a priestess of Darjin. It embraces

Knight of Carmania



light magic and seeks alliance with Dara Happa. The Black dynasty descends from Carshandar and a Spolite priestess, hates Dara Happa and practices darkness Sorcery.

Since 880, the White Dynasty has ruled Carmania. Its previous Shah, Saman the Lion, introduced a series of religious reforms advocated by the serenely brilliant prophet Aljijyah. These scoured the sacred laws of Carmania of both darkness and draconic influences. Saman proceeded to wage war against the EWF, which by 875 had crept up its eastern borders. In 900 he was slain in battle against the War Dragons.

The current Shah is Samandar, a cautious man who would sooner make decisions in the tent than ride onto the field of battle at the head of a regiment. His half-brother Survilstar Dragonslayer eclipses him in bravery and accomplishment but is more interested in fighting than ruling. It is Survilstar who found the old secrets left behind by the EWF missionaries back in Surandar's day. Armed with their knowledge, he discovered a technique

Though the loss of Mathaktakarsk, Zitaral'lalkep and Watha'oaglio rends our hearts, it must be noted that they were not True Dragons, as the Carmanians boast. They were merely dream dragons of exceptional size.

—Ervaling Scalemaker, Wyrmfriend Priest

of anti-dragon Sorcery, which requires that a special new spell be developed for each dragon target. Three years ago, during a series of military engagements near Darjin, he used three of these spells, slaying the dragons Mathaktakarsk, Zitaral'lalkep and Watha'oaglio.

Brolia

The terrain of this scrub-forested region is rocky and steep, with nary a flat surface in sight. Acidic soils prevent agriculture, allowing only the hardiest of weeds and most twisted of trees. It wild Orlanthi hill peoples survive by foraging and raiding. Fiercely conservative, they rebuff all entreaties from Hunting and Waltzing Missionaries. Their white-hot loathing of the EWF has led them to reluctantly accept the protection of Carmanian knights. Carmania claims Brolia as a subjugated territory but, at the insistence of the Shah's brother, Survilstar Dragonslayer, neither taxes or imposes its laws on them. Several of Brolia's great heroes, including the sardonic windwalker Vensor Circlemark and the disturbingly alluring Terla the Cat, belong to his personal retinue.

The One-Tongues, a desperate band of apostate wyrmfriends, gathers here to plot the destruction of their former Empire. Led by a blind dissident named Ingorlm, they trekked to this desperate place after being cast out by the Old Ways traditionalists of distant Esrolia, who did not trust them. Carmanian patrols exact heavy taxes from them. The population of their camps has swelled dramatically over the past two years.

Talastar

The hill barbarians of Talastar resisted wyrmfriendism until about 75 years ago, when their flying Orlanthi warriors noticed a resurgence of Chaos manifestations in neighbouring Dorastor. They then took to it enthusiastically, thinking its powers would offer a bulwark against the emerging threat. Since then, however, imperial officials have been reluctant to assign top War

Dragon platoons to Chaos-fighting detail. Instead they paid adventurers and mercenaries to bolster the war parties of local chieftains.

20 years ago, knights of the Carmanian shah claimed Talastar and undertook to suppress the spread of wyrmish religion in their new territory. Local chieftains, whose allegiance to the wyrm was always a matter of pragmatism, proffered only token resistance. Now they cheerily call on the knights of Idovanus to smite Ganesatarus by leading the defence against the Chaos creatures of Dorastor. In exchange for the blood and toil of the Carmanian knights, they pronounce themselves willing to pay them the same tribute they once gave to the wyrmfriends.

Peloria

Encompassing north-central Genertela, Peloria is the civilised heartland of theist practice in Glorantha. Now dominated by the EWF, its competing cultures have known many conquerors throughout the centuries, mostly from within their own ranks.

Dara Happa territory comprises the Oslir river and its banks. Other Pelorian regions cluster around it.

Dara Happa

Home to the Golden Empire of the Yelmite solar worshippers, Dara Happa is a series of highly developed cities, supported by lush farmlands worked by toiling, rustic peasants. These cluster along the Oslir River. Its noble class, conditioned to rule, has adjusted fitfully to EWF dominance. Some accept the legitimacy of the Golden Dragon who sits upon their imperial throne. Following the Star Dragon cult, the EWF fusion of their sky worship and draconic mysticism, they continue to administer the cities, as they have always done. Others hew to the traditional solar deities and wait for this blasphemy to pass. Some do it passively or divert themselves fighting trolls in Halikiv. Others risk all to join the insurgent forces of the Old Ways traditionalists.

The major cities of Dara Happa are as follows, from south to north:

The imposing metropolis of **Alkoth** pays homage to its city god, Alkor, a son of Yelm from the Golden Age. It is home to Shargash, the Dara Happa god of death and destruction, who, once released, kills all of your foes and many of your friends.

The capital is **Raibanth**, birthplace of Raiba, a First Age son of Yelm. The city is divided in three quarters, separated by the confluence of the Joat and Oslir rivers. Great spanning bridges connect the quarters. The wyrmfriends have covered them in golden scales.

Yuthuppa, a towered metropolis whose city god is Yuthu, a Dawn Age grandson of Yelm. Fires are harder to quench here than in other places but will not burn the property of good Dara Happans without permission.

Elz Ast is a city of boat builders and river traders. Its people are known for putting pragmatism over pride, an unusual quality in Dara Happa.

Darjin

Many Oslir tributaries feed the loamy marshes of Darjin. Villages sit on reed-covered hilltops, overlooking rice paddies below. The locals worship SurEnslib, the heron goddess. Their earthy fertility rites disgust the Dara Happans, who have consistently suppressed attempts by the Darjini to assert themselves.

The city of **Dorkath** is the Darjini capital, where the Sex Hunt, the annual three-day orgiastic worship ceremony, takes place. Other settlements include **Manithi**, stronghold of anti-troll magic and **Massos**, an ancient citadel.

Darjini Clans

Clans define a Darjinis' lot in life.

Clan Name	Economic Role
Weeders	Barge-dwelling rice farmers
Walkers	Woodland hunters
Highfists	Hill-dwelling townsfolk
Stickmen	Lodrili farmers (an outsider caste)

The ruling clan of Darjin is the ancient Manimati. The EWF allows them to rule Darjin under the Golden Dragon's banner, so long as they force the people to attend one wyrmfriend ceremony per week, donating their worship energy to the Great Project.

Rinliddi

The Rinliddi live around the Arcos River, which empties into the Sea of Ice. They descend from the bird god Vrimak, an emanation of Yelm. Along with Vrimak, they worship a number of other avian deities. They enjoy reputations as expert falconers and educated scribes but are best known for their avilry, troops mounted on enormous, two-legged, flightless birds. The Rinliddi organise themselves into extended clans called nests, establishing a pecking order under the guidance of wyrmfriend priests.

The Dara Happan cities of Yuthuppa and Elz Ast dominate trade and politics. Other cities include the ungovernable pirate enclave of Birin and Diavizzi, a ruin centred around a magical spring, which EWF priests intend to revive.

In 825, Rinliddi revolted against the Dara Happan Empire, aided by covert forces of the EWF. The weakened solar Emperor, Karmexdros, faced with encroachment on his western borders, declined to retake his former province. He issued a decree withdrawing his right to tax them, as if granting the successful insurgents a gift of imperial largesse.

Unconquered Lands

North of Rinliddi lie the territories of Koror and Velthil, known by EWF leaders as The Unconquered Lands.

Koror includes the hinterland around the city of Elz Ast. The wyrmfriends and their Dara Happan subjects maintain law and order in the city but not in the surrounding countryside. Caravans in or out of the city travel under the protection of formidable mercenary bands, who are often hiring new adventurers. Competing petty nobles of Rinliddi descent engage in brigandage and assert taxation rights over travellers, which amount to the same thing. They worship Tholm the Hawk, a predatory deity related to Vrimak.

Even scruffier bandits proclaim themselves as kings in Velthil. Few caravans come through here, so its self-proclaimed nobles raid into Rinliddi, Garsting and Kosaddi. When not fleeing EWF patrols, they are running from the hungry trolls of the nearby Blue Moon Plateau or the vicious land raiders of Pent.

Rinliddi Winged Patriot



The Guiding Council has initiated an action in the higher realms, called the Common Hatching, which will effectuate our dominion over Rinliddi, without the need for war.

— Ervaling Scalemaker, Wyrmfriend Priest

When the EWF took over Dara Happa, they intended to seize control of Rinliddi as well, through their agents on the ground there. They announced the Revelation of the Common Egg, proving a mythic connection between the birds of Rinliddi and the dragons and dinosaurs. By this time certain nests of Rinliddi had already embraced draconic worship. These spread the Revelation with optimistic missionary zeal. The majority of Rinliddi opposed them because the EWF controlled Dara Happa and an alliance with them would lead to Rinliddi's reabsorption into the Empire.

Low-level civil war persisted for a generation as pro-dragon nests clashed with the Winged Patriots, supporters

of continued political independence. Defeated and subject to violent harassment, Common Egg nests either renounced their wyrmfriend affiliations or went into exile in Dragon Pass. There they bonded with War Dragon commanders and seek to prove themselves as among the Empire's most fearsome special troops.

Despite their urging, the Guiding Council has yet to mount a full campaign to subjugate Rinliddi.

Kostadi

Kostadi is a great belt of rich farmland overshadowed by the howling steppe of the Hungry Plateau. Its people are humble agriculturalists with a history of bending to foreign ways. When the Dara Happans were strong,

they adopted Dara Happan traditions. They flirted with the Spolites and now embrace the solar version of the wyrmfriend cult. Undercover God Learners have to dig to find their true native traditions, which involve an unlikely billy-goat deity called Gerendetho. They fear the nearby Dara Happan city of Alkoth; when its hellgate opens to loose the dread god Shargash, it is always they who bear the first brunt of his indiscriminate killing.

Draconic Dara Happans administer the main Kostadi city, the sleepy and sprawling **Darlap**.

Sylila

Scourging winter winds rake the deeply forested hills and valleys of Sylila but religious controversy heats



its politics. This barbarian homeland houses both the fiercest critics and staunchest supporters of draconic Orlanthi faith. The Tarumathi, adherents of a mystical approach to storm worship, embrace and even improve EWF practices. Other tribes chafe under wyrmfriend dominance and covertly send their young men to join the Old Ways traditionalists.

Sylila encompasses the border regions of Aggar, a wild land where only crazy people and outlaws care to dwell, and Bilini, a barbarian buffer zone between civilised Peloria and the horrors of Dorastor.

Dorastor

Dorastor was a sprawling land and centre of civilisation during the later centuries of the First Age. The First Council moved there to establish a new capital, from which to launch the God Project. After the birth of Nysalor a long, long war made it a foul, churning wellspring of Chaos manifestations. The destruction of Gbaji suppressed Chaos throughout the world but Dorastor was awakened by God Learners and now is irreversibly tainted by it again. Its once-beautiful valleys and ruined cities comprise a maze of horrors, into which the heroes of neither Empire care to tread. Its broo armies send raiders into Bilini and eastern Ralios, trailed by a hopping, suppurating multitude of other obscene monsters.

Half a century ago, a horde of cursed Telmori wolf people migrated here from Telmoria.

Balazar

The rugged borderlands of Balazar serve as a battleground for battling members of the elder races. For centuries a human tribe called the Votanki have prospered by playing off the local trolls, elves and dwarfs against one another. In the eighth century their king made himself a vassal of the EWF, returning from Dragon Pass with carts laden with weapons and silver. They secured the allegiance of the elves by promising to aid them in their continual struggle against the trolls. Lately EWF priests have come to Balazar and the Elder Wilds demanding more worship energy. The aldryami, who do not worship as men do, rebelled against them. They now raid frequently from the Elder Wilds into Balazar. The Votanki stage regular reprisal attacks. Both sides employ adventuring bands to do their dirty work for them.

South of Balazar the heretic mostali community of Greatway lives in the mountains. Over the past half century the dwarfs of Greatway have had to withdraw from their battle against the local trolls to defend themselves against their own kind. The Greatway dwarfs are Openhandists, who believe in sharing the benefits of their knowledge with others. Although their artefacts are largely incompatible with the mystical mindset of the wyrmfriends, they persist in engaging them in dialogue. The authorities of the Nidan Decamony consider this treason and launched a war against them in 852. Their efforts failed but the Greatway mostali expect them to try again at any time. Adventurers providing them with intelligence on the movements and intentions of the Nidan Decamony can expect rewards of lore and technology.

Garsting

This land of gloomy forests and mist-hugged, rocky hills has become a stronghold for trolls, who fight the humans and dwarfs of Balazar and the elves of the Elder Wilds. Some tribes of eastern Garsting accept aid from the wyrmfriends to battle their own kind, protecting the Votanki barbarians and Greatway dwarfs. Their leader is Voxa Vol, a clever matriarch who wears a wooden mask. The mask's expression changes constantly but it is said that her own is frozen with paralysis. She justifies her allegiance by saying: 'Any hand that feeds is a good hand'.

Her main enemy is her sister, the matriarch Gatha Vak. Gatha Vak gives her warriors the blessing of Far Walking, which allows them to travel great distances without having to rest, provided they eat while they walk. Infuriated by Voxa Vol's betrayals, she spares what little wealth she can gather to pay mercenaries to hound her sister to her grave.

Elder Wilds

Constant warfare with other races have rendered the green (coniferous) elves of the Elder Wilds ruthless in battle and wary in peace. They allied with the EWF until they asked to be worshipped as gods. They drove the wyrmfriends from their forest and now battle their human, dwarf and troll allies in Balazar and Garsting. Their bloody-handed champion is Tolarin, the Pine That Bends In the Winds But Never Breaks. Spirits of the hardiest trees teach them how to resist weather magic and to toughen their skins against the stings of serpents.

Redlands

This region of windswept sandstone ridges gets its name from the rivers of blood spilled here over the centuries. As a borderland separating Pent and Peloria, it is the site of frequent battles between the fearsome raiders of the steppes and their civilised neighbours. War Dragon detachments patrol the region, mimicking their vanquished Pentan foes by keeping continually on the prowl, living out of tents. The Guiding Council seasons its earthshaker units by rotating them in and out of Pent. If they can survive Pent and hold the battlefield against Pentan horse nomads, they can find anyone, anywhere.

One commander, Orsarik Cloudviper, resists reassignment out of the Redlands. He knows the Pentans better than anyone and maintains close ties with their vanquished tribes who worship their great spirit, Kargzant, in the draconic manner. At his elbow stands Sarkosa Ripplewing, a cryptic, reserved wyrmfriend priestess who visits vassal tribes to ensure that they worship in the right way. The affair between Orsarik and Sarkosa is common knowledge in the Redlands but news of it never seems to make its way back to Dragon Pass.

Kethaela

Kethaela, a culturally diverse coastal region in south central Genertela, consists of five territories: volcanic Caladraland, matriarchal Esrolia, barbarian Hendrikiland, the Rightarm Isles archipelago and the trollish Shadow Plateau. From the dawn to the rise of the great Empires, all of it was ruled by Ezkankekko, an uz demigod, also known as the Only Old One. From his Obsidian Tower in the Shadowlands, he allowed the peoples under his domain to run their own affairs and worship as they pleased, so long as they paid him tribute. Imperial encroachment robbed him of his former possessions. The God Learners control the Rightarm Isles and Caladraland, along with some coastal outposts in Esrolia. They even attacked the Shadow Plateau itself. By this time, Ezkankekko had forged an alliance with the EWF, who defended it as if it were their own. They found common cause even though Hendrikiland rebelled. The wyrmfriends still pay him token tribute, as if he willingly ceded it to them.

Caladraland, Realm of Volcanoes

Amid a range of active volcanoes, one fiery massive and fiery peak surges further into the sky than any other. This is Aurelion, who is both mountain and god, and whose

Caladraland



breath scorches the air for miles around. Dedicated to him is an aboriginal people who live, fight and play on his enormous slopes. In Fire Season they conduct ritualised wars; the losers are fed to him as sacrifices. Aurelion can rain his molten contents on invaders but when the God Learners came to conquer the land, he stayed silent. They have reunited him with his twin sister, a goddess named Caladra from across the world. Enemies of the God Learners would kill to understand the ultimate import of this metaphysical scheme.

Esrolia, Land of Women

Esrolia reveres the Earth Pantheon. Its people recognise Imarja, the ruler of many other ancient female deities and treat Orlanth as merely one of a number of useful but subservient husbands. A council of queens, each heading a clan devoted to a different earth entity, rules their matriarchal society. Rich agricultural lands support a thriving urban economy. Several Esrolian clans partake of EWF practices, while others shun them. The queens claim to have consented to God Learner domination of their coastal settlements, including the scholarly centre of Nochet.



Hendrikiland

An archetypal Orlanthe territory, Hendrikiland has proven itself a refuge of Old Ways traditionalists. They have survived, free, by hiding and dodging. Its tribes recognise the authority of a king, who at present is Androfin the Defiant. Two years ago, he reinstated traditional worship. His warriors have courageously resisted forays into his domain by EWF forces, who still intend to knock him from the throne and force the locals to dedicate their worship energies to the wyrm. Adventurers unfriendly to the EWF will find a haven here, provided they are willing to fight back against imperial patrols.

EWF pressure on Hendrikiland may now be easing, as both old way Orlanthe and wyrmfriends unite to lay siege to the Clanking City. This truce can only be temporary.

God Forgot

The natives of this tide-buffed archipelago have been true atheists since before the Dawn, when their nameless god was slain. They replaced his worship with their own brand of Sorcery, devoted to the mastery of blind chance and contingency. The God Forgetters dismiss all other divine entities as useless pretenders, as victim to the whims of fate as they. Overrun by God Learner conquerors, they continue to run their famous casinos, profit from the construction of the Clanking City and await with quiet smugness the inevitable moment when fortune's wheel turns against their arrogant masters. They greet the arrival of enemies to besiege Zistorwal with equanimity, covertly supplying them (at inflated prices) and issuing sincere invitations to commiserate around the gaming table.

Esvularings

Andorfin acknowledges an uneasy truce with the Esvularings, a group of ancient Malkioni who have lived here since the Dawn. They subscribe to a local form of the henotheist heresy, which states that all of the pagan gods are creatures of Malkion and that one can still be a good Malkioni while deriving magic from Orlanth and his kin. They had been subjects of the God Forgothers but broke away when they saw the horror of the Clanking City being assembled.

The Clanking City

Zistorwal is an enormous edifice of twisted metal rising from an island in God Forgot. Its gleaming foundations extend past the island's footprint into the sea. Twisting ducts and vents climb up its surface like throbbing veins. The infernal hiss and clang of steam engines issues from its high walls. Inside dwells Zistor, a titanic, shrieking demigod combining the qualities of man and machine, and his sorcerous servants, the Zistorites. Among other projects, they manufacture magic weapons on a mass scale. Their foes, an unlikely alliance of old ways Orlanthi, wyrmfriend, troll and mostali, slowly encircle them in a sea borne siege.

Shadow Plateau

The troll demigod Ezkankekko rules this uz stronghold from his towering Obsidian Tower, more imposing and majestic than even that of Halikiv. Once the ruler of all Kethaela, he has been reduced in status to a client of the EWF. They defended the Shadowlands against God Learner attack in the first massive clash between the two powers, in 842. Ezkankekko rules over the plateau's clan matriarchs by his divine right as a son of the travelling deity Argan Argar. He supports the fight against the Clanking City but does what he can to ensure that the two Empires cripple each other, allowing him to reassert control over the region. Trollkin live on the glassy plateau, while uz dwell in the tunnels of the great Castleof Lead beneath it.

Dragon Pass

In the First Age, Dragon Pass was also known as Kerofinela. It takes this name from Mount Kero Fin, a snow-capped peak that rises both majestically and gently from the Dragonspine range, in the region's northwestern quadrant. Kero Fin is also a goddess and mother to

Orlanth. Her shadow is dimmer now, as this bowl of fertile land between two mountain ranges is now the primal core of the dragon Empire.

Dragon Pass is also a notch in the Dragonspine Hills, affording the easiest access to Peloria, to the north. These hills were once the dragon Sh'hakarzeel, who was slain here by Orlanth. The notch is the spot where he hit it. But try saying that these days in wyrmfriend territory and you'll find yourself up on sedition charges.

— Enlirath Casting, God Talker of the Brown Deer Clan

Dragon Pass is heavily populated as never before. EWF magic has turned already verdant hills into highly productive farmlands. These support ever-expanding cities of draconic mystery.

Draconic Agriculture

In normal years, weird magic sustains the food belt of Dragon Pass. Strange hybrid beasts, like sheep and cows but with odd reptilian features, browse the pastures of Dragon Pass, fattening themselves on quick-growing weeds and grasses. Massive plough oxen drive deep furrows into the fields. New grains, such as vell and kreet, sprout tenaciously, grow speedily and, once milled, bake up into fat, bulging loaves. Their seeds dissolve into slime when taken across the Empire's boundaries.

At the moment, though, the region trembles in the grip of an unending winter. Herd animals die of starvation. Hard caps of icy snow cover the fields. Ordinary people wait hungrily for their wyrmfriend priests to pull a mystical solution from the air – yet no relief comes.

Unlike the quickly-constructed dragon cities of Ormsgone, the original wyrmish cities of Dragon Pass generate themselves through a combination of ordinary building techniques and mystical self-propagation. They become living things, apparently empowered by the dragon Sh'hakarzeel that was turned into rock and

became a dead thing. Boundaries between categories blur. What one moment may seem to be a verbal abstraction can the next prove itself to be a physical manifestation, like a wall, pool or plaza.

The magically unaware find navigation of draconic cities confusing at best and literally maddening at worst. Their thresholds abound with drooling beggars, once sages and warriors of foreign lands, who arrogantly tried to wend their way into them without the necessary adjustment of psychic viewpoint. Those schooled in the wyrmfriend way, or at least accustomed to devoting their worship energy to the Great Dragon Project, can make their way through their winding streets easily enough. However, even they must accept their cities' tendency to shift boundaries and move about, as if in response to esoteric fluctuations from the higher realms. Their residents move about not by remembering spatial relationships between landmarks and destinations but by feeling the city's present state of meditative attunement.

Each city possesses two names, a draconic name which is difficult to render into normal, one-tongued speech and a name in the local Orlanthi language which is easier to pronounce.

The sagacious missionary does not attempt his work through persistence or obvious persuasion. He lets his subject develop his own insights, which will be all the stronger for their independent generation.

— Ervaling Scalemaker, Wyrmfriest Priest

The largest city, where newcomers and foreigners are sent, is **Orin Jistrel**, City of the Mouth. Its education centres welcome new cultists. Each missionary organisation staffs its own centres, and seeing to it that their converts go to the right processing station. Although such jostling is unseemly and metaphysically damaging, certain rival groups nonetheless attempt to poach one another's converts. Diplomats and traders who do not at present intend to convert to the wyrmfriend path are diverted to orientation stations, where they are provided with prayer beads and protective aphorisms allowing them to move, with experienced guidance, between authorised points in the various cities. Once they have achieved orientation,

converts and outsiders alike are directed to their ultimate destinations, whatever these may be. The city's draconic name is Darmislangastrofey, or 'Great Hidden Soul of Knowable Dragons'. Lesser cities include:

- ❑ **Banjarn**, City of the First Eye, perches on the south end of Liorn Island, at the headwaters of the Oslir River. Its School of Cyclic Rising educates outstanding recent converts and trains missionaries. Its Leaping Faculty practices spiritual inquiry through bodily contortion, and claims responsibility for several of the Empire's more recent animating insights. The Consulate of the Egg, an ovoid structure on by the city's sweeping gates, headquarters the Empire's diplomatic corps. The city's draconic name is Orfanmangostobos, or 'Draconic Learning for the Middle Education Classes of Spiritual Opulence'.
- ❑ **Nevelmarkan**, City of the Reaching Claw, takes new converts after their initial orientation in Orin Jistrel. The War Dragons maintain training centres here, where the Wyvern Corps and the Wyrms Riders drill and garrison. In draconic, it is Markanbandaranstos, 'Insightful Centre of Relaxation between Love and Hate'.
- ❑ **Salor**, City of the Dragon's Tongue, serves as the Empire's commercial hub. Local merchants trade among themselves and with caravans from foreign lands (who must stop at Orin Jistrel first). Visitors must take care not to stray into the Market of Illusion, which resembles the ordinary marketplace but is actually a living parable of mystic consciousness. Customers buy products for coins that cost them pieces of their souls and receive in return food that does not nourish, weapons which will not cut and luxuries that instil discomfort. Believers who turn the experience into insight receive back their soul parts in better condition than they left them but the spiritually undistinguished can be harmed forever. In

When my cousin Enarsen returned from Salor, he no longer took comfort in the touch of his wife or the laughter of his daughters. Six months later, he sawed off his right hand with a serrated blade. In a cool tone, blood soaking his bandages, he told me that it had 'gone snaky on him'.

— Jorudanthe Silverhand, Trader of Jans'town



Auld Wyrnish, the city is Kermalanaladeen, 'Process Barracks of the Right to Left Hand'.

- ☒ **Olorost**, City of the Third Eye, is the city of government and administration. The Guiding Council, when it deigns to convene in physical form, meets here. The Throne Hands convene in the spiralling Hall of Anonymity, which only they and their retinues can ever find and which preserves the illusion that it is the Guiding Council that directly manages the Empire's day-to-day affairs. Retired generals and heroes while away their contemplative days in magnificent piazzas, whose splendour is only visible to their peers. Others see austere structures of abiding humility. Known in Auld Wyrnish as Forstobordar, 'Magnificent Centre of High Luxury', Olorost is also nicknamed the Fort of the Outer Brain.

- ☒ **Orostan** provides second-stage education to the masses. Its ever-ringing chimes allow converts to separate themselves from their ordinary desires, burning away the need to possess, love or achieve grandeur. Unwary visitors may completely lose their ambition and goals here, without acquiring the mystical attunement sought by knowing students of the wyrmfriend path. Draconic speakers call the city Markarastanarbos, which means 'Insightful Centre of Emotional Suppression for Delight'. Outsiders find its nickname, the Cavernous Throat of the Soul, confusing, expecting it to consist of a series of underground passageways or at least a labyrinth of some sort.
- ☒ **Dragon's Eye**, the City Before All Else, is the original dragonewt city, from which all the other cities are bizarre humanoid elaborations. Missionaries claim

The Lordly Forests

More active members of the EWF's ruling class, including most Throne Hands, congregate in the deep woods known as the Lordly Forests to hunt the Beasts of Falsity. These monstrous animals combine six-legged insect body structures with mammalian features such as fur, warm-bloodedness and the capacity for live birth. The Lordly Forests contain only creatures that are dangerous or enjoyably challenging to hunt.

These beasts are emanations from misguided spiritual questing, brought into existence by the mystic's doubt, fear or imperfect understanding. Specially trained Discretion Squadrons quietly collect them throughout Dragon Pass' cities. These teams, armed with advanced mystical magic of refutation, disperse the physical essences of the misshapen or uninteresting emanations and gather the promisingly fierce ones to be released to the Lordly Forests.

The hunters take it as a point of sportsmanship that no one employs their mystical abilities of dissolution against the creatures. Instead they bring them down with only physical prowess and common magic. Trophies are proudly displayed at the hunt camp, then smuggled back to their lordly manors in Olorost (to show pride in accomplishment is a violation of the mystic ethic of non-attachment but the Throne Hands feel they deserve the fruits of this trivial indulgence).

Ambitious officials dream not of enlightenment but of admission to the Lordly Forests, where they can associate with those empowered to rise them to the authority's topmost pinnacles.



that is both more and less disorienting to the untutored visitor than the constructed cities. Although the meaning of this statement is left as an exercise for the reader, it can be said that the dimensions of the city are less forgiving to the human frame and that most of its inhabitants are dragonewts and intelligent dinosaurs. Even high-ranking human practitioners of the dragon way may be set upon and torn to pieces by its reptilian inhabitants, for infractions as obscure as they are undoubtedly grave. The wyrmish name for the city, Darfostalabos, literally translates as 'Great Leadership in Luxurious Education of the Mind'.

✘ **Banamabar**, Wall of the Inner Brain, is encircled by a serpentine, curving wall which doubles back in on itself and, in several places, intersects with other structures, so that both occupy the same point in physical space. Unschooled visitors receive violent shocks when they touch these points of intersection; they do not kill but can throw one into a multi-year sleep. The truly aware may decide whether they wish to interact with either wall or building. The choice of one over the other unpredictably forecloses certain choices in their future lives. In a vast double-domed building, the Banambarites manage a huge language

school. Initiates come here to undergo a ceremony in which their brains and tongues are split, enabling them to speak Auld Wyrnish. Depending on their course of study, this may happen early on in their spiritual development or near its climax. Afterwards, they may correctly pronounce the city's name as Orfandarobordar, which means 'Draconic Learning of Liberation of the Great Luxury'.

☒ **Pald**, City of the Snout's Tip, is mainly a centre for the redistribution of agricultural produce throughout the Empire. It is most famous for its Round Temple, a school for curious, respectful outsiders who wish to learn about dragons without joining the wyrmfriend religion. It is covered in iridescent blue ceramic tiles, and constructed in the shape of a snake eating its tail. They say that what you learn here depends on what door you go in. Its graduates never learn the city's true name: Ingyastrobos or 'Foreign Teachings Useful without Extravagance'.

☒ **Bevjarn**, City of the Second Eye, houses a school for advanced studies which looks like it is situated atop a hill during the day and at the bottom of a deep gully at night. Its meditative scholars explore their dreams, learning the so-called Walking Method, which allows them to access both their personal dreamlands and the ordinary senses of the waking world at the same time. Bevjarn also garrisons the bulk of EWF troops in the pass, from traditional infantry and cavalry to units augmented by dinosaurs and Rinkliddi warbirds valley. Its deep name is Ingforslanabordar, which translates to 'Foreigner Education Basic to Greatness'. This may seem puzzling, until one remembers that the Guiding Council perceives its thundering war legions as their most reliable tool for the education of incorrigibly stubborn foreigners.

Bevjarn's full of the right kind of wyrmfriend. Not the kind who looks through you and whispers nonsense like it's wisdom. No, I mean the kind whose guts are ready to bust, that's how much they yearn to loose their savage fury on the foes of our sweet Empire.

— Varankol the Mangler

The Wastelands

A vast and inhospitable swath of scrubland, plagued by equally by cold winds and scorching heat, occupies eastern central Genertela. Its comparatively liveable corner is called Prax and borders Kethaela and Dragon Pass. Prax exists under the indirect control of the EWF but the rest of the Wastelands have never been conquered.

Only the Animal Nomads and a few other odd species like the anthropomorphic baboon people, know how to survive in the Wastelands proper. They battle fiercely for control of its few oases. Notable tribes of the Wastelands include the Sable Riders, the Bison Riders, the Llama Riders, the Impala Riders, the inhuman Morokanth who herd degenerate humans, the Rhino Riders, the Zebra Riders, the Unicorn Riders, the Bolo Lizard Riders and the Ostrich People.

Pent

The grassy steppes of Pent wilt under the summer sun and quiver beneath the wintry blasts from the adjoining, trackless tundra on its northern boundary. Here ride the fearsome Pentan horse nomads, who worship the great sun spirit Kargzant. Their fortunes are presently on the wane, as fast-moving velociraptor units of the EWF War Dragons suppress their raiding efforts. Vanquished clans submit to wyrmfriend priests, who imbue Kargzant worship with serpentine rites to tax their worship energy. Nomads who join their Horse Dragon cult take part in the subjugation of rival tribes. War Dragon leaders condone raids into God Learner territory, prompting the Pentans to conduct their usual whirlwind attacks on Kralorela and southern Teshnos. They may also attack the animal nomads in the Wastelands, though not in Prax.

Pent's tribes are alliances of family lineages. Pentans follow their leaders fanatically and expect gruesome death if they betray them. However, when a leader dies, a tribe's lineages may either remain together or split apart to be absorbed by other tribes. Successful war leaders gather large tribes. Right now the tribes of Pent are weak and numerous. The most notable of them are:

☒ The **Otniza**, who are despised for submitting to the War Dragons and then aiding the foreigners against the other tribes. They are led by Lughteg Erdeneg,

The biggest War Dragon in Pent is Orsarik Cloudviper, who strikes from the back of a galloping armoured earthshaker beast. His lance can sink poisonous fangs into your flesh or entangle you and crush your bones.

— Ervaling Scalemaker, Wrymfriend Priest

known by the Otniza as Lughteg the Wise and by his enemies as Lughteg Windshifter. He is always seen in the company of his waddling boar, Trene, leading others to whisper that he is really a pig hsunchen.

- ☒ The **Burilgi**, the strongest of the unvanquished tribes. Their leader, Cherel Bayaris, launches daring raids against War Dragon encampments. He has sworn that before he takes his last breath he will hoist the head of Orsarik Cloudviper on a lance of gold.
- ☒ The **Qutu**, known as the Beseechers, for their habit of chanting to the Sun God, Kargzant, as they fire their arrows in battle. They have not submitted to the War Dragons but do not defy them either, confining their raiding to Kralorela. Their leader, Tolui Apisho, is famed as the richest Pentan. He owns a mail shirt made of golden links. He keeps this display piece in the encampment, wearing it only on ceremonial occasions.
- ☒ The **Ube**, who confine their raids to Teshnos. Their leader, Dosvene Dolamen, always wears the hat of the last person he slew. Accordingly, he is most often seen in a turban.

Technically, Dosvene Dolamen wears the hat of the last person he slew, who was wearing a hat. When we fought the Ube, I took off my helmet and he attacked my mates instead.

— Curek Runespear, Mercenary of Safelster

- ☒ The **Grupartha**, which in Pentan means ‘invented tribe’. Led by an apostate Malkioni sorcerer named Orathorn, they are half-foreigners who have been adopted by Pentan bloodlines. They war viciously

Pentan Nomad



against both War Dragons and other tribes who reject their legitimacy. Although their leading warriors appear to embrace the prospect of death, it frequently eludes them. Instead doom visits itself on their enemies, especially when the Grupartha are wildly outnumbered by them. Orathorn’s tribe allows adventuring groups to join them on raids, hoping they will permanently join their elite ranks.

- ☒ The **Bokesth**, guardians of the Hellcrack. This great fissure in the earth leads to the mythic Underworld. Monsters still crawl out of it from time to time. After their leader, Tegus Yeke, was wounded in the brain by a hellbeast, he submitted to the War Dragons. Now he sends them out to kill Underworld creatures, while he remains in his tent, wracked by fever dreams.

Kralorela

Wide, flat, well-irrigated plains fill Genertela’s eastern coast, feeding its large population. The land grows progressively hillier as one moves from coast to mountain. The Shan Shan mountains contain its splendour, protecting the lush land from the deprivations of the Wastes and Pent, to its west.

Emperor ShangHsa rearranged the traditional provincial boundaries of Kralorela in 783, 20 years after his ascension to power, as part of his bloody Purge of Antiquated Thinking. Governmental officials who resisted his changes were gathered together and buried alive. Others kept quiet at that time but fled north to the Kingdom of Ignorance as soon as they could.

Each of the provinces is named after a principle of Immanent Mastery. The renaming altered the personalities of the common people who dwell there, as was the plan. The provinces were divided so that each (except for the central province) would contain three major cities, though not all sectors are equally prosperous. Each is now ruled by a governor appointed by ShangHsa, who is also an advanced student of Immanent Mastery.

Continual Ascendancy

The people of Continual Ascendancy are strivers, never content with the depth of their service to the Empire. They compete with one another to fulfil the letter and spirit of ShangHsa's proclamations, and to inform on those of their neighbours who fail to measure up. The province's main cities are:

- ✧ **Chang Tsai**, the Cannibal City. Conquered over 40 years ago by a sadistic Chaos champion called the Ogre King, it is now the subject of a rapprochement between Emperor and interloper, brokered by God Learner sorcerers. The Ogre King acknowledges ShangHsa's primacy and the Emperor in turn allows his Legion of Red Bones to devour both those who flout his laws and they who die of natural causes. Prisoners rescued from the Red Bones Legion may legally escape their ordained punishment by crossing the provincial boundary into Truthful Exhalation. Those who try to escape by sea remain outlawed and must be bound over for death if caught elsewhere.

Ordinary people of this province seek forever to prove their harmony with the principle of Continual Ascendancy. The Red Bones Legion advances no such philosophy, save perhaps for Continual Aggression.

— Songling Hu, Annalist of the Temple of Immanence, Ting Shui

- ✧ **Hsin Yin**, City of Cleanliness, where people high and low compete to reflect their spiritual purity with a fanatical hatred for dirt, especially that which arises from, or attaches itself to, the human body. Frequent executions for sneezing, scratching or giving off an ill odour are woefully necessary, especially during the summer months.
- ✧ **Tzu Lung**, City of Beauty. Kralori mercenary bands earn generous stipends by escorting the coveted brides of Tzu Lung to destinations throughout the Empire. Naturally, they must arrive with purity intact. The provincial governor, Chi Ying, has dug a new palace for himself underground. By remaining beneath the earth, he claims he will evolve into a new Immanent state, freeing his people forever from hunger and want.

Green Contemplation

Residents of Green Contemplation seek harmony with nature, as represented by the brilliant emerald hills of the countryside, and the lush aldryami forests to the south. Certain unlucky monks, contemplating the Great Dragon, accidentally make themselves like the Great Tree. Depending on need, they are either converted to an ever-burning fuel or planted in the earth, to yield crops of nutritious nuts. Its cities are:

- ✧ **An Kwan Dai**, City of Persuasion, where anyone can be made to believe anything, at least for the space of a few hours. For enjoyment, nobles and merchants stroll through the lantern-lit Promenade of Folly, where, to everyone's delight, sages spout nonsensical yet rigorously constructed theories. None dares contradict the doctrines of ShangHsa, however. Certain sages can talk you into instantly rematerialising in particular locations elsewhere in Glorantha. Known sites of verbal transport include the Slontan city of Thanor and the Umathelan Psychic Zoo.
- ✧ **Guiching**, City of Palaces, where the richest Kralori live in unbelievable splendour, surrounded by neighbourhoods of stunning wretchedness. Rebels against ShangHsa covertly gather in its slums, yet also infect the minds of the pampered, salon-dwelling youth.
- ✧ **Shi Mai**, City of Permeability, where the monks feed themselves through the pores, bathing in nourishing liquids harvested from the God Plane, by their Jrusteli allies. Several God Learner colleges cooperate to

maintain a celestial sled, which permits easy launching into the eastern Other Side myths.

Hopeful Centrality

Here the mystic atmosphere requires one to maintain a sense of optimism and a certitude of future splendour. Dolorous thoughts may be spoken only in whispers. In the province of Hopeful Centrality, even rotten food tastes like the finest delicacy. Cities are:

- ☒ **Chi Ting**, City of Immanence, where the Emperor and his Dragon Masters dwell, in gold-scaled pagodas of ascending magnificence. A large western enclave surrounds their compound. The ambient contentedness of the province prevents people from expressing distaste for the foreigners, no matter how odd they smell. Those with government business to conduct must come here, where all the truly powerful officials are found. ShangHsa has recently conceived an interest in silkworms, and seeks to make them as compliant as his people.
- ☒ **Wan Hua**, City of Calligraphy, where writing was invented and the best brushes are made. Officials who cannot write beautifully fare poorly here, a rare Gloranthan city where nearly everyone is literate.
- ☒ **Ting Bu Dao**, Port of Willows. The Kralori fleet is built here, with the cooperation of aldryami craftsmen, who persuade the trees to form themselves into hulls. The wood of its living lumberyards fetches a dear price in any other nautical city in Glorantha but is always spoken for cannot be purchased, only stolen.
- ☒ **Ting Shui**, the Dragon's Court. At the centre of this hushed and reverent city lies a vast, shining courtyard whose paving stones are a curious mixture of metal and brick. There, at three separate occasions since the Dawn, the August Dragon has descended from the sky to grant audience to people. It dispenses justice to all who submit to an interview, granting relief from grievance to the wronged and devouring the unrighteous. The dragon's past appearances all occurred during Yanoor's reign. ShangHsa's friends and foes alike greet the prospect of a new



visitation, which is overdue, with a mixture of dread and anticipation. Will he affirm the rightness of the Immanent Path or scour all vestiges of it from the face of the earth?

Inner Retreat

The people of this province shun visitors, even other Kralori. They prefer speech to action and thought to speech. It is their duty to look inward and find further improvements to the Immanent Path. Cities are:

- ☒ **Laonan Tao**, the Lingering City, where any fast action fails and slowness wins in all endeavours. Its martial artists have perfected the Falling Petal fighting style, in which the combatant appears to

Dragonewt Colonies

Kralorela houses four dragonewt colonies: one west of Chi Ting, another to its northeast, another near Guiching and the largest in the forest of Fethlon. This last colony, known as Fanzai, is ruled by an Inhuman King.

Unlike the dragonewts of Dragon Pass and Ormsland, he and his fellow lizard men maintain the traditional separation between wyrm and humankind. As always, the humans of Kralorela maintain an affinity with draconic principles but do not presume to insert themselves into the affairs of dragonkin. The motto 'two paths to the same destination', seeks to explain ShangHsa's hands-off policy toward the dragonewts. A sentence of death awaits any Kralori who violates it.

The exiles of the old regime say that the dragonewts will one day rise to strike down accursed ShangHsa and Cham Dao for their blasphemy but so far they have shown no inclination to smite anyone.

be barely moving, even as he tosses his hapless opponent across the courtyard. Laonan Tao's trainers can improve any fighter's technique, even if he is a benighted westerner.

☒ **Tung Shui An**, City of Nourishment, where everyone prepares his own food. To eat food prepared by another without payment risks stomach cramps. Food cooked for payment is toxic. Restaurants exist as social locations, to which one brings packed meals. People wishing to speak to dead comrades can do so at the city's Pool of Resurrection. Ghosts of all cultures can be contacted there, except for observant Hrestoli Malkioni. Believers in reincarnation sometimes find themselves talking to living incarnations of their dead friends.

☒ **Sha Ming**, City of Refusal, where any question which can be answered in the negative will be.

Only those who die violently may be contacted at the Pool of Resurrection. It is frequented by warriors and adventurers, not by good and ordinary folk.

— Songling Hu

It houses the School of Withheld Affirmation, an Immanent Path offshoot which promises to grant the powers not of dragons but of gods themselves. ShangHsa grudgingly allows it, only because his mentor Gillam D'estau has declared it a fascinating avenue of exploration. Other God Learners are anxious to pry into its secrets, even before D'estau is ready to reveal them. Sha Ming is also known for its perennial lateness in paying taxes, a practice which long predates the reign of ShangHsa.

Respectful Welcome

The port cities of Respectful Welcome open their hearts to outsiders of the God Learner persuasion and are reservedly friendly to other foreigners. They follow the motto: 'Absorb what is best about others, so that it becomes yours'.

☒ **Hui Jang**, City of Seawomen, staffs entire trading vessels with female merchants. They drive hard bargains and fight off pirates with their Spinning Crane fighting style. Women adventurers wishing to be accepted in Kralori society perform favours for Spinning Crane nuns, winning the right to paint the Kralori character for 'Valour' on their foreheads.

☒ **Shiji Mori**, City of Perfection, celebrates its craftsmen, who produce simple objects notable for their flawlessness. The humbler the beauty they attain, the more valuable their objects become. Shiji Mori crafts fetch high prices wherever the wealthy seek luxury and status.

☒ **Yumo Dao**, City of Dreams, where one may place a bowl of rice wine under one's bed, using the intoxicating liquid as a medium to record one's perambulations through the lands of dream. Professional dream-seekers lace fine wines with vistas of unearthly wonder and offer them for sale. These infusions are valued throughout Glorantha.

Truthful Exhalation

In Truthful Exhalation those who speak honestly of their love for Immanent Mastery feel full and light, as if the purest air animates their lungs. Those who despicably lie and say that it is a false or dangerous doctrine or that ShangHsa is less than benevolent, find themselves perpetually winded and short of breath. They sicken easily and must often take to their beds for days at a time. To avoid this effect, secret critics of the regime migrate either to other provinces or to the Kingdom of Ignorance. Officials whose loyalty of questionable loyalty are sent

Kraloreti Emissary of ShangHsa



here as a test; those who fall ill are demoted or, in the case of those of lofty rank, executed.

Conversely, only those certain of their affection for the Emperor and his doctrine tend to move here. Its cities, all of whom have lately taken a melancholy, deserted quality, are as follows:

- ☒ **Fuknama**, City of Radiant Perfection, whose official and priestly classes are not permitted to use any object which is cracked, blemished, chipped or improperly manufactured. Rivals undermine one another by hiring stealthy operatives to place damaged or ill-made items in their enemies' display cabinets. The ceramic tile murals of Fuknama's Wall District are so stunningly beautiful that hardened men weep when forced to depart from them.
- ☒ **Lokow**, City of Rest, whose chief industry is sleep. Wealthy Kralori come from across the Empire to make use of its luxurious clay sleeping chambers. They climb into these vessels, which are then mortared shut and lowered into pits in the earth. As dirt is piled over their encompassing clay beds, they fall into a surpassingly deep slumber. They remain unconscious for anywhere from a few days to months, depending on their need for spiritual

regeneration. When they wake up, they ring a silver bell, alerting workmen on the surface to dig them up. They emerge with all emotional and physical fatigue scrubbed away from them, fresh and ready to face the world again. Horned guardians of animate ceramic material guard the slumber mounds, to prevent kidnappings. Lokow's stone buildings were made from the eggshell that hatched the immortal Luy Wi, a son of Allgiver. No dust ever settles on them.

- ☒ **Hsiang Wan**, City of Taboos, where each social class is forbidden to touch a common element or object. Officials may not touch their feet or shoes directly to outdoor ground and must be carried from place to place in palanquins, even when moving only a few paces across a courtyard. Merchants and artisans may not allow liquids to touch their lips, and must drink through straws. Commoners born on the city's east side may not touch clay vessels, where those from the west are forbidden glass containers. Each despises the other as unworthy. The origin goddess, She of the All Encompassing Before, was born here; some say the taboos are a tribute to her, while others say they keep monsters from pouring down out of the mountains.

The drinking straws of Hsiang Wan's wealthiest merchants are made from gold, ivory or jade and are delicately carved or salted with jewels. Certain thieves of my acquaintance specialise in their acquisition and sale.

— Songling Hu

Kuchawn, City of Exemption

When ShangHsa marched on the imperial palace in 768, to call the Emperor Yanoor to account, the officials of Kuchawn were the first city governors to announce support for him. As a reward, Kuchawn was granted special status upon ShangHsa's ascension to the throne. It is independent of provincial rule and thus to the odd ambient magics that affect each province. It pays taxes only to the Emperor and need not support a provincial bureaucracy. The Emperor's summer palace lies outside the city nestled in the rolling Shan Shan foothills, and subject to a cooling wind. Despite his seasonal proximity, secret societies opposed to his rule gather here, to covertly plot his downfall.

Kuchawn's tallest structure is its observatory, which boasts the world's longest uninterrupted set of celestial recordings.

Churn Durel, The Kingdom of Ignorance

Throughout Kralorelan history the ruling class of that great Empire has looked with loathing and revulsion on Churn Durel, the Kingdom of Ignorance. Now, having fled their own once-perfect nation, they languish in exile, in this most hated of places. Its natives are the Ignorants, who wear tanned hides and avoid metal implements, money, abstract thought and literacy. They worship Zerel Fan, god of ignorance. This four-faced solar entity is now mostly known in his aspect as the Black Sun, thanks to the efforts of the local uz, who used to rule over the humans here. Churn Durel is a craggy hill country covered in twisted forests, many of them overgrown by fungus.

Shan Shan Mountains

A range of sharp-edged mountains, the Shan Shan, overlooks Kralorela, taunting its rulers, who have never conquered it. The eastern hsunchen tribes dwell here, feeding on its sparse vegetation and preying on one another. They include:

- ☒ The peaceful **Damali Deer People**, who attempt to bring harmony and mutual prosperity to their fellow hsunchen.
- ☒ The burly **Lo-Fak Yak People**, who, like the wasteland nomads, subsist on their herds and supplement their larders with raids.
- ☒ The warlike **Hsa Tiger People**, who attack all non-hsunchen humans on sight and their beastfolk neighbours, as hunger warrants.
- ☒ The aloof, predatory **Qa-Ying Eagle People**, who live in the northern mountains and raid into Pent.
- ☒ The comparatively complaisant **Ri-Si Woodpecker People**, who disclaim raiding in favour of hunting, trapping and foraging.
- ☒ The elusive **Chen-Ga Snow Leopard People**, who live so high in the mountains that many Kralori think they can fly.

Verenela

The region of Verenela encompasses the peninsula of Teshnos and a network of islands, most prominently Trowjang and Melib. Sofali turtle people dwell on many of the smaller islands.

Fethlon

The dense forest region of Fethlon, ruled by aldryami and dragonewts, lies between Kralorela and Teshnos. Its elves have traditionally been hostile to the Kralori and friendly to the Teshnans. The God Learners make a sustained effort to win over the Fethloni elves. Delegations from Seshnela, headed by nobles who have grown up with the elves of that nation's Jorestel Forest, patiently state and restate the case for an alliance. They have even brought the elves of Jorestel along with them on occasion.

Their peace efforts have led to war within rival aldryami tribes, who have split over the wisdom of an alliance. The brown elves of the north are more favourably disposed to the God Learners than the yellow elves of the south and interior, but the battle-lines in this internal feud shift unpredictably. Leader of the anti-Jrusteli forces is Daranor, an imperious bamboo elf. Her main foe is Tanelos, whose vegetable traits are those of an ever-spreading Tree of Heaven. As spilled sap soaks the Fethlon forest floor, the elves of Seshnela petition Emperor Ilotos to stop what his delegations started. Power and influence awaits the God Learner in good standing who can put an end to the Leaf Wars of Fethlon.

Teshnos

The fire mystics of Teshnos build ornate cities on the savanna and carve settlements from sweltering jungles. The land's major port, **Dombain**, has been significantly expanded by the God Learners, who lease it from King Kasinslian in a favourable deal executed under duress. They also occupy the small city of Gio, a place of religious contention, where adherents of various mystic paths debate to prove their surpassing sublimity. The Jrusteli built Tigonidar, city of cages, as a prison colony, mostly for heretics and enemies from elsewhere. The forest of Fethlon is a yellow elf redoubt; its plant people favour the Teshnans but dislike the Jrusteli interlopers.

Trowjang

Under the rainforest canopies of this tropical isle dwell the Marazi, a tribe of civilised human women, and their mates, a race of red-skinned demigods called the Tolati, after their father, Tolat. Practicing a mystic tradition imparted to them on the breath of their ruddy god-husbands, the women oversee a city-state famous for its

music, food, poetry and decorative art. The demigods dwell in seclusion in anthill-shaped clay shrines, visited only by their many wives, who act as their intermediaries to the wider world. God Learner visitors are tolerated, so that they may be schooled in the error of their ways. The Marani disdain the men and keep any female foreigners far away from the clay shrine-homes where their husbands dwell.

Melib

A generation after their initial push into the seas, the God Learners established a major merchant-naval base on this pleasant tropical island and have dominated it ever since. Called **Sivestarm**, it is known as the City of False Symmetry, as every building on its eastern side is an imperfect reverse copy of a counterpart on the west side. Two native ethnic groups, the striving, yam-eating Gachi and uneasy, piratical Ashurtans, compete for the favour of their Jrusteli masters. The God Learners favour the latter group for their boundless servility, rewarding them with work in their trading fleet.

Vithela (The Eastern Isles)

Dozens of disparate mini-civilisations flourish in the eastern islands of Vithela, which once was a mighty continent unto itself, before a pre-Time disaster sundered it into countless pieces. Worship here is mystical in nature.

Most peoples of Vithela range across a number of islands. Major groups of interest to adventurers include the following.

Hanfarador Islands

The Confederation of Hanfarador fights a constant battle against the demonic inhabitants of a nearby island chain, the Arandinni. They worship Vith and Laraloori and pay homage to monarchs who favour the female line in determining succession. Upon their arrival in Vithela, the Jrusteli allied with them, but now extract trade concessions by threatening to withdraw support needed against the Arandinni. The Hanfaradori offer bounties for the heads (where applicable) of their Aradinnini enemies. Valuable prizes can be won each year at its spice competition, in which eaters compete to survive various pepper dishes of tongue-stripping intensity.

Arandinni Islands

The scaled, horned race of demon men called the Andin are found throughout Vithela but enjoy political unity in this eponymous island chain. What they lack in speed and wit they make up for in size, strength and determination. They worship Vith and the dark mother, Gebkeran. Jrusteli renegades, led by the outlaw sorcerer Varsard, are busily teaching them war Sorcery, for which they display a native talent. Their leader, Beg Usta, has announced his intention to eat the soul of Malkion and excrete it in the form of a cloak-fastener.

Arch-Duchy of Haragala

The once-wretched mercenaries of the Haragalan Islands have prospered by attaching themselves thoroughly to the Jrusteli. Their leaders voluntarily made themselves vassals of the Emperor and even adopted an outwardly Malkioni religious practice – albeit one in which Malkion’s sayings suspiciously resemble those of Kabalt, the Liberating Bolt. They work with God Learner sorcerers to perfect the art of magical ship-making. Haragalans intervene in other Vithelan wars by auctioning their sleek navy to the highest bidder. Their main city, **Chartam**, boasts a glowing cathedral dome that illuminates the night sky for miles around.

Mokato

Jeweled Mokato is all that remains of a ruined city of the gods. Its people dwell below crystalline spires of divine manufacture which have hardened into resplendent peaks. They proudly bask in the direct rule of their infallible god, Hobimarong. A staff of governor-priests called stewards carry out his flawless edicts.

Hobimarong declared war on the Waertagi even before the God Learners did. They deployed a wondrous weapon against the green-skinned seafarers: a fleet of ships seeming composed of pure magical essence, without physical components. Despite these so-called essence ships, few of Mokato’s neighbours expected them to prevail against the sailors of the dragon ships. The Waertagi destroyed a Mokatan ally, the people of the Tamanjary islands, and were about to turn their might on Mokato when the Jrusteli destroyed their fleet.

Hobimarong decreed this event as further proof of his omniscience and decreed that his people should rebuff the God Learners overtures. They quickly moved to establish

naval hegemony over southeastern Vithela, declaring this the god's will.

Their essence ships patrol southeastern Vithela, taking tribute from the populations of its islands. Mokato styles this new territory as the East Isles Empire.

Clashes between the bronze, magic-powered leviathan ships of the God Learners and the blinding essence vessels of the Mokatans have been rare and inconclusive. The most dramatic contest, between the God Learner ship *Xemela* and the Mokatan glowsloop *Amsurelas* resulted in the sinking of both vessels, with great loss of life on both sides. Since that battle, a hundred years ago, confrontations between the two sides have centred on brinksmanship over battle.

When the God Learners were on their way here, Hobimarong's stewards produced a poetic account of his origins called The Mokatiad, intended strictly for prying foreign eyes. It is an entertaining but entirely fictitious account, designed to lead the God Learners into traps in the Other Side.

— Yragrair, Knot-Maker of Mokato

Reasons to come here: The God Learners have offered a legendarily fat bounty for the secrets of essence vessel construction. Mokatans also hire adventurers to deliver plans of God Learner ships.

Homago

Upon arrival in Vithela, the Jrusteli performed a gesture of goodwill by imposing a blockade on the cannibals of Homago. Though unfailingly polite, the Homagoans eat distant relatives – that is, other East Islanders – in sacred rites dedicated to their god, Saliligor the Devourer. After a century of active repression, the God Learners authorised the resumption of Saliligor worship, in exchange for a map to his home on the God Plane. Since then the Homagoans have resumed their human hunting but only against targets authorised by the ranking officer of the island's naval installation. Fear of the Homagoan Eating Battalion quells rebellious tendencies among Vithelans of all persuasions.

Keet Man-Bird



Keetslands

This island chain serves as primary nesting site to the anthropomorphic waterfowl known as the keets, who are also resident as minorities elsewhere in Vithela. They include not only humanoid ducks but also other man-birds including albatross, penguins and puffins. Considered ill-tempered by others, the keets insist that it was their efforts during the shattering of Vithela that preserved life in the East Isles, and that everyone else is ungrateful and forgetful. Many Keets are afflicted by wanderlust and often join adventuring bands in order to prove themselves and get away from their overcrowded nesting sites. They defend themselves aggressively but would rather migrate to other islands as permanent residents than take them by force.

Vormain

The mysterious island of Vormain tantalises the God Learners, as it once did the Kralori and Teshnans, with its famous impenetrability. To keep others away from their home soil, the Vormaino conquered the surrounding isles, calling them the Hinter Islands. One may occasionally encounter a true Vormaino officer, who, having polluted himself through contact with outsiders, faces eternal self-exile. Adventurers are far more likely to meet up with their vicious proxies, the Ratuki shark hsunchen. Jrusteli scholars offer generous bounties to anyone who can come back with a description of the island, or, better yet, information on their guiding myths.

Pamaltela

The southern continent of Pamaltela has just shrugged off its ties to the Middle Sea Empire. Even the kingdom of Umathela, made up of culturally Jrusteli settlers, has opted for autonomy.

The human kingdom of Fonrit occupies the north central coast of the island, flanked on either side by vast aldryami forests. The centre of the continent is a grassless plain. Climate is subtropical to tropical.

Fonrit

The humans of Fonrit result from interbreeding between a blue-skinned slave race and their ancient conquerors. Each of its 17 cities was once ruled by the warring descendants of the original invader, Gargangordos. When the Jrusteli came, they aided some of the cities against the others, then completed their hegemony by taking over from the exhausted victors as well. They imposed a regime of tolerance and peace on the Fonritans (who call themselves Torvavs), who had previously lived in a climate of fear and degradation. They pulled down temples of the oppressive slave-holding god, Ompalam. Eight years ago the Torvavs rose up, demanding their yokes and lashes back. They drove the surprised and complacent God Learners out and are now embarked on a bloody purge of all Jrusteli influence. Foreigners face extreme danger. Only the bravest of adventurers dare venture into the maelstrom of sectarian slaughter left by the power vacuum following the Jrusteli defeat.

The Northern Mountains

A spectacular mountain chain, broken into three fragments, cuts laterally across the continent, placing a barrier between the forests and civilisations of the coast and the idyllic interior.

The western range is the Tormo, occupied by the Jakaraki uz. These are the descendants of the wise uz who did not battle Pamalt, and therefore retain the strength of original trolls. They pity the Moorgarki uz, weakened trolls of the rest of the continent, but keep them at arm's length.

God Learner explorers set up a network of outposts in the eastern range, the Palarkri. Here their naturalists found entire catalogues of bizarre entities and animals, extinct elsewhere in the world.

Mostali heretics occupy the central Mari Mountains. Isolated from their kin in Genertela and Slon, they have created an orthodoxy of their own, called the Revelation of the Missing Part. Missingartists, influenced by Pamaltela's pervasive shamanic worship, attribute the failure of previous World Machine repair efforts to a crucial error of omission. Before it can be restored to proper working order, they must find and reinstall a crucial component – Mostal's spirit. Their prophet, Skathdarajanagna, has set out a plan of study to tackle this vexing problem, for which centuries of cold rationalism has left his people ill-prepared. The Missingartists create whirring, steaming devices called Ghost Engines to entrap, study, dissect and replicate the howling spirits of the peaks and snowcaps. Once Skathdarajanagna and colleagues learn to fully recreate a destroyed spirit, they will attempt to make one from scratch. When that goal is accomplished, they will move on to their ultimate aim: fabricating a new spirit exactly matching the one inside Mostal when he was destroyed.

The Interior

Agimori peoples occupy the various regions of the continent's interior. In the central Jolar plain, the Arbennan people celebrate the victory of their great hero, Hon Hoolbiktu, against the Six-Legged Empire established by the God Learners to rule them. He struggles to establish a new golden age for his people. A spirit guide warned him of the madness that sudden victory can bring. He strives to avoid this doom by spreading a doctrine of non-violence. Hon Hoolbiktu also campaigns to bring the fruits of the Arbennan way to the passive Doraddi and desperate Tarint.

The Undiscovered Heresy

The Mari Mountain mostali are so isolated from their fellows that the depths of their heresy has yet to be discovered by the mainline dwarfs of Slon or the Nidan Decamony. God Learner scholars are in contact with them, finding their inquiries promising, if misguidedly mechanistic. In his zeal for success, Skathdarajanagna has set aside his aloofness to exchange data with the human wizards. Trimeiros, a presumptuous dean of Umathela's New Hrestolket University, has taken it upon himself to act as liaison to the Missingartists and to conceal their existence from mostali elsewhere. He periodically hires adventurers to track down and eliminate nosy interlopers and Missingartist defectors.

Elf Coasts

The aldryami kingdom of Errinoru girds itself against a God Learner attempt to retake Pamaltela. It is named after its great and ancient hero and ruler, who back in the 8th Century sacked God Learner cities halfway across the world. After that he journeyed to the Underworld and came back here, powerful and strange. A rare seafaring elf, he oversees the construction of a fleet of vessels with giant leaves for sails. Each hull is carved from the wood of a massive oyup-nut, grown specifically for the purpose.

Errinoru aims to keep the God Learners out of Pamaltela forever but for the moment seems willing to consider an alliance with the breakaway cities of Umathela. His delegations also maintain contacts with Hon Hoolbiktu to coordinate future efforts against the hated Empire of tree-cutters.

Errinoru says that when his work in the world is done, he will have cuffs taken from his limbs and these will be planted in the richest soil, each to grow a new kind of healing vine.

— Jijimue, Yellow Elf of Errinoru

The new friendship between man and plant-man does not extend to the various weird remnant cultures who infest the elf coasts. These include the fearful, superstitious Thinobutans and the malign, psychically potent Gorgers. The aldryami hope to gain Umathelan consent for a mass migration of these people to the Kingdom of Learning.

Umathela, Kingdom of Learning

Jrusteli settlers, who came here as early as 580, carved the seven shining cities of Umathela from the surrounding aldryami jungles. The cities became centres of learning and Sorcery, their populations determined to take the early governmental experiments of the Jrusteli cities one step further. They enacted a meritocracy, in which all citizens capable of passing a comprehensive academic test were enfranchised to elect their city lords. The lords then select one of their number to serve as Consul for all Umathela. Deans, tutors and professors are disproportionately represented in the Umathelan leadership rolls.

As the Middle Sea Empire grew increasingly powerful – and Seshnegi in character – its Emperors attempted

to erode and eventually replace the enfranchisement system. Ilotos' attempt, shortly after his coronation, to personally appoint new dukes sparked a rebellion. This left Umathela as a nation of God Learners politically opposed to their own Empire, because they think it has betrayed its original principles.

The current Consul, Cerori D'korrein, makes uneasy peace with King Goranerno and the Agimori hero Hon Hoolbiktu, knowing that one day their interests will diverge. His people must cut trees to survive and they still want access to the myths of the interior.

In the meantime, Umathela has become a meeting place for independent-minded Malkioni sorcerers who want to operate without interference from a faraway Emperor. Joining them are employable outlaws and troublemakers of all imaginable affiliations.

Cities of Umathela

The seven great God Learner cities of Umathela are:

- ☒ **Arstranwal**, a city on a high crag. Its tallest point houses the Soul Net Observatory, a domed structure created in imitation of the sky, dedicated to the plumbing of its secrets. Glowing nets of magical power drift out from the top of the dome to ensnare sylphs and other insubstantial beings of the air.
- ☒ **Korreinwal**, a port city. Favourable currents make it the easiest city to reach from Jrustela. Its university is a small, select institution specialising in the relationship between theist magic and political power. Korreinwal has elected more Consuls than any two other cities combined. Its tea houses buzz with trade opportunities and political gossip.
- ☒ **New Hrestolket**, celebrated for its university, which graduates more God Learner HeroQuesters per year than any other. Umathelans from all the other cities fill its inns and taverns during the annual summertime Festival of Disaffirmation. Drinking and merriment accompany this great debating contest, in which entrants vie to prove their rhetorical powers by convincingly denying obvious and incontrovertible facts.
- ☒ **Noarn**, known for its advanced sewage system, dug for the God Learners by cooperative Mari Mountain mostali. A tribe of loyal Ludoch guard its exit points to the sea, rewarded by a potion granting them ecstatic visions of their gods.

- ❑ **Tarstargawal**, a smoky city surrounded by felled forests. Zistorite factories clank through the night, turning out magic weapons and replica mostali artefacts. The city's leaders resisted the rebellion against the Empire and were forcibly deposed by the Consul, with the consent of the other cities. They live here under house arrest. When their loyalist supporters grow restive, Consul Cerori D'korrein threatens to turn them over to the elves, who wish to put them on trial for their crimes against the forest.
- ❑ **Varanswal**, whose university last won the Imperial Cup, awarded every four years by the God Learner Alliance for advances in mythic understanding. A team led by the university's dean, Anaut Cernos, invented a fictitious deity, Jograpur, and imported a clan of Tarint Agimori to their city. Slowly they converted these hapless subjects to the worship of Jograpur and even succeeded in creating a flicker of its existence in the God Plane. Cernos believes that, through the sincere beliefs of his pet clan, he can infuse Jograpur with even greater power. He looks forward to the day when he personally controls a tame deity, who will grant him magic and perform missions against for him in the Otherworld.
- ❑ **Yoranday**, home to the world-famous Psychic Zoo, a menagerie of Otherworld creatures kept in their unearthly habitats by a powerful system of sorcerous wards. The elf king of Errinoru has allegedly offered a reward to any adventuring band able to penetrate the zoo's defences and disable the wards.

The Oceans

Travel from one place of adventure to the next requires a sea journey. Glorantha's dangerous waters may yield as much trouble and excitement as the Player Characters will find at their various destinations.

Magasta's Pool

Over 200 kilometres wide at its mouth, the Cosmic Whirlpool swirls inexorably at the centre of the world, surrounded by the Homeward Ocean. Sailors unfortunate enough to find themselves on this stretch of whirling, glassine sea can see it tilt downward toward the pool. Once caught in its unrelenting current, only God Learner vessels equipped with magic-driven engines are powerful enough to reverse themselves and escape. All other ships caught in it are doomed. Sailors have one chance to save themselves, by leaping to safety on Nowhere Island. This deceptively large patch of barren ground, suspended eternally in the churning pool, sits on the boundary

between Life and Death. Castaways dwell there, forlorn and ageless, coping glumly with their own boredom and each other. At the bottom of the whirlpool lies the mythic depths of the ocean beyond the ocean, inhabited only by marine gods and great spirits.

God Learner vessels have on occasion rescued important explorers from Nowhere Island, though several have been destroyed in the attempt. Over the past decades, the flat stone seafaring vessels of the mostali have been spotted nearby, groaning under the weight of a massive, disassembled iron edifice.

Western Waters

Temperatures ranging from cool to frigid characterise the waters of western Glorantha.

Hudaro Ocean

A fleet of icebergs sails this chill sea, posing a perennial hazard to all but the nimblest sailing vessels. Oouri merfolk call it home. Vigilantly patrolled by the implacable war fleet of Brithos, the Hudaro remains off-limits even to the God Learners.

There are two kinds of triolini, or merfolk: the mammalian cetoi and the fishy piscoi. These subdivide further into other types. Cetoi include the quasi-humanoid ludoch and the walrus-like oouri. Notable piscoi are the sinister malasp and the enormous, spiny ysabbau.

— *Ombast Slope-Treader, Pedant of New Frowal*

Banche Sea

The currents of this gelid sea send icebergs and freezing currents past the northern tip of Jrustela. Full of life, it teems with crustaceans, ice fish, and walrus. Enormous sea birds, including the marine dodo and giant puffin, squawk on its rocky islands. The Middle Sea fleet patrols it against incursions from Brithini and Waertagi ships.

Netiomi Sea

Tiny spears of rock pepper the sea immediately surrounding the isle of Brithos. These are the last shards of Danmalastan, the mythic continent shattered by prehistoric wars, of which Brithos is the only viable

Fate of the Waertagi

The Waertagi are a human race whose pale complexions display a tint of blue or green. Some exhibit webbed toes or fingers, or vestigial gill-slits along the throat. They grow weak if forced to spend more than a few days inland. They ruled the seas, riding vast ships carved from the bodies of dragons, from prehistory to the early eighth century. Then the God Learners destroyed their fleet, scattering them into wretched exile. Jrusteli imprison or kill them whenever they can.

Most fled to Brithos, to the arms of their perennial allies. Like the Brithini, they are old-style Malkioni sorcerers who adhere fervently to a restrictive caste structure. Some take refuge in Sog City, in Fronela.

Others stubbornly ply the seas on rickety vessels, overcoming the limits of their leaky makeshift ships via their innate nautical skill. One day, they tell themselves, they will rise again, consigning their Jrusteli oppressors to history's ash-heap.

remnant. The Neliomi is a dark and limpid sea, as clear and cold as the heart of Zzabur. The ever-growing Brithini navy, augmented by vengeful Waertagi seamen, bars all foreign shipping, especially that of the Middle Sea Empire.

Vadeli Islands

South of Brithos and west of Seshnela lurk the tiny Vadeli Islands, home to the remnants of an evil Empire from before the dawn of time. Once a tripartite race with red and blue-skinned members, the present-day Vadeli are all brown-skinned survivors of the lowest, most numerous caste. Fierce opponents of Malkion and his people, the Vadeli launched a war that destroyed the primal continent of Danmalastan. They were finally defeated by the Brithini; those few who weren't killed were exiled to this stark and windswept island cluster. Now they fear not only the Brithini but also God Learner sorcerers who seek to imprison and interrogate them to learn the secrets of early prehistory. No tears are shed for their wretched state. To maintain their immortality, they reproduce by incest and then dine on their offspring.

Kereneth Sea

The shallow, turbulent waters of the Kereneth are known as the Brown Sea, both because of its high concentration

of particulate plant life, and its visible, craggy bottom, filled by lifeless, detritus-covered reefs. Weedy sargassos cover vast swathes of its surface, sheltering an ecosystem of bizarre and frequently predatory marine creatures.

Suermela Sea

Seeping between the southern landmasses of Slon and Pamaltela is the Sea of Worms. Both of its shores are marshy and brackish. Its muddy floor births swarms of leeches, some of them gigantic, which attach themselves to whales, ichthyosaurs, krakens and passing vessels. The Swermela also provides a home to mammoth crocodiles and the diminutive, malign so-called merfolk known as the Dwerulan.

I can confidently announce that the Dwerulan aren't Triolini at all, but are aquatic aldryami, who I have dubbed the blue elfs. You may examine them in my capture tank but take care – they bite.

— Ombast Slope-Treader, Pedant of New Frowal

Keniryan Sea

This frigid body of water, also called the White Sea, slices down into Peloria. A subglacial waterway connects it to Glorantha's other seas. A few hardy Ouri merfolk swim between its ice floes, living amid narwhals, seals and snow-snakes.

Eastern Waters

The warm waters of Glorantha move into the world from the east.

Sshorg Sea

On the floor of this warm and turbulent sea the gods Endaralath and Ermanthiver eternally battle, sending periodic tsunamis coursing toward either Vithela or Teshnos and Kralorela. Sailors fear its notorious doom currents, which can drag a ship instantly below apparently placid waters. The remnants of five drowned Empires lie below it, prompting God Learner expeditions to explore it, equipped with water-breathing spells.

Teleos

The mountainous jungle island of Teleos rises from the middle of the Sshorg Sea. Six tribes of humans live here,

Slon

This obscure land mass, tucked in the world's southwest corner, houses the world's largest population of mostali. They live beneath the surface of Slon, on its snout-like northern peninsula. Over their heads, on its cracked hardpan ground, toil a population of deluded human slaves who believe themselves to be mostali – or, at least, capable of becoming such. Centuries of environmental degradation have rendered the land completely infertile, forcing the humans to subsist on a canned nutrient sludge.

A high wall, its interior salted with traps and ballista emplacements, separates the mostali portion of Slon from its wild southlands. These are populated by fearsome dinosaurs and the benighted tribesmen who worship them as gods. Giants used to ride the largest of these beasts into war against the mostali of Slon but these have not been seen since early in the Dawn Age.

each with a skin colour of a different, bright rainbow hue. Although they share the same culture, gods and customs, each tribe regards all of the others with loudly expressed revulsion. Each provides a different narrative explaining the fundamental uncleanness of the others. As vehement as their prejudices might be, they are always expressed peacefully. Teleosans only marry within their skin colour. Their children, however, can be of any colour, a distressing fact that the islanders deal with through annual child swaps, where their progeny are traded for adoptees of the correct complexion.

God Learner scholars find the Teleosans maddeningly illogical. Studies of their mythways are infrequently launched and invariably abandoned.

Omisso Sea

Ludoch, the most human-like of the Triolini merfolk, populate the tepid coastal waters of eastern Pamaltela. Their leader, the once-quiescent King Kuchoswen, was rescued from slow poisoning by a poultice provided by the militant elves of Errinoru. Now infused with new youth and zeal, he supports their cause by sabotaging ships from the Middle Sea Empire. Kuchoswen professes a blithe inability to distinguish the vessels of the Empire proper from those of Errinoru's allies, the breakaway Umathelan Coalition.

Dashomo Sea

Placid and full of fish, the Dashomo teems with cruel malasp merfolk. The God Learners secured their obedience, if not their fealty, by holding hostage H'hjarich, their deity of communication. Now they are torn between imperial loyalists and Umathelan rebels, both of whom have demonstrated the ability to torture H'hjarich in his God Plane prison.

Kahar Sea

The Kahar Sea, north of Vithela and east of Kralorela, roils with a thick, billowing fog, rendering its waters navigable only by the most skilled of sailors. Sailors call it the Sea of Fog. The zabdamar merfolk, a curious species of manatee-faced Triolini, disport both beneath the waves and in the fog itself, controlling the movements of the dangerous mists. God Learner vessels test a variety of magics against their moveable mists, with variable success.

Only the zabdamar males exhibit bestial features. Their women are surpassingly lovely and supremely devoted to the men, despite their snout-snouted ugliness.

— Ombast Slope-Treader, Pedant of New Frowal

Togaro Ocean

The most blistering of Glorantha's oceans is the Togaro, also known as the Ocean of Terror. Storms of steam, capable of scalding a man to the bone, whirl across its surface. Patches of its waters may suddenly boil without warning. Sailors fear to fall overboard, lest they be devoured by the ocean's main predator, an armoured, carnivorous fish.

Ludoch mermen dwell in its outer reaches, while their vicious ysabbau counterparts live at its roiling core.

The Edges Of the World

Because Glorantha is flat, the edges of its maps do not meet. Instead they give way to mythic borderlands where humans dare not tread. These are accessible only by superhuman effort.

Usaððau of the Togaro Ocean



Altinela, Beyond the Glaciers

To the north lies Altinela, a frosty land of Chaos-fighting demigods, known only through visions and dreams. No human has ever been there and returned to report on it. On the slopes of frosty mountains a legion of primal uz, unaffected by the Gbaji curse, conduct hardscabble warfare against rushing ice demon hordes. These peaks eventually part to expose a land beyond the glaciers, dominated by the cyclopean Palace of Valind, home of the winter god. Made of a vibrant, unearthly stone that repels cold, it is home to the Altinae, beautiful demigods of a blond, pale aspect. Their eternal duty is to ward off incursions of Chaos from a rent in the world's fabric, which exists even further north than Valind's palace.

Theyala, Land of Dawn

Only a handful of Vithelan mystics have gone past the eastern isles, navigating the treacherous Ferezed Deep to arrive at Theyala, the Land of Dawn. The Dawnsate sits on a dappled hill atop its golden city of morning light. This is the gate through which the sun is released every morning to begin its warming trek across the sky. Its people are faceless, golden-skinned immortals who constantly sing, to keep the universe alive.

Sakum, the Burning Regions

South of Pamaltela, past 4,000 kilometres of the scorching Nargan Desert, a place of punishing heat, poison clouds and uniquely horrible Chaos creatures, a few legendary shamans have reached Sakum, the Burning Regions. They remained there for only a few hours before their protective spirit shields burned away and they were forced to retreat back to the Nargan. There, most of them died. But when they got reincarnated, a few of them remembered a bit about Sakum, which is all that is known.

It is a land of living fire, where only those plants descended from gods can survive. Its quasi-divine people, the Agitani, are the people who, when Pamalt gave them the choice between living forever and making children, chose the former.

They guard the sacred, blackened Enmal

Mountains, through which one must plunge to find Um, home of the Pamaltelan gods.

Luathela, Land of Sunset

Far to the west rise the blood-red gates of sunset, where the sun returns each night, to temporarily close its blinding eye.

Non-Malkioni regard the Sunset Gate as identical to the portal to the Underworld, the land of death. Its violet-skinned inhabitants, the immortal Luathans, serve as escorts to the dead and irredeemably hostile enemies to any living souls foolish enough to venture here, past its legions of slicing and rending monsters. Five metres tall, with beautiful visages, the Luathans sing rather than speak and respond to questioning with flashing, threatening grimaces.

Hrestoli Malkioni know the Sunset Gate as the Black Pit of Introspection, an eternal spiritual trap which good worshippers bypass, going to Solace.

We will not truly deserve the name 'God Learners' until we have explored and mapped the edges of the world, cataloguing its inhabitants and learning the real, absolute truths behind the monomyth.

— Spolorfal the Arranger, Dean of Pythos University

Supposedly the demigod peoples of the world's edges never set their perfect feet in the dirty realms of Man. If so, why did a Cachi trade skiff spot a Luathan aboard a Brifhini galleon last year?

— Toranalt the Abider, Sage of the Segurane Knowledge Market

Whatever you believe, the Sunset Gate is unquestionably the exit from this world. Few living beings make it to Luatha and remain so. To come back from the Underworld is to forever join the ranks of legend, as a great hero like Harmast or Errinoru.

Otherworldly Realms

Attached to the world but not part of it are three Otherworlds: the Visible Sky, Heaven and the Realms Below. Each contains a portion of the Hero Plane, the magical reality to which mortals can travel to take part in the great myths. If you know the right magic, you can physically travel from the ends of the earth to one of these Hero Planes. That said, it is almost always easier to move into the Hero Plane from your comparatively safe and comfortable home region, by means of magic.

The Visible Sky

The Visible Sky, or Sky Dome, consists of the field of constellations and heavenly bodies one can see with the naked eye, by looking upward. It is synonymous with the aloof sky god Dayzatar, who is Yelm's brother. On this dome, which was largely blackened during the God's War, celestial representations of other theist entities appear. The sun, associated with a great many gods, of course travels across the dome each day.

A circle of stars associated with the Storm Gods is called Orlanth's Ring. It is of odd colours and moves erratically, spiralling across the sky to disappear at the central star, then reappear later halfway up the dome and start its journey again.

Most stars and constellations, including the central solar entities of Polaris, Arraz and Ourania, remain fixed in place. A few unruly barbarian stars, including Pamalt's Spear and Valind's Glacier, move about as the seasons progress. The first rises in the south in summer, while the latter ascends in the north in winter.

Higher Realms

Other, higher realities exist which are not attached to the material world at all. You can get there only through profound magic, or in some cases, the even more profound act of dying.

Solace, the eternal joyful resting place of Hrestoli-based Malkionism, lies outside the system of Otherworlds. Once a soul is in Solace, it remains there. No amount of HeroQuesting allows you to penetrate it in search of your dear departed mother. Saints go there, too. When Malkioni derive power from saints, they are not contacting them directly but deriving power from contemplating their deeds or handling the relics they have left behind.

Mystic high realms are as numerous as competing eastern philosophies. Many Vithelans pursue the realm of Dura Pradur, which is not a realm at all but a simultaneous and harmonious combination of being and non-being.

Chaos is not a realm at all, higher or lower, but something outside of creation that occasionally bursts in to poison and disrupt it. If you were completely mad, you could presumably enter it through the tear in reality north of Altinela.

The Visible Sky



The Sky World

The Sky World, or Heaven, houses the pure celestial gods. Here they appear in incarnate form, as opposed to their astrological reflections in the Sky Dome. Dayzatar rules this place. Yelm, tainted by nightly descent into the Underworld, may not come here.

The Realms Below

Beneath the world is the earth, and beneath that, the Underworld. First there is the mundane crust of the world, through which mostali miners dig. Then you come to the Underearth, where you can interact with the earthen gods and demigods. Below this is the Underworld, which is

comprised of many realms, meaning different things to various peoples. There are gloomy realms of the dead, where the souls of shamans, theists and mystics dwell eternally or await transport to their final destinations, ranging from earthly reincarnation to an eternal bliss of mystic oneness. Some realms of the dead are hells, where the souls of transgressors suffer unending torture for misdeeds committed in life.

This used to be Wonderhome, the original realm of the uz. Its unity and harmony were destroyed when the sun was knocked from its perch in the sky, down into the realms below, at the beginning of the Storm Age. It now exists only in the deepest parts.

CAMPAIGN SETTING: SAFELSTER, CITIES OF INTRIGUE

Safelster occupies the urbanised lowland of Ralios, in the northern continent of Genertela. Once home to the grim and mysterious Stygian Empire, Ralios is now a possession of the God Learner Empire. For many years it was ruled by dukes who, as vassals of the Emperor, owed revenues and soldiers to the imperial treasury. The region still reels from a war waged by the Emperor against his dukes and viscounts, who he accused of rebellion. Now imperial functionaries administer the area directly, fuelling local resentment.

Though the God Learners lay claim to all of Ralios, large portions of it remain ungovernable. Outlaws and troublemakers able to defend their own rights of person and property can always make a life for themselves in these places, no matter how out of favour they might be with the putative authorities.

Safelster's ambitious, enterprising people remember a time when they ruled Ralios. After the brooding hero Arkat slew the evil Chaos god Gbaji in 450, he retired to this area to establish a government. Everyone else remembers it as the terrifying Stygian Empire but locals fondly recall it as the Autarchy.

They claim that Arkat was unjustly maligned. According to Safelsteri, the harsh measures he and his successors sometimes undertook against enemies and traitorous subjects were justified, if occasionally unpleasant in detail. The history books of the victorious Seshnegi, who destroyed the dwindling vestiges of the Autarchy over a century and a half ago, dwell on the atrocities and leave out the justice and prosperity Arkat fostered.

River traffic from Seshnela connects Safelster to the heart of the Empire. Adventurers, mercenaries, and sellswords rank among its primary exports. Here all manner of wild and violent people first become acclimated to the

Other places you go, the name 'Arkat' is an expletive, like you yell out when you stub your toe. Say it here and you get a look of furtive reverence.

— Curek Runespear, Mercenary of Safelster

demands of God Learner civilisation. As Emperor Ilotos becomes increasingly concerned about sedition, useful troublemakers have departed upriver for the looser, freer atmosphere of Safelster. Within its many hiring halls, God Learner recruiters seek out professional magicians and warriors for hire, for missions near and far.

The city of Kustria is detailed extensively from page 136 onwards and is an ideal starting point for adventurers. The other cities of Safelster are as follows.

Azilos

A town rife with internal tensions, Azilos has always adapted its uniquely vicious politics to the rising and falling of the Empires around it. Its two noble families, active before the Dawn, are the Rangran and Tzurkal clans. Each perpetually tries to destroy the other, but neither ever quite succeed.

From an early age, every citizen of Azilos knows which of the two sides he is on. Few maintain neutrality for long. The Rangran crest bears a rampant boar; the Tzurkal, a stag. Azilosians, even those so lowly that they will never get to glance at a member of either family, refer to themselves as either boars or stags. Even the most innocuous of social occasions can erupt into rioting between the two ancestral factions. Boars and stags are segregated by neighbourhood, making it easier to see each other as enemies in need of a good beating.

The Rangran and Tzurkal families have feuded since before there was Death. A local legend says they made Death to fight each other, and that the gods only got hold of it afterwards.

— Gurek Runespear, Mercenary of Safelster

Dalection Tzurkal was Viscount of Azilos until the Emperor's campaign against the dukes of Ralios. He has now been supplanted by clueless Seshnegi officials, in consultation with Torfain Rangran. Torfain runs rings around his supposed bosses and now really runs the city. He uses the officials to oppress the hated stags.

Stags and boars agree on only one thing: that Arkat was unquestionably a hero, a good knight fighting for the Malkioni people. A chapel in his honour celebrates him as St. Arkat. Some Azilosians pray to him for martial magic.

Reasons to come here: Both families routinely hire adventurers to conduct covert missions against their rival.

Belstos

Suranos Silvermask, universally acknowledged as the best of Ilotos' new officials in Ralios, has been assigned the region's most difficult task.

The city of Belstos, otherwise a sleepy city serving as a transshipment point for grain and cattle, has long been a hotbed of Chaos heresy. Any of its podgy, bland-faced merchants could be hiding his true nature as a member of the Guild of Chaos Monks.

These secretive cultists follow the sinister creed of the Black Saint, Bor, who claimed it was not only possible, but holy, to manipulate the forces of Chaos with god-given Sorcery. Initiates into the Borist cult learn a variant of the dread

sorcerous technique of Tapping. They work a spell that allegedly shrives individuals of any lingering Chaos taint that may have attached itself to their souls. The Borists then take this Chaos energy into their own bodies, gaining a range of horrible yet concealable mutations. Rumour has it that they also create independent Chaos creatures, which they command with charm spells.

Standard Tapping, in which the sorcerer takes life energy from others to power his spells, is bad enough. The so-called 'shriving' of the Chaos monks compounds the crime with gross recklessness and blasphemy.

— Suranos Silvermask, Interim Administrator of Belstos

They claim to be good Malkioni, using the powers of Chaos for the greater glory of the Invisible God. Other monotheists have always shunned and persecuted them. The Autarchy tried to root them out, to no avail. Now it is the God Learners' turn to try to extirpate this infamously tenacious and resilient cult. The deposed viscount did

Suspension of the Counties

Prior to the Emperor's war on his own dukes and viscounts, Safelster was divided into a number of counties. Each generally encompassed the natural trade and farm area around one of the major cities. Ilotos has temporarily suspended the county system, pending a top-to-bottom accounting of the area. His officials have begun the heroic task of cataloguing all lands, businesses and revenue-generating entities in Safelster. When this is concluded, imperial courtiers will redraw the boundaries and appoint new viscounts. No one doubts that the courtiers themselves will be the viscounts and that the county lines will be redrawn to the advantage of the most influential of them.

This confusion redounds to the great benefit of troublemakers and outlaws. Each viscount used to maintain a staff of sheriffs to maintain order within his country boundaries. Imperial officials keep a more or less tight reign on the cities but exert little authority outside their walls. Banditry has reached epidemic proportions. Some of the worst offenders are former sheriffs fired by the transitional regime.

Adventurers can gain from this either by taking advantage of lawlessness to perform their own shady deeds unencumbered by the law. More honest sorts can earn the coin of hard-pressed farmers by signing on for anti-bandit duty.

Chaos Monk of Belstos



a good job of suppressing them, exposing several cells and putting their members to death. Unfortunately the Ducal Wars allowed them breathing space and in the past five years the cult has staged a comeback. Nearly a dozen of Suranos' anti-Borist operatives have been slain or assassinated. Ordinary residents of Belstos are afraid to walk its streets at night. Broo and scorpion men have been spotted in the city's decaying slum districts.

The countryside surrounding Belstos is one of the few areas in the Second Age where Chaos creatures are still commonly encountered. Members of cults and orders with anti-Chaos powers make pilgrimages here to test themselves against the foul spawn of Wakboth.

Reasons to come here: Suranos is hiring replacements for his lost anti-cultist squadrons. Honest merchants seek protection from both Borist extortionists and garden variety criminals attracted by the city's current lawlessness.

Ordinary residents of Belstos? There is no such thing. By choosing to live here, one voluntarily accepts the covert rule of a pifiless Chaos cult. My naïve successor refuses to see this.

— Aribert D'belstos, Ex-Viscount

Col

Known recently as the City of Exiles, Col sits in a lush green valley, its slopes covered by vineyards. Over a dozen orders of monks and nuns work the wineries, producing vintages coveted throughout the Empire. The same cloistered holy folk are also responsible for a variety of stunningly fine cheeses. Col's chief industry is food export. Its markets and food stalls make it a point of pilgrimage for wealthy gourmands from all around the world. The city's inns and taverns cater to them extravagantly. Clack-pinching adventurers often complain about the inflated prices.

Defeated military officers, disgraced courtiers and exiled nobles fill the monasteries of Col. By withdrawing to a cloistered existence, they signal their surrender to the Emperor, avoiding execution or assassination. Dozens of leaders toppled from power during the Ducal Wars now seek the contemplative life in its various abbeys. However, not all of them are sincerely retired from affairs of state. In quiet taverns they sit in their monks' robes, sipping fine wine, swapping gossip and bitterly scheming for Ilotos' comeuppance.

Notables of Col include the openly vituperative Aribert D'belstos, the deposed viscount of that city. Two years ago he founded a new monastic order, named after St. Prades, who was martyred after speaking out against the corruption of the Autarchy. The Knights of St. Prades have unsbtly established themselves as a government in exile.

Col's beleaguered administrator is Guarand the Ebullient, a jowly, gregarious cousin of the Emperor who wishes only to be left alone to enjoy his cheese and wine.

Reasons to come here: Indiscreet exiles may be targeted for kidnapping or assassination. Adventurers may be hired on either side of the equation, as executioners or bodyguards.



Anyone seeking political intelligence will find it in Col. The hard part is sorting truths from fictions.

Dangk

A rambling, low-slung city situated on the southern edge of a vast marshland, Dangk has become a hotbed of God Learner activity and religious fervour. Dangk is about 25 kilometres away from the mysterious ruin of Hrelar Amali. This ancient holy place served as a centre of theist worship early in the First Age, before Malkionism arrived in Ralios. Its vast, half-toppled stones glow at night and take on a curious shadowy resonance during the day.

A God Learner study group, led by the breathlessly enthusiastic Bruyant Openwing, has established control of Hrelar Amali. They have covering the ruins with scaffolding supporting a bewildering array of sorcerous measuring devices. Every few months Openwing hints at a stunning announcement which never quite comes.

For as long as anyone can remember, theist worshippers from all around the region have flocked to Hrelar Amali to perform sacrifices and rituals. They stay in Dangk on

their way to the site, filling local coffers. Flocking to minister to them is a missionary sect led by the caustic and uncompromising Fluilea Gencourt. His thunder and brimstone style alienates more theists than it converts, but Fluilea's supporters are fervent. They are quick to arrange a demonstration whenever his prerogatives are threatened.

The interim administrator is a chronic temporiser called Esclafr, nicknamed the Crumbler. He works hard to balance the competing demands of Bruyant, who wishes to study the interaction of worshipper and holy site, and Fluilea, who wants the blasphemous ancient temple sealed off to unauthorised personnel.

Reasons to come here: EWF and mostali operatives have placed bounties on the God Learner equipment at Hrelar Amali. Adventurers earn more if they bring back pieces relatively intact, but sabotage has its rewards, too.

Theist worshippers sometimes gain instant POW refreshes or useful visions at the site. Rumour has it that special runes materialise here on a regular basis, which are only usable by theists.

Drom

Drom is a stronghold of the Ancient Beast Society, an animist cult whose members worship their inner totem animals. They are the urbanised descendants of hsunchen tribes. Their religious ceremonies take place over many long hours, in which the celebrants drum and dance themselves into a state of ecstatic acceptance. As the ritual reaches a feverish intensity, the totem spirits inhabit the bodies of the most fortunate participants.

We of the Beast Society are sometimes called 'Loons', because we begin our ceremonies with an invocation to Grandfather Loon. Though meant as an insult, we refuse to take it as such.

— Arna Footstomper, Rug Merchant

Malkioni authorities have outlawed all activities associated with the Beast Society. An offshoot of the Rightness Army, the Force for Decency, patrols the city on holy nights. When they sniff out a ceremony in the making, they burst in to attack the celebrants with truncheons. This draconian suppression arouses the chagrin of God Learner sorcerers, who would like to get inside the cult and rob it of any useful secrets it might be harbouring.

Drom also serves as a gathering point for caravans trading with Maniria. Although the two Empires are at war, considerable trade still occurs between them, to the immense profit of Drom's mercantile class.

Drom's interim administrator is Adelgon the Filter, so named for his ability to remember only facts which please him. Real power rests where the money is, in the hands of Brarden the Exacting. As head of the Drom Mercantile League and the city's wealthiest man, he works to shield the Ancient Beast Society from the Decency extremists. Everyone assumes he is himself a Loon, although he has never been observed at their ceremonies.

The statue of a forgotten horse-headed deity looms over Drom's front gate. It protects the city, slaying attackers with its staring eyes.

Reasons to come here: Adventurers headed for the EWF can make money along the way by hiring themselves out as caravan guards. Opportunities for strong-arm work abound on both sides of the conflict between the Ancient Beast Society and the Force for Decency. Infiltrators of the Society can expect generous compensation from local God Learners.

Estali

Rule over the city of Estali requires possession of an ancient implement called the Purple Sceptre of Serpent Sentence. Its owner has traditionally been styled an Arch-Duke. The artefact was wrested from the dying fingers of its previous owner during the Ducal Wars. The soldier who grabbed it, an uneducated sergeant named Hardguin, has since been unable to release it from his grip. The city has chosen him as its replacement ruler. Hardguin, a gruff man of simple pleasures, found himself elevated against his will to the position of interim administrator. He has turned this city, which derives its wealth from the fertile farming lands of the Estal River, into a haven for warriors, mercenaries and hard-drinking layabouts. Every season climaxes with a joust or arena free-for-all, with lucrative prizes for the winners and copious free healing for the vanquished. Garbage may rot fragrantly in the streets and women may not be safe to walk Estali's laneways without a bodyguard, but it has become second only to Kustria as a magnet for recruiters of mercenaries and adventurers.

Hardguin broke my nose once but I forgive him, on account of he changed the Estali anthem to a rude drinking song.

— Curek Runespear, Mercenary of Safelsjer

Beneath the smell of ale-breath that wafts ceaselessly through Estali is an animal musk. Like Drom, Estali is also a stronghold of the Ancient Beast Society.

Reasons to come here: Estali's taverns overflow with shady characters offering missions to adventurers. Ne'er-do-wells who get into trouble elsewhere can luxuriate in Estali's notoriously lax law enforcement. Its frequent tournaments offer opportunities for quick riches and easy glory.

Galin

This city is famed as the birthplace of the ancient horse god of the same name. Though not now the recipient of open theist worship, Galin was the region's important human deity at the Dawn and for a century and a half afterwards. First Council missionaries largely redirected theist worship to Orlanth. The local Orlanthi identify Galin as a brother to their sun god, Elmal, who is also patron to horses.

The city that bears his name is still renowned for the quality of its horse breeding operations. Breeders and country folk pay homage to him as St. Galin, who lent his horse to Malkion the Seer, so that the prophet could spread his word more quickly to those who needed it. The ultra-devout wrinkle their noses at this, smacking as it does of henotheism. The compromise seems to work, however, and the superior horses Galin's magic brings are a linchpin of the municipal economy.

Unusually, the city's interim administrator is a local, the horse breeding magnate Lant Lantiet. Hale and jolly, he is cleverer than he lets on. Like any businessman, he wants peace and prosperity to rule Ralios. He maintains discreet contacts with the Orlanthi tribes of Lankst, who buy horses from him. A relentlessly practical man, he has little use for either crazed religionists or interfering sorcerers.

Reasons to come here: Orlanthi who need to visit a city come here, where they can go about their business unmolested. Adventurers can sign on to transport expensive horses through danger-infested wilderness to their final purchasers.

Jorgablan

Among Safelster's youngest cities is Jorgablan, constructed by the God Learners as a safe haven during their initial foray into the region. As their power became well entrenched, sects of St. Hwaros moved many of their operations to the area's unofficial capital, Kustria. Still, the libraries and laboratories of Jorgablan are well-equipped and its magical accoutrement shops are second to none. Street merchants, many of them of Seshnegi extraction, sell Zistorite magic items at market stalls.

The city's rigorously grid layout reveals it as a recent city, designed from the ground up. The roofs of Jorgablan are of gleaming bronze, brass and copper. Weird towers rise improbably from narrow bases. Arrays of sorcerous measuring instruments jut out from them like bristles. A continual fluting noise, created by the famous Chime Machine of Xenja Xorl, echoes throughout the city, exerting a calming effect on the populace.

If only every Malkioni city was as open and tolerant as Jorgablan, I might reconsider my decision to worship the Invisible God without ever darkening the doors of a cathedral.

— Ermes Guillor, Translator for Hire, Jorgablan

Ralians seeking a member of a distant or obscure culture know that Jorgablan is the place to go. Its largely immigrant population includes miniature communities representing every place the Middle Sea Empire has touched. Among the large Jrusteli and Seshnegi population huddle communities of Kralori, Teshnans, Vithelans and Agimori. There is even a duck enclave. While representatives of the elder races are rare, an entire quarter of the city, Webtown, crawls with timinits.

For an embodiment of Jorgablanese cosmopolitanism, look no further than the city's interim administrator, a Kralori convert to Malkionism called Zhang Mei. As if in compensation for his outsider status, he works too hard to please, attempting to satisfy all factions in any dispute.

Reasons to come here: In Jorgablan, Player Characters from oddball cultures can find advice, comradeship, community worship, even marriage prospects, among their own kind.

Marost

The city of Marost was founded by Arkat in celebration of his military victories. 100 swords, taken from creature he had slain in battle, were built into this walls. Their magic ensures that the city can never be taken by siege.

Marost's martial magic stands it in good stead as a garrison town. Legions of the Middle Sea Empire rest and resupply here in their ongoing battle with EWF forces over the northern Ormsland region.

Unlike Estali, this is no place for stray adventurers. Marost's interim administrator is the commandant of local forces, General Hugueli. This grim-faced disciplinarian brooks no trouble in his city. Conveniently-placed gibbets on the city walls attest to his low tolerance for disorder and thuggery. Lucky adventurers who disobey his tightly enforced laws may merely be pressed into the army. More likely, they will be sentenced to the gibbet. Legend has it that Hugueli's battlefield Sorcery is strengthened every time he executes a deserving wrongdoer.

Those merchants willing to live under curfew and extreme rules of personal conduct make a lucrative living supplying the troops with food, weapons and sundry necessities.

Reasons to come here: Dedicated, well-disciplined agents of the God Learner Empire will find Marost a safe, if dour, base of operations.

Others will likely want to move in and out of the city quickly, as their missions dictate. EWF or theist war bands may conduct acts of sabotage or espionage. Freelance adventurers could be hired for rescue missions, to spirit away prisoners destined for Hugueli's gibbet.

Partan

The ring of hammers and chisels marks the ongoing construction of Safelster's newest city, located near the shores of Lake Helby, between Drom and Galin. Constructed under the patronage of the Emperor's devout mother, Partan exists as a spiritual way station. Although its primary mission is the conversion of the Beast Society people, missionaries of all stripes gather and pray here. They fan out through all of Ralios, seeking converts among the Orlanthi. One brave sect, the Order of St. Berisse, even attempts to bring the true faith to the trolls of Halikiv.

Cathedrals, chapels and churches dominate the cityscape of Partan. Its structures are

predominantly in the old manner of Seshnegi architecture. They eschew the metallic sails, towers and panes of High God Learner design for the simple purity of monumental dark stone. Saints and gargoyles drip from Partan's vaults and domes. When sins are committed in their presence, the saints weep and the gargoyles scream.

The nominal authority in Partan is Rengère Engoss, a reclusive fellow who steals time from his duties as interim administrator to complete his scholarly thesis on the roots of the Theyalan calendar. It is the imposing abbess Guiva Wimplefold who really dictates policy in Partan. Her partner in holiness is the Abbess Berthoma Glassfold, who happens to be her half-sister. Guiva focuses her missionary efforts on trolls, while Berthoma takes care of the hsunchen descendants.

Partan



St. Berisse was martyred in 741, when she attempted to bring the word of the Abiding Book to the troll king, Cohando of Guhan. They sent her bones home in a box.

— *Guiva Wimplefold, Abbess of Our Lady of Forbearance, Partan*

Our lorefalkers remember this incident: First, uz do not have kings. Second, the robed woman's delicate flavour was much remarked upon, which is why we did her the big honour of returning the precious marrow to her kin.

— *Zoga Llogr, Argan Argar Trader of Guhan*

Reasons to come here: Appalled locals hire adventurers to recover their sons and daughters when they fall prey to excessive religious fervour and join a cloistered order in Partan.

Syran

The quiet city of Syran is famed for its glassblowing. It exports its products to the world. Syran's well-fed burghers detest any disturbance. The municipal motto is: 'Don't break the glass'. It is illegal here to shout, curse or to 'engage in behaviour not conducive to trade'. These edicts are enforced by the infamous Syranese spirits. These are the ghosts of past criminals, executed for breaking the peace. Denied Solace, they engage in lethal spirit combat against wrongdoers. The spirits believe they will attain Solace after performing an undetermined number of righteous slayings. They are kept in beautiful, irregularly-shaped glass globes which dangle from light posts of burnished jade, imported from Kralorela.

Reasons to come here: Only Syranese glassblowers can maintain the degree of material

perfection required for certain alchemical containers and implements. Sorcerers come here to personally oversee their creation. Even dwarfs come here to buy choice pieces of Syranese glass, which is a compliment indeed. If you want to chat with a mostali without risking a trip to dwarfish home turf, Syran is the place.

Tarasdal

Tarasdal is called the Seshnegi City. Two generations ago, a devastating plague struck the craftsmen and farmers of the city and surrounding countryside. Entire families were wiped out.

The viscount, an absentee landlord, repopulated his land with eager immigrants from Seshnela, poaching the best serfs from the domains of his aristocratic brothers. Now one in seven Tarasdalites is of Seshnegi extraction. As is typical of immigrants, they display an exaggerated loyalty to their former homeland. Their memories of the place have been burnished by distance and nostalgia. They cultivate a pronounced Seshnegi accent, celebrate

Arkat: Slain Devil or Martyred Hero?

400 years after his apotheosis, Arkat's fame in Safelster burns as bright as ever. Adventurers active here may be quizzed, subtly or otherwise, on their attitudes toward this enigmatic anti-hero. Their answers may determine whether they are welcomed as friends or suddenly ambushed in a dark alley. Attitudes toward Arkat fall into the following camps:

- ☒ **Arkat the Devil:** Arkat betrayed everyone he set out to help, eventually becoming the monster he promised to destroy. He is Arkat Gbaji, the Chaos Deceiver. Proof of this lies in the secret tombs of the Borist Monks, who derive Chaos magic from him.
- ☒ **Arkat the Just King:** Arkat's great achievement was the founding of the Autarchy, a government that made Ralios strong for 250 years. He was as wise and just as our Seshnegi overlords are greedy and overreaching. Those who would lead us to freedom can prove it by receiving the magic of kingship from him.
- ☒ **Arkat the Knight:** Arkat was a righteous knight, fighting in the name of the Invisible God and under the banner of the Seshnegi king. To follow in his footsteps is neither disloyal nor disreputable. We can prove this by praying to him as a saint and receiving combat magic.
- ☒ **Arkat the Martyr:** Arkat was dismembered and nailed to a scaffold, yet came back to life. The bad things said about him now are a second mortification, which we must redeem through suffering. We can prove this because when we scourge ourselves, we gain helping magic.
- ☒ **Arkat the Troll:** Arkat betrayed humanity by becoming a troll. I can prove this by showing you the uz shrines to him in Guhan. They pray to him and receive the magic of battlefield trickery.

The plague was sent against us by the wyrmfriends. Some say it was the elves, who used disease against us in Pamalfela. They're wrong. I can still feel the dragon stink in the gnarled bones of my roffen knees.

— Bodo Bent-back, Serf of Old Tarasdal

Seshnegi holidays and pugnaciously defend the Emperor against insult, no matter how slight.

Prominent citizens vie for status by forming militias to fight in defence of the Emperor and the Seshnegi values he represents. Ironically, they are composed primarily of mercenaries whose devotion is to gold, not Seshnela or its Emperor. These war bands spend the bulk of their time bullying the minority of ethnic Ralian plague survivors within the city. On occasion, the adventurers who staff these militias take the initiative to launch a dramatic raid against real or perceived opponents of Seshnelan purity.

The city's unusual personal loyalty to the Emperor made it an ideal base of operation for Ilotos' forces during the Ducal Wars. Its loyalist viscount, the ostentatiously athletic Turgaros Postbreaker, led several decisive battles under the imperial banner. The nobles he helped to depose despise him as a traitor. He has survived four separate assassination attempts since the end of the Ducal Wars.

Reasons to come here: Wealthy patrons hire adventurers to lead their militias on raids against exiles, heretics and other symbolic enemies of the Empire. Turgaros Postbreaker and his knights all have prices on their heads, payable by the exiles of Col.

Tinaros

In this large riverside city, noted for its docks and shipping facilities, the name of Arkat is still revered. Each Sacred Time an enormous pageant is staged here. Its procession includes a parade through city streets and a waterborne masque held on a series of barges. At the climax of festivities, a passion play is enacted, recreating the ascension of Arkat to the God Plane in the year 500. Attempts by Malkioni zealots to suppress the ceremony have resulted in widespread rioting. Interim

administrator Gais the Unmoving, a sharp-minded politician of staggering corpulence, has decreed that any disruptions of the procession will be harshly punished. God Learner sorcerers, wanting to remain on the good side of Arkat sympathisers so they can uncover more Stygian mysteries, support Gais back home. Religious officials lobby for his ouster.

Tensions escalate as Sacred Time approaches but Tinaros is otherwise a peaceful city devoted to river commerce. It is the last major centre within Safelster for travellers headed north to Vesmonstran. Orlanthi barbarians come here to engage in trade, in delegations led by emissaries of their Talking God, Issaries.

Reasons to come here: Gais the Unmoving hires adventurers as temporary deputies in the run-up to the Arkat Festival (expect to be carefully screened). God Learners send sorcerers to bolster security. Adventurers affiliated with the Rightness Army or other Malkioni purist groups might be sent to disrupt proceedings.

Tiskos

Tiskos was established by Arkat as a city of learning. It was here that he left his HeroQuesting journals in the care of a secretive priesthood dedicated to preserving his techniques for future generations of Autarchic leaders. When the God Learners took over Safelster in 740, their sorcerers rushed headlong to the Archive of Arkat. His priests were forced to surrender the ancient documents, which the God Learners plundered. They became the basis of God Learner experimental HeroQuesting.

To this day, Tiskos remains a centre of God Learner ventures into the Hero Plane. The courtyard of the Arkat Archive has been converted into a ceremonial launching pad allowing easy access to the Hero Plane. It is heavily guarded, to prevent theist sabotage. On occasion, adventurers have burst through the line of guards to leap randomly into the Hero Plane. None have ever come back, at least not via the portal of Tiskos. Either they find other ways out of the Gods Realm or experimental HeroQuesting is just as dangerous as everyone says it is.

Aside from its magical importance, Tiskos is famous for its fish oils, candles and ceramics. Its interim administrator is Namusta Gird, a sorcerer turned politician. His uncle is Lurghalos, the imperial High Sorcerer. He places the needs of sorcerers above all others.

Reasons to come here: The Portal of Tiskos is an irresistible magnet for saboteurs and would-be HeroQuesters. A variety of priceless artefacts are housed in the archive and in a dozen associated institutions of God Learner inquiry.

Tortun

In addition to its boatyards, timber mills and distinctively colourful rugs, the city of Tortun is known for its rumoured manifestations of Arkat. In times of crisis, a dark figure who could only be Arkat himself is seen wandering through the streets late at night. The figure appears melancholy and wracked with sorrow. He has been spotted three times in the last year alone.

Cultists of all stripes flock to Tortun in search of a personal encounter with the deified hero. The city's hard-pressed watchmen report confrontations with reverent knights, self-mortifying flagellants, Autarchy revivalists, Borist Monks and even trolls. Wags suggest that the Innkeeper's Guild started these rumours to drum up trade but the cultic intrigue has only accelerated as Safelster's brewing disorder seems to herald a reappearance of the great hero.

The last interim administrator fled for parts unknown a few months ago. His new replacement is an avid but anxious fledgling bureaucrat named Fabiach. The odds given in Tortun's wagering houses have him resigning within a year.

Reasons to come here: Fabiabos offers lucrative contracts to experienced warriors willing to sign on as deputies of the public peace.

Uton

Over the past 30 years, thanks to an invitation extended by a sympathetic former viscount, Uton has become a haven for refugees from the Empire of Wyrms' Friends. The vast majority of these hail from the Pelorian region of Carmania, which has long cultural ties to the west. Its people practice a dualistic variant of Malkionism, proposing that two equally powerful entities, Idovanus, Lord of Truth, and Ganestarus the Deceiver, vie for control of human affairs. Each was created by the Invisible God. Carmanians do not accept the prophet Malkion, instead ascribing the revelation of ultimate wisdom to the prophet Carmanos.

The Carmanians brought wealth and skills with them to Uton, reviving a moribund city languishing between a stinking marsh and the more prosperous centre of Kustria. They now represent 30% of its population and their success gives them an influence belied by their numbers. Even Utonese of Ralian ancestry have come to adopt Carmanian fashions, figures of speech and articles of faith.

Inquisitors of the Rightness Army pressured the former viscount to suppress the Carmanian heresy. In response, the Carmanians and their new Ralian friends modified the outward appearance of their faith. Now, instead of Idovanus and Ganestarus, the Utonese refer to the Right and Left Hand of the Invisible God. They say the name 'Malkion' when in their hearts they mean 'Carmanos'.

We are not fooled by the Carmanians' attempt to mask their heretic faith under a cloak of Malkionism. When our Emperor loses interest in them, we will drive them forcefully onto the path of righteousness.

— Guiva Wimplefold, Abbess of Our Lady of Forbearance, Parfan

Like many exile cities, Uton has become a haven for intrigue against a foreign power. Here enemies of the EWF gather to plan sabotage missions and God Learner faith raids against the wyrmfriends who have overrun Peloria. Representatives of other Pelorian theists, from Darjini to Rinkliddi, have shown up to ally themselves with the foes of their foes. Old Ways traditionalists, considered as much a threat to the God Learners as to the EWF, are made distinctly unwelcome here.

Reasons to come here: Adventurers plotting hostile action against the EWF can find allies, information and support in Uton.

Valantia

When the Ducal Wars concluded, both the local populace and the ambitious courtiers of Seshnela expected new ducal assignments to be handed out within the year. The process of assembling complete new taxation rolls for

Ralios has dragged on for nearly five years now, with no end in sight. The bureaucrats who serve as so-called interim administrators have responded to the vacuum by entrenching their own power.

The moving force in sustaining this quagmire is the tenaciously clever interim administrator Jachinos Fecundator, who aims to make his rule over the city of Valantia permanent. He has covertly frustrated the activities of the Empire's tax assessors for years, throwing up obstacle after obstacle to prevent them from completing their work. Aiding him in this scheme are his 12 sons, known collectively as the Seedlings.

Half of the Seedlings are legitimate and consistently stupider than those born out of wedlock. We refer to the former as the Saplings.

— Aure Inkwrisk, Tax Assessor of Ralios

The Seedlings travel after the assessors, find (or fabricate) mistakes and challenge their accuracy, forcing them to start over from scratch. They have arranged for assessors to be kidnapped by bandits and held for ransom. Some assessors have disappeared entirely; others are anxious to protect themselves through the cooperative acceptance of bribes. Jachino and sons interfere with assessors throughout Safelster. New dukes will not be chosen until the project has been completed for the entire territory.

Newcomers question how Jachinos can work his schemes so blatantly without reprisal. The answer lies in another plot. He has separately convinced two rival Seshnegi courtiers that he is keeping the ducal throne of Valantia warm for their eventual takeover. When authorities threaten to move against them, he plays one of his duped patrons off against the other. They pull strings and the assessments are pushed back even further.

Although the area's farmers and businessmen are already heavily taxed, they are sure that the eventual assessment will bite even deeper. Accordingly, they regard the Seedlings as folk heroes striking blows against the greedy imperial tax man.

Reasons to come here: The Seedlings pay adventurers to do their dirty work against the tax assessors.

Seshnegi bureaucrats may hire them as investigators or bodyguards.

Wolfblood

The best-defended city of Safelster is the secluded community of Wolfblood. Tucked into a ring of high hills offering only a single approach to potential invaders, its keep and walls are blessed by sorcerous spells woven back in the Dawn Age. The most famous of these protects its keep, whose mortar was mixed with the blood of wolves. This spell grants special ferocity to its defenders. All combatants fighting within or around Wolfblood to protect the city from invasion gains a magical boost to their offensive and defensive fighting abilities for the duration of the battle.

The city's implacable interim administrator, Malieros the Compass, was a prominent general before he secured this posting. He had never seen the city or evidently looked at its position on the map. Apparently the name led him to conclude that Wolfblood was a raiding base against Telmoria. Malieros' family has hated werewolves since an entire troop of his grandfather's men were slaughtered by them during the Empire's assault on the Shadowlands in 842.

Undeterred by the fact that Wolfblood is on the opposite side of Ralios from Telmoria, Malieros has devoted the bulk of his time and the city's tax rolls, to an ongoing campaign against the Telmori. His admirers credit him with a clever plan: he intends to draw the wolf men out of their own territory, to attack impregnable Wolfblood. He will then trap and exterminate them, as they did to his grandfather's troop 60 years ago.

Malieros cloaks himself in the skin of a giant wolf, as do the howling halberdiers of his personal retinue.

— Aure Inkwrisk, Tax Assessor of Ralios

Reasons to come here: Malieros is always looking for a few good men to help him kill werewolves up north. He pays handsomely for Telmori artefacts or hostages, or even reliable maps of their region. The Telmori want him dead and would mightily reward adventurers who do the deed for them.

Kustria

Since the Dawn, Kustria has been the largest, wealthiest and busiest city of Ralios. Founded by the wizard Kus the Binder in the first century, it served as a place of trade and peaceful colloquy between early Hrestoli missionaries and Galininni horse people. It did the same when the peoples of the First Council came to Ralios to spread the worship of Orlanth.

As horse people turned away from their equine deity to worship the Invisible God, they became a people of towns. They settled first in Kustria and then in other towns around Felster Lake. The towns became cities.

When St. Gerlant joined Arkat in his fight against Gbaji, he garrisoned his armies in Kustria. Arkat and Gerlant became friends within its walls and later enemies. Arkat retook the city after he slew Gbaji. Kustria became the capital of the Autarchy. Tiskos was where he worked his magic. In Tortun, he bedded his women. In Azilos, he executed his foes.

In Kustria, he wrote his laws and laid the groundwork for Empire. Kustria swelled in size as the Autarchy prospered. When times were bad, it was the last city to suffer.

Kustria was overrun by the Seshnegi in 740. Once they had conquered Ralios, they accepted its status as the region's natural capital. God Learners transformed it with their lofting towers and vast, singing machines. They built the Tower of Xud, a mile-high edifice erected with the aid of powerful Sorcery.

Depiction of St. Kus



It is now as spectacular a city as any in the world. Whether you seek fame, money, safety, wonder or danger, it is the place for you.

St. Kus the Binder

Kustria was founded by a first-century saint. He grants the magic of civic cooperation to dedicated officials and long-time residents. Kus is the patron saint of prosperity through peaceful dialogue. His chapels dot the city, either as free-standing structures or shrines within larger Malkioni cathedrals. Those who go to one of them and ask the priest to tell you St. Kus' story, will hear the following tale:

Myth of the Founding

St. Kus was one of the first wizards to accept Prince Hrestol's revelations as true. He performed the Irrefutable Proof for everyone who sought to deny it and they were converted instantly. He went into Ralios to spread Joy and the news of

Solace. There he found people living like animals. The horse people were the most elevated of the lot. There were also raven people and those who lived like lions, wolves, bears and the animal called eastarki, which was later wiped out by Cbajii. They were so much like beasts that the Irrefutable Proof meant nothing to them. A different validation was required.

These people fought each other all the time. There was so much blood in their mouths that they could not receive Joy. So Kus went to a fertile riverbank and walked a square. Each place he set his sandaled foot became a stone. The square of stones spread out. It rose and became a vast and shining wall. Then another, and another, until there were four walls all told, each of them connecting at the corners. On each wall, in each direction, there was an archway, a gate without barriers, welcoming all to come in.

And when the animal people came in to devour Kus and the Galininni came in to spear him from horseback, they came through the archways and were changed. They fell to their knees, dumbstruck by the simplicity and beauty of his miraculous construction. They could sense that there was a future for them here, even if they could only see its outlines.

'Can we live here forever?' they asked him.

'Only if you love one another, the way you love these stones.'

'This will not be easy.'

'It is not supposed to be,' Kus answered 'that which is valuable is never gained without effort. You must struggle to resolve differences with swords, not words. If you do this, you'll be blessed forever and so will your descendants.'

The people growled at each other. Each had gods who told them that they were the enemies of the others.

Kus saw this and said 'I have a God who wants all of you to worship him together. You do not have to do violence to each other. Instead you may honour him with mutual friendship, which will reap mutual reward.' And Kus touched the foreheads of each tribal king in turn and they experienced Joy.

Some of their people ran away, frightened, because it was too great a change for them. Kus was patient. He knew that this city he had made would bring in the souls of all the people of Ralios, eventually. It would bring souls to Solace long after he was dead. He showed the wild people how to build walls and make ovens for bread, and establish markets to trade in.

Then he left the city, to take Joy elsewhere. But he left a piece of it behind.

'Who will lead us?' cried the people.

'You must decide that yourself. That is what a city is for.'

He was killed on the road, by an animal man who belonged to no tribe. His soul returned to the place he had made and manifested as the flowers in the public square and as the pool of clear water they surrounded. Kus' people immediately understood what had happened to their hallowed friend. They wept and named the city after him, calling it Kustria.

'We live in the heart of a saint,' said the people of Kustria. And this was True.

Naturally, Malkioni accounts of the civilisation of Ralios overemphasise their own contribution to the effort and downplay the pivotal role played by the Orlanthi of the Theyalan First Council.

— Othor, Lhankor Mhy Priest, Church Row, Kustria

Districts

Kustria's densely packed, winding streets make navigation difficult even for the seasoned urban dweller. Residents travelling outside their immediate neighbourhoods must expect to rely on directions from others. City maps, which of course must be inscribed by hand, are rare, expensive, and inaccurate, sometimes wildly so. The addition of a mile-high tower to the city landscape allows people to orient themselves in relation to it. This helps in finding a particular district but not a street or specific address.

Safelsteri do not put numbers on their homes or shops. Businesses use large, pictographic signs, carved in relief from oak panels and colourfully painted, to attract

customers. Armourers hang wooden swords and shields over their windows; butcher's signs depict choice cuts of meat. Any oddball sign must represent a tavern.

Docklands

Kustria's shipping district is a tight conglomeration of piers and warehouses jutting out into Felster Lake. It dominates river commerce from Vesmonstran to the north and Seshnela to the south.

Sodden, rotting wooden structures lean shambolically against gleaming, metallic new structures in the fanciful God Learner architectural style. The air echoes with the low bellows of longshoremen, the lap of waves against boat hulls, and the plaintive shrieks of hungry gulls.

Dock workers adopt a brusque and preoccupied demeanour. They answer questions as tersely as possible, then get back to hauling crates and pushing carts. Adventurers without obvious business to conduct here are assumed to be reconnoitring for a robbery. The longshoremen enjoy a good scrap and are quick to pile

onto a group of perceived troublemakers, provided they do not look unduly tough or heroic. Some are imbued with superhuman strength and endurance through their veneration of St. Beaud, patron of labourers.

God Learner magic keeps the harbour well-dredged. A working in the God Plane performed 70 years ago locked two minor local goddesses into a continual re-enactment of a mythic struggle. The lake goddess Fel perpetually attacks the shoreline goddess, Mola. Detritus swept up by this churning current is deposited on the opposite end of the lake, at Estali, much to the annoyance of residents there.

Guildertown

The city's merchant district, commonly known as Guildertown but also called Swagwood, Pennylost or Rugmarch, adjoins the Docklands and spreads liberally into the heart of the city. Outdoor stalls and an everyday open-air market form a buffer against the poor district, the Scrubs. Fashionable shops create a barrier of luxury between Guildertown and the nobles' district, Manor Hill. Sellers of tomes and curios cluster near Marvelmaze.

Merchants live where they do business, or nearby. Prosperous members of the middle class dwell in a more ostentatious version of Manor Hill, called Newcoin. Its oversized homes burst with the latest ornaments and gewgaws invented by God Learner architects. Metallic siding catches the sun. Pyramids turn slowly on silvered pylons. Magical weathervanes measure the movement of invisible winds. Automated chimes ring out the time or harmoniously tinkle out the Middle Sea anthem.

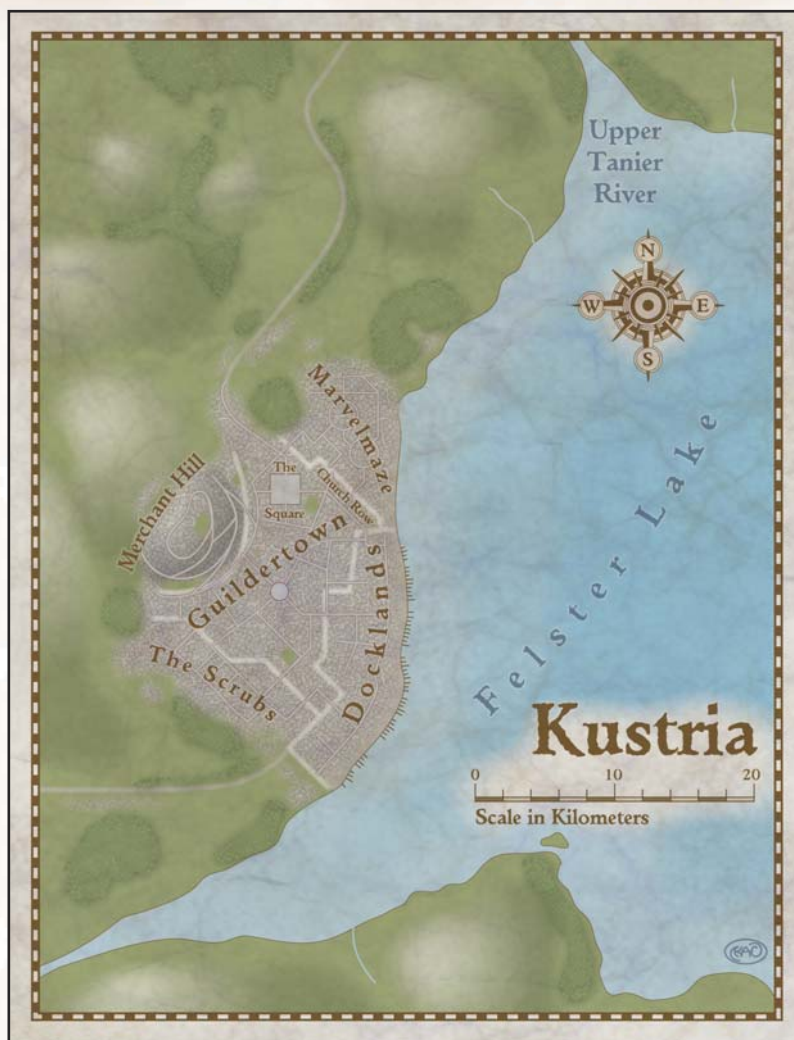
The Scrubs

The city's working class and destitute huddle in deteriorating wooden structures ranging from multi-story tenements to makeshift hovels slapped together from scrapyard refuse. The Scrubs houses Kustria's roughest taverns and provides a haven to its criminal element.

To hear the good burghers of Guildertown tell it, the district's entire population is composed of shiftless human detritus who deserve their squalid conditions. In fact, the Scrubs boasts more shrines and chapels per square mile than any other Kustrian district. Its people are among its most fervent Malkioni. Worship here centres on the forgiving doctrines of Prince Hrestol. His self-sacrificing mother, St. Xemela, is especially revered here.

Kustrian Longshoreman





Why do the downtrodden of the Scrubs not revolt? Because their saint, Xemela, tells them it is good to be meek. They should worship Orlanth and know that it is good to fight back!

— Enlirath Casting, God Talker of the Brown Deer Clan

The Square

The Square comprises the city's central plaza and several rings of governmental buildings around it. The Ducal Palace was built by Arkat himself, for his own use.

Imperial officials tore down historic old structures to make room for a modern warren of bureaucratic offices. Fire elementals heat its austere hallways in Sea and Storm Season; sylphs blow cool air through its corridors during Fire Season.

The plaza itself is an exact square of perfect stone, each of them also perfectly square. They never show signs of wear; efforts to remove them, no matter how extraordinary, inevitably prove fruitless. Legend has it that this was the original square miraculously brought into being by St. Kus when he founded the city. Although a low ledge surrounds the plaza on all sides, the original walls and archways can no longer be seen. Supposedly these were removed by early city fathers to accommodate Kustria's expansion. Early records suggest that the walls were moved out a number of times, presumably after a mission to the Saint Plane to garner Kus's blessing. Where their components wound up remains a mystery. The God Learners are loathe to mess with the flagstones of the square itself but have posted a generous reward for the missing pieces of Kus' walls and archways.

The square is often the site of demonstrations by the city's various factions and interest groups. As violent as their intentions may be when they set out, they find that protests held in the square always devolve into peaceful protest. Because rioting is impossible here, agitators have learned to stage their clamours elsewhere.

Church Row

Temples, shrines and chapels can be found throughout Kustria. Most are Malkioni but a select few theist institutions are permitted, by rights of ancient charter.

The biggest and most spectacular cathedrals line Church Row, where the city's influential go to pray and be seen. Any Safelsteri leader anxious to leave his name to posterity attempts to outdo his predecessors by building a new and

more imposing cathedral. Churches credited to Hrestol, Gerlant, Arkat, various archons of the Autarchy and the Seshnegi kings Annmak and Miglos lean aggressively into the broad central avenue, vying for attention.

The abundance of magisterial church architecture leaves the pews of many of these edifices largely empty, even on Godday. Many a conspiracy has been hashed out in the relative privacy of an empty, echoing cathedral.

Marvelmaze

Although its founders prefer to call it the District of Inquiry, this labyrinthine monument to God Learner ambitions is more commonly known as Marvelmaze. Fanciful metal-shod structures sprawl across the ground, penetrate deep into the earth or unfold like titanic flowers in the sky. Peculiar resounding musical notes thrum rhythmically throughout the day and buzz lowly at night. At night, the structures light up, casting rainbow illumination across the district and up into the sky.

Marvelmaze's bizarrely circuitous streets buzz with activity 24 hours a day. Robed sorcerers hustle from experiment to lecture to symposium, dodging dewy-eyed apprentices, shuffling servants, blasé builders, fulminating clerics and visiting gawpers. Fashions range from the austere to the outrageous, with a definite emphasis on the latter. An outside observer might be forgiven for concluding that the God Learners here devote the bulk of their researches to the construction of ever more elaborate and gravity-defying headgear.

The district's centrepiece is the mile-high tower of Xud, an observation tower used by God Learner sorcerers to peer into the portion of the divine Otherworld atop the mundane sky. Other structures emanate magical vibrations which support the use of sorcerous magic and retard the efficacy of divine and spirit spells. These normally operate at barely detectable levels but can be cranked up during emergencies,

so that divine and spirit effects are severely hampered within the city limits. So far this ability has been tested only on an experimental basis; its exact effects remain a matter of speculation among all but a few elite God Learner sorcerers.

Manor Hill

In contrast to the pretentious homes of the nouveau riche and the surreal constructions of the sorcerers, the low-slung villas of the entrenched nobility appear comparatively modest on the outside. On the inside, however, their interiors boast of a tasteful and abiding opulence.

The Ducal Wars seemed like bad news to the landowning class, and indeed, many of us suffered terribly during the actual struggle. But now that the tax rolls have been suspended pending a full assessment, we've found many ways to tuck away additional coin for a stormy day.

— Alakelm the Monologist, Landowner of Kustria

A City Without Walls

Kustria famously lacks any but symbolic fortification. Its boundaries have expanded far beyond its original walls. There are no gates and no gatekeepers. The Ducal Palace can serve as a retreat in times of attack. Stone walls surround Manor Hill; access to it is sternly monitored by private guards sponsored by a consortium of wealthy residents.

In times of invasion, the rest of the city may elect to defend itself with quickly erected barricades. The people of Kus are highly adept at tearing up their paving stones and converting available materials into makeshift fortifications.

The city's primary defence lies in the prevailing magic of St. Kus. Under its influence, invaders may sack the city and occupy its structures but cannot muster the will to do physical harm to any person who does not attempt to resist them. Because they have little to fear from occupiers, no matter how ill-willed, political leaders find it hard to rally the people to fight for them.

Kus' magic ensures bloodless changes of regime. Time and again, most recently during the Ducal Wars, invading forces have entered the city, to be greeted with yawns and shrugs. As the Seshnegi king Annmak once observed: 'Kustria is a bedevilling city – easy to take and difficult to hold'.

All of the villas cling to a U-shaped range of hills overlooking the city below.

The streets and laneways of Manor Hill seem abandoned. Nobles venture outside only briefly, accompanied by large retinues. Often they are borne in litters, by sweating dogsbodies, or hide themselves away inside ornate carriages. Anyone who does not seem to belong here will be challenged by the private watch groups hired by area nobles.

Resources

Of all the cities of Safelster, Kustria is the most hospitable to adventurers. Recruiters come from throughout the Empire to find brave, competent mercenaries. Unlike the Empire's clerics and sorcerers, they are less interested in a hireling's faith and culture than in his ability to swing a sword or cast a spell.

Kustria's adventuring population supports an entire mini-industry of shopkeepers, bartenders, blacksmiths and researchers.

*History and geography are all well and good.
What I want to know is, where are the swords?
Where is the ale?*

— Gurek Runespear, Mercenary of Safelster

Lodgings

Kustria's status as a trading city requires it to welcome travellers in large numbers. Of its many inns, a handful tolerate the idiosyncrasies of professional adventurers. The ten establishments listed here, in ascending order by price, accept potentially violent freebooters of any race or culture, so long as they behave themselves while on the premises.

Prices given are for group lodgings suitable for a party of four to six, on a weekly basis. When staying in cheaper establishments, it is wise to sleep in one's own bedroll, avoiding the bedbug-infested torment of the supplied beds and mattresses.

1. **The Laggard's Rest.** A nest of interconnected, lice-infested cottages on the far outskirts of the Scrubs. Recommended only for its absolute discretion; the proprietor, a greasy-skinned hunchback named Nrabelg, had his tongue torn out by the City Watch when he refused to identify a client. The fugitive in question had not even paid his lodging fee for the week.
 2. **The Brass Horn.** This tenement teeters precariously on its foundations and is quiet during the day and noisy at night. Its clientele includes not only bargain-conscious adventurers but rat hsunchen and minstrels. The latter play long into the evening after returning from a busy day's busking. Its proprietress is called Mad Maud. She is deaf and something always seems to be scurrying in the frizzy mass of hair piled high on her head.
 3. **Loup's Red Inn** is a series of dank, reeking rooms atop an abattoir. Its proprietor, Loup the Butcher, is notoriously soft-hearted, and will allow financially embarrassed clients to work off their back lodgings in his slaughterhouse.
 4. A relatively new establishment converted from a warehouse in the Docklands, **Rufus' Place** is run by the defrocked ex-bishop Rufus D'granton. The furnishings are spare but clean but some customers prefer to go elsewhere after being subjected to the owner's unstinting rants about corruption in the priesthood.
- I have to laugh when Rufus whinges on and on over profiteering in the church. If you knew why he got kicked out as a bishop, you'll wonder why they didn't burn him alive.*
- Gurek Runespear, Mercenary of Safelster
5. **The Ape and Cup Inn** began as a haven for street performers but was recently inherited by the original proprietor's son, Huguelm the Ignorant. Huguelm despises minstrels with a fiery passion and has sent them packing to attract an adventuring clientele. He plays favourites, tolerating misbehaviour from mercenaries who stop to regale him with anecdotes, while trying to cheat standoffish types. His furniture is fairly new but shows the scars of the fights that frequently break out here.

Lodgings

Hostel	Location	Price (bed & meal)
The Laggard's Rest	The Scrubs	3 copper
The Brass Horn	The Scrubs	5 copper
Loup's Red Inn	On the edge of the Scrubs and Docklands	15 copper
Rufus' Place	Docklands	2 silver
The Ape and Cup Inn	Guildertown	4 silver
The Quicksilver Inn	Marvelmaze	7 silver
The Red Brick House	Guildertown	14 silver
Iron Courtyard	Guildertown	28 silver
Velvet Inn	Church Row	5 gold
The Picos Gaide Agency	Manor Hill, Newcoin	25 to 125 gold per day

6. **The Quicksilver Inn**, located in southern Marvelmaze, occupies the former alchemical laboratory of its proprietor, Renyl the Admixer. A friendly, chatty fellow, he runs the inn ably despite the loss of both hands in a lab accident. His pretty young daughter Orance discourages the guests from asking questions about the incident.
7. **The Red Brick House**, tucked in a quiet corner of Guildertown, caters to recruiters as well as the adventurers they hire. Its capacious tavern serves as an informal hiring hall. Mercenaries looking for advance word of the best assignments pay a premium to stay here. Content to rest on its reputation, its perennially itchy proprietor Orvisvo Redskin offers merely average amenities.
8. Clients of the **Iron Courtyard** pay more for guaranteed security. This large squat structure, painted to look like it is been clad in iron, requires a password to leave its lobby and move up to the guest rooms. Beefy guards man a portcullis in the foyer. A staff of semi-retired but still able warriors remains on call at all times, to intervene in case of attack. Guests sign contracts agreeing to disburse combat pay to the guards if they are forced to enter into melee on their behalf. This includes compensation to their families should they be killed in action. The innkeeper, known only as Scalemail

Savagos, is himself a seasoned adventurer who quit the freebooting life to offer a vital service to his erstwhile colleagues. He carries himself with a military bearing and occasionally makes the mistake of barking orders at his guests as if they are soldiers under his command.

9. Seekers of luxury make their way to the **Velvet Inn**, a converted vicarage overlooking Church Row. It caters to visiting ecclesiasts and scholars as well as well-heeled adventurers. Proprietor Yonzeni Ayon, a sly ex-nun disowned by aristocratic parents, expects absolute discretion and polite conduct from all clients. Those who make a fuss of any sort are quietly asked to depart. From its gilded fixtures to its magically comfortable mattresses, the Velvet Inn makes comfort a holy mission.
10. Guests looking for complete privacy book the rental of an entire Manor Hill chateau from **The Picos Gaide Agency**. The unflappably servile Picos, a bald and rotund man who favours flowing robes of colourful silk, connects cash-poor nobles and down-on-their-luck trade magnates with wealthy clients wanting to rent their homes. He supplies a full staff of servants and, most of all, saves the renters from the crushing indignity of ever interacting with the guests.

Mad Maud, Proprietress of the Brass Horn



CAVERNS

With bar fights an occupational hazard of the adventurer's existence, PCs tend to run through taverns even quicker than they do inns. The top ten drinking establishments of interest to Kustrian mercenaries and freebooters are as follows. Many cater to primarily to groups adventurers might want to conduct business with. They are ranked by rowdiness, from most to least violent.

1. **The Crone and Crown** (Docklands) caters to longshoremen and freebooters, always a volatile mixture. It is recommended primarily as a place to get into a rousing fight. Its proprietor, Homynos Thickskull, will allow any customer to break a bottle over his head for 10 silver pieces. He is never fazed by this.
2. **The Bent Elbow** (The Scrubs) attracts a criminal element and is a good place to go for criminal gossip. Many of its fights technically begin as mugging attempts outside its threshold but spread inwards as the victims defend themselves. The Bent Elbow (or the 'Elb', as it is known among the drinking cognoscenti) is owned by the outlaw Wigidai Big-Breath and operated by Ayon Aimos, a towering thug rumoured to have the blood of a great troll rushing through his veins.
3. Given its primarily sorcerous and scholarly clientele, you would not expect **Wormwood** (Marvelmaze) to rank just below the Bent Elbow in fights per week. Their secret lies in the unpredictably hallucinogenic alchemical beverages cooked up and served by proprietor Gaidenam the Segmenter. His brews, which include such active ingredients as centipede poison and sylph essence, can reduce even the meekest apprentice scholar to a shrieking, flailing menace to the social order. Wise customers stick to the ale and wine, enjoy the flare-ups when they occur and keep their ears open for the latest gossip from the city's God Learner community.
4. **The Upper Floor**, located above a barn-like tavern catering to tourists and traders, is an exclusive joint where only adventurers are welcome. To gain admission, you must be vouched for by a current member. The admissions officer, the exactly surly Namach the Broiler, may quiz you for details of your exploits, to be assured that you are not some dilettante or slummer hoping to eavesdrop on true warriors. The Upper Floor is run under the auspices of the Kustrian Freebooter's Guild. Guild members in good standing need merely flash their badges to gain entry. A prominent banner above the bar reads: *NO SHOP TALK*. The patrons would ignore this supposed rule even if they were not mostly illiterate. This is a place to kick back, relax and share old war stories. The brawls that break out here are usually good-natured tests of martial prowess. Carousers are expected to pay for any broken furniture. The Upper Floor is located in Guildertown, near The Square.
5. **The Man in the Red Hat** serves as a meeting place for adventurers and prospective clients. Located on Plum Lane in Guildertown, a broad laneway lined with expensive lodgings for foreign travellers, The Man in the Red Hat suffers from excessive fame. On most nights, the number of tourists hoping to get a glimpse of a real life legendary hero far outnumber the legitimate employers. For this reason, its proprietor, the smoothly businesslike Aliet Audin, has introduced an exclusive backroom where known adventurers and the patrons who hire them can meet in discreet privacy. Aliet's composure is disturbed only by people asking him if he is the man in the red hat, a question that reliably reduces him to barely contained, sputtering fury.
6. Bureaucrats and politicians gather to swap rumours and complain about their lot in life at **The Hub and Spoke**, a surprisingly dingy tavern overlooking The Square. Its buxom proprietress, Jehable, has a soft spot for adventurers and allows them into her pub in small quantities, provided she can trust their discretion. Often they find that if they dress like bureaucrats, adopting their slovenly postures and simulating their chalky complexions, they can harvest bushels of useful scuttlebutt about affairs at the Ducal Palace. Officials also invite adventurers to the Hub and Spoke when they need to hire sword-wielders and spell-casters.
7. Cavernous and noisy but relatively peaceful, **The Lost Clack** caters to the city's traders, burghers and hustlers. The coppery smell of money wafts through the air here, as deals are proposed, negotiated and sealed at every table. Men of trade in need of ordinary caravan guards will hire them through an agent. When unusual circumstances demand a more direct approach, mercenaries are invited here to discuss the details. Adventurers who manage their own trading routes find The Lost Clack an ideal watering hole. Its proprietor, Beustan, once controlled the entire grain market from here to Istakar but the Ducal Wars

City of Demonstrations

Kustria's would-be rulers have always commented on its people's unusual sense of entitlement, which outstrips even the egalitarian pioneer communities of Jrustela. The city's competing interest groups are quick to express their displeasure with their rulers and each other. They do this by taking to the streets, waving pictographic banners, shaking their fists and shouting out their demands. They blare out on trumpets and pound thundering drums until they are promised some form of redress. Violence breaks out surprisingly rarely. The magic of Kus protects the citizens from authorities' attempts to suppress them by force.

A strong Kustrian ruler ignores demonstrations, even as they grow to a fever pitch. The interim administrator, Dardais, does the opposite. He attempts to placate every protesting group, in a symbolic fashion if nothing else. This does not reduce the number of demonstrations but at least it ensures that a fresh group will be up in arms on any given day.

reduced him to the status of a mere taverner. Word has it that he maintains connections to the exiles of Col, who have promised him a return to glory if they are reinstated in their old positions. Rumours aside, the clientele of The Lost Clack remains staunchly apolitical, supporting whichever leaders will be best for business. Look for it in the heart of Guildertown.

8. Nobles who wish to meet with adventurers invite them to **The Gilded Frame**, a small, quiet establishment in northern Guildertown, noted for its fine brandies and selections of Colite cheeses. Player Characters of noble Seshnegi birth can come here by themselves or with well-behaved guests. Commoners will be politely refused entry by the spectrally thin, officious proprietor, Flondon. He may admit foreign nobles, especially those who convincingly claim a royal connection. The Gilded Frame's reputation as a peaceful hideaway for the elite suffered a blow last year when an entire table of Kustrian landowners was poisoned, apparently by a Kraloreli assassin posing as a serving wench.

9. Quibblers may assert that, given that it serves only water and fruit juices, that the fellowship hall in the basement of the **St. Kus Cathedral** in Church Row is not technically a pub. It does, however, serve as a social hub of the most zealous of the city's Malkioni. Dignified ecclesiasts break bread and trade theories of heterodox doctrine with hard-handed bullies of the Rightness Army. Whether you are seeking a clerical appointment or hoping to arrange a demonstration against vice, the St. Kus Fellowship Hall is the place for you.
10. Visitors to the city are surprised to find that its most peaceful pub is located in the fringe of the city, where The Scrubs are at their bleakest. **Ber's Pub** is an outsider's joint, frequented by foreigners, hsunchen and inhumans. Its proprietor is an articulate great troll named Ber. He serves drinks all night long. His human partner, Begothos, takes the day shift. Begothos speaks tersely and reveals nothing about the sequence of events that turned a Humakti Death Lord into tavern help. Both Ber and Begothos are so convincingly terrifying that no one dares to so much as break a chair. The few fools who have tried anything are now represented by their desiccated hands, which are nailed in a neat row above the bar. In addition to its sternly enforced peace, clients come to Ber's for the wide range of exotic intoxicants, especially those geared for non-human physiologies. Whether you are an aldryami looking for fermented sap or a mostali seeking a mercury fizz, Ber's has the rare drink of your distant homeland. For this reason it is an ideal place to catch up on inhuman affairs.

Supplies

In smaller centres, adventurers are lucky to find a single general store able to meet their material needs. Kustria provides a home to so many freebooters that a host of specialist shops have sprung up to compete for their business. Lodgings may be expensive here but equipment can generally be purchased for prices 10 to 15% lower than given in *RuneQuest* (if you are using the *RuneQuest Companion*, Kustria has large city prices).

Successful suppliers add extra value, with a gimmick, convivial atmosphere or guarantees. Some pay the proprietors of the Upper Floor or Man in the Red Hat to recommend them. Current favourites among the freebooting class, all located in Guildertown, are as follows.

Armour

1. **Fromonnos the Younger** gives a 10% discount to anyone who can best him in a belching contest, as judged by the patrons of the Upper Floor tavern. He has never been known to lose.
2. The portly **Gillar** gives a month's supply of dried sausages with every full set of armour he makes.
3. The talented armourers **Hernouc and Nepurda** are a lusty husband and wife team, often covered in scratches and bite marks. They are perhaps the best armour makers in town, if you can stand the lusty winks and nudges they cannot stop themselves from continually exchanging.
4. **Milhablos**, a washout from Zistorite training school, fashions exceptional helmets that have 6 AP rather than the usual 5 (they are greater helmets with the Bulwark effect, if you are using the *RuneQuest Companion*). A Milhablos helmet costs 300 silver.
5. **Savans the Deferrer** is known for the indifferent quality of his wares and his generous credit terms. Adventurers can pay him 75 now for any item and pay off the remainder with six monthly payments of 5% each. His chief repossession officer, Naisvok, is a human cultist of the trollish death god, Zorak Zoran. Few debtors wish to bear the brunt of Naisvok's legendary cruelty.
6. **Vivis Benaldir** passionately hates vampires, who poked out his right eye and amputated his foot, ending his career as an active adventurer. He offers a 25% one-time discount to anyone who brings him the head of a Vivamort cultist.

Weapons

Kustria's weapon makers are a notoriously eccentric and cranky lot. The most famous of them are:

1. **Adhémar Curvemaker**, who only makes archery equipment. His bows are so exquisitely balanced and intrinsically beautiful that owning one confers a +10% Influence bonus when conversing with other archers who do not own a bow of at least exquisite quality. His bows cost six times the normal *RuneQuest* price and grant a +10% bonus to the wielder's relevant Bow skill when used (they are exquisite bows with the double Warrior's effect, if you are using the *RuneQuest Companion*). Adhémar, a quiet, reserved fellow who lets his stunning craftsmanship speak for itself, makes short, long and nomad bows. He produces them to order; customers must wait 4 to 10

weeks for delivery. Adhémar bows are the frequent object of theft attempts.

2. If you supply the moody, shifty-eyed sword maker **Drede** with a litre of fresh blood from an enemy, he will use it to forge a blade that deals certain damage against all of that enemy's compatriots. In the case of inhumans, the weapon affects all members of the same race. If the blood comes from a human enemy, the weapon makes its distinctions by nationality, damaging all Ralians, Pelorians, Seshnegi, Kralori and so on. Against the specified enemy, the weapon's base damage dice are increased by one increment. Thus a dagger would inflict 1D6+1 damage and a war sword would inflict 1D10+1 damage (they are greater weapons with a restricted version of the Baleful effect, if you are using the *RuneQuest Companion*). Drede forges daggers, knives, short swords, war swords and rapiers only. The process takes 2 to 8 weeks and cost three times the normal *RuneQuest* price. There is an additional catch: Drede insists that all communications with him be conducted in rhyming couplets. He himself does not speak in poetry but in a variety of grunts, nods and growls. Expect members of the targeted group to treat you unkindly as word of your special weapon spreads.
3. Transactions with the prickly **Gahansaf** go awry if the customer betrays a lack of detailed information on the history of weapons. When this gnarled, woolly-eyebrowed man hears a mistake of martial expertise, he will engage in an opposed Lore (Military Tactics) test to browbeat the hapless client with his superior knowledge. Only if the customer backs down and acknowledges Gahansaf's deeper grasp on the field will he proceed with the sale.
4. **Guidour the Questioner** makes weapons of all types at the usual bargain Kustrian rates. Unlike many of his more studiously craftsmanlike rivals, he keeps a deep stock of ready-made swords on hand for immediate sale. Guidour's main objective when conducting a transaction is to talk the adventurers' ears off with his latest political speculations. He is obsessively fearful of the EWF and is sure that the Ducal Wars were secretly engineered by them. Whether the Emperor and local administrators were in on the plot or are its unwitting victims depends on which day of the week it is.
5. The bony sword maker **Prard** manages to be both abusive and whiny at the same time. He will undercut

any other rival blade maker of Kustria by 2%, while subjecting you to a stream of hysterical complaint.

What? You want my blades for less, still? Why don't you cut out my liver? Why don't you feast on my heart?

— Prard, Swordmaker of Kustria

6. **Ren the Vagrant** will make you a sword of superior durability, if you can find him. To atone for past and future deaths his weapons will inflict, he took a vow of poverty, dedicating himself to St. Kus. He travels through the Scrubs, dressed in rags, aiding others by repairing their hovels and household items. When he makes a sword, he borrows Drede's forge; the two are childhood friends. Ren's blades all have +6 hit points (they are marvellous weapons with a treble Enduring effect, if you are using the *RuneQuest Companion*). To get him to make you a sword, you must disburse its standard value as alms to the poor. You must also personally perform a good deed for the poor of the city, which Ren may specify. He might ask you to protect tenants from a rapacious landlord, intimidate members of a criminal gang or call in political favours from a patron. The humility of Ren's vows have not rendered him especially pleasant; he has a bad habit of frankly reminding interlocutors of their glaring character flaws.

Equipment

1. **Amiert's Shop**, in the Scrubs, sells used and battered equipment, along with shining new goods of dubious provenance. A cheerful, self-admitted scoundrel, Amiert pays the City Watch not too look closely at his wares. Prices are 25% lower than usual but items are all sold on an 'as is' basis. An adventurer who bought a distinctively embossed leather pack from Amiert was recently slain by a man who claimed that it had been looted from his brother's corpse.
2. **Pongile's Shop**, where the Scrubs meets Guildertown, offers prices 20% lower than usual but customers must be willing to paw through unsorted piles of merchandise to find what they want. Pongile is a dedicated loafer who rarely takes his feet off the front counter. A frequent habitué of the mind-bending Marvelmaze tavern Wormwood, he is well briefed on all the latest sorcerous scuttlebutt.

3. The premises of **Bervier** are clean, well-organised and a paragon of professionalism and service. A porcine gentleman with slicked-back hair plastered across his generous skull, he sells items at 5% less than usual. Bervier offers customers a special confidentiality plan. For 5 silvers a season, he will promise not to gossip about the adventurers to anyone. To prove his point, he happily spills the beans on any customers who failed to pay his service fee.
4. **Esperna Toulque** advertises her shop as the official supplier of the Imperial Army. She sells items at the usual price, backing them up with a money-back guarantee and a four-week refund period. This dignified widow can secure Zistorite magic items on a special order basis.

Services

Adventurers in Kustria may wish to take advantage of services offered by the following organisations.

The **Kustrian Freebooter's Guild** is not a proper guild, in that it is unable to establish rules for the profession or prevent non-members from engaging in it. It is more aptly characterised as a lobbying group, meant to protect the collective prerogatives of the freebooting community from local authorities intent on reigning them in. They stage demonstrations and lobby government officials. Within the community, they pressure their colleagues to act in a dignified manner befitting their time-honoured profession. They quickly distance themselves from adventurers who commit crimes or otherwise attract infamy. Their leader is the blandly enthusiastic Huin Greenbeard, who goes on one caravan guarding expedition a year but otherwise devotes all of his time to the expansion of the Guild. He is a kindly, approachable individual who will provide information on the city's political situation but deftly avoids exchanging gossip on fellow adventurers.

Guild membership costs a hefty 10 silver pieces a year. Aside from automatic admission to the popular adventurer tavern the Upper Floor, the benefits of membership are largely intangible.

The **Messengers of St. Beaud** are a youth organisation named after the patron saint of labourers. When Beaud was young, he was a lawless ruffian, without parents to guide him. He encountered a righteous priest, who whipped him until he saw the light of Malkion. His

Messenger of St. Beaud



first job after that was as a messenger boy. Today the priests of St. Beaud pay homage to him by thrashing successive new generations of Kustrian street urchins until they become good and productive members of society. Beaudite messengers, who range in age between five and ten and are exclusively male, can be identified by the jangling necklace of whistles they wear around their necks. They provide one of the whistles they carry to anyone who asks. To summon a messenger, just step into a busy street and blow sharply on the whistle. A messenger boy appears within 15 minutes. For one clack, they will convey a verbal message to any destination within the city. The customer must be able to describe the recipient in sufficient detail to allow the messenger to find him. Delivering the message to an employee or other suitable intermediary counts as a successful discharge of their duties. The service offers no refunds or guarantees. That said, if a boy fails to deliver the message in a correct and timely manner, the customer may complain to one of the Beaudite priests. Should he conclude that the boy was in error – and he usually does – the customer may beat the errant child a dozen times with an implement supplied by

the priest. Customers may choose between a switch and a wooden rod about 1 cm in diameter. Boys are expected to apologise to the customer after the beating; if they refuse, they are beaten further, until they comply. The spiritual service performed by the fathers of St. Beaud is widely lauded.

Adventurers in need of emergency healing seek out **The Sisters of St. Xemela**. Nuns of this order swear oaths of modesty, celibacy, honesty and help for all. They charge adventurers and well-to-do clients for their healing magic. The sisters use the proceeds to support themselves and to offer free medical aid to the city's poor and destitute. They will help anyone, regardless of religious affiliation, and maintain strict confidentiality for their patients, even when they show up with suspicious wounds. Any advice or admonishments the sisters choose to offer are phrased with extraordinary gentleness and tact. They cannily price their services according to the recipient's means. Every copper they squeeze out of their wealthy patients means more medicines and bandages for the truly needy. The sisters maintain four way stations in the Scrubs, three in the Docklands, two in Guildertown and one where Church Row meets Marvelmaze.

Occasionally a band of Chalana Arroy healers from up Vesmonsfran way sets themselves up as healers to Kustria's theist population. The Xemelan Sisters see to it that no backwoods pagan goddess outshines their blessed saint.

— Curek Runespear, Mercenary of Safelster

Theists facing persecution for practicing their faiths can enlist the **Mutuality League** to intercede on their behalf. Billed as an alliance of pagan and monotheist religious leaders, the organisation is in truth a God Learner front. Kustria's God Learner sorcerers want easy access to, and good relations with, the area's theists, so they can pump them for myths and secrets. They use their political connections back home to extricate theists from legal trouble and to fight for punishment of Malkioni zealots who harass or attack them. Their current leader is Nalmanos the Permeator, a glib young sorcerer related by marriage to Interim Administrator Dardais. A worn-out follower of Orlanth Adventurous named Hendrick Honeystaler acts as figurehead co-councilor to Nalmanos. Although the need seldom arises, The Mutuality League will also defend mystics and shamans.

Notables

Characters using Kustria as a base of operations will eventually cross paths with the city's prominent citizens, or their intermediaries.

Patrons

Though some mercenary war bands follow an agenda of their own and can always find their own interesting trouble, many prefer to act as hirelings. The following patrons often hire adventuring parties, often on a one-off basis. Few are widely known; many maintain secret loyalties. Parties may work for them for months without ever learning whose interests they truly serve.

Aberos Pureblood hires on behalf of the local God Learners. He sends adventurers out to steal artefacts, learn myths of remote sub-cultures and to bodyguard God Learner sorcerers doing the same. On occasion he requires operatives to counter enemy groups. These include rivals within the Empire, like the most intolerant zealots of the Rightness Army, as well as violated pagan cultists hoping to wreak vengeance for God Learner interference in their myths and ceremonies. Aberos, a proud scion of one of Seshnela's oldest families, nearly succeeds in concealing the revulsion and disdain he feels for unwashed, uncouth mercenaries.

Maushion the Exemptor acts as intermediary when the Rightness Army hires war bands. He sends them out to attack the foes of righteousness, to act as bodyguards for Malkioni missionaries or to rescue them when they are taken prisoner. Although his bosses are among the staunchest of believers, Maushion's own attitudes are surprisingly pliable. Although trained as a priest, he now devotes himself exclusively to the business of the church, in this and other matters. His nickname comes from his skill at winning indulgences for paying clients, allowing them to conduct themselves in an outwardly sinful way in exchange for donations to the Rightness Army.

Maushion's superiors don't much like him and his loose ways. But every time they've demoted him, his replacement messed things up so bad they had to go to him on bended knee, pleading for him to take his old job back.

— Gurek Runespear, Mercenary of Safelster

Maushion the Exemptor



When Interim Administrator Dardais needs the services of an adventuring band, he turns to his fretful right-hand man, **Juliner Lack-Coin**. As the son of an impoverished Seshnegi noble, Juliner grew up with worry in his bones. Throughout any encounter, he fidgets, bites his lower lip and mops sweat from his brow with a perfumed lace cloth. As uncomfortable as it may seem, Juliner's chronic dread allows him to see every angle of a scenario, anticipating and avoiding its pitfalls. He hires adventurers for jobs too sensitive for the administration's own guard to openly perform. Juliner considers only mercenaries who have demonstrated utmost competence and discretion for other patrons. He gets his recommendations from allies such as Aberos Pureblood, Huilon Berabloin and Meipala D'hredmorinos. Contrary to his cognomen, he has amassed a tidy fortune for himself in the last few years. This does not stop him from dressing like a threadbare student.

Ance the Expounder, steward for Solofos, the former Duke of Kustria, appears to be reactionary blowhard who despises his former boss and worships the Emperor. His actual loyalties are completely reversed, as rebellious-

seeming adventurers learn, should they win his trust. Ance works for the exiles of Col. He hires discreet mercenary bands on espionage missions against Dardaís and other local officials, especially Ilotos' tax collectors. He also sanctions various acts of raiding and banditry to embarrass the interim administration by making it seem incapable of maintaining local order. Adventurers hired to conduct must restrain their level of violence. The exiles are nobles above all and demand that their noble rivals be treated with kid gloves. They will be kidnapped and held for ransom, not killed. Commoners may be murdered, if necessary, so long as they are not valuable farmers or craftsmen.

The blacksmith **Baranwulf** maintains a façade as a safely urbanised Orlanthi, so genteel that he numbers several God Learner sorcerers among his large circle of friends. In reality, he is the leader of a rebel cell intent on bringing down Marvelmaze and putting every sorcerer in it to the sword. He hires only groups predominantly made up of Orlanthi worshippers. Ideally, he prefers warriors from his native Vesmonstran, who he can check up on by consulting his contacts up there. He will tolerate a few trusted oddballs within an otherwise reliably theist war band but never trusts sorcerers. Baranwulf prefers to work with committed subversives who pay their own way but occasionally hires adventurers for less sensitive missions. These include acts of sabotage, the kidnapping or assassination of God Learner sorcerers, disruption of their magical experiments and the planting of false and misleading myths. Adventurers are encouraged to act as double agents, pretending to complete missions for the God Learners while really working to destabilise them. He and the Rightness Army agent Maushion the Exempter recently established a tentative alliance, exploring the possibility of working together against their mutual foe. Baranwulf's false self is a genial joke-teller; his true face is fierce and bloody-minded.

When the Player Characters have alienated everyone else in the city, they may find their careers revived by a curious message in the outstretched hand of a trembling urchin. **Ermendír Girar** vanished from Kustria three years ago but somehow that does not stop him from hiring adventurers for dangerous missions of cryptic import. Before his disappearance, the aloof and uncommunicative Ermendír was an infamous mercenary adventurer. In his last years here, he secretly converted to the wyrmfriend religion. Combining its beliefs with the techniques of the Immanent Mastery Path, he advanced

rapidly but strangely. Now he is the victim of a sort of reverse amnesia: no one who encounters him can commit the meeting to long-term memory. He could create a riot by striding naked down the aisle of Arkat's cathedral during High Service and by that night no one would recall quite what had happened to spark it. Working through the St. Beaud Messenger Service, he hires desperate and down-on-their-luck adventurers to perform missions of sabotage and subversion for the EWF.

I didn't like Ermendír Girar so much but it's a shame what happened to him. Whatever that may have been.

— *Curek Runespear, Mercenary of Safelsjer*

The saturnine merchant prince **Meipala D'hredmorinos** has one interest: Meipala D'hredmorinos. Jrusteli by birth, Meipala came to Ralios in his youth. He rose from poverty to the region's largest personal fortune. Meipala's company built many of the strangest and most elaborate structures of Marvelmaze. He cuts timber and mines metals throughout Ralios, then imports it for construction projects in Kustria. In the process, he has crossed swords with elves and dwarfs alike. He hires adventurers to protect his mines and timber mills, to crack the heads of recalcitrant indentured workers and to find new sources of raw materials. Although his interests are aligned with the God Learner sorcerers, he tries to stay out of politics as much as he can. He also constructs and furnishes cathedrals, giving him good reason to stay on the good side of the sorcerers' clerical rivals. In person, he is an aggressively gregarious fellow who plies his conversational partners with exotic delicacies.

The gaunt and mournful **Huilon Berabloin** hires adventurers for missions advancing the interests of the Kustrian Trader's Guild. This group, an alliance of the city's importers and exporters, aims to suppress banditry and oppose taxes on goods. It agitates in favour of guild rules licensing the professions. It limits competition within a trade and between professions. The Trader's Guild opposes businessmen like Meipala D'hredmorinos, who produces goods, ships them and then uses them in his construction projects. According to guild ideology, separate businessmen should perform all three transactions. Meipala is guilty of excessive competition and should be boycotted or legislated out

of business. The Guild denies that it funds sabotage operation against Meipala's far-flung interests but Huilon Berabloin's hirelings know the real story.

Excessive competition is ungodly. By obeying Guild Rules, one works neither so much that one becomes idle (and thus sinful), nor so much that one cannot attend Church or send one's thoughts to the Invisible God.

— Guiva Wimplefold, Abbess of Our Lady of Forbearance, Parfan

Arneus Grics is a wealthy collector of curios. He made his money importing fabrics from Teshnos and Kralorela and sold his business to his brother when taxes got too high. Now he spends his time in the libraries of Marvelmaze, which he treats as a vast and dusty catalogue. When he finds evidence of a magical artefact or lost art object that strikes his fancy, he dispatches a messenger to find one of his favourite adventuring band to get it for him. Technicalities, such as the item's present owner or the fatalities that might result from an attempt to wrest it from him, do not trouble the blithely covetous ex-trader. He will try to get adventurers to sign a contract, especially if they are illiterate. These documents inevitably attempt to cheat his hirelings and should never be signed under any circumstances.

Aided by a small network of human sympathisers, the troll **Huddux Urgug** travels into the city at night to hire adventuring teams to conduct missions against the enemies of his people. Huddux, an Argan Argar trader once friendly to the God Learners, now works to undermine them and their effort to penetrate uz mysteries. He speaks the local tongue in an elaborate, flowery manner and is generally at pains to prove himself as knowledgeable and civilised as anyone. His human accomplices are mostly Spolites, members of a darkness cult that flourished briefly in Peloria before the wyrmfriends took over. When Huddux wants to hire mercenaries without letting them know they are working for trolls, he uses them as intermediaries.

The sculptor **Casch**, who makes his living carving saints and gargoyles for cathedrals, acts as an agent for mostali interests. An obliging fellow who talks more than he listens, Casch fell in love with all things dwarfish during a sojourn to the Nidan Mountains many years ago.

Apparently considering him a useful idiot, representatives of the Decamony cultivated him as a contact among the God Learners. He hires adventurers to recover stolen mostali technology, to pilfer plans for God Learner technological items and to strike against the Zistorites.

Fluvand the Muffler is so named for the voluminous multi-coloured scarf he wears around his neck. No matter what the weather, Fluvand complains of chills. He also wears white gloves to protect his delicate hands. He is an organist at the Annmak Cathedral and a fervent devotee of Hrestoli Malkionism. An avid roof gardener, he believes the plant world is a profound expression of the Invisible God's will. He helps the aldryami, in hopes that they will one day experience Joy and Solace. They use him to hire adventurers. Missions include vengeance against wood cutters and God Learner exploiters of aldryami secrets. He is accompanied wherever he goes by Nrart, the sylph who powers the bellows of his church organ. She has a crush on Fluvand and will interfere with any female adventurers who seem overly familiar with him.

Huddux Urgug



AUTHORITIES

Interim administrator **Dardais** proved himself an able second-hand to Ilotos' treasurer, Sylark, thus winning the difficult assignment of keeping the peace in Kustria while a new Duke is appointed. Dardais does not want to rule the city or make changes to it. He simply wants to ride out whatever crises present themselves without making any career-ending mistakes. As his tenure here has stretched out, the various power groups, sensing the fundamental weakness of his position, have tried to make gains at each other's expense. Dardais understands that this is going on and tries to covertly keep the factions of Kustria in roughly the same balance as they were when he started. Any bold action he takes will be covert.

His steward, **Ponceli Greybrecks**, served the old Duke in the same capacity. Few suspect that this infirm, nattering old man was in his day a first-class assassin and poisoner, who disposed of the Duke's enemies with quiet aplomb. Haunted by his misdeeds, he now attempts to redeem himself through prayer. The exiles of Col fear that he will openly repent, confessing to murders undertaken on their behalf when they were in power.

Although Ponceli is still Dardais' public face, in private most of the work is done by his childhood friend, Juliner Lack-Coin.

HEROES

Kustria's fledgling adventurers aspire to the status of its legendary heroes. Any sensible person gives them a wide berth.

A hero is a murderer you admire.

— *Gurek Runespear, Mercenary of Safelster*

The City Watch

The job of keeping public order in Kustria belongs to the City Watch. Members of the watch must have been born in the city itself. This renders them immune to St. Kus' protective magic against invaders. They can manhandle city residents as necessary.

Unlike a modern police force, the City Watch does not patrol the streets or proactively look for trouble. Its officers and deputies maintain stations in Docklands, Marvelmaze and Guildertown. When crimes are reported to them, they send a team out to investigate. They muster en masse when commanded by the interim administrator. They spend most of their time riding herd on demonstrations, seeing to it that they do not get out of hand.

The Watch can muster a mere handful of units capable of dealing with Master-level adventurers. In the face of serious opposition, the vast majority of its deputies are too ill-paid and inexperienced to do anything but run.

Anyone who can afford it pays private bodyguards to protect them. They rely on their personal guards to investigate crimes against them and even to capture the offenders and turn them over to the watch.

Those lacking permanent guard details hire adventurers to do what the Watch will not. If they avoid harming innocent or influential citizens in the discharge of their duties, they will be lauded for acting as de facto deputies of the City Watch. If they hurt the wrong person, they will be treated as criminals.

Mad Dog Harda is an Orlanthi devotee of the female warrior god Vinga. She once threw a spear through the side of Arkat cathedral, during a pro-theist demonstration. This started a riot but no one dared charge her with the crime. Quick to anger and unrepentantly violent, she embodies everything ordinary people fear about both barbarians and adventurers. She went to the Hero Plane and found the secret of the Reverberating Strike: if she kills a person with her bare hands, the victim's surviving parents suffer immediate and fatal heart attacks. Harda disavows any interest in Orlanthi politics; she wants money and glory, and thinks the pickings are fatter under the God Learners than they would be if the Vesmonstrani rebels drove them out.

The Rightness Army champion **Gerieus** drips with jewels, each of them celebrating a heathen slain by his holy Sorcery. He wears his hair in an elaborately layered and lacquered arrangement, reminiscent of the court ladies of Kralorela. Gerieus delights in battling pagans

and personally slays any heretic he comes across in the lawless wilderness. His harsh, barking voice complements the maniacal glimmer in his eye.

Tuarardos the Jester affects motley garb and a multi-capped felt hat festooned with platinum bells. A master of God Learner magic, he lost his left hand in the Hero Plane and went back later to replace it with a six-fingered version. He argues that true understanding of the pagan myths lies in its nature as a cosmic joke. Tuarardos responds to attacks with capering, juggling, laughter and cold, soul-eating fire.

Yon the Wrestler styles himself as the peoples' hero. Born a slum-dweller, he was rescued by the fathers of St. Beaud, who beat into him a quiet reverence for the Invisible God. By praying to his saint, Yon became a mammoth man of muscle. A cheerfully boastful fellow, he loudly claims to have personally fought all nine of the Sinful Errors, headlocking all but one of them into submission. He ruefully admits that the Sixth Error, gluttony, defeated him soundly. Yon most often says this as he tucks into a mountainous pile of crispy chicken parts. Up in Ormsland last year, he knocked down an entire platoon of Dara Happan hoplites with a single punch, directed into the ground beneath their feet.

Presumably Yon's literal confrontation with the Nine Sinful Errors took place on the Saint Plane.

— Raberi D'janisor, Chief Officer, Kustrian God Learner Alliance

The **Effigy of Thrang** was recovered by the God Learners from the Hero Plane. Though some might argue it is more object than hero, this 45 centimetre automaton of brass, silver and living wood speaks, thinks and is capable of independent motivation. An unswerving supporter of the God Learner project, it advises Marvelmaze leaders on political and military strategy, as well as on their Other Side forays. On the battlefield, soldiers carry the Effigy on a litter. When they throw open its doors, terrible energies course through the enemy lines, scorching skin and liquefying internal organs. The Effigy appears in the dreams of God Learner foes, demoralising them and stealing their memories. It speaks in a high, whining voice and is attended by twin virgins, who must remain

The Effigy of Thrang



mute in its presence. It lives in a tower overlooking Felster Lake; at night the sound of its weeping echoes across the water.

Religious Leaders

The top cleric in town is **Jehard, Archbishop of Kustria**. He inspires his congregation with stoic forbearance in the face of an awful wasting disease which palsies his limbs and weakens his voice. The illness, widely believed to have been sent by agents of the EWF, has resisted the efforts of all healers who have tried to cure it. Jehard must be borne through the streets on a litter. To preserve his strength, he keeps his meetings short. Beneath the veneer of infirmity lies a canny politician who uses his limitations to best advantage. Jehard, an intelligent and urbane man, favours the church's moderate side. Aside from his all-important work as a spiritual exemplar, his primary purpose is keeping the city's many bumptious religious factions from overreaching. Even zealots who wish he was as fiery as they are cannot help but genuflect before his obvious suffering. During those rare moments when the flock is at peace, Jehard provides wise and cautious counsel to interim administrator Dardais.

Legal System

Under normal circumstances all criminal and civil cases would be adjudicated by the Duke, who would delegate nearly all of them to a steward. Now the interim administrator adjudicates cases involving serious offences to the public order, including murder and delegates minor cases to one of three deputies.

Four sentences are possible in the event of criminal conviction: discharge, fines, banishment or execution. A noble would have to commit a crime of extraordinary brutality to warrant execution. Instead, they are banished from Safelster (if they return, then they are subject to execution). Commoners can be executed for petty theft.

In civil cases, the adjudicator may award monetary compensation to the plaintiff, grant the plaintiff's claim but award token damages or dismiss the claim.

A strong leader could dispense justice without concern for political consequence. Dardais hates lawsuits between influential persons, as they guarantee that he will alienate somebody he'd sooner mollify. He has adopted delay as a standard tactic and now has a year's backlog of cases he just does not want to deal with.

If Jehard is the city's voice of religious moderation, **Thyerna Whale-Eater** is its paragon of scourging faith. He is the local general of the Rightness Army, the faith-driven militia responsible for countless imperial victories. An uncompromising, single-minded man with a face like a hardened fist, Thyerna earned his nickname from the circumstances surrounding his rededication to Malkion. Once a sailor in the imperial navy, he was shipwrecked on a tiny Vithelan island. Starving, he prayed for deliverance, promising to give himself up to the destruction of God's enemies. Just as Thyerna was on the brink of death, a mammoth whale beached itself on the shore. He nourished himself on the sea beast until rescue came. Since then, whenever he questions his promise to burn and flay heretics and heathens, he pats his stomach and remembers the gift God gave him. Thyerna's current avowed fixation is the EWF; he seeks authorisation from his superiors back in Seshnela to declare a pogrom against its local minions. This project is a smokescreen. In truth, he suspects Kustria's God Learners of heathen sympathies and seeks evidence to have the lot of them burned.

The God Learner chaplain, **Eliasch Gald**, has sniffed out Thyerna's true intentions and seeks to immunise his cadre from harm by ingratiating himself with Jehard. Witty and companionable, Eliasch is a talented card player, expert taster of vintage brandies and delightful teller of mildly scandalous jokes. While laughingly professing a complete disinterest in politics or controversies of doctrine, he keeps his ear firmly pressed to the ground. If an eruption in Kustrian church politics is imminent, Eliasch will know about it before it happens.

Where Eliasch goes, **Heriganth Eaglespeaker** is not far behind. This Orlanthi priest serves as Bishop of Pagans, an odd position created by the God Learners – and vehemently disputed by the Rightness Army. Heriganth's job is to keep the local Orlanthi quiet and obedient, in exchange for grudging tolerance of their heathen religious practices. During his tenure, Heriganth has become thoroughly infected by his friend Eliasch's taste for cards, brandy and witticisms. He has also become quite fond of Archbishop Jehard. Some urbanised Orlanthi appreciate the protection afforded by Heriganth's political connections. More recent émigrés from Vesmonstran mock him as a dandified collaborator.

These types gravitate toward **Gordangara Rockstaff** for spiritual guidance. An Ernaldan priestess who makes her living as a washerwoman in the Scrubs, she says little about her reasons for coming to Kustria from the barbarian north. She refers often to an apparently dead husband, who was an Orlanthi priest. When giving advice to men, she phrases it as what her husband, Venaharal, would say. Gordangara is fiercely protective of her eight year old son, Alakoring. Somebody once heard her say that the dragonfriends know of his great destiny and will kill him if they get the chance.

SORCERERS

Kustria's ranking member of the God Learner Alliance is **Raberi D'tanisor**, who is famous for never using a single word when many will instead ideally suffice and

Four (Affordable) Sages of Kustria

Alfant Hart is a hungry young student, son of local farmers, determined to make a name for himself as a God Learner. When he runs low on drinking money, he sleeps on the steps of the Xuralion Crystal Library, hoping to intercept an adventurer in need of research assistance. He is cheerful and diligent, though some mercenaries feel he takes too specific an interest in the motives behind their inquiries.

The portly **Beufouid Sugartooth** must usually be roused from a table at his favourite drinking establishment, a student pub called the Fallen Acorn. Though well into middle age, he has stalled at the initiate level in his sorcerous order. His research results are a little sloppy but, to his credit, is completely disinterested in his clients' activities.

Rain or shine, the sage **Brunema** can be found working her musty-smelling stall at the Knowledge Market. With a hooded robe and dishevelled hair, she affects a crone-like appearance, although people who've seen her in her off-hours report an elegantly dressed and neatly groomed woman of obvious means. She specialises in brief and snappy answers, and will also perform card readings and other auguries. She fends off accusations of witchcraft by salting her readings with calls for saintly intercession and quotations from the *Abiding Book*.

The bent and wizened **Hastaval Old-Clan** is a senior member of the city's intelligentsia who has fallen into dotage. His memory for facts is clear as a bell in the hours after dawn. By night time he confidently spouts utter rubbish. His fellow Lhankor Mhy sages take good care of him, knowing that he has forgotten more than they will ever know.

who is equally notorious for his never-ending sentences, which never seem to require him to pause for breath and are uniquely phrased to ward off interruption. He works to expand Marvelmaze and to increase the share of imperial funds going to the God Learners of Ralios. His own journeys to into the pagan mythworlds of the Other Side have granted him a peculiar, echoing laugh and an infallible ability to predict the weather.

Raberi comes from the Seshnelan duchy of Tanisor, where Gbaji once made men into vampires. Come to think of it, I cut my finger in front of him once and he all of a sudden looked awful hungry.

— Gurek Runespear, Mercenary of Safelster

Girans Malos heads the Kustrian branch of the Zistorite Order. This diminutive, wizened man is famous for his ability to disguise himself as a Clay Mostali. He speaks their tongue, knows their customs and allegedly served for two years as a dogsbody in the dwarf community of the Nidan Mountains. When asked about the 10,000 silver bounty they have placed on his head, Girans is dismissive: 'Those cheap whoresons! They know I'm worth ten times that!'. Right now he is busily attempting to recruit battalions to break the siege of the Clanking City in God Forgot. Few takers have lined up to join him.

Pre-God Learner Sorcery schools also practice in Kustria. Their leading exponent is the physically and socially awkward **Gillanc Triori**. This lanky, guffawing fellow looks the part of a cretinous rustic but is an accomplished practitioner of the Telendarian school. In his

younger days, he parlayed its exploration-oriented spells into a career as Kustria's richest adventurer. Now he uses his fortune, and a small private militia, to agitate for the rights of traditionalist sorcerers.

Agitators

The city's official leaders must contend with the ceaseless agitation waged by dozens of professional troublemakers. They cultivate groups of supporters to donate money to their various causes and march in demonstrations. Kustria's ordinary folk are notoriously susceptible to engineered hysteria. They might be swept into an anti-God Learner march one day and then riot with equal fervour for the God Learners the next.

Kustria's agitators rise and fall like leaves in the wind. The most successful of the present moment are as follows.

The ragged, wild-eyed **Geoffros of the Sacred Urn** claims to receive sacred visions from St. Xemela, mother to Hrestol. According to Geoffros, she warns him that the God Learners are wounding the fabric of the universe. Unless they are stopped, their wicked Sorcery will sink half the Empire and plunge the rest into darkness and superstition. Geoffros and his vociferous followers, many of whom are rejects from sorcerous universities, walk through the streets tolling warning bells. Annoyingly, their favourite time to do this is at sunrise. He whips up riots whenever scandal rocks Marvelmaze. Rivals to the God Learners secretly fill his alms bucket, even though they know his outlandish predictions could never come to pass.

The sacred urn Geoffros carries was blessed by St. Xemela. Some ruffian adventurer tried to steal it last year and his son was badly wounded. Rumour has it that Arneus Crics sent them.

— Beufouid Sugartooth, Sage of the Fallen Acorn Tavern

Zealous anti-pagans and native Kustrians with an axe to grind against their Orlanthi neighbours find common cause under the banner of **Abelam Archeri**. This rail-thin, darkly insinuating man blames the barbarians for everything from crop failure to the death of his mother. Whenever an Orlanthi commits a crime or offends public piety, which is often, Abelam and followers hit the cobblestones to demand the expulsion from Kustria of all pagans who refuse to convert to Malkionism.

Abelam clashes often with the equally fiery **Godemar Pavingstone**, waggishly nicknamed for his habit of tearing up the streets during demonstrations. He and his people belong to the Missionary faction. They believe that pagans are doomed to eternal perdition unless they embrace Malkion but insist that they be well-treated by the city. Driving them out won't help them convert, will it? Godemar's muscular conception of faith allows him to guiltlessly crack the skulls of any who dispute his authority.

The Moderation League, composed of avowed Delayers, Postponers and Realists, occasionally marches against both Abelam and Godemar's groups. It preaches for calm and thoughtful discourse, underlining the point with hurled rocks and debris. Their leader, widely thought to be in the pay of Eilasch Gald, is **Nainvaros Silverhelm**, an illegitimate son of the old duke who uses league funds to offset his always-crushing gambling debts.

Loyalists of the old Autarchy take to the streets whenever the reputations of Arkat or the Stygian Empire are publicly sullied. The Sons of the Autarchy parade on the old Empire's national holidays. Their demonstrations often collapse into drunken rampages. Once considered subversive, this organisation is now mostly the preserve of nostalgic drunkards. Because they release of social tensions which might otherwise be directed in an effective manner against the authorities its festivals are tacitly permitted. Its current head is a white-haired, doddering old crank named **Engral**, who says he can out drink any man alive.

The Sons of the Autarchy are regularly provoked by the Anti-Gbaji Conference, an officiously titled assemblage of Arkat haters. Some, like the enigmatic **Thamaneu the Educuer**, who changes his name at the end of every year, purport a connection to the long-forgotten teachings of the invented god Nysalor. Others are fervent Malkioni who condemn Arkat for his embrace of the trolls.

Outlaws

Orlanthi outlaw **Wigadai Big-Breath** runs the Vadrus Runners, one of the city's most feared criminal gangs. He struts with impunity through his section of the Scrubs, leading most to assume that he has paid hefty bribes to the City Watch. Since being cast out by his clan, he has rededicated himself to the worship of Orlanth's brutal brother Vadrus. In this god's honour, his men go on a rampage of senseless violence every Sacred Time. Because he confines his fury to the Scrubs, the authorities never bother him.

The Renunciators are a rival gang operating in the northern Scrubs. Members must swear an oath against Malkion during their initiation rites. They ally with the

Ava, Leader of the Renunciators



wandering spirits of theists slain by Malkioni churchmen and missionaries, gaining shamanic magic from them. Their present leader is a near-feral young woman simply called **Ava**. She is infamous for biting out the throat of a City Watch deputy in a recent street fight. This happened during a reprisal raid for a previous injury against a City Watcher; after that, they have left the Renunciators alone.

Kustria's most feared assassin is known only as the **Marrow Taker**. Examinations of his victims indicate that he killed them through sorcerous magic. They are found locked in positions of twisted agony. When the bodies are moved, the bones turn to powder, leaving the corpses horrifyingly limp and malleable. Because this is the work of a sorcerer, the Marrow Taker is widely imagined to be a culturally Malkioni man. Two years ago a Colite exile called Helinos was tried and, on scant evidence, sentenced

to death for one of the Marrow Taker's murders. Months later, the killer struck again, in Partan. Victims are invariably prominent but have nothing else in common, suggesting that the assassin hires out to anyone who will pay his fee. A 5,000 silver award awaits anyone who apprehends him and turns him over to city authorities. Anyone figuring out how his clients contact him would have a leg up in the race for this enticing bounty.

Adventures in Kustria

Before involving themselves in the affairs of the city's heroes and power brokers, beginning adventuring parties can establish themselves on the Kustrian the missions provided below. Because players can read this book, they are presented as the party would learn about them. Games Masters should add complications and surprises as session pacing demands.

The Dozing Bureaucrat: Tax assessor Louquel Falbrak is in trouble. Last night, overcome by overwork and anxiety, he fell asleep in the middle of a meal at the Tavern of the Sublime Pen, near The Square. While he dozed, someone pilfered his folio of tax rolls, representing an entire season of alternately painstaking and dangerous work in the farm district surrounding the city. This morning an urchin of St. Beaud's approached him with an anonymous message. The thief says he can have the folio back in exchange for an extortionate sum. If he cooperates, none of his superiors will ever know of his flagrant dereliction. He needs to recover the rolls without his bosses finding out but can only afford a fraction of the ransom. Louquel approaches the adventurers to find out who has the papers and get them back for him.

Demon Hunt: The timinit monk Orvisvo sits in chains, in a church dungeon beneath the Arkat Cathedral. Two nights ago he tore a post from his bed and used it to beat his abbot, Miglonn, to death. Orvisvo says he was possessed by a demon, who compelled him to do it. This is a valid defence under Malkioni law, provided that it can be independently corroborated. The church will not pay to investigate his story but Suiccol, a timinit prominent in the Rug Seller's Guild, will. He provides the adventurers with a compass which will light up when within ten metres of the demon or someone possessed by

it. According to Brother Orvisvo, it was named Carduku and intended to instigate further murders of Kustrian churchmen.

Dragon in the Catacombs: Har Bau, an outlaw Kralori mystic, defected from the Path of Immanent Mastery to fight against the Empire alongside uz from the Kingdom of Ignorance. He was captured by the Viviel, a sorcerer of the Hwarosian order, and brought here for interrogation. Viviel believes that Har Bau found a connection between dragon and trollish magic – one that the God Learners could use against both uz and EWF, if only they could extract it from him. Har Bau escaped from custody, down into the ancient catacombs beneath the city, where its Stygian kings are buried. Viviel seeks adventurers to go down and capture him alive. The EWF wants Har Bau dead, in case he does have damaging occult secrets to reveal. The uz of Guhan see him as a hero and want him rescued. Depending on their loyalties, the Player Characters could hire on with any of the above patrons.

Poison Whispers: Someone's spreading rumours that the young sorcerer Bralant is a henotheist heretic. If these take hold, they could dead-end his budding career and prevent his elevation within his order. He hires the adventurers to find out who is behind the whispering campaign. Is it his former friend Herneto, who he edged out for an important award? Amilman, the instructor who got fired after Bralant exposed his incompetence? Or could it be the innkeeper, Suilinos, whose daughter he deflowered?

Puzzle Maze: Every year the Zistorite sorcerers of the Queljang Institute stage a demonstration of their trap-making prowess. Adventurers of all stripes are invited to compete against an obstacle course of sophisticated mechanised traps. Unlike the traps the Queljang sorcerers sell to their clients, these have been rendered non-lethal. Adventurers who fail to circumvent them are held or rendered unconscious. The individual who gets through them in the shortest time wins a 2,500 silver prize. Even experienced heroes who do not need the money compete for the prestige. This year the Queljang have learned that a mostali agent has entered the contest as a ringer, in order to sabotage it. They hire the Player Characters to enter the contest too, so they can smoke him or her out.

Raging Tide: The wealthy burgher Suidos hires the group to scare some sense into his prodigal son, Ulieu. This surly, truculent fifteen year old has run off to run with the Raging Tide, a rising delinquent gang from the Scrubs. Suidos wants the group to kidnap Ulieu, posing as a rival gang, and show him how terrifying the life of a criminal can be. They must at all costs conceal their true allegiance; if Suidos finds out the lesson came from his father, he will bind himself even tighter to his ne'er-do-well friends.

The Zittr's Sapphire: Najurav, an envoy from Teshnos, is on his way to Kustria, where he will participate in a symposium on mysticism sponsored by the Telendarian College of Sorcery. This exalted zittr wears a turban containing a lucent sapphire as big as a man's fist. Despite the array of exotic fire powers he and his retinue wield, stealing that gem would be a legendary and lucrative achievement.

Everyone knows what Najurav will say at the conference: that mysticism is incompatible with God Learner techniques and best left alone. It is the same old song the cross-legged meditationists always sing.

— Spolorfal the Arranger, Dean of Pythos University

Wonder Brew: The Brewer's Guild is up in arms over the sudden entry into the Kustrian market of an incredibly popular ale called Blackbrew. It is especially popular among the city's Orlanthi residents. Some say it even increases an Orlanthi worshipper's physical powers. Wilder rumours claim that its recipe came from the Other Side. Guild rules specify who in the city can make ale and what the ingredients may be. If the Brewers can find out who is making it and prove that its manufacture fails to conform to established recipes, they can bring a suit before the interim administrator to put a halt to this blatantly unfair competition. They hire the adventurers to conduct their investigation.

INDEX

- Abiding Book, The 45
 Above and Beyonds 28
 Adventures in Kustria 156
 Age of Terror 12
 Aldryami (Elfs) 7, 65
 Aldrya the Grower 7
 Aldryami History 66
 Aldryami Life 66
 Aldryami Magic 67
 Aldryami Myths 65
 Alkoth 98
 Allegiances of Jrustela 85
 Altinela, Beyond the Glaciers 122
 Annor 94
 An Kwan Dai 110
 Aptanance the Sage 33
 Arachan 75
 Arandinni Islands 115
 Arbennan 53
 Arch-Duchy of Haragala 115
 Arch-Duke Norlantos 84
 Arene Whisper-Hush 30
 Arkat 13
 Arkat: Slain Devil or Martyred Hero? 132
 Arkwal 86
 Arolanit 88
 Arshmolod 60
 Arshu Phola 83
 Arstranwal 118
 Ascended Gods 34
 Auld Wyrnish 6
 Azilos 125
 Babadi 60
 Balazar 101
 Banamabar 107
 Banjarn 105
 Banthe Sea 119
 Barmalan 45
 Beels 83
 Begotha 90
 Belstos 126
 Bemelor 95
 Bevjarn 108
 Bokesth 109
 Boztakang 79
 Brass dwarfs 74
 Breaking of the World Machine 71
 Brithos 88
 Brolia 97
 Bronze 5
 Burilgi 109
 Caladraland 102
 Calendar 4
 Calyz 59
 Carmania 57, 96
 Cerebresites 75
 Chal 59
 Chalana Arroy 4
 Chang Tsai 110
 Chaos 7
 Charg 91
 Chen-Ga Snow Leopard People 114
 Chi Ting 111
 Church Row 139
 Churn Durel 114
 Cities of Jrustela 82
 Cities of Umathela 118
 City of Demonstrations 144
 City Without Walls 140
 Clanking City, The 14, 104
 Col 127
 Commerce (EWF) 29
 Commerce (God Learner) 22
 Continual Ascendance 110
 Converters 28
 Copper dwarfs 74
 Creation Age 12
 Cultures and Peoples 4
 Currency 5
 Current Events: Year 908 14
 Dakkad 59
 Damali Deer People 114
 Damolsten 86
 Dangk 128
 Dara Happa 14, 98
 Darjin 98
 Darjini 57
 Darjini Clans 98
 Darlap 100
 Daros 23
 Dashomo Sea 121
 Daughter of the Golden Dragon 14
 Dawn Age 12
 Dayzatar 5
 Debaldans 45
 Delecti the Inquirer 31
 Destroyed Peoples of Pamaltela 53
 Diamondwarf 74
 Dijaar and his Five Friends 31
 Dinisso Sea 121
 Divine Magic 9
 Doraddi 54
 Dorastor 101
 Dorkath 98
 Draconic Agriculture 104
 Draconic Powers 27
 Draconised Orlanthi 41
 Dragon's Eye 106
 Dragonewts 6, 67
 Dragonewt Colonies 112
 Dragonewt Existence 68
 Dragonewt History 69
 Dragonewt Magic 70
 Dragonewt Myths 67
 Dragons 33
 Dragon Pass 104
 Drom 129
 Dromalwal 89
 Ducal Wars 18
 Duke Bauratos 85
 Duke Garolan 83
 Duke Kontharan 85
 Duke Miskos 83
 Duke Sableros 86
 Duke Shordone 85
 Duke Valarger 83
 Duke Yuthelmag 84
 Eastern Waters 120
 Edges Of the World 121
 Eenlor 93
 Ekozite 45
 Elat 59
 Elder Wilds 101
 Elf Coasts 118
 Elz Ast 98
 Empire of Wyrn's Friends (EWF) 6, 24
 Enemies of the EWF 31
 Ephemeræ 75
 Eradinthanos 83
 Ernalda 4
 Esrolia 102
 Essence World 10
 Estali 129
 Estan 86
 Esvularings 104
 Evrowal 83
 Ezran 63
 Faith and Magic (God Learner) 19
 Fate of the Waertagi 120
 Fethlon 114
 Fethloni 60
 Fifth Action Era: Decay and Doom 44
 First Action: Creation 42
 First Age: Recovery and Catastrophe 12
 Fogarth Toothaxe 31
 Folk Magic 8
 Fonrit 117
 Foreign Gods 39
 Fourth Action: Duplication and Preservation 43
 Four (Affordable) Sages of Kustria 154
 Frastoreal 91
 Fronela 90
 Frowal 86
 Fuknama 113
 Furalor 59
 Furlandan 45
 Galin 130
 Galstar 91
 Garsting 101
 Gaskaros 24
 Gbaji the Deceiver 13
 Gebkeran 62
 Genertsket 87
 Geography 3
 Gloranthan Metals 5
 Gloranthan Themes 3
 God Forgot 103
 God Learners 5
 God Learners' Secret, The 13
 God Learners Empire 6
 God Learner Empire 15
 God Learner Magic 19
 God Learner Tolerance 24
 God Time 12
 God World 10
 Golaros Lowlands 91
 Golden Age 12
 Gold dwarfs 74
 Goondas 60
 Great Compromise 12
 Green Age 12
 Green Contemplation 110
 Grinel 53
 Grupartho 109
 Guglar 94
 Guiching 110
 Guildertown 138
 Gwymirwal 89
 Hanfarador Islands 115
 Hargrath Golden-Scale 31
 Hathinelthor 83
 Hendrikiland 103
 Hensavara 62
 Hernies 90

- Herolal 95
 HeroQuesting 11
 Hero Plane 11
 Hesezjagu 63
 Higher Magic 9
 Higher Realms 123
 History in a Nutshell 11
 History of the EWF 26
 Hobimarong 62
 Hobintam 53
 Homago 116
 Hombobobom 78
 Hopeful Centrality 111
 Horse Nomads of Pent 5
 How Do I Scheme? (EWF) 29
 How Do I Scheme? (God Learner) 22
 How Do I Trade? (EWF) 29
 How Do I Trade? (God Learner) 22
 How To Act Like An Aldryami 66
 How To Act Like A God Learner 15
 How To Act Like A Timint 76
 How To Play A Kraloreli 35
 How To Play A Yelmite 58
 Noble 58
 Hredmorinos 83
 Hrestolket 87
 Hsa Tiger People 114
 Hsiang Wan 113
 Hsin Yin 110
 Hsunchen (Beast Men) 8
 Huand 59
 Hudaro Ocean 119
 Hui Jang 112
 Humakt 4
 Ikankos 91
 Ilotos, Emperor of the Land and Sea 23
 Inganna Willowhair 30
 Inhuman Races, The 7
 Interior, The 117
 Invisible God, The 6
 Irenstos 83
 Iron 5
 Iron, Clay and Diamond 72
 Iron dwarfs 74
 Issaries 4
 I Fought We Won 12
 Jakaboom 78
 Jalanswal 84
 Janube Valley 90
 Jeset 78
 Jolosi 53
 Jorgablan 130
 Jrudai 59
 Jrustela 82
 Kabalt 62
 Kahar Sea 121
 Kajabor 12
 Kargzant 5
 Karkal 62
 Karrg 78
 Karvanyar 14, 31
 Kaxtorplose 95
 Keetslands 116
 Keniryan Sea 120
 Kenthiliu 23
 Kereneth Sea 120
 Kethaela 102
 Kingdom of Ignorance 7
 Kingdom of Ignorance, The 114
 King Androfin 31
 King Bandan 63
 Korreinwal 118
 Kostadi 100
 Kotersland 96
 Kralorela 109
 Kraloreli 7, 32
 Kraloreli History 34
 Kraloreli Life 35
 Kraloreli Magic 36
 Kraloreli Myths 32
 Kuchawn 113
 Kustria 136
 Kustria Agitators 154
 Kustria Armour 145
 Kustria Authorities 151
 Kustria City Watch 151
 Kustria Districts 137
 Kustria Docklands 138
 Kustria Equipment 146
 Kustria Heroes 151
 Kustria Legal System 153
 Kustria Lodgings 141
 Kustria Notables 148
 Kustria Outlaws 155
 Kustria Patrons 148
 Kustria Religious Leaders 152
 Kustria Resources 141
 Kustria Services 146
 Kustria Sorcerers 153
 Kustria Square 139
 Kustria Supplies 144
 Kustria Taverns 143
 Kustria Weapons 145
 Laonan Tao 111
 Laraloori 62
 Larn Hasamador 63
 Laurmal 87
 Lead dwarfs 74
 Lhankor Mhy 4
 Lo-Fak Yak People 114
 Lodril 5
 Lokarnos 5
 Lokow 113
 Looting the World of Myth 20
 Lordly Forests 107
 Loskalm 90
 Luathela, Land of Sunset 122
 Lucans 75
 Lumavoxoran 62
 Lurghalos 23
 Magasta's Pool 119
 Magic (EWF) 27
 Magic Plane 10
 Mahan 91
 Maidstone Mountains 91
 Malkioni 6, 42
 Malkioni History 44
 Malkioni Life 46
 Malkioni Magic 48
 Malkioni Myths 42
 Malkioni Saints 47
 Malvonians 45
 Maniria 94
 Manithi 98
 Manor Hill 140
 Man of Five Stones 31
 Marost 130
 Marvelmaze 140
 Mashunashan 63
 Massos 98
 Melib 115
 Merasch 90
 Modern Age: Empire and Adventure 13
 Mokato 115
 Mostali (Dwarfs) 8, 70
 Mostali History 72
 Mostali Magic 73
 Mostali Models 74
 Mostali Myths 71
 Mostali Origins 71
 Mostal Dies 71
 Myrmidons 75
 Mystic Gods 33
 Mystic Magic 9
 Myth of the Founding of Kustria 136
 Narilor 94
 Neleswal 87
 Neliomi Sea 119
 Nenduren 63
 Nevelmarkan 105
 New Frowal 84
 New Hrestolket 118
 Noarn 118
 Nomads of the Waste 7, 48
 Nomads of the Waste History 49
 Nomads of the Waste Life 50
 Nomads of the Waste Magic 51
 Nomads of the Waste Myths 48
 Northern Mountains 117
 Notables (EWF) 30
 Notables (God Learner) 23
 Nysalor 12
 Oceans 119
 Old Ways, The 4
 Olorost 106
 Orgethite 45
 Oria 5
 Orin Jistrel 105
 Orlanth 4
 Orlanthi 4, 36
 Orlanthi History 38
 Orlanthi Life 39
 Orlanthi Magic 41
 Orlanthi Myths 36
 Orostaban 106
 Orphalsket 87
 Orphalsketkal (New Orphalsket) 85
 Oslira 5
 Otherworldly Realms 123
 Otherworlds, The 10
 Otniza 108
 Pald 108
 Pamaltela 117
 Pamaltela's Non-Pamaltelans 52
 Pamaltelan 51
 Pamaltelans 7
 Pamaltelan History 52
 Pamaltelan Life 53
 Pamaltelan Magic 54
 Pamaltelan Myths 51
 Partan 131
 Pasos 87
 Path of Immanent Mastery 7
 Pelandan 57

- Peloria 98
 Pelorians 5, 55
 Pelorian Cultures, Other 57
 Pelorian History 56
 Pelorian Life 56
 Pelorian Magic 58
 Pelorian Myths 55
 Pent 108
 Peoples of Teshnos, Other 60
 Peresk 85
 Perfect Age, The 33
 Pernosi 53
 Piskosol 85
 Pompalic 24
 Prax 7
 Prehistory (The God Time) 12
 Prime Runes 12
 Prince Hrestol 12, 45
 Pronunciation 14
 Qa-Ying Eagle People 114
 Quicksilver dwarfs 74
 Qutu 109
 Raibanth 98
 Ramalia 94
 Rathorela 92
 Ravin 94
 Realms Below, The 124
 Redlands 102
 Respectful Welcome 112
 Return from Chaos 72
 Return to Splendour 34
 Ri-Si Woodpecker People 114
 Rinliddi 57, 99
 Rock dwarfs 74
 Rothor 93
 RuneQuest Sight 6
 Runes 8
 Safelster 125
 Saint Plane 11
 Sakum, the Burning Regions 122
 Saliligor 62
 Salor 105
 Sankusa 59
 Scrubs, The 138
 Second Action: Manifestation and Perception 42
 Second Council 12
 Segurane 88
 Seshnela 86
 Shadow Plateau 104
 Shan Shan Mountains 114
 Sha Ming 112
 Shenilstos 86
 Shiji Mori 112
 Shi Mai 110
 Silver 5
 Silver dwarfs 74
 Sky World 10
 Sky World, The 124
 Slon 121
 Slontos 93
 Sog City 91
 Solf 59
 Somash 59
 Sorcery 9
 Sorcery Schools of the Dawn
 Age 45
 Soster 94
 Spike 12
 Spike, The 71
 Spirit Magic 9
 Spirit World 10
 Sshorg Sea 120
 St. Gerlant 47
 St. Hwaros 47
 St. Kus 136
 St. Serozos 47
 St. Talor 47
 St. Volanc 47
 St. Xemela 47
 Storm Age 12
 Stygian Empire 13
 sublime mysticism 7
 Sunstop 12
 Suspension of the Counties 126
 Svalwal, The Shattered City 86
 Swermela Sea 120
 Sylark 23
 Sylila 100
 Syran 132
 Talarswal 89
 Talarastar 97
 Tarasdal 132
 Tarint 54
 Tarkala Wyrmsdottir 31
 Tarstargawal 119
 Tastalor 92
 Telendarians 45
 Teleos 120
 Teshnan 58
 Teshnans 7
 Teshnan History 60
 Teshnan Life 61
 Teshnan Magic 61
 Teshnan Myths 59
 Teshnos 114
 Thanor 94
 Theyala, Land of Dawn 122
 The Goddess Switch 21
 Third Action: Multiplication and Identification 42
 Thoskali 60
 Timinits (Insect Men) 8, 74
 Timinit Attitudes toward other Inhumans 77
 Timinit History 75
 Timinit Magic 77
 Timinit Myths 74
 Tinaros 133
 Tindryza the Geologist 83
 Ting Bu Dao 111
 Ting Shui 111
 Tin dwarfs 74
 Tiskos 133
 Togaro Ocean 121
 Tortun 134
 Trowjang 114
 Truthful Exhalation 112
 Tung Shui An 112
 Two-Year Winter 14
 Types of Insect Men 75
 Tzu Lung 110
 Ube 109
 Umalon 60
 Umathela 118
 Unconquered Lands 99
 Underworld 10
 Undiscovered Heresy 117
 Urox 4
 Urusvensket 89
 Uton 134
 Uz (Trolls) 8, 78
 Uz History 80
 Uz Life 79
 Uz Magic 81
 Uz Myths 78
 Vadeli Islands 120
 Valantia 134
 Vaneekara 78
 Varankol the Mangler 31
 Varanswal 119
 Veakmal 94
 Venperesha 63
 Verenela 114
 Vesharios 23
 Visible Sky, The 123
 Vissala 24
 Vistikos Left-Eye 30
 Vith 62
 Vithelan 62
 Vithelans 7
 Vithelan History 63
 Vithelan Life 64
 Vithelan Magic 64
 Vithelan Myths 62
 Vithela (The Eastern Isles) 115
 Vormain 116
 Waertagswal 89
 Waha 7
 Wakboth 12
 Wan Hua 111
 War (EWF) 29
 War (God Learner) 22
 War Dragons 28
 Wastelands 108
 Wenela 93
 Wesluk 94
 Western Waters 119
 What's Your Faction? (God Learner) 19
 What God Learners Do 18
 What Wyrmfriends Know 25
 Who Do I Fight? (EWF) 30
 Who Do I Fight? (God Learner) 23
 Wolfblood 135
 World of Glorantha 3
 Wurm's Claw Initiate 27
 Wurm's Eye Ascendant 27
 Wurm's Face Believer 27
 Wurm's Hand Triumphant 27
 Wurm's Tongue Master 27
 Wyrmfriends 6
 Yelm 5
 Yelmalio 5
 Yinkin 4
 Yoranday 119
 Yothernara 62
 Yumo Dao 112
 Yuthuppa 98
 Zaaburket 89
 Zendamalthans 45
 Zitro Argon 59
 Zon 59
 Zorak Zoran 79

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