



# Glorantha

THE SECOND AGE



RuneQuest



## JRUSTELA

### Credits

**Author**  
Gareth Hanrahan

**Editor**  
Nick Robinson

**Cover Art**  
Tony Parker

**Cover Design**  
Bob Cram, Dan Howard & Jeff Koch

**RuneQuest Logo**  
Anne Stokes

**Proofreading**  
Scribendi

**Interior Illustrations**  
Robin Bowles, Nathan Furman,  
Iordanis Lazaridis, Javier Martinez,  
Claudio Pozas, Phil Renne

**Publications Manager**  
Ian Belcher

**Production Director**  
Alexander Fennell

**Playtesting**  
Lucas MacKay

**Special Thanks**  
Greg Stafford & Roderick Robertson

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# HISTORY

In Jrustela, just before the End, they told strange stories. Some tales were of laments to the Invisible God, asking why He had abandoned His most devout; others were cautionary tales of hubris or rallying calls for revenge or teaching stories about survival and the preservation of knowledge. Most, though, were tales of a kind not told since – they were stories of symbol and metaphor, of equation and reference; they were notational stories, empty stories but they were the only stories left to the doomed land.

Then the End came and washed it all away.

This book is a story of the years before the End.

## Prehistoric Jrustela

Jrustela figures in almost no tales of the time before the Dawn. This odd blank period in the land's past confuses historians and some have even suggested that Jrustela was raised from the Dashomo Sea during the Greater Darkness by some ancient and potent magic as a refuge for those fleeing Chaos, although this is most likely a confusion engendered by the original Slontan refugees who came here during the Dawn Age. It is probable that some elder civilisation – not uz or timinit but something stranger – once held this island fortress but nothing survives of Jrustela before the Dawn save for some cryptic ruins and carved stones. The inhumans may know more of the island's past but their histories have not yet been revealed to the God Learners.

Certainly, when humans first came to Jrustela during the Dawn Age, there were already inhuman creatures living there. Uz could have crawled out of any hole from the Wonderhome before the Dawn and there are numerous Uz settlements in the central mountains. There is also a Mostali fortress somewhere in the highlands. The timinit were once believed to have originated on Jrustela but their myths point to a birthing in the southern continent of Pamaltela. Nonetheless, timinit crossed the sea to Jrustela centuries ago on little rafts or just by clinging to wave-tossed sticks.

## The First Settlers

The Olodo – literally, *old people* – were the first human settlers of Jrustela in history and were brought to the island by the Waertagi. Jrustela is obviously the key to travel across the seas, as it is the first major landmass encountered by a ship sailing south from Genertelta or Brithos. The other routes south, like island-hopping down the Venperthan Sea or braving the storms around Teleos, were too long for the Waertagi to contemplate and they needed a base of operations. As the Waertagi had no desire to live on the land, they looked for a people willing to settle a new land. The first settlers were transported south from their original homes in Slontos. Accounts of the original motivation for the Olodo's departure from Slontos vary – some tales say that the Olodo were exiled from their homeland and rescued by the Waertagi; others insist that the Waertagi took the Olodo as slaves. By blood and culture, the Olodo were most akin to the folk of Kaxtorplose. However they came to Jrustela, they landed on the north coast, very near to the first Seshnegi settlements that would come centuries later. The relatively sheltered bays around what would become Hredimorimos or Evrowal would have been ideal ports but for some reason the Olodo abandoned their early settlements within a generation. When the Waertagi trade boats returned, they found nothing but cold hearths and empty buildings. The first settlers had left the coast and gone beyond the ken of the sea-farers. The Waertagi no doubt shrugged their shoulders and muttered about how the one time they actually wanted land-dwellers to stay still, they heard the call of the horizon wandered off.

The initial settlement of Slontan refugees called themselves the Kachenblod (the name Olodo was obviously applied by the later Seshnegi). Within a few years of arriving, they angered the local earth spirits, the dreo, and were forced to flee. They abandoned the town of First Landing and travelled south into the inner reaches of Jrustela. There, they ran afoul of the timinit hives and fearsome dreo-controlled beasts of the inner jungle basin and a great many Kachenblod were killed or else separated from the main colony. They were scattered and by the time they found the Faramosel river and followed it south to the coast they had lost everything they brought with them from Genertala, including most of their magic, as they

worshipped northern storm gods who had little power in the jungle. The Kachenblod divided into a dozen or so tribes and built small fortified villages along the southern shoreline. They survived by fishing and gathering while they fought a constant war with the timinit tribes and jungle horrors.

The largest of these villages was Arshu Phola, which became the new holy city of the Kachenblod as they struggled to re-establish a relationship with their gods. Their other settlements (and their modern names) were Chabu, Persek (Peresk), Piskato (Piskosol), Managar (Irenstos), Lostrum (Shenilstos) and Barvendaru (Bathijras). As the attacks on the settlers continued, many in the smaller villages began to look jealously upon Arshu Phola. With its defensible position along the coast and its rich fishing grounds and increasingly powerful priests, the city became richer and richer while the other settlers starved. Persek, Chabu, Barvendaru and Managar united and sent an army against Arshu Phola. The lord of the city, Sergalis Manlanth, entered the nearby Cave of Nemath, a den of dreo spirits, and somehow won their aid for the city's defence. The alliance of other towns collapsed in the face of this unexpectedly strong resistance and the raiders of Persek soon turned on their erstwhile allies and stole from them instead of pressing the attack on Arshu Phola.

## The War of Thorns & The Peace of Ekose

Around the year 400, the central Kachenblod tribes were united by marriage under a single chieftain, Ekose, who led his people in the War of Thorns against the Timinit of the jungle. The numbers of the Kachenblod had grown considerably in the previous two generations and they now had enough strength to force the insect-men back. The alchemists of the town of Managar had managed to create a magical smoke that poisoned the timinit who were exposed to it and considerable copper and tin deposits had been discovered in the foothills of the Curustus range.

The War of Thorns lasted a generation and ended with the destruction of a huge timinit-hive in the heart of the central basin. Ekose died setting fire to the hive and he is remembered as Ekose the Burner by both insects and men. After this defeat, the timinit retreated deeper into the jungle and the rivers quickly became accepted as the borders between human and insect territory. The northern town of Lostrum was built initially as a bulwark against further timinit hostility but quickly developed into a trade town.

With the threat of the insects and the jungle dealt with, the Kachenblod civilisation thrived for a time. Their capital remained at Arshu Phola but the central towns of Managar and Lostrum became almost as important. The isolated northern town of Piskato was almost totally abandoned during this period, with only a few die-hards remaining in the mud-baked brick houses to care for the temples and to fish the stormy waters of the east coast. There were a few attempts to unite the Kachenblod under a single leader but these failed due to the ongoing rivalry between the priest-kings of Arshu Phola and the warrior dynasty descended from Ekose. Slowly, though, they began to decline due to a lack of trade with other civilisations and cultures. They turned inwards in a time called the Slow Years. A series of harvests failed due to intense rainstorms, forcing the Kachenblod to cultivate more land and abandon their towns just to survive. Even at its height at the start of the Slow Years, Arshu Phola's total population never exceeded a few thousand and barely 10,000 souls lived within its walls when it was discovered by the Seshnegi.

## The Seshnegi Arrive

Nralar was the thirty-second King of Seshnela, the son of Gerlant Flamesword, also called the Firelord. His father had battled the betrayer Arkat and his Stygian Empire but Arkat vanished the year before Nralar inherited the throne. The foul Stygian Empire survived the loss of its founder and so Nralar made war against the Stygians and the trolls to ensure the humanity's survival in the west. He also took the iron mines from the dwarf-folk, winning that precious metal for the Seshnelan crown and fortifying his armies for their struggles against their enemies.

During the reign of Nralar, a small number of adventurers departed Seshnela and sailed south. They went seeking adventure, knowledge and power. By the time they crossed the sea and landed on the north coast of Jrustela, they had lost both their taste for danger and about half their number. Still, they founded a small community called Frowalkel or New Frowal. They explored little of the island after their first three expeditions failed to return. The hilly terrain due south and east of Frowalkel is dangerous to this day, an untamed tangle of jungle, swamp and jagged wasteland. This initial settlement was founded around 520 and maintained irregular communication with the mainland. Removed from the normal intercourse of study, the adventurers developed some curious new sorcerous traditions that would one day give rise to the God Learner's Secret but this lay

centuries in the future. For the most part, the initial settlement of Frowalkel is but a footnote compared to the 'true' founding of Jrustela.

King Nralar lived a very long time and had a great many sons. One of these, Nepur, was chosen by the priests to inherit the throne. Now this was before the great revelation of the *Abiding Book* united all the followers of Malkion and there were many different sects and orders in Seshnela. Nepur was the only son to follow the now-defunct Invisible Hand Sect, an order of cynics who mouthed prayers to Malkion while lining their own pockets, which gave him many supporters in court and in ecclesiastical circles. Some of his elder brothers and their followers agreed to leave Seshnela to avert the spectre of a civil war. As part of this compromise, the brothers agreed to abandon not only their claims to the throne but also their status as part of the royal family. In effect, they became commoners but were still respected and loved by the virtuous. Other brothers, though, were disbarred from the throne by the priests for very good reasons, as they were foolish or greedy or otherwise unfit to rule. These unworthy ones remained in Seshnela and would bring civil war down in future years.

The Community of the Virtuous, as this assembly of would-be exiles called themselves, was a motley crew. (They are often referred to as Nralarites, although this is likely a confusion of historians, as both the Community and their antagonists, the Nepurists, were equally descended from Nralar.) There were priests and philosophers from a dozen sects, many of which had been oppressed when Seshnela was a vassal state of the Stygians and who hoped they could find a new place to worship the Invisible God in peace. There were wise men who saw that the great days of Gerlant had come to an end and that Seshnela would soon be torn apart by kinstribe. There were adventurers looking for a challenge, there were peasants who sought a new and better life and there were exiled nobles and their followers and knights who were leaving to avoid a conflict with Nepurists. Initially, the exiles were determined to go north into Arolanit and either settle in that pleasant land or pass onwards into the north-east but then they received an unexpected offer – one that would give birth to the Middle Sea Empire.

The declining reach of the dark Stygian Empire and the opening up of trade routes encouraged the Waertagi seafarers to again attempt to set up a port on the southern island of Jrustela and they offered to transport the

Seshnegi exiles south. Seeing this as a sign from the Invisible God, the Community agreed en masse to accept the Waertagi offer. There were too many exiles for even the vast dragonships to carry, so it was agreed that there would be several waves over five years. The Waertagi ships would winter in their home ports at Brithos then pick up the settlers from the Virtuous' temporary base at Pasos before carrying on to trade in the east.

The initial crossing from Genertala to Jrustela was blessed with fair winds and calm seas and the Seshnegi landed at the same bay where the Olodo had arrived centuries before. The Seshnegi named it Hredimorimos, which means 'Great Venture.' Nothing remained of the original Olodo settlement save a few broken walls and wind-worn carvings, so the Seshnegi quickly built a wood-walled stockade to protect their little village. None of the old nobles of Seshnela had come south in the first wave, so they chose their leaders democratically. A parliament of nine elected from among the settlers would make all decisions for the colony and a leader would be elected from among the nine councillors. The first leader was the far-sighted Faramos of Hredimorimos, who ordered that they immediately begin exploring their new home.

## Early Exploration

The early explorers set off inland and soon discovered a strange wet jungle quite unlike the forests of Seshnela. They found no animals in this jungle but there were all manner of lizards, serpents, birds, plants and insects – especially the latter. Some of the insects were as large as men and were discovered to be intelligent. The timinits initially assumed that the settlers were just another group of Olodo who were trespassing into the central basin in contravention of the peace of Ekose and attacked the explorers from Hredimorimos. The explorers retreated back to the coast but Faramos refused to give into fear of the unknown and ordered a large area south of the new settlement cleared for farming. The settlers soon discovered that the soil of Jrustela was incredibly fertile and its growing season long. Further armed expeditions were sent into the jungle to battle the insects; these expeditions discovered some of the Olodo ruins and also the upper waters of the Faramosel river.

Meanwhile, the famed explorer Borostonar built wooden longships and sailed east. Over the next few years, Borostonar would circle almost the whole island and to this day the east coast is called Borastenorela, Borostonar's Land.

After Borostonar returned to Hredimorimos, he and Faramos debated future exploration plans. It was believed that the Pila river discovered by Borostonar might be the same as the Faramosel river found by the southern overland explorers. No major river deltas had been encountered by Borostonar along the eastern coast, so it seemed that the Faramosel must turn south, implying that the whole inner basin was drained by a single vast river. Recognising the importance of this supposition, the two leaders travelled south the following year and Faramos sailed all the way down the river, emerging at the same point on the south coast as the Pila river. For a time, the river was called the Faramosel and its main tributary the Pila. Decades later, the settlers made contact with the secretive river-folk and the native names of those rivers were adopted, with the settler names changed to apply to the surrounding lands – thus, there is the Pilasel district around the Jrezar River and Faramosel on the Curand River.

## Early Settlements & Early Wars

Meanwhile, the bulk of the Nralarites were still waiting in Pasos for the next Waertagi dragonship to bring them to Jrustela. Their numbers swelled unexpectedly when King Nepur discovered that his coffers were nearly empty and saved money by offering thousands of jailed prisoners pardons if they would take ship with the Waertagi. With one stroke, Nepur removed thousands of mouths to feed, gained a reputation as a peacemaker and law-bringer and weakened his enemies by transferring the burden of the thieves and brigands onto them. Fortunately for the community, a charismatic preacher named Theditos Chainbreaker moved among the criminals, pacifying them and convincing them to build new lives for themselves.

New settlements were founded, first at Evrowal and then at Orphalsketal when Borostonar's Second Journal was found. Many of the criminals found life in the religious colonies too oppressive or dull, so they struck out on their own and eventually founded the city of Hathinethor on the east coast. One Nralarite prince, a grandson of Nralar, led his personal household down the Norvalelan coast in the west and founded a settlement at Jananeswal. Every dragonship that arrived swelled the populations of the existing settlements and created a half-dozen new ones. Hredmorinos and Frowalkel were the best established colonies but they were just used as gateways by the new settlers, who usually pushed on to other towns. As the settlers moved south, they finally encountered the Olodo, who initially mistook the Seshnegi for Waertagi. The first encounter was at Piskato, which had dwindled to



a pathetic fishing village when the Seshnegi arrived. The Piskatoans told the explorers from Hredimorimos about the southern reaches of the island, about the pirates of Persek and the priest-kings of Arshu Phola. Alarmed by the thought of a powerful rival civilisation, Faramos of Hredimorimos led another expedition south. After many adventures and battles in the jungles, he sailed down the river that still bore his name and discovered the city of Managar, which he nicknamed Arastos (*City of Birds*), as thousands of jungle parrots nested in its crumbling walls and flew up as his boat approached. Managar was larger than Arshu Phola but because of the information Faramos had received from the folk of Piskato, he did not pay proper tribute to the chieftain of Managar and instead asked for directions to the king of Arshu Phola. This was a terrible insult to the descendants of Ekose the Burner and one that would have lasting repercussions. Arastos became Irenstos (*City of the Source*) because of a mistake by Borostonar's cartographer, who marked the city as the source of the rivers instead of their mouth.

Faramos met with the king of Arshu Phola, Sergalis Manlanth. Now, while the king bore the same name as the famed ancestor who had entered the Cave of Nemath over two centuries before, he was not the same person (despite

a cult tradition among the Olodo that Manlanth received immortality from the dreo). The two leaders exchanged gifts and agreed that there would be peace between the Olodo and the Nralarites but there was little friendship between them. Faramos mistrusted the Pagan king and Sergalis foresaw the annihilation of the Olodo at the hands of the numerically and magically superior newcomers. Still, peace might have been achieved if it were not for the warriors of Managar. They ambushed Faramos' party as they travelled through the jungle, believing that the newcomers were going to ally with Arshu Phola against the river towns of Managar and Lostrum. Faramos survived the ambush but was severely wounded and died on the journey home.

## The Treaty of Peresk

Infuriated by the murder of Faramos, the Hredmorinos Parliament discussed a response. They were joined by representatives from Frowalkel, Evrowal, Orphalsketkal and Hathinelthor. While the Jrusteli Confederation would not be formally established for another four decades, the Passing of Faramos is generally held to be the event that led to its formation. The accounts from the survivors of the expedition to Arshu Phola were confused and it was believed that they had been attacked by Arshu Phola warriors, not men from Managar. Therefore, the Parliament voted to declare war on Arshu Phola.

The first year of hostilities between the Nralarites and the Olodo was limited to border raids. The northernmost Olodo towns like Piskato were destroyed or occupied; in response, the Olodo attacked several new settlements like Hathinelthor.

To get the ships and soldiers they would need, the Parliament sent diplomats and missionaries to the Olodo town of Persek. The Persek pirates were rivals of both the river towns and Arshu Phola and responded immediately to the Seshnegi overtures. They converted to Makanism immediately and the Parliament and the chieftain of Persek signed the historic treaty of Persek (or Peresk, as it became known). This treaty is the legal foundation of the Jrusteli Confederation. It acknowledged the right of the Makanised Olodo to dwell on the island and gave them equal rights to the Seshnegi settlers. It also permitted them to send a representative to the Parliament at Hredmorinos.

An army of warriors from Peresk, together with cut-throats and adventurers from Hathinelthor and sorcerers from Hredmorinos attacked Arshu Phola. Just as his

ancestor had done, Sergalis Manlanth attempted to invoke the dreo earth-spirits but he reckoned without the power of Sorcery. The earth-spirits were bound or destroyed and the outer district of Arshu Phola was set alight. Reinforcements from outlying villages did manage to drive the invaders back but this was a temporary relief. Hadilon of Persek, a Seshnegi who had married one of the Olodo converts, took command of the attacking army. A year later, Seshnegi troops were back at the walls of Arshu Phola and a year after that Arshu Phola was taken. Many of the inhabitants of the Olodo city fled before the end, sailing south on a hazardous journey to Umathela in the far south.

Once Arshu Phola was conquered, Hadilon sailed onto Managar and conquered that town too. Seeing that the newcomers could not be defeated, the town of Lostrum surrendered and became known as Shenilstos (*City of Bargaining*). A few isolated Olodo settlements managed to hold out but the vast majority of the old folk were either conquered by or surrendered to the Seshnegi. The terms of the treaty of Persek were extended to all Olodo – if they converted to Makanism, they would have the same rights as any of the Seshnegi settlers. With the assimilation of the Olodo, the Seshnegi learned a great deal about their new home. A combination of Seshnegi Sorcery and Olodo knowledge allowed the colony to expand into the mountains and deeper into the jungle. The Olodo coastal boats began to travel between all the east coast ports.

A second and third wave of immigrants from the north arrived in 620-623 and 631-634. The first group were mostly Nralarites, or new enemies of the king who had joined with the Nralarites in taking exile instead of risking death or civil war. The rest were drawn by the opportunity of a new life in Jrustela. Tales of the island's incredible fertility and the new land to be claimed had spread back to the north, a complete contrast to the 'Jrustela – land of monsters' stories that had been current when Frowalkel was founded. These new immigrants flocked to the southern side of the island, often occupying Olodo settlements. New cities established in this time included Svalwal (a mining town) and Eradinthanos (originally a supply base for Hadilon's wars).

## The Taming of the Timinitis

As the Olodo had done before them, the Nralarites warred with the insect-folk. The Olodo had come to an uneasy peace with the insects after the deeds of Ekose the Burner but they had agreed not to cross into the heartland of the

jungle. The expanding Nralarite colonies, though, did not honour this agreement and the timinitis responded with force. The war was initially led by the Parliament of Hredmorinos, who seized upon the timinitis as a way to re-establish their town's pre-eminence. The first Virtuous settlement was being eclipsed by new towns like Svalwal and Orphalsketal.

Hundreds of acres of jungle were cleared using slash-and-burn techniques, while hunting parties searched out timinit hives and attacked them. The timinitis began to dig tunnels and crept into human territory by night. The insect-folk did not have the same concept of morality as the Seshnegi and saw nothing wrong with attacking women and children. Tales of atrocities drew volunteers from other cities and through both force and Sorcery the insects were soon retreating into their jungle heartland. One timinit ambush slew the leader of the Parliament, Abriythos, who had been visiting troops in the region.

Attempts to attack the heartland were beaten back. The Olodo offered the use of their magic smoke and a batch of it was brewed up in the alchemical vats at Hredmorinos. However, before the smoke could be used, it was destroyed by a saboteur who was later discovered to be the mind-controlled host of a new and hitherto unknown species of insect – the cerebresites. The belief that anyone in the colony could be an insect thrall nearly tore the nascent Confederation apart. Evrowal closed its gates, while Orphalsketel and Jalaneswal declared that any ship passing into Norvalela would be attacked if the navy believed it carried cerebresites. It was later found that only rare cerebresites could take non-timinit hosts.

The crisis was averted when a researcher in Piskosol discovered a reference to a hundred-year-old letter from the old colony at Frowalkel. One of the sorcerers there,

### The Migration To Umathela

Umathela was founded by migrants who were opposed to the war with the Olodo. They argued that the parliaments were engaged in Empire-building and would fall victim to the same feudal foolishness that threatened to tear Seshnela apart. When the warring city refused to listen, they left and sailed south. Ironically, their numbers were reinforced by Olodo who fled from doomed Arshu Phola

Varnwey, had managed to learn the timinit language but his research had been ignored by the universities and scholars of Seshnela. Now, a century after his death, Varnwey's work proved vital. Using his work and combining it with the folk traditions and observations of the Olodo, the men of Piskosol were able to open up negotiations with the insects. The timinitis responded eagerly to the offers of peace, as they were utterly terrified by the prospect of losing more hives. The quick-minded insects learned the human tongue and began aping human culture. Less than a year after Varnwey's work was rediscovered, the war was effectively over and the timinitis were applying for citizenship under the terms of the treaty of Peresk.

Just as the discovery of the cerebresites had forced the various cities in Jrustela to close their gates against traffic from outside, the timinit question also divided them. The Parliament in Hredmorinos was unanimously opposed to stopping the war, let alone letting the timinitis into Jrustelan society. The towns of the east coast, who had done most of the actual fighting, were willing to countenance the idea while the southern district sought an end to the fighting in order to re-establish river traffic through the jungle basin. The increasingly independent western cities remained neutral on the topic. As the debate moved from the immediate question of ending the war to more rarefied topics, such as the possibility for timinitis to achieve Solace or their standing as ensouled beings, Hredmorinos became isolated and acquired a reputation as being hidebound and reactionary, a curious state for a city that had been founded only a few years earlier as the 'Great Venture' of radical progressives.

### Birth of the Confederation

The Jrusteli Confederation was born partly from the debate over the timinitis and partly over the near-revolt of the western colonies of Norvalela. The western land was virtually a separate entity to mainland Jrustela, as the only way to reach it by land was via the dangerous northern pass of Abri Khalan. The shipyards of Orphalsketal had become vital to the Jrusteli civilisation but they were dominated by the nobles of Jalaneswal, who treated Norvalela as their own personal fiefdom. As relations with the Waertagi soured, the cities looked to Orphalsketal for aid and ships but the nobles refused, preferring to invest magic and money in their growing domain and claiming that the rest of Jrustela was none of their concern. Secretly, the nobles were allied with forces from the mainland.

This coincided with a spate of troll attacks on outlying settlements near Jalandeswal. Out of paranoia, these attacks were blamed by the Norvalelans as being caused by the easterners, or by the timinits, or the Olodo or all three. The Norvalelans threatened to close their borders once more but a coalition of democrats, philosophers and shipwrights rose up in Orphalsketkal and called for aid from the eastern cities. A rag-tag fleet of mercenaries and Sons of Damolstan sailed to Norvalela in support of the coalition, forcing the nobles to climb down and abandon their territorial claim on Orphalsketkal.

The authority of the nobles was effectively broken from that moment on and Jrustela was almost wholly in the hands of the various democratic leagues and theocracies. Of the thirteen cities, only Jalandeswal was ruled by nobles from old Seshnela. Hredmorinos and Evrowal, though, were controlled by the 'new nobility,' the descendants of the first founders who had dominated the parliaments in both cities. Frowalkel clung to the same curious legal structure it had used since its founding. Orphalsketkal and Svalwal were ruled mainly by coalitions of guilds and elected councils, while Hathinelthor was ruled by criminal gangs posing as guilds. Eredithanos was a theocracy; the Olodo towns of Piskosol, Peresk, Arshu Phola and Irenstos were all ruled by councils comprised of Nralarite administrators with Olodo advisors, while Shenilstos still refused to wholly yield to the Malkionist settlers.

The alliance with the timinits opened much more of Jrustela to colonisation and the island attracted more settlers as Seshnela slipped into civil war. The various cities declared that their oaths to the throne in Seshnela were void between 620 and 627. Each city-state was independent between then and 652 but the practise of the Insight Contests brought their laws into alignment. If two cities disagreed, they would each nominate the best of their scholars and philosophers and oracles, who would question each other on Malkanite lore and other scholarly topics. The city of the winning scholar was deemed to be in the right. This practise united the cities of Jrustela and paved the way to the war for unification in 652.

While the Insight Contests did iron out the differences between the laws of the various cities, they had two unexpected side effects. Firstly, Jrustela moved further and further away from the caste system that was prevalent in Seshnela – this social upheaval was already present due to the large numbers of settlers from the lower castes who were taking on roles as leaders, scholars, warriors and

sorcerers normally reserved for their betters. Secondly, and more insidiously, every city was lavishing money and power on its universities in order to win the insight contests. This meant that the scholars were probing the boundaries of traditional belief; as a result, all manner of unusual cults and sects were springing up. Jrustela was always welcoming to those of minority sects but by the 630s it seemed like every neighbourhood had its own unique beliefs and ways of honouring Malkion and the Invisible God. By the early 640s, the proliferation of different cults had even begun to disrupt the Insight Contests, as judges began arbitrating based on their own home sects instead of 'outdated' or traditional beliefs.

## The Jrusteli Confederation

The appearance of the *Abiding Book* six years earlier was the force that pushed Jrustela over the edge into unification. Not only had the holy book unified Jrusteli religion, it also resolved the on-going concerns with the Insight Contests. The appearance of the Book was so conveniently miraculous that some whispered it was in truth a forgery, designed to quell any dissent and enforce a single authority on the whole island.

The Confederation first met in Eridithanos, where the *Abiding Book* had appeared. The terms of the confederation were that each of the thirteen cities would nominate a member of the council. Each city could decide who its member was as they wished – Jalandeswal, for example, always chose its representative from the line of Jaland, grandson of Nralar, while the head of the Hredmorinos Parliament also became its council member. From their own ranks, the thirteen council members would elect a leader, a First Among Equals, who would shape policy and lead the Jrustelan nation for a term of ten years. No city's member could be the First twice in a row, ensuring that the locus of power moved between the cities. Initially, the power of the council was limited but its rise was utterly intertwined with the rise of the new religion of the *Abiding Book* as preached by the Sainly Bookbearers. Political unification was driven by the tide of religious unification, as exemplified by the choice of First Volunteer Hyrafos of Piskosol as the first leader of the council.

Hyrafos' first acts were to secure the safety and independence of Jrustela. Recognising that the island did not have an especially strong civil martial tradition, he instituted the policy of sponsoring and supplying religious troops from the Return to Rightness movement

and soon the crusade *was* the Confederation's military arm. He ordered all the magical colleges that had grown up to fight Insight Contests to turn their attention to more practical Sorcery, beginning a crash-course in military magic development. He also began to support the splinter colony in Umathela, building the first ocean-going ships held by any western humans outside the Waertagi. Trade sprang up between the island and the southern continent and soon these ships were also sailing north to Genertela, bringing missionaries and Sainly Bookbearers as well as trade goods and products of Jrustelan Sorcery.

Angered, the Waertagi used their magic against their erstwhile allies in 665, summoning up a host of water elementals who rushed inland in the form of a huge tidal wave. The city of Svalwal was drowned and thousands of lives were lost. Many of these lives were later returned in mass resurrection miracles by the Malkioni, becoming the order of Just Shipbuilders. In defiance of the Waertagi ban on sea travel, the Just Shipbuilders continued to launch ocean-going ships, sailed by the Free Men of the Sea. To placate the Waertagi, agreed to cease all voyages north to Genertala but the Free Men of the Sea continued to sail to Umathela and other points along the southern coast. While the Waertagi and the Free Men of the Sea utterly despised each other, relations between the Confederation and the Waertagi were quickly repaired after the destruction of Svalwal, as the Confederation needed the Waertagi to spread the word of the *Abiding Book*.

## The Collapse of Seshnela & The Return to Rightness Crusade

While Jrustela strode ever onwards, the mother country was collapsing into ruin. Barbarians encroached on its borders and dozens of petty nobles plotted to seize Gerlant's throne. Not even the advent of the *Abiding Book* could stave off collapse. The last true king, Bretnos, perhaps recognised that only the true teachings of the Invisible God could save his kingdom, for he supported the Sainly Bookbearers who arrived on his shores. In 660, he called the Fourth Ecclesiastical Council, hoping to unify religions in Seshnela as way they had been in Jrustela and so bring his land into rightness. The blind clerics of Seshnela rejected the primacy of the *Abiding Book* – some argued that while it was a revelation from God, it did not necessarily supersede previous insights and teachings, while others dismissed it as a forgery or even a trick of the devil. In a last, desperate attempt to salvage something, King Bretnos addressed the conference but was assassinated by Sorcery even as he spoke.

## The Years of Jrustela's Glory

**Approx 400:** War of Thorns

**401:** Burning of Ekose

**426:** Sergalis Manlanth enters the Cave

**501:** Establishment of Frowalkel

**511:** *Impossible Landscapes* smuggled to Frowalkel

**540:** Nralarite succession crisis; formation of Community of the Virtuous

**555:** Establishment of Hredimorinos; first voyage of Borostanar

**556:** Second voyage of Borostanar

**557:** Establishment of Evrowal and Orphalsketkal

**574:** Second wave of colonisation; Establishment of Hathinelthor

**575:** Treaty of Peresk

**577:** Foundation of Eridithanos

**578:** Fall of Arshu Phola

**580:** Establishment of Svalwal; Establishment of Umathelan colony

**593:** Taming of the timinits

**602:** The Burning of Hredimorinos; closure of ports

**603:** Peace with the timinits

**643:** First Eridithanos conference

**646:** Second conference; The *Abiding Book* appears.

**647:** Foundation of the New Order

**652:** Foundation of the Jrusteli Confederation

**655:** Establishment of Malkioni True Church

**665:** Drowning of Svalwal

**660:** Fourth Ecclesiastical Council; Civil War in Seshnela

**680:** Army of Rightness lands in Seshnela

**718:** Battle of Tanien's Victory

**740:** End of first Return to Rightness Crusade; beginnings of transfer of the power of the Middle Sea Alliance to Seshnela

**745:** *Impossible Landscapes* discovered at Frowalkel

**776:** New Order enfranchised as monastic order

**798:** Opening of the School of the New Order

**806:** Order of Otherworld Explorations established

**823:** Invasion of Brithos

**845:** Formation of the God Learners' Collective

**876:** Declaration of the Era of Continued Revelation

**908:** The Present Day

The civil war continued for nearly twenty years until the Army of Rightness arrived in the shores of Seshnela. This army was sent by Jrustela, ostensibly to protect the few Jrusteli citizens still caught in the chaos of the civil war.

The Army of Rightness was led by Trymir, the head of the Confederation and a descendant of the Seshnegi kings of old. The Army crossed the seas on Waertagi ships. It was relatively small compared to the warring Seshnegi forces or to the barbarians or beast-men hordes but the magic of the Order of the New Iron Staff was of a magnitude undreamt-of since the days of Zzabur. Armed with this Sorcery, the Army of Rightness liberated much of old Seshnela and brought it under the control of the Jrusteli Confederation.

Trymir returned home in triumph and his place on the mainland was taken by Hadalin, a native of Jalanswal and a descendant of the great explorer Borostonar. Hadalin acted as a peacemaker, bringing other Seshnelan provinces into the Jrusteli protectorate and resolving disputes between conquered groups. He also helped spread the word of Makan to the benighted people and missionaries flooded out to the countries around Seshnela. Hadalin was well loved by his people, who called him the Great, and a grateful Confederation gave him the honorary title of High Duke.

## The Alliance

Hadalin was so respected by the Seshnegi that they accepted his son, Ullmal, as his heir. This was anathema to the democratic Jrusteli, who only approved of inherited power when it was cloaked in a veneer of democracy or merit. However, Ullmal was established as the Duke of Seshnela and the bulk of the 'Jrustelan' army was on the continent and loyal to him after several years of crusading. While he was nominally a representative of the Confederation, in truth they had no power over him. Ullmal was able to appoint his own War Bishops to run the Rightness Crusade, battling vestiges of the Stygian armies.

Meanwhile, the Confederation was being threatened by the Waertagi. The sea-folk had violently disapproved of the Jrusteli ship-building efforts in the past and had even destroyed the city of Svalwal to maintain their monopoly on ocean travel. The growing magical power of the Confederation had stopped the Waertagi from taking direct action again but with the Jrusteli power overextended and divided between the island and Seshnela, the sea-folk had grown increasingly belligerent. Matters came to a head in 715 when a Waertagi diplomat threatened to invoke a sea-god to drown the whole island. The Confederation could not permit this threat to continue but needed aid. They appealed to Ullmal, who traded recognition from the

Confederation as High Duke for the support of his armies and war-wizards. In 718, the Jrustelan Free Men of the Sea sailed out to meet the Waertagi dragon-ships in battle. The Waertagi had fifty city-sized dragon-ships, each one holding as many men as the entire Free navy. Their sailors were vastly more experienced and better armed than the Free Men. The Waertagi had weather-shapers and elementalists who could conjure tidal waves, mentalists who could command kraken and whales and undines. The Free Men's position seemed hopeless but they had a secret weapon.

New Order sorcerers from Seshnela had prepared a new and great invocation, one of the greatest spells since the conjuring of Nysalor. They called on a strange god, the son of Tanien, and bound the god as if it were the merest spirit. Then, they forced the son to call his father down from the sky realm – and the sea became fire. Tanien was the god of water in the fiery sky realm and his presence transformed the earthly water into flame. Huge firebergs cascaded across the ocean, smashing and burning the Waertagi ships. The transmutation spread to the skies above and the storms rained fire.

Over a third of the Free Man fleet was destroyed by the Waertagi or by the fires but over nine-tenths of the dragon-ships were now nothing more than ash or ever-burning fire. The power of the Waertagi was broken forever. The Battle of Tanien's Victory was costly for the Jrusteli (or, more properly, for the Middle Sea Alliance of Jrustela and Seshnela) but it confirmed the incredible power of their new Sorcery and gave them dominance of the oceans. The path to the Middle Sea Empire was open.

Ullmal died without an heir and his throne was claimed by Pilif the Magus of the New Order. The church opposed the crowning of a sorcerer, pointing out that the *Abiding Book* insisted that no person dedicated to Sorcery could be king. Instead, the nobles of Seshnela chose one of the Jrusteli Princes, Saval, to be king and he quickly obtained the support of the church. There followed a brief but bloody clash for control of the Seshnegi throne. Pilif's allies, the powerful New Order sorcerers flush with their success in the Battle of Tanien's Victory, immediately tried to kill Saval when he came ashore but he fled to Sanderel where allies of his waited. Pilaf and his cabal met with Saval's Loyal Twelve in sorcerous battle but the New Order met with disaster when Pilaf attempted to summon the Power of Seshnegi Kingship. The entity turned on the false claimant, devouring him and instructing Saval on the true



rites and rules of kingship. Although Saval was crowned in the ancient manner of Froalar and took the title of Sacred Overlord, he never claimed the kingship.

The repercussions of Pilif's claim were also felt in Jrustela, the home of the New Order. The sorcerous group was forced to curtail its researches and activities and was placed under the control of the church.

### The Shift To Seshnela

Over the next three generations, more power returned to the northern homeland. Annmak, son of Saval, was crowned king and while his heirs would alternately be warriors or builders, they all expanded the territory paying tribute to the Seshnegi crown. A spirit of adventurism seized the lands, leading to such grand deeds as the alliance with Kralorela. The last remnants of Arkat's Empire were smashed and other northern lands were incorporated into Seshnela. In the south, the opening of the seas following the defeat of the Waertagi meant that the colony at Umathela could blossom into the Six-Legged Empire.

Through all this, though, the Jrusteli Confederation failed to take a leading role. It was no longer the brave new frontier but had matured into the stable centre of

the Empire. Jrustelan Sorcery was the source of the Middle Sea Alliance's strength, Jrustelan trade ships kept it together and Jrustelan money paid for it all – but the Confederation seemed unwilling to push the kings it had created. By the time the Alliance was reconstituted as an Empire, the Confederation had waned to be little more than a meaningless middle house in the Middle Sea bureaucracy and the thirteen cities were again behaving as independent city-states.

As part of the coronation of Svagad, the Emperor of Land and Sea, the original *Abiding Book* was transferred from the Cathedral of the Book at Eredithanos to the Holy Mountain at Damolsket in Seshnela. With the passing of God's book from the island, the days of Jrustela's primacy in the Middle Sea Empire came to a close.

### The Era of Continued Revelation

Although the political control of the Middle Sea Empire has passed back to Seshnela, Jrustela is still the wealthiest of the provinces and the centre of the Empire's burgeoning overseas trade. More importantly, it is also the source of the Middle Sea Empire's staggering magical power. While Frowal and Estan on the mainland have their own respected universities and the Pameltanan colonies are home to radical experiments and highly advanced research, the intellectual heartland and questing mind of the Empire was fostered and established on Jrustela, the island of sorcerers. While the rise of the universities and Jrustelan Sorcery is described above, the precise path that led to the God Learners requires special consideration.

It started with a group known as the New Order. They began as a Makanist scholarly circle, a group of merchants, philosophers and sorcerers who met to discuss and debate the revelations of the *Abiding Book*. Soon, they discovered that some of the teachings in the book could be construed as sorcerous formulae, making the holy book a grimoire. Their use of the *Abiding Book* as a grimoire was quite different to the application of the book by the Rightness Crusade and their *Sharp Abiding Book* – the *Sharp Abiding Book* is an edited version of the original, with the teachings and commentaries about conversion removed and battle-spells added. The Crusader magic did not attempt to address the high planes – it was direct, simple Sorcery. In contrast, the New Order's work with the *Abiding Book* involved taking the writing of Makan in the same way they would examine a sorcerous textbook, taking the word of God as a coded incantation. By the time of the Waertagi crisis, the New Order was among the

most powerful military orders in Jrustela, focussing on the military applications of the revelations. It was powerful, flexible, insightful but also bordered on the heretical.

The conjuration and binding of Tanien's son to destroy the Waertagi dragon-ships could not have been accomplished without the New Order but they made a disastrous political blunder by supporting Pilaf the Magus' bid for the Seshnegi Throne. The New Order was caught in the turmoil that followed Saval's victory and was officially disbanded. The Jrusteli military could not afford to lose the magical advantage offered by the New Order, though, so the organisation was eventually put under church control and reformed as a monastic order. The best of the New Order sorcerers were ordered to join the sect and its researches were now overseen by church censors.

Four centuries before the present day, a book called *Impossible Landscapes* was stolen from the Stygian Empire by dissidents who smuggled it to the colony at Frowalkel. There, it lingered in obscurity for decades, miscataloged as *A Compendium of Medicinal Fungi*. The book was a series of animated pictures depicting scenes from various Otherworlds. The provenance of *Impossible Landscapes* was uncertain – though it certainly came from the heart of Arkat's Empire, it was damaged by fire and several parts could not be discerned. If that was all there was to the book, then it would simply have been recatalogued and forgotten once again. However, page 43 contained a minor spirit, an imp called Samin. The imp crawled out of the book and sang and danced to entertain its observers. It thrived on the attention and grew. When asked about the other pictures in the book, Samin taught the scholars some other silly songs.

These songs were effectively microscopic HeroQuests. When a song was sung while looking on its corresponding picture, the observer would move closer towards the Hero Plane. This shift was but the tiniest fraction of the spiritual movement made possible by an actual Gate but it was a definite magical shift and could be built on and exploited. It was an opening into the higher realms that required much less power than the epic invocations of Tanien.

It was rediscovered in 745 by a member of the New Order of sorcerers. To be precise, it was discovered by one of their librarians, who took the book on tour as soon as the imp was found. *Impossible Landscapes* entertained crowds all over Jrustela and the Silly Man's Song was imitated by minstrels and bards. The Order initially saw

## The Roll of Kings From Nralar the Old to the Present Emperor

The Kings of Seshnela & Jrustela are recorded in the Third Book of Salovan:

32. Nralar the Old, King of Seshnela 501-603
33. Nepur, King of Seshnela 604-632
34. Bretnos, King of Seshnela 632-660
35. Relam, King of Seshnela 661-666
36. Pamalar, Duke of Frowal 666-673
37. Hymat, Duke of Frowal 674-676
38. Thyerm, King of Tanisor and Seshnela 677-679
39. Grodlam the Wolf, Duke of Malkonwal 680-681
40. Trymir, Commander of the Army of Rightness, Prince of Jrusteli 680-689
41. Hadalin, Manager of Greater Seshnela, the High Duke of Greater Seshnela, Prince of Jrusteli 689-708
42. Ullmal, High Duke of Greater Seshnela, Prince of Jrusteli 708-725
43. Saval, Count of Orphalsket; Champion of Malkion, Prince of Jrusteli; later also Sacred Overlord 729-734
44. Annmak the Peacemaker, King of Seshnela 734-751
45. Meipal, King of Seshnela 751-754
46. Orvansfal, King of Seshnela 755-768
47. Svalak, King of Seshnela 768-789
48. Svagad, Emperor of the Land and Sea 789-805
49. Modos, Emperor of the Land and Sea 805-816
50. Miglos, Emperor of the Land and Sea 816-823
51. Suilmant (aka Sulmat), Emperor of the Land and Sea 823-838
52. Brailach (aka Bralak), Emperor of the Land and Sea 838-859
53. Darangram (aka Dagram), Emperor of the Land and Sea 859-870
54. Triosos (aka Trosos), Emperor of the Land and Sea 870-887
55. Keralamalos (aka Kralas), Emperor of the Land and Sea 887-901
56. Ilotos, Emperor of the Land and Sea 901-today [908]

the book as source of quick cash which they desperately needed to survive but when the magical implications of the plane shift were discovered, the tour was cancelled and *Impossible Landscapes* was brought back to the Order's library under guard.

*Impossible Landscapes* contained clues that led to the acquisition of the *Five New Ways*, a tome that contained the secrets of Arkat's revolutionary HeroQuesting as reinterpreted and refined through the lens of devout Makanism by a great cleric named Mandarel. It took an understanding of Arkat's techniques to produce the *Five New Ways*, as previous analyses of the records left by the great trickster failed due to a lack of understanding of HeroQuesting. With that in hand, the New Order were able to develop a powerful new form of magic but it was as controversial as the application of the *Abiding Grimoire* to Sorcery. Mandarel feared that his discovery would be lost if the suppression of the New Order continued, so he travelled around Jrustela preaching the virtues of the *Five New Ways*, arguing that it was a way of honouring and praising Makan while also fighting against unbelievers and Pagans. When they were reformed as a monastic order, Mandarel was named the first abbot.

Early HeroQuesting attempts met with disaster. Attempts to replicate Arkat's accomplishments and tried to penetrate into the prehistoric myths of Ralios. Firstly, access to the holy sites had to be gained, which often involved clashing with local foes and priesthoods. Then, they would transit to the Otherworld but without a working knowledge of the myth cycle they were often destroyed by the first guardians or ejected at an early station. Few survived these abortive voyages. Mandarel's project seemed doomed, although the Sixth Voyage did manage to approach Orlanth's Hall by the simple expedient of blowing through as much opposition as possible. They were faced with a horde of angered demigods but they managed to escape by deliberately failing a station and being forcibly ejected from the mythic realm. Parallel research offered a new opportunity, though – those who had experienced the minor shift through *Impossible Landscapes* had not gone through an existing gate or holy site. The pilot bands did not need to use major gates; they could seek out other portals, lesser backdoors into the Gods' War.

The researchers also made discoveries into what exactly the Gods' War denizens were and how they related to the pagan Gods. The revelation that the God's War aspects of the gods were constantly repeating their own past deeds and myths gave the scholars the key to successful HeroQuesting – know the myth and you can manipulate the god. The second phase of HeroQuests were able to replicate the results of many Pagan rituals, garnering rewards from the gods without any requirements for belief or sanctity. The God Learners would slip into a

pagan myth and complete as much of the quest as possible using information from the myth, then use brute force and Sorcery to get past any remaining barriers.

Mandarel's successor, First Pilot Maragaran, revealed the results of the early work with *Five New Ways*, a book called the *753 Compilations*. This was part grimoire and part commentary on the *Abiding Book* and effectively offered a new way to worship Makan through HeroQuesting. It argued that prayer energy could be utilised and shaped using belief and that adherents should experience and utilise Pagan beliefs and myths as a way of praising Makan. This grew into the religious movement known as Malkionerism, which remained controversial throughout its history, and was deemed heretical by some in the mainstream faith of Makanism.

The *753 Compilation* was built on with works like the *Abiding Grimoire* (derived from the magic of the *Abiding Book* but stripped of all encumbrances and elements not related to the practice of Sorcery) and its successor, the *Unencumbered Lights of Reason* manual of Sorcery. The original New Order school gave rise to dozens of sub-cults and other orders, such as the Supernatural Pilots (officially the Order of Otherworld Exploration), which allied together in the God Learner's Collective of 845. The *Compilation* also detailed the results and accomplishments of the earlier HeroQuests. The *753 Compilation* inspired a young wizard named Hwaros, who made a mystical voyage similar to that undertaken by Mandarel and produced the technique now known as RuneQuest Sight. This effort drove Hwaros to the brink of madness but the intercession of St. Xemela saved his sanity and Hwaros was able to teach his technique to others before retiring to a closed monastery. By now, the God Learners were able to tap divine power from dozens of myths, to charge up magical items as reflections of the possessions of the gods and to invoke divine powers via quests. They had developed the God Learner's Secret, which let them step beyond *recorded* myths and perceive relationships between powers and deities.

On the centennial anniversary of the reformation of the New Order, First Pilot Arados declared to the Jrusteli Confederation council that the Collective was entering what he deemed the Era of Continuous Revelation, when the power and utility of HeroQuesting through Malkionerist Sorcery would continue to grow and grow indefinitely. He said that with this power at its command, the Middle Sea Empire would be utterly invincible.

# GAZETTEER

*A hot land of thick jungle... broken ground that steams and spits fire... soil that must be fertile, for it sprouts weeds and poisonous vines most profusely... a trackless wilderness haunted by monsters... without any redeeming pleasantries or virtues... utterly useless to civilised men.*

— from the diary of one of the first Nralarite settlers.

## Geography & Travel

Jrustela is a sub-tropical continent, warmer and wetter than the northern lands. It is land of volcanoes and earthquakes, where the ground is uncertain and violent. As if in recompense, though, the land is fertile and produces very great harvests. The weather is generally mild, although there are tremendous storms in the later months of the year. Admittedly, the land seemed much less welcome to its first settlers, as the central basin of Jrustela was a dense and virtually impassable jungle haunted by insect-men, monsters and earth-spirits. It was only after the Nralarite colonisation that the bounty of Jrustela became manifest.

The land is shaped like a great crater or basin – the lowest point of the central jungle basin is only a few metres above sea level, hence the great slow meandering course of the Famos river. The mountains of the Curustus thrust up thousands of metres above the mainland and slope steeply down to the ocean on the western side. The northern and eastern coastlines are a maze of cliffs, reefs and sheltered coves, often of spectacular natural beauty. The south-east of the island is known for steam vent and earth tremors, although it is nowhere near as volcanic as parts of the western Curustus.

To the south, there is the great mouth of the rivers. The central basin is drained by a single vast river system that stretches for thousands of kilometres. These rivers empty out into a wide bay that provides the best harbourage and fishing on the continent.

When the Olodo first arrived here, in the Dawn Age, all of Jrustela's central basin was covered by jungle. The Olodo cleared much of the south-eastern jungles when they built their cities but it was not until the Nralarite expansion that the majority of the island's forests were removed, initially by slashing and burning, then by magical means involving the binding of the native dreo or the temporary animation of whole swathes of vegetation. Today, only the centre of the island and the eastern side of the mountains are still covered by jungle. Much of the land once claimed by the wilderness is now farmed, although extensive reaches have been cordoned off as military testing grounds, timinit reserves, parkland, hunting grounds or simply as green areas dividing city-states. Jrustela, it is said, could feed the world with its bounty. The fields' natural productivity is very great but when augmented by the stolen blessings of numerous fertility deities, they produce three harvests every year and never suffer from blights or bad weather. (The failure of the Goddess Switch, if known to the farmers of Jrustela, would cause mass panic and carries the threat of famine.) Despite this natural bounty, the population of the island is highly urbanised. As many people live in the thirteen great cities of the Confederation as dwell in the countryside and many of the rural population are imported labourers from Umathela or the north.

Jrustela's cities are almost all located along the coast. There are few inland towns and it is a rare Jrusteli who does not at least see the sea every few days. The island has an admirable infrastructure, with well-paved roads running from city to city, watched over by guards at regularly spaced posts. Of late, Zistorate mechanical coaches have become the favoured mode of transport on the roads but the bulk of the population still rely on horses (especially since the God Learners replicated the Pentan horse-blessings of Kargzant). Swift coastal boats, either sailed or propelled by bound sylphs or undines, hug the coastline while mighty Free Man galleons are always crossing the horizons. The great river is also a major artery of trade and travel, especially since the construction of the Thirteen Thunders canal linking Evrowal to the river. Finally, for those with the gold to spare, there are more exotic ways to get from Arshu Phola to Zzabburistos, like flying beasts, balloons, skyships or even the still-experimental teleport grid.

In contrast to the dangers and restrictions on travel in Genertela, where there are innumerable little kingdoms and feudal domains that might block a wanderer's path, most of Jrustela is open. Peasants (donari) can travel with a letter obtained from a noble or bureaucrat, while those of higher castes can go anywhere on the island they wish. Each of the thirteen founding cities is legally permitted to bar non-citizens from entering but this law has not been invoked in centuries.

*Competence is holy, but it also washes away all sins and associations. We Jrusteli would support a criminal, or a heretic, or a dragon or even a woman if he or she proved himself worthy of it.*

— Astralic of Hredimorinos

## Cultures & Beliefs

To outsiders, even Seshnegi, the common conception of the Jrusteli is that of a nation of cold-minded and cunning sorcerers who will brook no limit to their ambition, who also believe they possess a unique divine mandate. While the Jrusteli are a united people thanks to the revelation of the *Abiding Book*, there are still cultural divides among them. The majority of the Jrusteli are of Seshnegi blood but there are numerous social groupings that are not immediately apparent to outsiders. There are five main Seshnegi-derived cultures on Jrustela.

Old Frowalkelites are the descendants of the very first Seshnegi settlers from the old colony at Frowalkel. They are rare outside their home city and are noted for being conservative and reserved, even standoffish. They are said to make excellent scribes and librarians and good wizards but rarely produce any dashing generals or explorers.

Nralarites are the descendants of the first wave of Virtuous colonists, the founders of Hredimorinos and the great explorers and conquerors of the island. Nralarites make up most of the population of the northern towns and are in positions of power and wealth throughout the island. They pride themselves on their financial cunning and influence and on their progressive, free-thinking attitudes. They consider the Old Frowalkelites to be cowards and backwards cousins and are fierce rivals of the Volunteers. The Nralarites have abandoned much of the caste system they brought from Seshnela.

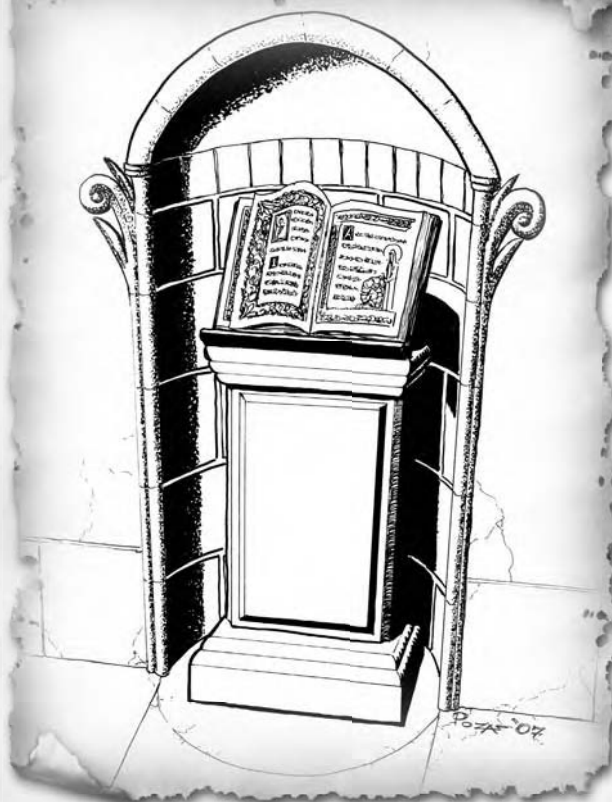
Kalites are the third group, made up of the descendants of the second wave of colonists. They are most common in the east and south and are probably the largest of the older cultural groups. Kalites are especially devout for the most part, and are strong backers of the church and the Rightness Crusade. Some hold the Olodo in disdain; others are strong advocates of integration and hold Jrustela to be a model for a new society where all old divisions are annihilated by the pure light of Makan's reason. The Kalites give lip service to the caste system but are willing to tolerate social shifts and changes in caste that would be unthinkable elsewhere.

In Norvalela, one finds the Jalanites, the followers of the family of Jalan. They are arch-conservatives and supporters of the old ways. They rigorously obey the caste system and keep to all the Seshnelan traditions there are, even ones that had died out on the mainland. The Jalanites would be politically isolated if it were not for their mining wealth and their control of shipping.

The final major Seshnegi group are the Haladinities, newcomers who arrived in the wake of the unification with Seshnela. (Older immigrants tend to be considered Kalites or just ordinary Jrusteli.) Haladinities are of a lower social class than the first settlers and have little political power but it is from the ranks of the Haladinities that the majority of craftsmen, petty wizards and soldiers come.

Half-breeds – originally, half-Seshnegi, half-Olodo but latterly anyone who is partially Seshnegi – are generally called Hadites after the first Seshnegi/Olodo child born on the island. Hadites face prejudice from more conservative Jalanites, Frowalkelites and some Kalites.

The original Olodo culture has largely been washed away but many in the south of the island still have Olodo blood in their veins. They tend to be slightly larger and heavier than the Seshnegi and some isolated rural families still speak the Olodo language at home. The Olodo tend to follow the lead of the Kalites or Haladinities in most matters. One subgroup, the Old Way People, still cling to the Olodo culture and beliefs. They were once prevalent in Shenilstos but fled that city when it was converted to the Rightness Crusade. Old Wayers are found mostly in Arshu Phola but many have gone overseas to Umathela. The third major Olodo grouping are the Saved, fundamentalist converts to Malkionism who are the most devout of all Jrusteli.



Certain qualities are shared by virtually all Jrusteli. Learning and scholarship is universally prized on the island, especially mastery of magic. In the cities, all children are taught at least to read and write and the children of even moderately wealthy parents can go on to further education. Especially gifted children have their education paid for by the Church or by a university and cities like Irenstos and Evrowal have even instituted universal education policies. The Jrusteli are a practical people, too – ‘God helps those who helps themselves’ was once a common phrase but it has been replaced by the unofficial motto of the Middle Sea Empire: ‘Competence is holy.’

Religion occupies an odd place in Jrusteli society. On the one hand, Jrusteli are a very devout people, which is unsurprising given that the Invisible God Himself appeared to sort out all questions of politics and belief. This intercession gave rise to the Return to Rightness movement and the fierce piety of its priests but it also had the opposite effect on many Jrusteli. All too many Jrusteli

believe that religion is basically a solved problem. God said they were right and everyone else was wrong and they have the documentation to prove it. Religion for many Jrusteli is a topic of idle debate or political convenience, not a true belief. A good Jrusteli will profess his utter devotion to the Invisible God but will retain what many call an ‘agile and open mind.’

## Caste

The colonists brought the four-fold caste system of Malkionism with them from the north. Originally, the colonists were divided into farmers (Donari), Soldiers (Hroli), Wizards (Zzabur) and Lords (Talar). In the rough and dangerous early days of colonisation, the caste system had to be ignored. A man’s merit counted for more than his birth caste. If a Donari knew how to build a dam to save the village, then he was listened to instead of a Talar. There was so much work to do that even wizards had to get their hands dirty and the population was so small that inter-caste marriages had to be allowed. In any event, the spirit of reformation was in the air and old caste boundaries were becoming blurred.

In Jrustela, a person’s caste is still a major factor in his social standing. Lower-caste people must defer to higher-caste people and there are all sorts of subtle changes in address and bearing that go with inter-caste communications. However, all men have equal legal standing in Jrustela and a lord has no more power under the law than a peasant (of course, the courts are more likely to side with a lord than with some grubby Olodan Donar but the principle remains true). The free elections practised by many cities allow all castes to vote equally and candidates have even been elected from among the farmers to rule over whole cities.

With the growth of Jrustela’s wealth and especially with the opening of the seas after the Waertagi were dealt with, the merchant ‘caste’ blossomed. While this is not an official caste, the wealthier merchants are treated as Soldiers (Hroli) instead of peasants and it is common to buy a minor title for promotion to the Talar. Under Jrusteli law, it is also possible to rise in caste through marriage, so the wife of a noble is a noblewoman and so forth, allowing people to ‘marry up.’ The traditionally narrow definition of the wizard caste has also been expanded to cover all the academics and scholars of the many great universities.

# Provinces

The Jrusteli Confederation is made up of thirteen (twelve, since the drowning of Svalwal) great cities, called the Original Thirteen or the Founding Cities. Officially, these are the only cities on the island as it is the dukes of these great metropolises that sit on the Council. Every Jrusteli man, woman and child is a citizen of one of the thirteen. Each city administrates the land around it, even when this land incorporates other cities. For example, the large town of Isstur is located around the coast from the city of Frowalkel. In any other land, Isstur would be considered a city but as Jrusteli law defines a city as one of the Original Thirteen, it remains a town. Isstur is in the zone administrated by Frowalkel. A man dwelling in Isstur might introduce himself as 'Albred of Isstur, Citizen of Frowalkel,' or just 'Albred of Frowalkel' if his home town is not at issue.

There are constant demands to promote one or more of the great towns of Jrustela to city status, opening up another seat on the council and giving another town a chance at the Arch-Dukedom – or at very least choose a town to fill the empty seat left by Svalwal. Thus far, the twelve cities have resisted adding another to their number, leading the

town councils of such places as Isstur and Bathijras to petition the Emperor of Land and Sea directly.

Jrustela is divided into several geographical provinces, which are described below.

## Kerela

**Cities:** Frowalkel, Evrowal, Hredimorinos, Piskosol

Kerela is the oldest 'civilised' part of the island. It was here that the Nralarites landed and their influence is obvious. If it were not for the tropical trees and the cries of strange birds, this could be Seshnela. The coastline of Kerela is dotted with innumerable small villages and ports and the inland reaches are a patchwork of small farms and vast manorial estates. The citizens of Kerela take great pride in their ancestry and heritage and everywhere are monuments to some great explorer, sage or philosopher of the past. They are also noted patrons of the arts and often it seems impossible to take two steps without running into some poetry recital or uplifting dramaturgical performance. It is a settled land, a safe land.



## Western Kerela & The Frowalkel Peninsula

Kerela's boundary to the west is marked by the tangled Regrettable Hills, just south of the Frowalkel peninsula. The hills, a maze of thorny forests, bogs and things with teeth, once blocked overland travel from Frowalkel. The citizens of the city on the cape complained for years about the dangers of the hills, leading to the construction of the Corrective Highway in 801. This wide road of spell-reinforced stone cuts straight through the hills and wards along the sides of the Highway fend off wandering monsters. The opening of the Highway linked the Frowalkel peninsula with the rest of Jrustela (and within a day, the Frowalkites were complaining about the influx of visitors and meddlers in their affairs). The Highway is a century old but still consumes a huge amount of money on maintenance and security.

The Frowalkel peninsula (also known as the Spur of Hith) is the home of the first Seshnegi colony on the island. It is blisteringly hot, a land of parched hills and stony outcrops. There is little arable land here and few green things grow. Goats are farmed here and there are a few copper and gold mines of doubtful profitability. The heat grows marginally less intense in winter but summer is absolutely unbearable. Apprentice wizards are often employed by rich families in Hith to place spells of cold on their homes and there is talk of another great sorcerous project to rework the climate in the whole peninsula by either binding an ice god or moving the spiritual aura of the Valind Glacier. The small towns of Hithland are all located along the eastern coast, except for the mining towns of Esten and Galhind. From north to south, the coast towns are North Cape, Gerlant's Harbour, Frowalkel, Genersketkel and Port Haven.

### North Cape

The most northerly town in all Jrustela is also, perhaps, the most unhappy. The town swelters all year long in punishing, searing heat. The buildings are of Seshnegi design, made to cope with cold winters and winds but the hidebound citizens refuse to adopt more open styles of housing. Their servants, though, have no such compunction and dwell in airy huts and small homes. North Cape might have been abandoned if it were not for the North Cape Lighthouse just outside town. Dangerous reefs lie just beyond the cape and many ships coming from the north have run aground on them in the past. Originally, the lighthouse was a simple bonfire atop a tall stone tower but it has since been replaced with a magical

beacon containing a bound fire elemental. It is the only denizen of the district who complains about the cold.

The tip of Jrustela is marked by a rocky knoll called Gerlant's Head, so named because it resembles the great king in certain lights. Some have heard the head make prophecies in times of great upheaval.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Salvage and curiosities from drowned ships often wash up around North Cape. Gerlant's Head may also attract scholars and believers.

### Gerlant's Harbour

Gerlant's Harbour is one of the more pleasant Frowalkel towns, located in a sheltered bay thronged with dolphins. It is a fishing town but is also home to a small magical research group attached to the University of Frowalkel who investigate the principles of Debalidan water-magic. As of yet, their greatest accomplishment was when they flooded over half the town but accidents will happen.

An odd local legend claims that the copy of the *Abiding Book* held in the town church was drawn up by a fishing net from the depths of the ocean and that it is of special age and holiness.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Pagan legends insist that the spirits of drowned sailors are reborn as dolphins. Some come here seeking to contact the dead.

### Frowalkel

The oldest Seshnegi city on the island, Frowalkel actually seems older than even Arshu Phola in the far south. It is a dusty place, with a musty air of decay and indolence. All the great civic buildings were built generations ago, in stark contrast to the thrusting, competitive architecture of the other cities. Irenstos is always trying to outdo Shenilstos, Evrowal and Hredimorinos in competition to build the most beautiful temples or towers but Frowalkel just sits and festers.

The city is built on the Jensursus river, which flows down from the northernmost hills of the Curustus through the Regrettable Hills. By the time it reaches the town, the river is slow-moving and a muddy brown colour and the delta on which Frowalkel is built is thick with mosquitoes and crocodiles. The Jrusteli have dug deep channels through the mud to keep Frowalkel's harbour clear.

In the centre of Frowalkel, on Seldon Hill, is the Old Town, the first colony. Frowalkel was founded as a base for explorations, for an era of Empire that never came. Old Town bores into the hill, with miles upon miles of cellars and storage vaults for supplies that were never used or gathered. Much of this storage space has been taken over by the university of Frowalkel, which has absorbed many of the abandoned buildings in the city. Beyond Old Town, the newer sections of Frowalkel show little of the grandeur and ambition of God Learner architecture displayed elsewhere in Jrustela. There are few soaring towers reaching for heaven and no grand cathedrals or monuments to the Empire's glory, just endless terraces of dour-faced houses and brown-grassed parks named for long-dead Seshnegi kings. The vitality of the Middle Sea Empire ensures that Frowalkel is growing constantly but that cannot stave off the air of malaise that hangs over the city.

One curious rumour about Frowalkel insists that the city is home to numerous heretical cults. Certainly, Frowalkel is far from any of the centres of the Rightness Crusade, like Shenilstos, and its distance from the mainland when it was first founded centuries ago would have made it desirable to those practising heretical variants of Malkionism – or worse, those worshipping demons or pagan gods. The presence of *Impossible Landscapes*, a book salvaged from somewhere in Arkat's Empire, lends credence to this rumour but it is of course unthinkable that any such cult would have survived to the present day and it is even more unlikely that any such cults use the maze of cellars and vaults beneath the Old Town to hold their blasphemous rites.

The Civic Union, the governing body of Frowalkel, ignore such rumours as they ignore so much else. The Union is made up of a few elected officials but is dominated by the ancient families of the first settlers and by representatives from the church and the university. As Frowalkel's status declines, the Union's efforts to deny the obvious grow. The Union either trumpets the city's mediocre advancements or issues scathing condemnations of anything the other cities do. New trade routes will just sap the economy; new spells are morally suspect, while new support for the church is decried as crushing civic liberties and freedoms. In truth, the Civic Union does more harm than good to Frowalkel's reputation but it has managed to keep the city safe and secure – the crime rate in Frowalkel is lower than anywhere else in Jrustela and there have been no disastrous magical accidents here in decades.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Frowalkel's library, though decades out of date, has a wealth of tomes of historical importance. The discovery of *Impossible Landscapes* here changed the course of Jrusteli magical research; another tome from Brithos or Stygia could have equally enormous ramifications.
- ☒ The city is one of the founding cities and as such wields considerable political power. Duke Kontharan takes little interest in affairs of state and there has been much talk about appointing a deputy to serve on the Confederation council. An ambitious character who wins the favour of the Civic Union could take on such a role...
- ☒ If you want to do something secretly in Jrustela, Frowalkel is a good place to start. Few outside the city pay much attention to events in the City of Resentment and its isolated location and lack of sorcerous communication (condemned by the Civil Union as unsupportable and expensive) makes news slow to travel here.

#### Genersketkel

This town has grown into a suburb of Frowalkel, linked by the Ocean Road. Genersketkel has tried to stave off its inevitable absorption into the larger city but to little avail. Genersketkel is known for its smithies and foundries and the skills of its metal-workers.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Copper jewellery and other fine metalwork can be purchased here. Genersketkel's smiths are especially favoured by the Zistorites, who rely on the clever cogs and tubing and other machine parts made here.

#### Port Haven

The largest port in the region save for Frowalkel itself, Port Haven stands in opposition to its parent city. Whatever Frowalkel says, Port Haven opposes. The city has embraced the Return to Rightness Crusade and was a significant launching platform for the moral and military relief of Seshnela. The Cathedral of the Bright Word is dedicated to all the Saintly Bookbearers who were martyred in the north before Trymir led the Rightness Crusade across the ocean. The centrepiece of this cathedral is an enchanted copy of the *Abiding Book*. The book is said to be magically linked to all sentient beings

in the world and the pages turn as more are converted to the worship of the Invisible God. When the last page is reached, all beings shall give praise to His name. Most God Learners dismiss the book as a mere symbol or even a hoax but they still look warily at this clock that counts down to the effective destruction of the pagan worlds.

Recently, Port Haven was struck by a sneak attack from the air, believed to have been perpetrated by the Empire of Wyrn Friends. Fire lanced from the clouds, setting nine Bookbearer vessels alight as they sat in the harbour. Divination spells failed to track down the assailants, who were likely winged dragons, but some fishermen reported seeing a strange flying machine of paper and glass in the sky shortly after the attack.

There is also a significant shrine to St. Waertag in Port Haven, which is something of an embarrassment to the Missionaries who dominate the town. St. Waertag's status in the modern church is rather uncertain due to the Jrustelis' war with the Waertagi boat people. Nonetheless, the saint remains popular with the fishermen and sailors of the city and attempts to replace the shrine with one dedicated to a more acceptable saint (like St. Volanc or St. Hedimenta) have so far failed. The Saintly Bookbearers compromised by building a trio of religious buildings (a seminary, a library and an administration tower) around the Waertag shrine, overshadowing it and concealing it from the view of passers-by. Still, whenever the weather is bad or a ship is lost at sea, the common folk of Port Haven swarm in to pray to the Boat-building Saint for intercession.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Missionaries or crusaders heading from Jrustela to Genertela leave from this port.

### Esten

The mining town of Esten has been taken over in the last decade by Zistorites, who replaced the old, inefficient mines with vast open-face pits dug by golems and titanic machines. The town has become a showpiece for the new techniques (which can be summarised as 'throw magic at the problem until it works') and the foundries of Esten now run night and day. The human inhabitants of the town are now utterly overshadowed by the great machines. Esten is linked by a tributary of the Jensursus to Genersketkel and the two towns are closely linked. Some of the old underground mines have been taken over by the Zistorites and are now used as storage vaults for experiments. Ships from the distant Clanking City have



been arriving at Genersketkel of late and barges that bring ore downriver now return to Esten with cryptic cargoes concealed by spells and canvas coverings.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Esten's mining efforts have drawn the wrath of the dreo earth-spirits who sabotage or even possess Zistorite machines.

### Galhind

Galhind lies beyond the Regrettable Hills in the foothills of the Curustus. It is a mining town like Esten but is much more traditional and quiet, with none of the clanking machinery or bizarre religious practices of its northerly neighbour. Galhind's main claim to fame is its infrequent contact with the Mostali dwarfs of the mountains. There are also bizarre tales of Galhindians who have odd connections or even relations with the dreo spirits of the land.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Galhind maintains trade links with the Mostali but the dwarfs have become increasingly suspicious as more and more 'traders' turn out to be God Learner spies.

## Central Kerela

The central portion of Kerela runs along the coast from the Regrettable Hills to the Evrodry Forests. It is the home of the Reformist movement and holds itself to be the heart of Jrusteli civilisation. Central Kerela is a land of low hills, green fields, orchards and vineyards. It was once covered by forests but these were cleared centuries ago. It is not quite as fertile as the east and south but the wine and fruit grown here make agriculture vital to the region.

In the south of Kerela, the orchards give way to wilder lands, then to jungle as Kerela shades into Faramosel. The nobles of Kerela like to keep this region unspoiled, partly to provide hunting grounds but also as a training ground for armies and a buffer against Faramosel. There is a growing militaristic undercurrent in Kerela and more and more towns and cities are quietly building up their guards and private armies. This is perhaps a reaction to the sudden spate of setbacks afflicting the Middle Sea Empire, as Kerela has always been a weathervane as regards political and economic trends. The election of Beels as Duke of Evrowal may also be a mark of this renewed militancy.

The court at Frowal looks warily at Kerela, seeing it as the obvious rival to its power. The other regions of Jrustela are all caught up with their own internal projects or problems but peaceful Kerela has traditionally dominated affairs on the island and seems willing to take a leading role again. It is only the comparative weakness of Evrowal on the council and the ongoing struggles between the Jrusteli church and the God Learners that have held Kerela back from assuming a position of supremacy on the island.

The Evrodry Forest is a tangle of thick woodland and fast-flowing rivers that has never been fully mapped, let alone cleared. There are a few tracks through the outer reaches of the wood but most travellers take the longer roads that wind their way inland, or the magnificent sea road along the cliffs, where basalt bridges supported by titanic carved pillars span gaps in the coastline. One curious feature of the forest is the irregular sightings of strange granite monoliths or even white statues amid the trees. These stones are never seen in the same place twice but have never been observed to move. Alarming, the bodies of travellers have been found lying by these cryptic stones, dead but unmarked.

## Copertin

Copertin is best known for its markets. Originally, these were just farmers' markets selling fresh produce from the surrounding farms but as the reach and power of

the Middle Sea Empire grew, curios and treasures from foreign lands began to be sold alongside cabbages and pigs. Today, Copertin's bazaars are thronged with goods from as far away as Vithela or the elf coasts of Errinoru and the most wonderful things can be bought there: little glass figurines that move and roar, dreams of sleeping mountains, steaming potions of dragon's blood or even heretical texts from the Empire of Wyrms Friends...

Many of the items sold in Copertin are immortal, illegal or dangerous but the market is tolerated, partly because it has the support of the organised crime gangs in far-off Hathinethor but also because Evrowal's lords and wizards refuse to countenance the Church trying to impose laws and restrictions in Kerela.

### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ If it is rare, arcane and you need to be rid of it quickly, you will find a buyer in the Godsday Bazaar.

## Reyenswal

Reyenswal is an odd island of traditionalism in the midst of progressive Kerela. It was settled by immigrants from Brithos who arrived in the 650s. They may have fled an even more oppressive regime in their homeland but their new life seems incredibly hidebound to their neighbours. In Reyenswal, the old caste laws are rigorous upheld. A form of Makanism is practised in the town but it is perilously close to the atheistic ways of Brithos. Reyenswal is known to be under observation by church officials.

The port of Reyenswal is sometimes visited by Waertagi sailors, who also pay their respects at the shrine in Port Haven to the west. There is Waertagi blood in the Reyenswal people and some even have a bluish tinge to their skin. For the most part, they are snubbed by their neighbours as being wilfully backwards, although some outsiders tolerate the Reyenswal people and find their customs quaint.

Eighty years ago, before the Middle Sea Empire assaulted Brithos, the Order of the Iron Staff and other military groups came to Reyenswal to consult with the leaders of the town about potential hazards and defences that would be encountered on the sorcerer's isle. These preparations turned out to be of no use and some suspect that the Reyenswalians lied about their old homeland. Oddly, there are very few children and fewer old people in Reyenswal and there are many windowless buildings that no outsider is permitted to enter.

### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Reyenswal's people still remember lore from closed Brithos and many are expert sorcerers, especially in theoretical fields.

## Amersford

The city of Amersford is located in the Kerelan heartland. It is famed for its vineyards and orchards and boats sail downriver from Amersford to Copertin bearing the fruits of the region's labour. Amersford's wealth is founded on this trade and the safety of the harvest is of paramount concern. The local landowners employ many timinits as field labourers, believing the insect-men to be more productive and hard-working than humans. The Amersford Wine League is one of the financial power-houses of Jrustela, wielding a staggering amount of influence in the Middle Sea Empire.

Amersford is also the centre for research into magic of earth and plant. Blessings from a dozen fertility gods of

different cultures are invoked daily and this magic gives the land no less than four harvests each year. The lords of the Amersford Wine League are ambitious, though, and have given the God Learner's Collective a staggering amount of money to improve this fertility Sorcery. If the League learned of the disastrous effects of the recent Goddess Switch, it would cripple public confidence in the Empire's magicians and lead to a disastrous financial crash. Wine is as blood to this Kerelan town.

### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Every winery uses its own unique techniques and strains of grape; sabotage, espionage and magical subversion are increasingly used in conflicts between different vineyards.

## Southwall

This town was constructed during the war against the timinits and has retained its martial character even today. It is protected by heavy fortifications, both mundane and arcane, and has a number of military bases and training grounds. It is located on the edge of the border with Faramosel and rangers and border scouts from Southwall patrol for many leagues through the central wilderness. The town has a reputation for producing skilled warriors and is a good place to go looking for mercenaries or sellswords. The town also has an unsavoury reputation as a den of vice and depravity, although this is likely deliberately exaggerated on the part of the town's leaders; rich young nobles from the north and east go to Southwall seeking debauchery.

### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Southwall is a major fortress for the civilian Middle Sea Empire ground forces, so those looking for employment as soldiers or mercenaries should come here.

## Arshu Emris

This is the second town to bear this name. The original town was built by the Olodo soon after they first arrived. The inhabitants of Arshu Emris did not join the migration south and lost contact with the other Olodo settlers.

When the Nralarites arrived, they discovered ruins. Whatever fate befell the first settlers, it left no traces, no scars on the land. The town was situated in a fine spot, so the Nralarites moved in, reclaiming what buildings they could and demolishing the others. Today, little save the name testifies to the existence of the old city. Of late,

## The Dantrils of Amersford

Richest of the families of the Wine League, the Dantril Dynasty is infamous for its political infighting, torrid affairs and incredible wealth. Gossip about the loves and intrigues of the Dantrils is a common entertainment in the area. Currently, the old lord of the Dantrils, Jremos, is on his death bed but he has been there for almost two decades, sustained by Sorcery and his own stubbornness. His eldest son, Hrethas, has become a priest but mainly in order to convince his father of the virtue of letting go of life and letting the inheritance pass to Hrethas' son by a previous marriage, young Rohric. Jremos' three other children, his daughters Lucila, Amri and Katala, are all married to local nobles who want their share of the Dantril fortune- except for Katala, who has married a God Learner sorcerer and become an accomplished magic-user herself. She is pregnant but the child is not her husband's - she recreated one of the myths of Flamal and somehow conceived a child with the god in the God World. Meanwhile, Jremos' brother Gerema and his wife Kara have been trying to win control of the family estates for decades and are still searching for the will left by old Eranty Dantril, which was hidden somewhere in the family chapel...



though, many citizens of Arshu Emris report strange dreams. Some of these dreams are of the old city, of the daily lives of the Olodo. Others are sea-dreams, of something swimming in the blue waters of the bay. These dreams are most intense at the height of summer when the shores are covered with a seasonal migration of jellyfish.

Attempts to unravel these mysterious dreams have failed and as yet nothing untoward has happened save for a few sleepless nights. Still, something took the people of Arshu Emris once and it came for them like a thief in the night.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ The town is a stronghold of the church in Kerela and is the strongest support of the Loyalist cause along the coast. Those who flee the dangerous liberalism of Evrowal often come here.

### Evrowal

The sunset city of the north coast slopes steeply down from the hills to the sea. It is a city of wide plazas and golden-red stone, of canals and little harbours, of museums and cafes. Evrowal was founded as a city of intellectuals and sorcerers, where logic and reason and justice would count for more than strength of arm or might of magic. It has held true to these lofty goals and is known all over Jrustela

for being a city of artists and scholars. Some in the church question the morality of the citizens of Evrowal, decrying them for not being sufficiently strong in their faith and commitment to the Malkioni way. Others see Evrowal as a decadent, weak place, a city of shrill parasites who contribute little to the Middle Sea Empire.

The heart of Evrowal is the Grand Bright Square and the surrounding bright quarter, which holds the majority of the city's civic buildings and great towers. Evrowal's major streets are wide boulevards lit by magical lamps but there are many narrow alleys and wynds in the areas between these boulevards and the harbour district to the east. The four main streets start in the Grand Bright Square and run off in the four cardinal directions. The east street is the Street of the Ocean of Form; to the west is the Street of Clarity of Thought; to the north is the Street of Pleasant Shapes and the Street of Golden Reason runs south. Most refer to them as just Ocean, Clear, Pleasant and Gold streets.

Evrowal's harbour is small – the city is located on a promontory overlooking the bay and the way down to the harbour is via a cascade of staircases. A Zistor-powered pulley apparatus is being constructed above the harbour to ease the carrying of cargo up from the ships. The neighbourhood between the bright district and the harbour district is called the Steps and is seen as the most bohemian section of the city. To the north of the main city is the Spire, the seat of the duke and the city's main fortification. The defences of the spire have fallen into disuse and many worry about its ability to function in the unlikely event of an attack by the Empire of Wyrn Friends or another foe, like Brithos.

The newer sections of the city – the Clockmaker's Parade, Pandrel's Folly, the Dunes and Clifftop are all located to the south.

By tradition, the Duke of Evrowal is chosen by lot from among the nobles of the city. The nobility are a mix of the founding citizens and high-caste immigrants from Seshnela and as anyone with even a drop of noble blood is eligible for election, over a fifth of the citizens can hope to be elected Duke. The Duke serves for five years and is given a generous stipend by the city and the run of the ducal palace. The actual business of governing Evrowal is done by an elected council, who are voted on by the populace from among leading landowners and citizens. The council also serves for five years but elections for the council happen in between the lottery for duke; the

duke therefore acts as a check on the council. Attempts by the distant Emperor to bring Evrowal into line with more conventional cities failed – the citizens objected to having a permanent duke, as they believed it would lead to corruption and social restrictions. When Ilotos was informed that the citizens of Evrowal were willing to fight for their eccentric freedoms, he relented.

Evrowal has always been a place where new thoughts and ideas are fostered and allowed to thrive. Ideas that would be deemed heretical or blasphemous or just plain wrong in other cities are bandied about as casual conversation over dinner. If a citizen of Evrowal declares that Jrustela should break its ties to the Seshnegi throne and return to being a confederacy or say that he believes the *Abiding Book* is a pack of lies and nonsense, his opinions are tolerated and discussed without penalty. Conspiracies and cults can operate almost openly here and the city has been a refuge for oppressed peoples and religions in the past. Obscure branches of Makanism and Reconstructionalism are practised in the temples here and some even whisper doctrines that could be considered heretical Transgressionist teachings in a certain light.

Still, Evrowal is a beautiful city in the sunshine, which so often on the golden terraces with their coffee-houses and the curious cobbled laneways where citizens speak earnestly of reforming not just the government but the world and all that dwells within it.

*I dream strange dreams whenever I come here, of great waves rising from the ocean, of apocalypse and rebirth. I sometimes fancy that Evrowal is half in the dream world already, that soon it will shuck off the husk of material existence and become but a eidolon in the minds of men.*

— Randolo, Jrusteli Dreamer

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Characters who have been defeated in some political intrigue should consider fleeing to Evrowal, where the disgraced and disenfranchised are still treated with respect.
- ☒ Reformist characters will find many allies here; spies and agents of foreign powers will also find Evrowal to be a safe haven in which to operate.

- ☒ Many in the church suspect that Evrowal harbours heretics but the city's pride in its freedom and resistance to outside interference means the righteous must move secretly and carefully.

- ☒ Evrowal's bohemian atmosphere and intellectual ferment draws young and brilliant minds from across the Middle Sea Empire. While the university of Evrowal is small and unremarkable, the next great step in God Learning may be made here.

### Volancaster

This town is nestled in the Kerelan uplands, just on the north side of the central basin. It was founded in a spate of religious fervour after the canonisation of St. Volanc, the holy crusader patron of the Saintly Bookbearers. The town's commitment to Rightness has cooled over the past centuries, despite the best efforts of the church to establish Volancaster as a counterbalance to the secular influence of Evrowal. The town is noted for its ornate temples and its elaborate pageants. The diocese of Volancaster is a prestigious one within the church.

The Feast of St. Volanc is the great festival of the town, during which the death of the great saint at the hands of unbelievers is re-enacted. Visitors come from all Kerela to witness the mummers play. Three times in the past, the actor portraying the saint in the play has been rapturously affected or inspired and has spoken words of prophecy as if possessed by the spirit of St. Volanc.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Volancaster is still the most devout town in Kerela and those trying to curry favour with the Rightness Crusade are often found here.

### Talanis

The city of Talanis has grown from a small village to one of the great metropolises of the Middle Sea Empire in the space of little more than a generation. Its prosperity is founded on the grand tripod of the Empire – trade, conquest and magic. Talanisport welcomes trade vessels from all over the world and hosts one of the largest naval bases in the north. As for magic, why, the air in the city is thick with the crackle of spirit-binding runeplates and the chanting of protective spells. Talanis is a strong supporter of the Empire and as such is wholeheartedly opposed to Evrowal's reformism. It was the lord of Talanis, Duke Castor, who secretly lobbied the Emperor of Land and Sea to appoint a permanent duke in the capital. That

scheme may have failed but Talanis remains wary of its neighbour, whose commitment to the glorious eternal Empire is wavering.

Duke Castor sees himself as a champion of the Empire, a patriot who is willing to do whatever is necessary to preserve the Middle Sea Empire and the devout of the Invisible God. It rankles with him that the Emperor has not seen Castor's humility and heroism but no doubt evil advisors in the Seshnegi court are plotting against him, or so he tells himself. He sees enemies everywhere and many times has jumped to stab at shadows. No one in town dares mention the unfortunate incident where the duke personally funded a military strike against the worm-things in the southern ocean, having mistaken worms for wyrms and sent a hundred good men to a watery death.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Adventurers willing to serve the Middle Sea Empire are welcomed here, as the leaders and lords of Talanis take a pro-active approach to thwarting dangers. Say your sword is at the service of the Emperor and you'll find yourself on a boat to the

rebellious southern colonies or knee-deep in Wyrmfriend blood within a week.

### Aelswal

Quiet and civilised, Aelswal's fortune is built on maritime trade. The shipyards of Aelswal are not as impressive as those in Orphalsketkal but they put the vessels of any other nation to shame. The white-and-red ships with prows of bronze and sails of ensorcelled fire cut through the waves of Aelswal harbour like bloodied blades.

Aelswal is ruled by a baroness, Lady Jaca of Aelswal, but she is rarely at home. She holds a high position in the Free Men of the Sea (a testament to her tactical sense and skill at battle-magic) so her town is administered in her absence by a regent, Tyrfis. Tyrfis is known to be obsessed with Kralorelan culture and has filled the ducal manner with exotic artefacts and even a few imported servants and entertainers.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ While Orphalsketkal specialises in large vessels, the smaller ships of Aelswal are especially suitable for sea-faring adventurers and God Learner study groups.

### Eastern Kerela

The eastern portion of the province begins when the thick woods of the Evrodry are left behind and the traveller enters what is called the Land of the Great Venture. This is the oldest settled portion of the island by far and it bears the signs of long habitation. Most settlements in this province are scattered around the shores of First Landing Bay, where old Hredimorinos is located. South are increasingly steep hills where the hoary villages that were founded hundreds of years ago have not changed in the slightest and the people still practice old faiths. To the east is the Head of Nralar, a forested peninsula that marks the beginning of Borostenorela.

Eastern Kerela is a little more socially traditionalist than Central Kerela but politically is the birthplace of reformism. Hredimorinos pioneered democracy; the district is wealthy and powerful enough to chafe under the rule of distant Frowal. The easterners are a proud folk with a deep respect for traditions but also a committed belief in freedom, self-governance and working for the common good.

The insect-folk are a major social divide in Eastern Kerela. The region incorporates both 'Timinit city,' as Piskosol is called because of its large number of insect-folk living there, and the segregated towns of Landing Bay where the insects are legally separated from humans. This divide stems from the war between the settlers and the insects that occurred centuries ago; Hredimorinos was the aggressor in the war and many of the villages here suffered timinit attacks. The insect-folk still remember the burning hives, too, and that trauma made them frantically adopt human cultures as a defence mechanism.

## Hredimorinos

The City of the Great Venture is still one of the largest cities on the continent and its wealth is second only to Hathinelthor. The original buildings of Hredimorinos are long since gone but there are many small houses and ancient churches that date back centuries. These relics, though, are overshadowed by the new structures. Gothic towers and cathedrals jostle for space with the titanic parliament building and the nine-circle Library of All. The original scheme for Hredimorinos was for a carefully planned city with a grid system of streets dividing the city into quarters for each of the castes. This reasoned design was abandoned during the initial settlement rush, when new Nralarite colonists crowded into the town.

The walls of Hredimorinos are a curiosity on Jrustela, a land which has known few land wars or sieges. The Nralarite cities have never faced a major war, so they never constructed the mighty fortifications seen in the north – all save Hredimorinos, which built walls to defend against the insects. Today, the walls divide the city in two, into Inner and Outer Hredimorinos. The Inner City is the wealthiest city in the modern world. Its towers and grand palaces soar above the crumbling stone walls that once seemed so tall and imposing.

The University of Hredimorinos is located on an artificial island in the harbour, called the Rock of Books. It is connected to the mainland by a shimmering bridge but many students actually swim or row back and forth from town to academy. The University is not one of the leading lights of Jrustela and is outshone by Eredithanos or Irenstos or even Piskosol, to the great shame of the burghers of Hredimorinos. The great attraction of the Rock of Books is the museum attached to the university, which contains relics, artefacts and prizes from a hundred Jrusteli conquests. Items dating back to the wars against

the island's Olodo and timinits jostle for warded shelf space with Chaos-twisted horrors from Arkat's kingdom and bizarre draconic icons from the Empire of Wyrms Friend's. While the curators of the Museum of History & Pagan Gods try to ensure that nothing *actively* dangerous is put on display, every God Learner or military ship that arrives at Hredimorinos brings another crate or two of strange wonders to be categorised.

If Evrowal is a city of conspiracies and fringe groups, then Hredimorinos is the mature version, a city of factions and parties. There are numerous political groups vying for control of the Hredimorinos Parliament. The leading parties in 908 are the Thirteen Friends (Reformist), the League of Blue Flags (Loyalist), the Venture Trust (conservatives), Read Between The Lines (religious) and All Forward Together (God Learners). The current duke, the scholar-warrior Tyndryza, was a compromise candidate elected by a Thirteen Friends/All Forward Together coalition. He is also secretly backed by the Venture Trust group, which funded many of his scientific expeditions and holds great influence over him. When Hredimorinos holds the Arch-Dukedom, things get done and in times of crisis, the whole island looks here for leadership. The glory days of the Parliament have not been forgotten here.

### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Those delving into the secrets of Jrustela's past or looking for foreign magics or secret artefacts should start at the Museum of History & Pagan Gods. Those looking for, say, the origin of a plague of zombies, possessed cultists or strange blood-hungry gods stalking the streets of the city should also start there.
- ☒ Politics in Hredimorinos are not as bloody as they are in Hathinelthor but the rulers of this city look far afield. Conspiracies and plans involving the whole island or even the whole Middle Sea Empire begin here. One plan, the Reclamation Agenda, is the extreme end of Reformism and plans to cut the Middle Sea Empire in two by rejecting Seshnegi rule. This plan would begin with seizing control of the Free Men of the Sea and binding the fabled Spirit of Seshnegi Kingship to destroy the authority of Frowal and end with a new Empire comprising Jrustela, Umathela and the trading colonies to the east.

☒ The timinits insist that the city is haunted by the ghosts of their ancestors. While such superstitions might be tolerated in other lands, this is Jrustela, the home of inquiry and God Learning. If there are unquiet insect-souls clustering around the walls of Hredimorinos, then sorcerers should be able to delve into the Spirit Plane and deal with them. However, as the timinits who fought in that old war were shamans, not honest Malkioni, the God Learners assigned to this task have had to delve into the old myth-world of Paskadala's Egg.

## Danmalas Point

Named after the Eden-like realm of Malkioni pre-history, Danmalas Point is one of the most pleasant and beautiful regions of all Jrustela. The town is home to numerous wealthy merchants and nobles but in the last three decades it has become best known for a healing spa on the outskirts of town run by Xelemite nuns. The Hospice of Danmalas is especially good at treating afflictions of the mind and spirit and God Learners blasted by hostile divinities during HeroQuests are often sent here. The hospice has built a high wall to keep the madmen away from the wealthy neighbours.

### Reasons to come here:

☒ Insane veterans of previous HeroQuests may have the vital information that allows the Player Characters to succeed where the madmen failed.

## Abrokkel

A day's ride south of Hredimorinos, Abrokkel is used by the timinits as their gateway into that city. The insects refuse to enter Hredimorinos, so Abrokkel is full of middlemen, messengers and agents for the timinit trading guilds. There are also several accountancy firms and banks here – the insects have a talent for detail and mathematical problems, and so have a near-monopoly over financial administration. Carts loaded with documents, ledgers and even chests of gold crowd the road south from the Great Venture.

Most of the insects in Abrokkel are either aranea clerks or lucan guards but there is also a large colony of cerebresites. They employ many human preachers and poets to write religious tracts in praise of the cerebresite propagation methods. These tracts are distributed by missionaries in the timinit lands of the southern continent, in the hopes that more insect men will come forward and volunteer to be cerebresite hosts to win eternal Solace.

### Reasons to come here:

☒ Secure traffic between Hredimorinos and Abrokkel is vital to the Jrustelan economy so merchants regularly hire caravan guards to protect against bandits.

## Fortress Wing Break

The tower of Wing Break was constructed at the height of the war against the jungle and is still garrisoned even though the timinits are now part of the Middle Sea Empire. A trade town grew up around the military camp and that town has now become a small city. Fortress Wing Break is still a key part of the Jrusteli military machine, a training camp for knights and war-wizards. A forge – now dominated by Zistorites – turns out experimental siege engines while bubbling alchemical vats are used to brew up potions and poisons. The Middle Sea Empire's weapons' technology is already far ahead of any rival Empire but with places like Wing Break, it shall soon be invincible.

It is an open secret that Wing Break has been tasked with preparing for a major clash with the Empire of Wyrn Friends. The armies trained there practice ways to fight dinosaurs and flying foes and learn how to survive magical blasts of incredible power. When the war comes, they will be ready to slay dragons.

### Reasons to come here:

☒ The taverns and whorehouses of Wing Break may hide EWF spies who must be discovered and dealt with. As the wyrnfriends are adept spies and mind-readers, the Jrusteli counter-intelligence bureau often hires adventurers who are unknown to the enemy agents.

## Borosten Harbour

Borosten Harbour is sometimes called the Gateway to New Horizons. Located in a narrow bay between two towering cliffs, the harbour is home to the best explorers of the Middle Sea Empire. The ships built here have sailed to the very edge of the world and skirted the edges of Magasta's Pool. The quay at the harbour is studded with stones taken from all the islands and lands of the world; each time a ship returns, it brings a new stone for the harbour.

The sheltered location lends itself to small-scale weather magic and the gardens around the town are the world in microcosm, growing plants taken from as far afield as Vithela and Kralorela. There is a library of maps which

is one of the great state secrets of the Middle Sea Empire and a museum dedicated to past explorers. Borosten was obviously founded by the descendants of the Great Explorer and takes pride in its association with him. It is considered lucky to begin ventures here in the Harbour and many companies and adventuring parties are formally formed here.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Secret missions to distant lands are launched from this port.

### Piskosol

Piskosol is the city of surprises. When first discovered by the explorer Borostanar, it was a decaying Olodo village that was home to only a few dozen sullen fishermen. With the signing of the treaty of Peresk and the peace between the Olodo and the Nralarites, Piskosol was recolonised by newcomers from Seshnela. The town was decaying but its location was ideal and the fishing good. Within a generation, Piskosol had grown to one of the pre-eminent cities of the north.

When the timinits joined Jrusteli society, they too were welcomed into Piskosol. The town had profited from its merging of two cultures and so they were willing to accept the insects. For their part, the insect-men were suddenly obsessed with human culture and were eager to adapt human ways. The timinits proved to be extremely adept at mathematics and analysis and while their ability to innovate was limited, they made excellent aides and partners to human academics and librarians.

Today, Piskosol continues to reflect this partnership between man and insect. The city is divided into thirteen semi-independent wards, each of which chooses an elector to select the duke of the city. The wards were added to the city at various times, so there is a large difference between their sizes and importance. The Outer Ward, for example, covers nearly three times as much ground as the next largest ward.

Piskosol is also called the 'City of Volunteers' and it is true that the city contributes disproportionately to the success of the Middle Sea Empire. Patriotism runs strong here and many would argue that the 'melting pot' approach and potent Sorcery of Piskosol exemplifies the best methods of the Empire.

**Old Ward:** If one looks very closely at the cobbled streets and old buildings of the Old Ward, one can discern the shape of the ancient Olodo village that once stood here. There are a few of the curious hexagonal temples dedicated to their gods and some alleyways that still conceal shrines to placate earth-spirits. The brown-skinned folk of this ward still invoke the old gods sometimes but on most days they are as honest and fervent in their faith in Malkion as any man in the Empire.

**New Ward:** New Ward was built by the Nralarites and is the seat of government here in Piskosol. The whole ward has become little more than a few streets around the monolithic Ducal Palace and Civic Hall, which incorporates all the administration and bureaucracy of the city. Hundreds of arachans work here, swarming up the outer walls in a black tide each morning. The Ducal Palace also houses auditoriums, theatres, storehouses, defence towers, hidden wells, prisons and dungeons – every year, more of the city is consumed by the sprawling mass of the building. In certain lights, the palace is like a crouched beast, a dragon coiled around the city's heart, with tongues and horns of stone stretching languidly towards Wallward.

**Waertagsward:** The port section of the city is always crowded. Piskosol is one of the major trade hubs for the whole Middle Sea Empire and ships from all over the world dock here. Swarms of lucans carry the cargo from the ships into the underground warehouses while crews from a dozen races and a hundred nations flood the taverns and markets. Timinit-rafts jostle for space with Free Men galleons and elemental vessels.

Waertagsward is notoriously dangerous, especially for newcomers. Timinits who have come north from Pamaltela, full of enthusiasm and wonder for this new world, are often lured into slavery or press-gangs as soon as they scuttle off the boat. Criminal gangs based in Hathinethor control much of the business on the docks, despite the best efforts of the Piskosol authorities.

**Ironward:** This is the industrial section of the city and is dominated by timinit work-guilds. In the early days of the city, the insects were virtually enslaved by the Nralarites and were exploited as cheap labour. It was only when a famed ephemera, Lan Longtalker, united the workers and fought back against the Nralarite lords with a combination of industrial action and philosophical debate

that the balance shifted to favour the insect-men. Today, the timinits control all of Ironward and the foundries work night and day.

There is a growing schism between the timinit guilds and the Zistorites. Piskosol, with its strong military presence, devotion to logic and mighty ocean-going fleet should be a natural ally for the distant Clanking City but the influential Ironwarders block any attempts to support the Zistorites – the machine-priests are in direct competition with the industrial guilds and the longer the Clanking City suffers, the less the threat to Ironward.

**Wallward:** The Wallward district was constructed during the wars against the Olodo. It crowds against the Waertagsward's edge, a stone bulwark of battlements and barnacle-encrusted walls. Its original purpose as a military fortress has been partially lost, although the Free Men of the Sea remember that it was from here that the great war against the Waertagi was launched. Now, the Wallward is mostly warehouses and shipping guild-houses but the walls are still garrisoned and the fires of Tanien's victory are but banked, not cold.

**Insect Ward:** No timinit with an ounce of self-respect would live in the insect ward, the slum district of Piskosol. The shadowy neighbourhood is full of termite-tower tenements and stone hives, inhabited by a motley mix of species. Timinits – mostly lucans and myrmidons – are the marginal majority here but humans now occupy the buildings built by the insect-folk who first arrived here centuries ago. This is the poorest section of Piskosol and is often nicknamed Bugtown. Strange Malkionist cults find fertile ground here, including heretical ones.

**Spider Ward:** The Spider Ward is located above the insect ward. Seven tall towers rise high above the slums and an insanely complex webwork of strands runs between them. The Spider Ward is a marvel of engineering and Sorcery. Some of the webbing is natural but most is made from braided metal or spun with Sorcery. The web is strong enough to support not only the thousands of insects (mostly arachans and mymidons) but also numerous laboratories, libraries, temples, towers and even a monastery dedicated to the Saint Who Is To Come (a hypothesised/prophesied arachan saint). A handful of other creatures make their home here, mostly sorcerers working closely with arachan experts.

A new tower is under construction, an upside-down tower protruding from the base of the Spider Ward. This glass-roofed tower will be staffed by agents of the Ducal Guard and will be the new home of the Piskosol city watch. From this eyrie, they will be able to watch over the entire city for signs of trouble.

**Temple Ward:** Piskosol is a devout city due to its timinit population, who are fervent devotees of the Invisible God. The temples here are among the richest in all of Jrustela and that is no small accomplishment. It is whispered among the acolytes that this had made the priests of the temples here corrupt and decadent. The senior priests are all human but the majority of their congregation, as well as their acolytes and aides are timinit. There is a rising tide of support for renewed Rightness in Piskosol, a tide that may sweep away the established order in this ward. The arch-bishop of Piskosol, Jalbon the Great, has the support of the duke and the old families of the city, as they see him as a brake on timinit ambitions.

**Eighth Ward:** The Eighth Ward was built in the years of excitement and religious enthusiasm following the appearance of the *Abiding Book*. While much of the Eighth Ward has been taken over by criminals and whores from the neighbouring Waertagsward, a keen eye can still see the marks of that old fervour – all the street names are those of saints and every building is richly decorated with Malkionite symbology and the deeds of past heroes like Hrestol and Serozos.

There is a killer loose in this ward – four criminals have been found dead in as many weeks. Each one had his throat cut and words from the *Abiding Book* branded into his face. As long as this madman preys on other criminals, his deeds will attract little attention but if the murders cross into the Templeward or the Highward, measures will have to be taken.

**Highward:** The Highward marks the expansion of the city onto the headlands north of the bay. It is a wealthy area, home to merchants and traders. For much of the region's history, timinits were little welcomed here, until the establishment of an artist's village. Most timinit artists are ephemerae, swift to master a particular style and desperate to leave something to posterity. It has become fashionable among the nobles here to be patrons of the arts and competition to foster a particular talented insect is fierce.



When Highward was first discovered by Borostonar, there was a great carving depicting some Pagan deity on the chalk cliffs beneath the city. This was removed when the foundations of the Highward were dug, replaced by an image of Saint Serozos. Since then, the cliffs have been carved by successive generations of timinit masons and today the White Cliffs are one of the wonders of the world, comprising over two miles of incredibly detailed stonework. The cliffs are constantly being remade, both by the sea and by new artists. It has become a custom among the ephemerae that when they grow old and tired after ten months or so of life, they climb down the cliffs and work on the chalk just above the waterline until their limbs wither and they fall and drown.

**Hyrafos' Ward:** Hyrafos' Ward is located north and inland of the Highward and mimics its neighbour however it can. It is a lower middle-class area with pretensions above its station. There are many fine craftsmen in this ward but little money and less influence. A tradition of

military service has sprung up in the last century and almost every family here has at least one soldier fighting overseas. Myrmidon insect-men are a common sight here. The myrmidons are fiercely loyal to their comrades-in-arms and if a human dies, his myrmidon companion will always visit the family of the deceased soldier, serving and protecting them in place of the fallen.

**Tower Ward:** The Tower Ward is the university district of Piskosol. The university is dominated by the insects, who make up more than half its members. The university is highly regarded in many fields, including magical theory, mathematics, theology and Seshnelan history (ironically, it has little knowledge of old timinit history, but this deficiency is being addressed by questioning immigrants from Pamaltela). The rivalry with the university of Irenstos is well known and stems from a dispute over the interpretation of the Sorcery that led to the Battle of Tanien's victory. Scholars from both universities worked on the spell but the wizards of Piskosol argued that binding the god would have unintended side effects. Those of Irenstos insisted that the spell was as safe as it was going to get and presented their findings to the First Duke. Those of Piskosol still believe that if they had been listened to, the disastrous collateral damage of the seas of fire could have been avoided.

**Outer Ward:** The Outer Ward comprises all the smaller towns and farms surrounding Piskosol. The primary crop in this area is sugar-cane, which is prized by the insects.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ An ambitious timinit priest hires the characters to prove that Jalbon the Great has fallen from rightness.
- ☒ Any characters interested in Umathela or the southern continent will find visitors from that land here in Piskosol.
- ☒ Characters might be hired to persuade a particular well-known ephemera artisan to change allegiance to a different noble in Highward.
- ☒ Powerful God Learners could attempt to fulfil the timinit belief in the Saint Who Is To Come by controversially trying to engineer the Saint Plane in the same way they manipulate the Hero Plane.



## Norvalela

**Cities:** Jalaneswal, Orphalsketkal

It is a strange truth that a scholar from Eridithanos or Evrowal would feel more at home in some distant place like Umathela or even parts of Kralorela than he would in this part of his own land. Norvalela is so different to the rest of Jrustela that it is virtually a separate country. The tropical climate enjoyed by the rest of the island is unknown west of the towering Curustus range. Howling cold winds from the northwest lash the coast with driving snow and sleet. In the far north, beyond Orphalsketkal, the landscape is bare and broken, changing from jagged rocks and rushing streams to jagged rocks and bleached desert in a matter of miles. The south is grey and cold, resembling Fronela in climate. The arable sections of Norvalela are found in a narrow strip between the sea and the mountains, in high green vales and steep meadows. Technically, the region is divided into Northern Norvalela, Orphalwal, Southern Norvalela, the Mountains of Serakal and the island of Brosta. There are hardly any settlements of note in Northern Norvalela, save for mining towns

and prospectors looking for gold washed down from the mountains. Dreo earth-spirits are a constant threat in that area.

Norvalela was first settled by the Janalites, the followers of Janal. Janal was a descendant of King Nralar, who travelled south with his household and retainers to create a new kingdom for himself. While his dreams of an independent kingdom came to naught, the people of Southern Norvalela (the most populous section) consider themselves still Seshnegi, not Jrusteli. Their customs and mode of dress and speech are virtually unchanged from the time of Nralar and they were slow even to accept the teachings of the *Abiding Book*. Caste laws are still enforced here.

### Orphalwal

The folk of Orphalwal are hardy and practical. The land is not especially fertile, so they must rely on the sea for survival. The storm-tossed Kerenath Sea, though, is dangerous and the Jrusteli here have been forced to become superlative sailors. They live in small villages and are semi-nomadic – during the spring and fall, they work in the high fields and go sailing and fishing the rest of the year. They have little interest in the philosophical debates or grand ambitions of their fellow countrymen but are the very backbone of the Free Men of the Sea. Culturally, they are Haladinities but consider themselves Jrusteli first and foremost. An austere form of Malkionism is favoured here, with priests preaching from wooden churches when the storm-winds howl.

### Waenis

A large but otherwise typical example of the Norvalelan towns, Waenis is best known for its troubles with the trolls that live in the nearby mountains and the town has been attacked many times by them. Each time, the monsters have been driven back into the mountains but the power of the troll tribes has never been broken. The Confederation's grand military schemes have no place for minor engagements with the trolls in their own backyard, so the townsfolk of Waenis must resort to hiring adventurers and mercenaries to defend them.

Visitors to Waenis are struck by the lack of magic. Other towns in the Empire, especially elsewhere in Jrustela, tend to have obvious examples of powerful Sorcery. A town might be illuminated at night by sorcerous fire or impossibly tall towers might reach into the very clouds, supported by spell-wrought stone. Waenis has none of

this grandiose magic – the only spells commonly cast in town are Rune Magic charms to guard against drowning and foul weather.

### Orphalsketkal

The greatest city in Norvalela, Orphalsketkal's fortunes are intimately bound up with the sea. Orphalsketkal is the home port of the Free Men of the Sea and the mighty drydocks here are the primary construction yards for the Empire's navy. Virtually everyone in Orphalsketkal works directly or indirectly for the navy.

The city was almost completely rebuilt in the years after the destruction of Swalval. Many were convinced that Orphalsketkal was the next target for the vengeful Waertagi elementalists, so a new, more defensible city was constructed. The low-lying town that had sprung up in the initial settlement was swept away by a frenzy of rebuilding that was as destructive as any tidal wave. The city was rebuilt as a series of artificial boat-shaped islands of magically shaped stone, with all the buildings stacked atop these supports. If an elemental tide wave rushed in to Orphalsketkal harbour, the city (it is claimed) could ride out the storm with minimal damage. The vital shipyards are sheltered in the heart of these islands, on the lee side. Effectively, Orphalsketkal is a city of skyscrapers with shipyards at their hearts. The difference between Orphalsketkal and the surrounding towns is staggering – a new navy recruit might leave his little village of stone houses with thatched roofs and find himself sleeping that night in a barracks lit by glowing sigils a dozen stories off the ground.

The town's magical defences are even more impressive than its mundane ones. An eternal cloud of fog surrounds the harbour but a spell known only to the navy pilots allows a sailor to see through it. Warding runes guard against offensive magics, while bound elementals, spirits and other entities provide added force to the elite guards that protect the city. An eternal storm allows the harbour-masters to hurl thunderbolts at enemies or to command the winds that hang over the city, calming them or whipping them into a frenzy.

Orphalsketkal's three dozen artificial islands are designated by number, not name, although they have acquired nicknames over the years. The most important are Governor's Isle, Big Fish, Waves' Folly, Bloodmarket, Three Blessings Short, Last Sail, Lash City, Jalan's Writ,



High Squall and the South Isle. All the islands are very crowded, with buildings exceeding a dozen stories being quite common. Some of the fortress-towers are so tall their spires rise into the clouds above. Arachans and other insect-folk have taken to building webs in sheltered spaces between buttresses and the city authorities are considering the construction of floating platforms to create another level to the city. On the shore around the harbour is a more mundane city, officially Greater Orphalsketkal but more commonly known as the Flotsam.

The university of Orphalsketkal is attached to the naval school there and focuses on practical, military magic. Only the very basics of God Learning are taught here, in favour of blasting things and commanding things.

The city is ruled by a hereditary family, the Tarasts. Centuries ago, the Jalan family tried to claim control of the city but their brief reign was ended by a coalition of Nralarites from Kerela who objected to the Jalanites having such influence over the city. Many in Orphalsketkal hoped for self-rule but instead a new duke was chosen from among the military officers. With a permanent dynasty holding the city as their hereditary fiefdom, the Jalan

family would never be able to take over the government as they had done by subverting the elected officials. The Tarasts consider themselves to be servants of the Empire first and foremost and run the entire city as a military base. They tacitly support the Reformist cause, believing that the balance of power should tilt back to Justela. The common folk of the city are even more strongly aligned to Reformism and there are still many in the city who abhor Orphalsketkal's single-minded focus on the navy. These people dream of remaking the city as a metropolis of learning and logic like Evrowal or Eridithanos.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Orphalsketkal is the single largest Middle Sea Empire military base. Military characters will sooner or later end up here. Similarly, enemies of the Empire will sooner or later attack here.
- ☒ Control of Orphalsketkal means control of the single most powerful military outpost in the whole Middle Sea Empire. Between the avaricious Jalanites, the Reformists, the Free Men of the Sea and the city's own New Virtuous Order, politics in Orphalsketkal tend to involve daggers in the back and falling off very tall buildings.

### Port Storm

Port Storm is an uneven compromise of a town. It was founded by Haladinities as a fishing port but when Orphalsketkal was rebuilt, much of that city's trade was diverted to Port Storm. The town has tried to cling to its old Haladinite ways but the rush of gold and the growth of the port as the 'dark side' of Orphalsketkal has given Port Storm an unsavoury reputation as a den of thieves and whores. The Jalanites have numerous choice comments to make about this town and blame the lords of the port for every criminal and smuggler west of the Curustus.

In an attempt to redeem Port Storm, a new church has been built in the heart of the very worst section of the slums. This church is literally a moral beacon, as it is infused with mind-controlling spells that the sorcerers of the Order of Ascendant Light believe will transform Port Storm into a city of perfect order and grace. The true nature of this church has been kept a secret from the native Haladinities, who mistrust such potent magic.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ With Orphalsketkal under military law, Port Storm is the freest port on the western coast.

### Jalan's Landing

As the name suggests, this is where Prince Jalan first arrived on Justela. The town, though, is solidly Haladinite and takes little pride in its heritage. The few Jalanites who live here are mistrusted and seen as interlopers and useless parasites by the majority of the townsfolk.

One night two centuries ago, all the children in Jalan's Landing vanished. When their parents searched for them, they found no sign of their lost offspring save for a great crack in the hillside behind the town, a crevasse that had opened in the night and which slowly closed over the next few weeks. Today, the crack is discernable only as a grey stain on the green hills. The townfolk blamed the dreo earth-spirits for this crime, although others insist mostali were seen skulking around the town in the days before the kidnapping. Sorcerers from Orphalsketkal were called but even the most potent scrying spells could not find the children. Many of the townfolk joined the Sons of Damolstan in an attempt to atone to the Invisible God, believing they had been judged for their wickedness and to this day the Sons recruit many warriors from Jalan's Landing.



The town survived this tragedy and there are few signs of that ancient loss today save for a memorial shrine in the town chapel. Still, the people here clutch their children close whenever the earth groans.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Rumours insist that little grey-skinned beings have been glimpsed at night climbing around the cliffs near Jalan's Landing.

### Southern Norvalela

Icy and damp, Southern Norvalela was claimed by Prince Jalan largely because no one else wanted it and his dynasty are still the absolute rulers of the 'kingdom within a duchy' as many call it. Southern Norvalela is, despite the towering mountains and shining glaciers that provide a backdrop, almost identical to Seshnela of four centuries ago. Everything from dress to customs to politics harken back to the days of Gerlant's reign. The democratic, egalitarian beliefs of mainland Jrustela are almost unknown here.

Some traditions that prosper here are of great use to the Middle Sea Empire. Jalaneswal produces the best swordsmen and horse-riders in Jrustela and its armoured knights are the flower of Jrustelan chivalry. It is also a wealthy land, partially from exporting metal and gold to the rest of the island but also because many second sons of Seshnela come here seeking their fortune. They are welcomed by the lords of Jalaneswal and it has become customary for noble students at Jrustela's universities to be sponsored by one of the noble families here. Of all the provinces of Jrustela, Southern Norvalela has prospered the most from a closer connection to the north and has the most to lose from Reform.

### Genertsketkal

Named for the wealthiest port in Seshnela, this town has failed to thrive and prosper like its namesake. It is a blight on the face of Norvelela, a place of crushing poverty and despair. The town's decline began when the fish deserted the coastline nearby and continued as one by one the copper mines were exhausted. There are still noble families ruling over the town, too proud to work or ask for aid. The area around Genertsketkal is dotted with crumbling towers and mansions, with noble houses sliding into madness and decay. Occasionally one of these noble families produces a scion of such drive or intelligence that his madness is channelled into the service of the Empire – the current head of the Mercantilist's League and Lord

Treasurer of the Middle Sea Empire, Sylark, hails from this region but he long since paid for his family to move to the more politically suitable city of Jalaneswal.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ None.

#### Reasons to leave here:

- ☒ Young nobles from penniless families trying to reclaim honour and fortune make excellent Player Characters.

### Hostinwal

Every summer, the tournament at Hostinwal attracts knights and warriors from all over the Middle Sea Empire. The tournament is sponsored by the baron of Hostinwal, (currently Erikas Jalan, sixth of that name) and offers a pouch of gold as the prize. The festivities associated with the tournament last for two weeks, with fairs and dancing and feasting of all sorts. There are numerous other events in the lead-up to the tournament, such as archery, spell-flinging, wrestling, philosophical and insight contests and jousting. Last year, there was even a mock sea-battle commemorating the defeat of the Waertagi. The final event is a free-for-all tournament between mounted warriors, with the last knight left standing winning the prize.

Embarrassingly, the barons of Hostinwal are notoriously fervent in their support of the Inherent philosophy and use the tournament as a platform from which to preach a new crusade against the pagans. More and more of the events at Hostinwal are targeting enemies of the state and the last few years have featured dragon-slaying in various forms as the main theme.

For the rest of the year, Hostinwal is a quieter place, good for buying horse and weapons.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Characters skilled with a sword can win money and renown in the tournament but the politics associated with it are often more dangerous than the fights.

### Mirvaal

Mirvaal is the sorcerer's town in Southern Norvalela. It is the site of the Ducal Academy of the Arcane Arts, as well as a library of some importance. It is always ruled by the heir to the ducal seat at Jalaneswal, an acknowledgement that the Middle Sea Empire's fortunes are founded on Sorcery. The town is protected by an enchanted hedge-

maze that shifts and changes each day. Only those of the bloodline of Jalan or those bearing magic talismans containing a drop of this blood can find their way through the maze successfully.

Mirvaal's privacy has become more important in the last eighty years. In the aftermath of the disastrous attack on Brithos, Jrusteli agents did manage to retrieve several occult tomes from the sorcerer's isle. Since then, scholars in Mirvaal have been trying to decode the magical secrets held in the books. The existence of the Brithosi tomes is a secret, as the lords of Jalaneswal wish to keep whatever magic they retrieve to themselves as a counterbalance to the growing power of the God Learners.

Stories of insanity, misfortune and small hungry goblin-things lurking in the corners of darkened rooms are not associated with the books in the slightest and the fact that the last two scholars to study the book jumped off the topmost tower is a mere coincidence.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Those studying magic in Norvalela have a choice between the shaded groves of Mirvaal and the arcane boot camp of Orphalsketkal.

### Jalaneswal

To enter Jalaneswal is to step back in time. The sound of the streets is an archaic mix of old Seshnegi phrases and accents and the caste marks and customs are still seen, with peasants deferring to fighters, fighters to wizards and wizards to lords.

The city was designed by Jalan himself and has hewn closely to his original map. It is divided into five sections, centred on Castle Hill in the centre where the mighty keep of the Jalan family stands. The Jalan family has become a vast dynasty, controlling virtually all wealth and industry in the town. The remainder of the political power is held by guild masters and priests, most of whom are either married to a Jalan or were Jalan before taking holy orders. Wide boulevards, paved market-places and high walls (more ornamental than functional fortifications) divide the five sections.

Castle Hill is obviously the wealthiest neighbourhood, all gilt and marble and statues celebrating the glory days of Seshnela. Numerous Seshnegi nobles maintain palaces or townhouses here, as do all the major guilds. Castle Hill is

### The Serakel Range

The Serakels are perhaps the most dangerous part of the mountains of Jrustela. While they do not reach the same impossible vertiginous heights of mountains of the central Curustus range, they are full of hidden crevasses and steep cliffs, of spiky rocks and sudden falls. The inner reaches of the Serakels are unmapped even to this day. As if all that were not enough to dissuade any sane man from entering the mountains, then consider the fierce trolls who dwell there, sometimes descending from the peaks to raid villages and carry off the residents to eat.

Fortunately for the Jalans and unfortunately for their servants, the Serakels do contain highly profitably mines. Copper, tin, emeralds and alchemical substances are all found here in prodigious quantities and are carried overland to Jalaneswal or Curus Point. Working these mines is hazardous and guards are needed to fend off trolls and wild beasts. The miners have their own curious argot, with numerous Mostali loan-words and slang and they speak of old things slumbering in the heart of the mountains, of worms that gnaw the earth and a thorn forest of stone trees.

surrounded by a wall pierced by five gates, all of which are guarded night and day. Crime is unknown on the hill.

By contrast, Jalansport is relatively poor and dangerous but with the increased traffic from Seshnela coming in to visit the Arch-Duke's court, the city guard has stepped up its patrols, forcing the criminals and thugs out of the port district. Between Castle Hill and the port is the Street of Flowing Silver, the major trade section of the town. It is named for a canal that runs through it, crossed by over two dozen little arched bridges. The Thousand Towers Quarter is somewhat misnamed, as it has only around fifty towers which include the Court Wizard's Tower and the Cathedral of the Malkioni True Church.

The fifth section, Nine Loyal Swords, was named for the nine knights who accompanied Jalan south. It was destroyed in a fire three years ago and is still being rebuilt. The fire was started by arsonists who objected to the close relationship between Arch-Duke Norlantos and the Seshnegi Throne.

Technically, Jalandeswal holds authority over all the land west of the Curustus Mountains as well as the mountains themselves. Therefore, there is a small embassy from the Mostali in the city. Even so, the dwarfs prefer to deal with the simple miners of Galhind, far to the north, instead of their Jalandite neighbours. The mostali distrust the ambitious Jalandites and fear that they will be tricked or enslaved if they are not constantly on their guard. The embassy is one of the wonders of Jalandeswal, a mechanical double-dome of beaten copper that rotates to reveal its single entrance.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ As long as Norlantos holds the Arch-Dukedom, Jalandeswal will be the centre of the Jrusteli government and the main link between the island and the motherland of Seshnela. As such, every politician and noble in the Middle Sea Empire will have an interest in events here.
- ☒ The burning of Nine Loyal Swords was a warning. A conspiracy capable of burning down a large section of the city could be willing to do even worse, especially if they get wind of Norlantos' plans to extend his term as Arch-Duke or the Emperor's meddling in internal Jrusteli politics.

### Curus Point

Curus Point is the major town of the southernmost region of Norvalela, the Serakel mountains. It is a fortress town, built on a high knoll surrounded by miles of grassland. If Curus Point was in old Seshnela on the border with the Stygian Empire, it would have been the site of battles and sieges worthy of epic songs. Instead, it is in a land where war is virtually unknown, save for the occasional clash with trolls. Therefore, the warriors of Curus Point are knights-errant and the banner of the red horse on green fields has been raised in every crusade and expedition undertaken by the Middle Sea Empire. Sons of Curus have fought on every battlefield from Seshnela to Kralorela and trouble the serpent dreams of the wyrmfriends.

The town is ruled by a minor branch of the Jaland family, the Cuirjaland, who have been rivals of their cousins for centuries. The Cuirjalans plot constantly against the rulers of Jalandeswal and it was a near-crippling blow to them when Norlantos became Arch-Duke. In desperation, they have suddenly become strong supporters of Reformism in an attempt to undercut their cousin's hold on the reins of Jrusteli power.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ The weapon-masters of Curus Point are famed for their skills with sword, lance and short-bow.

### Brosta

The island of Brosta lies just offshore. It was named White Island by Borostanar when he first sighted it on the horizon at the very end of his first voyage but that was because he saw the plume of smoke rising from the peak. Brosta has a still-smouldering volcano at its heart. Like Arshu Phola to the far east, the ground on the island is often warm to the touch and steam sometimes gushes from holes or spring-mouths. Small earth tremors are common here.

Brosta was colonised during the second migration south and there was an early sentiment that it could become a 'new Brithos.' Many sorcerers and fundamentalist believers moved to Brosta, especially those who rejected Hrestol's reforms. The island's mineral wealth also drew settlers who were hunting diamonds and sulphur and who clashed with the new Brithos puritans. The Jalandites built the town of Brostawal on the island's northern coast. The town was promptly ignored by the puritans (who clustered on the western side of Brosta) and the Haladinite miners (who smuggled boat-loads of diamonds east). Still, the island thrived for a while, enough to be made into a fiefdom and given to one of the loyal Jalandite families, the Hristdos, who grew wealthy from the mines. The Hristdos built a castle on the coast, the Yellow Tower.

In 681, the island's central peak erupted, showering all of Brosta in hot ash and choking fumes. Hundreds died and the rest were evacuated, leaving Brostawal almost empty for almost ten years. The only people to stay on the island were the Hristdos family and their immediate retainers, who clung to their holdings even as the air grew poisonous and the castle was half-buried beneath acrid white ash. Many went mad. When men returned to Brosta in later years, they came in fewer numbers and stayed only a few months at a time.

With the growth of Jrustela's magical power, Brosta has become valuable once again. Not only are the volcanic stones and other chemicals useful elements in alchemy and Sorcery, the presence of the volcano may have implications for God Learner science as a whole. Recently, religious scholars conclusively reduced multiple volcano deity aspects into two entities, the 'Volcano Twins' Caldera and Aurelion. Since that success, God Learners have flocked to the Brostan volcano peak, which has been ceremonially

renamed Caldera's Chalice. Experiments are underway to use the volcano as a gateway for new Quests related to these twin deities, with the ultimate aim of taming all the fiery mountains of the world.

## Brostawal

Technically, of course, it should be Brostawalkal, New Brostawal, as this is the second town to bear the name. Old Brostawal is located three miles away and is mostly buried under ash. The new town is located in the bay near Yellow Castle. Brostawal is inhabited by miners and God Learner sorcerers. The two groups have little to say to each other.

Since the eruption, the island has been plagued by elementals of various kinds, as well as by the ghosts of those who died in the fires. These ghosts manifest as whirling vortices of ash and bone and have grown more aggressive since Brostawal was rebuilt.

## Borastenorela

**Cities:** Hathinelthor, Eradinthanos, Peresk

The 'glorious coast' is the face the God Learner Empire presents to the world. From Piskosol all the way down to the southernmost cape, Borastenorela is a land of high wizardry. The cities compete to build the tallest of towers or the greatest of monuments and the air crackles with barely contained arcane energy. There are more sorcerers in these cities than anywhere else on the face of Glorantha and they take pride in their awesome power. This is the cutting edge of the all-conquering sword, the driving engine of Empire.

Physically, the eastern coastline is hundreds of miles of steep cliffs and jagged escarpments rising from the comparatively calm ocean. A line of low hills runs parallel to the coast for much of this distance, marking the boundary between Borastenorela and the inland reaches. The three great cities that dominate this region all exemplify different aspects of the Middle Sea Empire. Hathinelthor is the richest of all cities, the hub of commerce and trade for the entire world. Eradinthanos was where the *Abiding Book* first manifested and is a city of priests and sorcerers and of their uneasy alliance in the God Learners. Peresk, finally, is a city of war and conquest, a military machine that sends navies and legions out to conquer distant lands.



Borastenorela has no time for tradition, no respect for the old ways or established norms. It is in constant creative turmoil. Beliefs, fashions, politics and magic change here seemingly daily, striving ever for perfection – or power.

## The Spirelands

South of Piskosol, the land suddenly bucks and rises up into a plateau. The road from Piskosol to Hathinelthor, for instance, must ascend the zig-zag course of the Hathinelthor Celestial Edifice, a staircase carved into the cliffside. Magical elevators drawn by golems haul cargo up the slope. Three spires of blood-red stone rise from the plateau, giving the region its name. Potent runes are often found around the spires.

The southerly section of the Spirelands slopes gently down, blending into the hills on its western edge and into a tangle of forests and broken ground atop the eastern sea-cliffs. Farms occupy the wedge between the hills, although today most of the Spireland's food comes from the vast estates in Faramosel.



## Asvinethor

The city of spires, Asvinethor sits atop one of the highest points of the plateau. It is so high that the air grows thin and rarefied and visitors to the city often breathe in the reinvigorating fumes of a burning herb particular to the plateau or bind minor air-elementals to themselves to cope. Asvinethor is also a city of kites and other flying machines and aerial displays are prized here. It has become a fashion here to collect exotic birds from the jungles of the southern continent and even to dress in feathers and capes.

Asvinethor tries to stay clear of the political knife-fight that is Hathinelthor and the city is often seen as a place to retreat from the battles in the district capital. To retire to Hathinelthor is to acknowledge defeat, to relinquish your position in the battles for power and prestige in favour of idly looking at the gaudy kites.

### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Adventurers are often hired to hunt down rare birds for nobles.

## Damroskel

Damroskel has the unfortunate but accurate reputation as a violent town. The mining town lacks the sophistication and subtlety of the larger cities on the coast, which means that the cut-throat politics of the east here take the form of literal throat-cutting instead of schemes and deceptions. A man can lose his fortune in Hathinelthor twice as quick as he can lose it in Damroskel but in the latter he will probably lose his life as well. The nearby bloodstone mines contain a multitude of nameless corpses, dumped by the criminal families who control the town; so many, in fact, that death runes have been found alongside earth rules in the depths. To go 'hunting bloodstones' is to be murdered and have one's corpse unceremoniously dumped down a mine shaft. Of late, rumours insist that the sheer number of death runes in the mines has caused murdered corpses to spontaneously animate, claw their way out of the red dirt and go hunting for their killers.

Damroskel's jewellers are the best in all Jrustela, so the town has both the best lock-smiths to keep the thieves out and the best thieves to steal the jewels. It is an unending cycle between the three, broken only by the occasional betrayal or inside job.

### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ The bloodstones are beautiful, expensive and magically potent, especially when ground up and mixed with the blood of pagan deities collected on Otherworldly battlefields.

## Hathinelthor

The pagan gods are not the first thing one notices when stepping off a ship and entering the great metropolis.

No, first one notices the crush of people, Jrusteli and Seshnegi for the most part but humans from many other lands, the timinit porters and servants, the clashing colours and strange garb and the babble of a hundred tongues and trade-languages. Then, as one pushes through the crowd, he cannot help but notice the wealth of the city. Everyone is laden with gold and jewels; exotic scents assail one's nostrils and one's hands brush against silk and brocade. Staggering sums of money are exchanged for treasures from distant lands and there are cabals of traders and investors wagering their fortunes in every coffee-house.

Next, one's eye is drawn up to the towers of Hathinelthor. This is a city of mighty buildings, of towers and cathedrals and spires. The sound of the mason's hammer and the

creaking of ropes and pulleys is never absent from Hathinelthor and joins in chorus with the stone-sorcerer's chant. There is the Mercantilist's League Chamber, there the House of Glorious Song, there the Trade Hall, there the All World's Bazaar. Hathinelthor is ruled by a dozen noble (by blood if not by demeanour) families who compete for the prestige of owning the most expensive and impressive buildings. There are cathedrals to the Invisible God and to the Rightness Crusade and all is proper and good and respectful as Jrusteli should be.

Ascend the steps of these towers, and one will notice the wind. The city is built on a promontory and the wind blows constantly from the sea, howling over the slate roofs and whistling around the spires. Every rooftop in Hathinelthor is decorated with a wind-vane or even a lightning rod in the case of taller towers. New visitors to the city often cannot sleep because of the keening; residents, by contrast, find silence oppressive and disturbing. Every gap in conversation must be filled with chatter; even the temples cannot be allowed to fall silent and so choirs and organs and musicians praise God every hour of the day and night.

As one's senses adjust to the rush and bustle and sheer newness of this city and Hathinelthor ceases to be an ongoing shock, one notices the curious pagan gods. They are everywhere, little icons of Issaries and Lokarnos and other trade deities. There are no temples to foreign gods here, just minor votaries and offerings. Often, they are woven into the décor of civic buildings; there, Issaries peeks from behind the skirts of a statue symbolising New Opportunity or some pagan sea-god hides in the jade seaweed of a wall mosaic. If one knows where to look, there are even golden dragons that are believed to bless commerce by the wyrmfriend traders. The merchants and nobles of Hathinelthor are Malkioni on Godsdays but they will take any advantage they can get in trade wars. It is applied Judicious Use of pagan magic but few in Hathinelthor have the patience for the philosophical debates of other cities. By the time the theologians have finished arguing about whether a thing is right and proper, it has been bought and sold a dozen times in Hathinelthor.

Attempting to describe the layout of the city is often futile, as Hathinelthor is changing and growing faster than any other city on Jrustela. It sprawls along the coast, engulfing smaller towns and villages. Broadly, the city can be divided into nine central districts, each one ruled by one of the great noble families. Beyond this centre is

a confusing maze of slums, warehouses, temple districts, embassies, manors and whorehouses. The nine districts are Holshadder, Mirasthelthor, the Golden, Twobottle Street, High Walk, Lost Tower Shadow, Lord's Reach, Storwark and the Circle Twining.

Other than gold, the favoured currency of Hathinelthor is gossip. By law, the duke cannot be related to the previous duke. In theory, this ensures that the dukedom will rotate among the nine ruling families of the city. In actuality, there are three dynasties competing for the dukedom, generations of bastard children and unacknowledged but cherished offspring. The duke might sire a child on some married noblewoman, then secretly pay for the child's education and care, manoeuvring the child into a position of power so he can be elected duke when the time comes. This state of affairs is an open secret on the streets of Hathinelthor, although exactly who sired which child is a matter of frenzied debate and speculation. As the three dynasties have different political views (respectively, strongly loyalist, moderate reformist and whatever is expedient that year), knowing which 'family' the new duke descends from is vitally important and the nocturnal activities of noblewomen in the city are closely watched.

The current duke, Miskos, is not in any way the son of the last duke, Arathos, who was absolutely not the son of the previous duke Faral. Miskos is loyal to the Loyalist cause and closely allied to Arch-Duke Norlantos in Norvalela. Miskos believes that as long as the court is far away in Seshnela, Hathinelthor's utter dominance of finance in Jrustela and the Middle Sea Empire can continue. He is also engaged in building the tallest tower in all Glorantha, an edifice called the Sky Cutting Spire. Wags in the city streets who know about Miskos' continuing failure to sire a son call it by a different name and mutter about compensation.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Hathinelthor is the richest city in all the world. More than half the wealth of the Middle Sea Empire flows through its markets. It is *the* place to come if you are a trader.
- ☒ Nobles in Hathinelthor often need to hide illegitimate children for a few years, so they are sent out adventuring in distant lands. Mercenaries and adventuring bands looking for well-paid work can offer themselves as escorts and bodyguards to such ducal heirs.

## Remais

Remais is, unofficially, the Seshnegi city of Borastenorela. With three of the Middle Sea Empire's most important assets (Hathinelthor's wealth, Peresk's might and the holy city of Eradinthanos) on the coast, direct representation from the Emperor of Land and Sea was considered vital. Valaindel, the lord of Remais is known as the Emperor's Eye and actively tries to foster the Loyalist cause among the nobles of Jrustela. Secretly, he is also engaged in plots to discredit or damage those nobles who favour Reform – the alleyways of Evrowal and Hredimorinos are crowded with agents of the Eye.

### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Seshnegi characters who are loyal to the King will find friends here.

## The Lands of the Visitation

God was here. Two hundred and fifty years ago, the *Abiding Book* manifested in the city of Eridinthanos. The Will and the Word of the Invisible God were revealed here, in the plains of central Jrustela, and that honour has never been forgotten. These are the Lands of the Visitation.

The Lands run far inland, through Faramosel to Shenilstos, a band of fervent Malkionism. There are few large towns here but many small, insular villages centred around a church. The caste rules are strongly observed here, even though few of the old noble families from Seshnela ever came this far south. The nobles here are the descendants of the first settlers. Despite not having any universities, the people of the Lands of the Visitation are known for their scholarship and deep knowledge of the Malkioni faith. Many go to the larger cities to study but must be careful to protect their moral rightness in the face of the corruption and sin of the metropolis.

## Eradinthanos

Eradinthanos today is a city for intellectuals. The old city, the city of guilds, traders, mercenaries and bloody strife that was united by the *Abiding Book* has long since been demolished and replaced by this new city of marble and imperishable diamond. Eradinathanos was built to be a fitting setting for the revealed word of God.

Of course, since the unification with Seshnela, the Book has gone north. A copy was left in its place in the Cathedral of the Book, but the loss of the *Abiding Book* signified the loss of Eradinthanos' essential purpose.

As the city's religious importance declined, the abandoned seminaries and buildings were taken over by the rapidly-expanding University of Eradinathnos. The wave of magical experimentation and learning precipitated by the New Order came at just the right time for the University, and it swiftly grew into the most significant God Learner institutions. Eradinathanos became, and remains, divided between the ultra-progressive sorcerers of the university, and the conservative priesthood. There is little to the city beyond the temples and the spires – it is said there are more scribes in Eradinthanos than there are bakers, and more scholars than there are honest men. Duke Valager is a pawn of the university, his authority reduced to nothing more than a signet ring to be pressed onto whatever the governors and professors decide.

Walking through the manicured gardens between the crystal spires of Eradinathanos, listening to the new students chatter about the latest wonders and the glories they dream of achieving, it is sometimes hard to remember that this was once a rude frontier town, a place where brutish sorcerers martyred Saint Serezos, a place where, unlikely as it seems, the Divine manifested itself directly in the world.

## Bathijras

Along with Shenilstos, the ancient Olodo town of Bathijras was one of the few major settlements to resist conversion by the Nralarite missionaries. Skirmishes between the pagans and Malkioni settlers continued until the manifestation of the *Abiding Book*. With this revelation, Bathijras' townsfolk changed religion *en masse* with the fierce devotion of the newly converted. Within a year, all traces of the Olodo faith was washed away and the men of Bathijras were bringing other Olodo holdouts into the church of the Invisible God by force. The hinterlands north-east of Shenilstos had been a bastion of theism and resistance to the Nralarites but the conversion of Bathijras was the beginning of the end for the Olodo theists.

Bathijras has never lost its crusading spirit. As soon as the Olodo were all converted, Bathijras started sending missionaries and warriors to the timinits, then to the new colonies in Pamaltela, then north to old Seshnela. The Rightness Crusade may be centred in Shenilstos but it began here when the townsfolk heard of the martyrdoms of the Saintly Bookbearers. Today, Bathijras is a town devoted more to the dead than the living; everywhere are monuments, shrines and cenotaphs to the martyred

dead and the crusading armies. For those dedicated to Rightness, to visit Bathijras is to be inspired and humbled. For those who lack the crusader's zeal, it is by turns a dull and frightening place.

While Bathijras is closely associated with Shenilstos, it pays tribute to the military city of Peresk – partly because it is in Borostenorela and not Famosel, partly because of ancient tradition dating back to Olodo days but also because the Rightness movement hopes to inspire the secular armies of the Middle Sea Empire by sending them heroes from Bathijras.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Crusaders fighting in the name of the Invisible God seek blessings from the temples here at Bathijras.

### The Middle Coast

The middle coast is one of the most dangerous sections of the Jrustelan coastline and is lined with sandbars and submerged reefs. There are safe harbours but reaching them requires a skilled hand at the tiller. Cut off from the main artery of commerce in the Middle Sea Empire – the sea – the cities of the middle coast have focussed on other fields to make their fortunes.

### Anniwal

This town is closely associated with Peresk. Under Jrustelan law, ownership of the land is held by males only and land rights pass down the male line. This law is in force everywhere except the lands administered from Anniwal. This is called the Widow's Town. When soldiers from Peresk go off to fight, they leave their lands in the care of their wives. Previously, when a soldier died in battle, his widow and his brothers and cousins would contest the ownership of the land. All too often, a court would look to the *Abiding Book* for guidance and rule in favour of the male relatives, leaving the grieving widow with nothing save a pittance of a pension. Reformist politicians argued that this was grossly unfair and so a new law was passed in Anniwal saying that any of its residents, male or female, had the right to own property.

Since the passing of this law, the *Declaration of Landholder's Rights*, Anniwal has become the second largest town in the Middle Coast, second only to Peresk. It has a disproportionate number of rich land-owners living within its walls and it is customary for a noble of Borastenorela to live on a manor but maintain a townhouse in Anniwal as his legal residence, thus putting him under

the jurisdiction of the Anniwal Court. By doing this, the noble ensures that his wife will have full claim to his lands should he die without a male heir.

There are many rich widows in Anniwal whose noble husbands died on some distant battlefield or HeroQuest and who now command the incomes of vast tracts of land. Politically, Reformism is dominant here and many of the widows of Anniwal have become patrons of various parties and conspiracies in Evrowal, Hredimorinos and Eridinthanos.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Handsome young men can often find good employment here.

### Pismaldo

Pismaldo vies with North Cape for the title of 'most unhappy town in Jrustela.' Founded around the same time as Peresk, it was soon conquered by the warriors of that city. When the Nralarites came, they allied themselves with the folk of Peresk and so tolerated the oppression of the Pismaldoans. When the Jrusteli confederation was formed, Peresk's voice was honoured and listened to, while everyone ignored the complaints of the Pismaldoan delegate. In every month of every year of its long history, Pismaldo has been oppressed by Peresk.

Pismaldo's chief industries are in metalworking and tanning. The air in the town is foul to both eye and nose, laden as it is with soot and the stench of lime and boiled flesh. Pismaldo is a vital but utterly unacknowledged part of the Peresk war machine. In many ways, this oppression is just as important as the leather armour and blades made here – young men of Pismaldo know that their only chance to escape a lifetime of backbreaking, lung-searing labour in the factories is to join the army and fight for the Empire, so Pismaldo provides a fresh crop of new recruits every year.

In the last few years, a religious group called the Iron Sword Friends has taken hold in Pismaldo. The Iron Swords are strongly Inherent, believing that pagans are unworthy of salvation. In fact, they secretly believe that the very *existence* of non-believers is offensive to the Invisible God and that all non-Malkioni should be wiped out by any means necessary. The Iron Sword Friends are growing increasingly influential within the secular military, as Iron Sword officers favour their fellow believers for promotion.

### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ If you are looking to hide, Pismaldo is a good place to lose yourself. The town is full of filthy, muddy and scarred labourers living in flop-houses and working in whatever forge, dung-collector or tannery needs an extra pair of hands that day.

### Peresk

According to legends, when the Nralarites first came to Peresk they found a river of blood flowing through the heart of the town. This river is now located somewhere in the warren of sewers and catacombs beneath the pavements and marble squares of the modern town but it still rushes redly into the ocean, symbolising the unquenchable courage and blood-lust of the men of Peresk. Like its naval counterpart of Orphalsketkal, Peresk is more a city-sized military base than an actual city. Everyone in the city is a soldier or is employed in some trade or activity related to the army. The ruler of Peresk is always an officer in the Middle Sea legions and the city produces as many warriors as any three other cities in Jrustela combined.

There is a veneer of civilisation and discipline in Peresk that can only be described as desperate. The law is harsh here, with public whippings common punishment. Even civilians have a military bearing; orders are barked, then obeyed. Beneath this discipline, though, is a barely

contained anarchy. In years past, the pirates of Peresk were fearsome sea-reavers and raiders who drowned the whole middle coast in blood and it is plain to see that this warlike spirit still burns. As one visitor from Evrowal wrote, *'this city is one meal and one disobedient act away from war on the streets.'*

A custom of duels has sprung up in Peresk, and most civil disputes are handled by the contest of duellists. It is permissible but impolite to kill a foe in a legal duel.

The city's skyline is dominated by the Citadel, a sprawling fortress that incorporates the ducal palace, the university of Peresk and the military headquarters for all Jrustela save Norvalela (which is administered from Orphalsketkal). Surrounding the citadel are four great plazas: the Grand Parade, the Market, the Muster and Cathedral Square. The city is divided into four quarters, unimaginatively called North, South, East and West, although most refer to them as the Big Camp, the Port Quarter, Southwell and the Westerwall.

Religion is a divisive topic in Peresk. The Pereski character combines passion and pragmatism in a curious way – he can be fiercely committed to a belief until it fails him, then change and accept a new way and commit to that just as strongly. For example, the Peresk raiders were fervent

### The Dam of Three Wonders

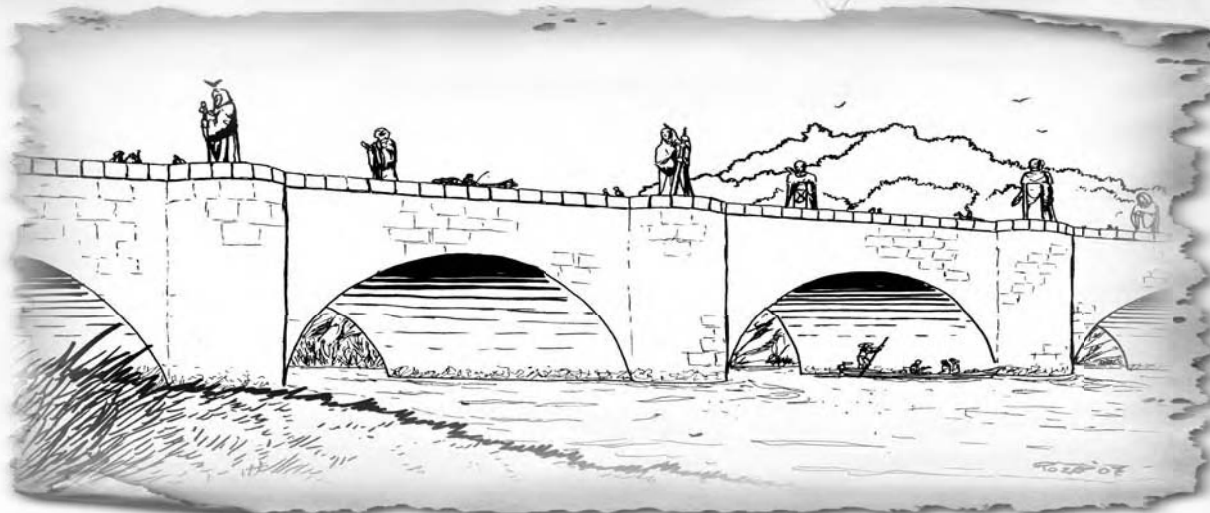
When complete, the Dam of Three Wonders will revitalise the fortunes of the district. The creation of the dam is a staggeringly ambitious plan to create an artificial lake in the heart of Jrustela by damming the Curand river midway along its course. The planned lake will drown the entire Holas Valley, making a freshwater lake more than twenty miles across. This will have three major benefits.

Firstly, the periodic flooding of the Curand, which causes problems in Shenilstos and the Irenstos delta, will be a thing of the past as floodwaters from the mountains will be contained in the lake. A second dam will be built along the wilder Pilasel river.

Secondly, the waters will compensate for the strain on the land caused by the multiple harvests. Having four different harvest deity blessings is one thing but not even Flamal or Enica can coax crops from dust.

Thirdly, the artificial lake will be used by the God Learners as an experimental platform in deity construction. Like all great rivers, the Curand has its own gods and spirits. The new lake, however, will be spiritually empty at first but the Collective intends to build a lake god that they can command directly.

As minor side benefits, the Dam of Three Wonders keeps Jrustelan money in Jrustela instead of going to Seshnela and also gives the Jrusteli another wonder of the world to crow about.



followers of the Olodo gods until the Nralarites proved stronger, whereupon they accepted the Invisible God and were the first Olodo to convert, cementing their place in the new order. Today, most Pereski are only barely reformed Hrestolites, only grudgingly accepting the reforms of the *Abiding Book*. This lack of commitment rankles with the Rightness Crusade and the two armies rarely work well together. To avoid friction, most Pereski have adopted a 'do not ask, do not tell' policy and religion is rarely discussed. In other cities, those of differing beliefs might use Insight Contests or polite debate to resolve their arguments but the Pereski rarely have a middle ground between 'silent disagreement and grinding of teeth' and 'hitting you in the face until you agree.'

The one religious topic that unites most Pereski is the Clanking City and the Zistorites – everyone in the city agrees that the Middle Sea Empire should immediately launch a massive military operation to break the siege. The Zistorites' battle machines and engines are too valuable to be lost and the Emperor is a coward for not sending troops to their aid.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Peresk is a leader in the development of new weapons and battle-spells. Spies could be sent to learn what the Middle Sea Empire has up its sleeve or characters could be employed to test some new secret weapon.
- ☒ The weapons masters of the city are incredibly skilled. God Learner Sorcery has been used to win the tutelage of war-gods from different cultures

and now the best warriors can hurl spears as well as Odalya or wield a sword with Humakt's grace. Those seeking to master the martial arts can train under these masters.

- ☒ Politics in Peresk are like a half-tamed horse. Currently, the city and its armies are strongly committed to the cause of the Middle Sea Empire but it would only take a single charismatic rabble-rouser to throw the place into chaos or to drive a wedge between Peresk and another city or group. Past dukes have employed agents and assassins to keep the city in check but Duke Shordone is disillusioned and bitter and pays little attention to such duties as he plots against the Emperor.

## Faramosel

**Cities:** None (administered from Shenilstos)

The inner reaches of Jrustela have only a fraction of the population of the coasts. Of the four districts in the central basin, Faramosel is the most populous and settled but it is still a rural hinterland. The eastern section of Faramosel is all farmlands and manorial estates owned by Jrustelan nobles. The only towns are small markets or those centred on castles, fords and other notable features. West of the river is virgin jungle, home to the timinit tribes that have not moved to Piskosol or another human city.

It is a quiet, even dull region. Life on these little farms is little different to the life of a freeman peasant in Carmania or Dara Happa, save for the wonderful harvests

and controlled weather brought about by God Learner Sorcery and for the eternal peace. Jrustela has not known war on its mainland in hundreds of years, unlike the rest of the world. No farmer living in Faramosel has ever had to witness his thatched cottage being torched, his crops trampled, his herds butchered or his family taken into slavery. Jrustela is a land of peace and security for the common folk and this is especially true in Faramosel.

## Tyroas

This central town is the effective capital of Faramosel, although the region is administered from Shenilstos. It is situated on the mighty Curand river at Faramos' Ford. The ford is long since gone, replaced with the famous Horizon Arc Bridge. This structure is the pride of the town. It is decorated with statues of all the Malkioni saints and it is said that these statues weep tears when the Jrusteli sin. The folk of Tyroas, though, have their own secret sin. The river was once named the Faramosel but its name was changed when the Nralarites made contact with the river-elementals. The people of Tyroas have become close friends and allies of the elementals and there are even some children in the town who have bluish skin and eyes like still ponds. The Curand is angered by the plan to build the Dam of Three Wonders and her children grow restless.

### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Tyroas is the only large trade town in Faramosel, so adventurers seeking work and those seeking aid will both come to its inns and taverns.

## Lukora

Around half the Jrusteli timinits live in the inner jungle, in Shenilstos district and Pilasel. Lukora, located just across the river from Pilasel district, is a human trade town which specialises in dealing with the insect-men. Unlike the 'gentrified' timinits of Piskosol, the timinits who visit Lukora often cling to the old ways, are still inexperienced in human culture or both. The jungle timinits do retain mastery of some crafts, like pulpspitting and silk-weaving, that the city timinits have forgotten or suppressed and it is from trading in these crafts that Lukora makes its profit.

### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ God Learner sorcerers studying the old timinit deities come here before moving onto the more fruitful research fields in the south.

# Pilasel

**Cities:** None (administrated from Irenstos)

The river Jrezar rushes in a wild torrent down from the mountains through the jungle. Although explorers have sailed up the river, the surrounding jungle has never been fully explored. Four attempts have been made to establish settlements in the foothills of the Curustus, all of which failed. The Olodo built the first town in the mountains but lost contact with it almost immediately and no sign of it has been found since. Three other settlements have been attempted since the birth of the Confederation. The first was washed away in a flood, the second abandoned when the miners went insane and the third buried by a rockfall. Hunters, explorers and adventurers have also vanished in the jungles. Something around the headwaters of the Jrezar wishes to keep its secrets.

Except for a few mines and isolated sorcerer's towers, there is no permanent human settlement in the Pilasel district. There are some hunting lodges north-west of Shenilstos.

## Timiswal

Few humans have ever looked upon the strange town of Timiswal, the single largest settlement in Pilasel. This is a timinit city built upon a huge insect burrow. The majority of the inhabitants of the town are lucans, who are notoriously witless. They built their town in imitation of the human cities they had seen or heard rumour of, so Timiswal is a bizarre sight. Everything in the town is made of wood or woodpulp spat up and shaped by the insects but made to resemble stone or metal. There are castles twisted from trees, paving stones of bark, paper horses tethered outside taverns which serve honeydew and rainwater. Inside, the timinits try to mimic human lives as much as possible but their understanding of human culture is limited. Lucan hatchlings are coddled by 'married' pairs of insects, for instance, but each day a couple just takes a random larva from the hatchery.

More intelligent timinits, like arachans or experienced cerebresites, are amused or embarrassed by Timiswal but they tolerate its existence. It is a private sanctum for the timinit race and as such is a useful refuge in troubled times. Some timinits come here to relax and reconnect with their insect roots.

### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Timiswal is a hidden city. Unless one is an insect, one should not be here.

## Shenilstos

### Cities: Shenilstos

The green centre of Jrustela is the 'land between the rivers' and is named after the city of the same name in the south of the district. Shenilstos is mostly jungle in the north, where only timinits and wild beasts live. The south is marshland and farmland surrounding the city.

### Northern Shenilstos

The jungle here has a few timinits but they have mostly migrated across the Curand to northern Pilasel and Faramosel. It was here that Ekose the Burner destroyed the great timinit hives and it was here that the Nralarites made war. The timinits now consider northern Shenilstos a graveyard and shy away from it.

With the timinits gone, the jungle has become more dangerous. Black cats prey on sheep herds in southern Kerela and fearsome serpents of prodigious size slither through the trees. The abandoned timinit hives and other ruins have been reclaimed by exiles from mainstream Jrustelan society – there is a cult of Transgressors who believe that the Devil and not Malkion was the true servant of God, operating out of a timinit pyramid-temple in Northern Shenilstos. This tribe is possibly working with a heretical God Learner group called the Unblinking Gaze Brothers.

### Southern Shenilstos

Southern Shenilstos is the westward end of the Jrustelan 'Abiding Belt,' also known as the Lands of the Visitation. The people are fervent believers in the cause of Righteousness and in many places the church and the Rightness Crusade hold more power and land than the local nobles.

Physically the region is a great swamp where the rivers meet. Houses are built on stilts or artificial islands to keep them above the waters and many people live on rafts or boats. In the west, the ground rises somewhat and becomes drier, so many settlements are built there even though their isolation from the rest of Jrustela restricts their growth.

## Shenilstos City

It is perhaps ironic that a place named the 'City of Bargaining' is the most uncompromising of the cities of Jrustela. Today, little remains of the Olodo trade town that once stood here, although the merchants of Shenilstos still quarrel bitterly with those of Irenstos. Shenilstos has been transformed by the purifying fires of devotion and is the headquarters of the Rightness Crusade.

Shenilstos is built at the confluence of the rivers and hundreds of small streams and canals flow through it. Going from one side of the city to another means crossing at least a dozen bridges and students at the Shenilstos Academy play fiendish logic games involving crossing each bridge in the city a set number of times. The nobles of Shenilstos usually travel by gondola rather than horse or carriage as it is faster and easier to get around town by boat. Great millwheels in the industrial quarter are turned by the flowing water, grinding or powering factory machinery or prayer-wheels.

The Rightness Beacon, the central building in the city, is so large that the main courses of the rivers Curand and Jrezar must flow through twin arches beneath the fortress. The Beacon dominates the city sky-line completely, overshadowing even the five Cathedrals of Good Action, each of which exemplifies a different virtue of Rightness. Clockwise from north, these are the Cathedrals of Indomitable Will, the Cathedral of Unsullied Vision, the Cathedral of Unyielding Loyalty, the Cathedral of Manifest Reason and the Cathedral of the Holy Martyrs. Every street in the city bears the name of some martyr or commemorates a battle. It rains constantly in Shenilstos, where water cascades through the mouths of gargoyles and leaves the lead roofs gleaming. The preachers say this is because Makan weeps for the world that does not wholly accept his divine plan.

At the edge of the city is a black tower, windowless and perfectly smooth, made of solid shadow. It is the home of the New Iron Staff order, the militant wizards of the Rightness Crusade. The tower has no true name but is nicknamed the Blackstaff. Only those consecrated to the Order can find the single door into the tower.

Unlike its secular counterpart of Peresk, the law is not especially harsh in Shenilstos. It does not need to be. The citizens are blessed with a moral fortitude that verges on the inhuman and crime is unknown here.

It is generally believed in the political circles of Hredimorinos and Jalanswal that Rightness is a spent force, that the pro-active, crusading spirit exhausted itself when Seshnela was freed and the last vestiges of Arkat's Empire were crushed, that all Shenilstos can do now is churn out missionaries and loud-voiced fanatic errant knights who run off to convert or slaughter pagans. In truth, the Rightness Crusade is almost as strong as it ever was but its focus now is on control of the Malkioni churches and its wars are fought on battlefields of doctrine and church appointments. The Rightness Crusade is covertly allied with the Back to Glory movement but this is an alliance of convenience. The leaders of the Rightness movement, especially Duke Salberos, want power to remain concentrated in Seshnela away from the dangerous and immoral lords of Jrustela but they also want to control the next pontiff and for that they need secular allies.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Crusader characters will come here for orders, or allies or simply to reaffirm their faith.
- ☒ Despite their alliance with the Reformist Back to Glory nobles, Shenilstos is strongly committed to the Loyalist cause. Agents from both sides of the Jrustelan political divide might be sent to Shenilstos to sabotage the Crusade's efforts to court the other.
- ☒ The scrupulous, magically-reinforced honesty and goodness of the Shenilstos citizens make the city a tempting target for foreign criminals. A band of thieves might find rich pickings amid the temples if they can stay one step ahead of the church's magic.

## Olodosel

**Cities:** Arshu Phola, Irenstos

The land of the Olodo encompasses some of the most pleasant landscapes in all of Jrustela. It is a green land sweeping around Gerlant's Bay, a land of sunshine and light rain and bright blue skies. Summers are hot but not oppressively so; winters are mild. The Olodo chose their home well when they migrated south.

Olodosel is divided into two regions: Gerlant's Bay and Briasa's Head.



### Briasa's Head

The rocky peninsula of Briasa's Head is a spiritually potent place. It is a volcanic region scattered with obsidian deposits and steaming vents and sulphurous pools. The dreo earth-spirits are still common here, manifesting as dancing piles of stones or moving cracks in cliff-faces. The majority of the population lives along the coast or in the hilly lands just north of Arshu Phola.

Briasa's Head is a land of surprises and strangeness. A traveller wandering one of the many narrow, winding paths through the hills might turn a corner and come upon a shrine to the old storm gods, or a village where everyone goes masked, or a circle of God Learner students from Irenstos practising their spells or a rampaging monster like an allosaur. Briasa's Head touches on the Otherworlds. Travellers are warned not to step outside during one of the tumultuous and awesome thunderstorms that frequently strike the headland or when mists rise from the sea. Such times are dangerous, both spiritually and physically.

## Briasa's Fold

The main road up from Irenstos passes through Briasa's Fold, a town on the west side of the headland. Sheep-farming is the main industry and is so important to the town that there is a secret temple to the Olodo farm-goddess hidden in a nearby cave. Distorted rumours of the disastrous effects of the Goddess Switch reached the ears of the farmers here and they are terrified that God Learner Sorcery will blight their flocks too. A conspiracy against the sorcerers is growing here among the peasants, although as of yet their actions have been limited to rumour-mongering and curses. Still, if they spread the news of the failure of the Goddess Switch, they will suddenly become a danger to the collective.

### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ The Goddess Switch is a state secret of Jrustela. Someone leaked word of the effects of the Sorcery to a gaggle of farmers, obviously in an attempt to discredit the God Learners' Collective without revealing his own identity. Characters might be sent to track down this enemy of progress and the trail starts in Briasa's Ford.

## Arshu Phola

The former capital of Jrustela in Olodo times, Arshu Phola was built in the caldera of an extinct volcano. The city is therefore bowl-shaped, arranged around a central lake. It is a city of low buildings and alleyways with none of the cyclopean fortresses, sky-scraping towers, bizarre arcane devices or wide impressive boulevards that characterise the other God Learner cities. It is an old city, a crumbling city.

It is known for its hot water springs and curative spas. Many of the palaces in Arshu Phola have running hot water and the public bath-houses are popular places to meet and socialise. It is said that more business is done in the steam rooms than in the council chambers and that exemplifies how society in the city operates – informally, casually and in secret. Unlike the majority of his subjects Duke Garolan is a Nralarite and his court is poorly attended. The city runs almost in spite of his efforts.

Politics are taboo in polite conversation here. Unlike the rest of Jrustela, where an avid interest in politics and world events is considered a virtue, Arshu Phola prides itself on apathy and resignation. What will happen will happen, they say, and there is little that can be done about it. Why not sit and relax a while instead of rushing off

to the four corners of the earth trying to conquer fate? If pressed, most people in the city would admit to favouring Reform but old grudges are still strong in Arshu Phola. They may believe that too much power and wealth has gone to Seshnela but neither do they want the Nralarites of the north to get all that power and wealth back. Few here have any interest in being part of an Empire and many sympathise with the Umathelan rebels.

There is a university of sorts in Arshu Phola, although it is very small compared to those in other cities. The best sorcerers go to Irenstos instead.

The Leaida Aqueduct is a major landmark in Arshu Phola, visible from all over the city as it carries fresh water down from the north. (There are natural springs in Arshu Phola but they taste bitter, especially the central lake.) The Aqueduct runs first into what is called the New Quarter, the Nralarite part of the city where the duke's palace and the Malkioni Cathedral of Thirty Mercies are found. The area around the lake is referred to as the Holgreen and is the main market area of the city. On the upper slopes is Manlanth's Hand, named after the great folk-hero of the city. Many of the temples to the old storm gods are found here. These temples are still intact, although they have been converted into warehouses or shops or homes to disguise their true nature.

### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ Centuries ago, Sergalis Manlanth bargained with the earth-spirits in the cave of Nemath. This cave was, according to the official histories, buried by an earthquake in 648 when the *Abiding Book* appeared in Eradinthanos. Some say, though, that the cave is still out there in the cliffs and hills around Arshu Phola and that a hero could re-enter it and gain the earth power like Manlanth did.
- ☒ Injured characters might come here for the healing springs or for counsel from the secret theist temples.
- ☒ Duke Garolan's hold on the city is slipping even as he tries to clutch it tighter. A rabble-rouser could easily foment a revolt in Arshu Phola, especially if he was able to tap into the resurgent theism of the populace. Characters could be a part of this uprising or be employed by the duke to stop it before it starts.

## Crunveld

This port town is infamous for its ties to Umathela. Many of those who fled the Nralarite conquest left from here and the connections have been maintained through the centuries. Now, with the southern colony seceding from the Middle Sea Empire, little Crunveld has suddenly become vitally important to Umathela. Letters, scrolls and new books of Sorcery are copied and smuggled out through Crunveld to ensure that the universities of Umathela do not fall behind their Jrustelan counterparts.

### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ The trade in secrets is illegal and highly profitable.

## Gerlant's Bay

This region has prospered for centuries. While Arshu Phola lagged behind and Shenilstos clung to theism and isolationism until the *Abiding Book* was found, Irenstos seized the opportunity to become integrated into the Jrusteli confederation and quickly became the richest town in the southlands. It ruled the farmlands, while the new twin city of Swalwal ruled over shipping and sea travel. With the destruction of Swalwal, Irenstos rose to the occasion and offered its harbour to the now homeless ships.

For the entire existence of the Middle Sea Empire, the south has prospered.

The calm crystal waters of Gerlant's Bay belie the region's current plight. Until recently, the towns along this coast thrived thanks to trade with Pamaltela, just as the east and north coastal towns traded with the northern continent. Now, with Umathela seceding and the Six-Legged Empire in chaos, the bay is crowded with empty freighters. For the first time in a generation, the perfect peace and considerable wealth of southern Jrustela is under threat.

## Borsyar

Borsyar was founded by the New Order school, the original pioneers of God Learner techniques, as a research base. The New Order were based in distant Frowalkel and they chose this town on the far side of the continent partly because it was so far from their home, thus hiding their discoveries from rival Sorcery schools but also because there was an Olodo temple near Borsyar which could be used as a gateway to the Otherworld. None of their work was wholly successful and they never managed to access the Olodo God Plane. When Mandarel's reforms brought

the God Learner technique into the public eye, the virtue of Borsyar as a secret research facility faded. A town had grown up around the New Order school and that town continued after most of the wizards left.

While the New Order may never have touched the power of the gods while at Borsyar, they did accomplish *something*. Ever since those initial experiments, the woodlands around Borsyar have been haunted. It is as though the border between this world and the Otherworlds was made weak and things leaked through. Runes are often found here and divine beasts and avatars walk aboard on Olodo holy days. Occasionally, Olodo priests or ambitious God Learners try to solve the mystery of Borsyar but no one has managed to replicate or repair the changes caused by those early experiments.

The strange case of Borsyar was one of the examples used by Valastos of Seven Pens in his influential critique of God Learning; it was cited as proof that the New Order magic could cause permanent changes, that the God World did not 'reset' on completion of a quest.

### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ The theists of Arshu Phola covet the Borsyar Enigma, believing that it can be used to turn the God Learners' own magic against them.

## Irenstos

The sprawling city of Irenstos is chaotic and colourful. Its population is a mix of Olodo, Nralarite, Pamaltelan and other immigrants. Unlike other cities, where the various groups and races keep to their own enclaves, here timinits live side by side with humans. Noble-caste Nralarite colonists who can trace their bloodline back to Faramos marry former slaves from Pamaltela. Traders from Vithos swap fake blood runes for enchanted sugar-cane and strong wine from Kerela. One can listen to the babble of tongues, see the clash of brightly coloured costumes and feel the endless frenetic life of the city wash over him. There is an eternal carnival atmosphere in Irenstos and the city seems to have a never-ending succession of holidays and festivals. Even the holy days of martyred saints are marked with feasting and dancing. Most of the old Olodo holy-days are also observed, albeit in the guise of secular celebrations.

Much of this attitude can be traced back to the wizard Darangor, who lived in the city in the years before the Taming of the Timinits. Darangor was an Olodo orphan

who was taught the basics of Sorcery by a kindly Malkioni priest. The young boy proved to be a prodigy at the arcane arts, working incredible wonders and uncovering new forms of Sorcery. Darangor intuited the structure of the runes, predicting the existence of the Stasis, Disorder and Infinity runes before they were ever discovered by the sorcerers. Darangor founded the university of Irenstos, which to this day teaches an intuitive, emotive form of Sorcery, treating it as an art instead of a science. Darangor's techniques are at odds with the ancient traditions of Malkioni-approved Sorcery, which is based on Logic and Reason and the original principles laid down by Zzabur. Even so, Irenstos has produced more than a few truly great sorcerers. The rivalry between Irenstos and Piskosol universities is exemplified by their differing approaches – the wizards of Irenstos rely on intuition, feelings and even luck when working magic, while Piskosol is founded on rigorous logic and insect-influenced formality and mathematics.

The government of Irenstos is quite at odds with the character of the city – it is a hereditary Nralarite family, who after four hundred years of rule still treat Irenstos

as a conquered enemy fortress and are quite prejudiced and mistrustful towards the Olodo. The current duke, Yuthelmag the Hobbled, is an especially bad example of this family's scions, as he is a strongly Loyalist duke who favours a punitive war with Umathela's rebels, while the vast majority of people in the city are friendly to Umathela and would oppose an attack on the south.

Trade is the lifeblood of Irenstos and even if legal trade with the southlands is diminished in the current climate, smuggling and commerce with the north and overseas continue. Irenstos is almost as important a port as Hathinethor but the consortiums and companies of the northern city own much of the shipping that goes through Irenstos.

#### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ A noble's son has gone to Irenstos for some raucous festival and his bodyguard has been found dead in an alleyway. The characters are hired to track down the son and ensure his safety.
- ☒ Irenstos' wild wizardry causes more than a few side effects. If weird monsters or dimensional breaches are going to manifest randomly in a major city, this is the place it will happen.
- ☒ Between Arshu Phola's theism and Irenstos' devil-may-care attitude, the whole southland is slipping away from traditional Middle Sea ways and drifting close to the ways of Umathela. Agents of foreign powers could be sent to Irenstos to foster this division.

#### Port Adventure

The name says it all. This sea-port was founded to support the Jrusteli expansion into the southlands. The ships that made the Six-Legged Empire launched from here, the largest naval base in Gerlant's Bay. The Free Men of the Sea consider it one of their most important assets now that Swalwal is gone. Port Adventure has no shipyards – its vessels are constructed in distant Orphalsketkal, then sailed south – but it has a binding tower to capture sylphs of the air and nets for undines of the sea. It is a place of swashbuckling adventurer and explorers and has a fierce rivalry with the sailors of Borasten Harbour in the north.



# Svalwalel

**Cities:** Svalwal (administrated from Irenstos)

The western peninsula was settled soon after the signing of the treaty of Peresk and its fertile fields and rich wildlife made it an ideal colony site. For a time, Svalwalel eclipsed Borastenorela as the fastest-growing and wealthiest region in Justela. The capital city, Svalwal, was a magnificent place, all silver and gold. Here, the sorcerers learned to bind elementals and spirits to their will and to set their bound energies to work in cunning machines of clockwork and jewels. Here, the principles of machine science that would come to full fruition with the Zistorites were first discovered.

Here, men learned to conquer the oceans.

Then came the wave and the drowning of Svalwalel. The province was almost totally abandoned after that – although the tidal wave conjured by the Waertagi only struck the southern coast, many more fled east and north fearing an invasion or further magical attacks. Even today, Svalwalel is largely empty, a land of ruined towns and isolated farms.

The magical machines and elemental-driven devices built in Svalwal survived the wave. The Free Men's League, a land-based counterpart to the Free Men of the Sea, was able to destroy or control most of the machines but there are still a few dangerous elemental devices roaming wild in the Svalwalel uplands. The Zistorites have applied to build a second monastery-city here, a new Clanking City, but their efforts have stalled due to the siege of Zistorwal.

There is adventure aplenty in Svalwal. The region was never reclaimed after the wave, as Justeli expansion went to the southern continent and then into the fervour of the Rightness Crusade and the Middle Sea Empire. An ambitious warlord could quite easily get the blessing of the Emperor of Land and Sea (if Loyalist) or the Confederation (if Reformist) to create his own domain in the unclaimed territories but he would have to prove his ability to claim and protect this new fiefdom.

## Siracapore

The only one of the Svalwal port towns to survive the wave, Siracapore has become the spiritual home of the Free Men of the Sea, the Justeli navy. The great ports of Orphalsketkal and Irenstos and Hathinethor are of course far more important to the navy in modern times but it is to Siracapore that the honoured dead are brought, Siracapore where great admirals retire and Siracapore where bloody oaths of vengeance are still sworn against the Waertagi and all who would harbour them.

### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ A handful of survivors from the invasion of Brithos still dwell here and may remember vital information from the sorcerer's isle.

## Nezeth

The inland town of Nezeth is the largest settlement in Svalwal. A vassal town of Irenstos, it is administered by a nephew of Yuthelmag. It oversees the mines in the southern Curustus mountains as well as the farms and herds of the uplands and also keeps the wilderness and its dangerous inhabitants from encroaching into settled lands. Nezeth is also the starting point for expeditions into drowned Svalwal City.

### Reasons to come here:

- ☒ The armies of young Baron Yuselov are perennially undermanned, so the noble regularly hires adventurers.

## Svalwal City

The wave tore away the foundations of the southern half of the city and now everything from the ruins of the ducal palace to the seaport is underwater. The northern section of the city, which comprised the university and magical foundries and the noble quarter is half-drowned; the streets are flooded but many of the sturdier buildings are intact.

Before the wave, Svalwal was one of the richest cities in the world. The sorcerers there had mastered the binding of elementals and their ships could cross the ocean. They had plundered the rich gold and gem mines of Umathela and Svalwal treasure ships brought a horde of incalculable value back to Justela. Much of this treasure, it is said, now

lies scattered on the ocean floor or in vaults deep beneath the towers of Svalwal. Of equal potential importance are the magical secrets of Svalwal – some magic used by the mage-smiths of the city is still lost and is coveted by the ship-wrights of the Free Men and by the Zistorites. Most magical research in Jrustela focuses on the ramifications of God Learning, so basics like elementalism have been neglected. The third treasure of Svalwal comes from the aftermath of the wave – Water, Death, Undeath and other runes are commonly found here.

The treasures of Svalwal are guarded not only by the dangerous conditions, like collapsing buildings or tidal bores rushing through narrow streets, but also by malevolent water-spirits, dangerous undead and uncontrolled magical-machines and elementals.

## Curustus Mountains

**Cities:** None (administrated from Jalandeswal)

Even to this day, the Curustus Mountains have not been fully explored by the Jrusteli. The peaks rise with shocking suddenness from the shore in the west, with sheet cliffs erupting from the ocean as if the world ended in a great granite wall. In some sheltered valleys on the west side, huge white glaciers grind towards the cliffs, occasionally calving off icebergs that tumble to the water far below. The approach from the east is almost as hazardous, as a traveller must cross a labyrinth of canyons, fast-flowing rivers and mosquito-ridden swamps before even reaching the lower slopes.

The mountains are rich in metals including gold in the north, copper and tin and jewels in the south and even a few rare iron mines in isolated places known only to the mostali. The Jrusteli mine where they can but have only scratched the surface of the stern mountain range.

The Curustus have three sentient races who call them home. The Jrusteli trade with the mostali, whose main city is located under a peak called Darasus by the Jrusteli, and Omphalos Prime by the dwarfs. The scale of the city is undreamt-of by the Middle Sea Empire, who believe the Mostali of the mountains to number no more than a few hundred. In fact, Omphalos has thousands of inhabitants, most of whom are engaged in a long-term plan to the central node of Omphalos, which they claim to be a major shard of the Spike that was used to unify



and modulate the various planes of existence. The God Learners' experiments cause terrible static and have set Omphalos' efforts back centuries but the insular dwarfs have no idea that their Jrusteli neighbours are running around the Otherworlds. It is only the rock, lead and iron dwarfs who deal with the Jrusteli, while the coppers, tins and silvers work on the Central Node.

The mountain trolls sometimes raid Jrusteli settlements in Norvalela and sometimes the Jrusteli attack troll villages. The trolls here are superlative mountaineers and prosper since they are not perceived to be any more than a minor nuisance.

Finally, there is a race of flying men in the upper peaks. They look human save for their arms, which are wings, and for their prehensile feet. They call themselves the Arhi and have no interest in trade. They practice a form of Mysticism based around the joy of flight. They are sometimes sighted by trappers in the mountains but the only Arhi specimens in Jrusteli museums are elderly flyers who fell from the sky at the end of their death-flight.

# MAGIC

In the Second Age, it is Jrustela and not Brithos that deserves the title of the Sorcerer's Isle. Every one of the island's twelve great cities has a university that trains thousands of students to command arcane forces. Magic enhances and supports every aspect of life in Jrustela, from raising towers that defy gravity, to ships that are drawn through the waters with the speed of the wind to talismans of communication that link the farthest-flung outpost to the greater Empire. Jrustela is a land of scholars, where learning is prized above strength of arms or even beauty. To be well-read and well-educated is to be respected here.

## God Learning 101

*From a lecture given by Haalabrim the Expositionist, Senior Lecturer in the University of Eradinthanos*

Good day, class. If you do not stop talking, I shall turn your words into wasps and bind your lips shut. That's better. Welcome to *Introduction to the Hwarosian Modifications* or as most people call the course, God Learning 101. I can see by the panicked expressions crossing many of your faces that at least two-thirds of you are nobles or students in some other discipline, not apprentice sorcerers. Yes, you're supposed to be here. We will not be covering any actual Sorcery in this course and it is important for the future leaders and scholars of Jrustela to have a basic understanding of our most powerful magical techniques. Just as a good citizen of the Empire should be able to sail a ship, swing a sword, debate an Insight Contest and grow a harvest, you should also at least be able to understand the principles of the God Learners.

We shouldn't use that term, of course. 'God Learning' implies that all we do is study and catalogue pagan beliefs. Better terms would be 'God Shaping' or 'God Binding' and an even better term would be 'Spiritual Engineering' but we'll stick with the common phrase for the moment until we understand exactly how it's wrong.

Yesterday, I presume you were all in the church, mumbling away in the back while trying to get over your hangovers. Did you listen to what you were saying? 'There is no God but the Invisible God and Malkion is his prophet!' If that's true – and it is most certainly true – then what are the pagan entities? Where did they come from? Again, the teachings of Malkion illuminate us. Makan – the primal mind of God – conceived of being and in conceiving of existence, he made existence exist. This transformed him into Malkion the Law. The existence of law allowed the physical world to form. Next, Malkion combined physical form with divine meaning, which birthed the runes. All that lives, all that has power, all that has *significance* stems from these runes. All living things are made from combinations of the runes. Note that there may be more runes than those we know of.

Now, as the *Abiding Book* and the other holy texts say, people turned away from Malkion to worship false gods. These false gods are spirits of great power but they are no more than powerful beings. They are not transcendent and omnipotent like Makan. They are limited beings – true, in many cases they may be awesomely powerful, unaging, invulnerable or otherwise impressive – but they are not God. Only God is God.

Some of the pagan deities may be empowered mortals, like Zzabur. Others, we now theorise, are semi-sentient emanations of runic principles. We refer to the runes as First-Order Eransachula, prime objects. If the pagan deities are emanations of the runes, then they may be called Second-Order Eransachula, derivations of the first order. There is solid experimental evidence for supposing the pagan deities are just powerful runes with a little mind mixed in. Consider that only a few centuries ago there were many local deities of war, or fertility or kingship. Our scholars have been able to redact different local deities into aspects of a single deity. Thus, we can recognise that, say Odalya of the Orlanthi and Udar who is worshipped in Maniria are one god. With further efforts, we may be able to further rationalise all the hunter gods into a single deity, then

strip away that mask of god to reveal the primal rune beneath.

In any event, we do not need to delve further into erasanchugenessis any further today. One does not need to know much about cow breeding to enjoy a fine steak. Oh, I should point out that the process can go both ways – just as we can resolve different aspects of a pagan god into a single, more manageable entity, we can also cause a local aspect to ‘bud off’ and become a distinct entity.

Anyway, we have all these pagan gods running around causing chaos and disrupting the perfect order of Makan’s original Law. Their actions result in the existence of multiple planes of existence, fracturing reality into multiple different coterminous realms. Important for our purposes are the God World and the Essence World. The God World is a spirit plane where the pagan deities dwell. It is largely static – the pagan gods don’t do much outside their normal ritual actions.

The Essence World is more interesting. It is effectively a realm shaped by belief and will but this shaping is *informed* by the God World. The Essence World is the source of magic. It is a route by which the First Order Eransachula – the primal runes – interact with reality. When a pagan priest prays to his god, his prayers pass into the Essence World through the filter of the God World entity. The prayers then infinitesimally alter the configuration of the Essence World, allowing energy to flow from the runes back to reality. Since the pagan prayed to his god, the change in the Essence World is favourable to that god, that Second Order Eransachula. Effectively, it’s a positive feedback loop. Pagan prays, Essence World changes, God World God gets stronger, God World God grants prayer.

All this was discovered by a group of sorcerers called the New Order and gave us the first intimations that the pagan gods were just powerful spirits. The New Order were able to use that to bind a fire-god to defeat the Waertagi but that was an exceptional piece of Sorcery that took the power of the whole nation to accomplish. It was grotesquely inefficient – the magical equivalent of scaling a castle wall by building a mountain next to it, then climbing over the mountain and jumping from the top just to land on the far side of the wall. By modern standards, the invocation of Tanien’s Victory was a monstrously wasteful spell. If that was all the extent

of our ability to manipulate the Second-Orders, we’d never get anywhere.

Next, enter Mandarel. He made the connection – the vital connection – that pagan prayers and the responses of the gods were linked. When one of us prays to Malkion, our prayers might go unanswered if our motives are not pure, our actions unjust, or if our desires go against what God intends for us. God owes us *nothing*. For the pagans, however, the relationship is more like that between a lord and his serfs. Remember, a pagan god is nothing but a rune dressed up with a little bit of sentience and will. Much of the behaviour of a pagan god is instinct and rote. When the pagan prays and his prayers affect the Essence World, the god must respond because the changes made in the Essence world reflect back into the God World. In effect, if a prayer to the rain god is made properly, the rain god *must* try to make it rain.

Why, you may ask, do not all pagan prayers work? If every prayer is an undeniable command to the gods, then why am I not lighting candles to Uleria and filling my bedroom with salacious nymphs? Well, firstly, there are lots of pagan gods. Take that rather fetching young student there in the third row – I, a filthy pagan, pray to Uleria that she will suddenly find herself passionately in love with me. She, being sensible, prays to some tribal queen to protect her virtue. If her prayers are better – and by better, I mean ‘designed to be more potent in the section of the Essence World that shapes the second-order Eransachula that she believes is her goddess’ – she’ll keep her virtue and I’ll be sleeping alone.

Secondly, there can be multiple conflicting prayers. A poor weather god, for instance, must be troubled every day by thousands of different prayers, all wanting different things.

Thirdly, it takes a lot of prayer energy to shape the Essence World and even more to shape the resulting God World analogue. Effectively, gods have a lot of inertia. I can pray to Boomon, the obscure troll god of lunchtime, and ask him to turn me into a shellfish. My prayer might be perfectly formed and we can be sure that no one is simultaneously petitioning Boomon to specifically *not* turn me into a shellfish – but because Boomon has godly inertia, my little prayer is nowhere near powerful enough to compel him.

It is important to remember that Boomon does not have any will in the matter. Second-Order Eransachula are witless, more like machines or animals than sentient beings. One cannot speak to Boomon because Boomon is just a corrupted mask for a rune or combination of runes. What did I say he was, the God of Lunchtime? Probably a Motion/Stasis/Man/Communication intersection. If I travelled to the Essence Plane, as we'll be covering later on, I could meet Boomon in person and talk to him. I might also encounter an avatar of Boomon wandering in the material world. Neither of these would be the Second-Order being my prayer was directed to; they would be reflections of that being, Third or Fourth-Order Eransachula. By the way, Order refers to the number of steps between the emanation and its underlying primal rune configuration. Eransachula can also be graded by Class, referring to their magical might. Boomon might only be a ninth-class Eransachula.

Anyway – we shall take a short recess during which I shall perform the great and holy rite of Boomon, and get lunch!

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Welcome back. I know how warm it is in this lecture theatre and how a pleasant postprandial lethargy is setting in. No doubt that big textbook looks a lot like a soft pillow right now. Well, fall asleep and we'll be using you as a test subject in Zistorite implant trials. This is important stuff.

I left you on tenterhooks with a long technical discussion of the relationship of pagan deities to prayer, which can be summed up thusly: pagan prayers can work for anyone but it's easier if you're a follower of the god you are praying to. Mandarel theorised that this meant anyone could pray to, say, Orlanth and have a chance of getting a response. Theoretically, the armies of Jrustela could pray to a dozen different war-gods and get blessings from all of them. There are several problems with that. Firstly, it's blasphemous to worship false gods. Secondly, it would take far too much effort to get any worthwhile returns on prayers.

A pagan god is more likely to respond – or, more properly, the Second-Order Eransachula you are trying to manipulate by distorting the Essence-Plane location corresponding to its position in the God-Plane is more likely to respond– if your prayers are well-formed. A

prayer should be uttered by a believer, a member of the god's cult, using all the trappings and costumes and rites and rituals that are pleasing to that god. The chances of a successful prayer by a true member of the Malkioni church, even one who tries to mimic the appearance and trappings of a pagan, are remote. What Mandarel needs is a technique that is more powerful than a mere prayer but less magic-intensive than a brute-force binding.

Now, remember your theology. Makan created a perfect, unified world which was broken by error and dissent into multiple planes. This division is not complete. There are gaps between the planes, weak spots and breaches and currents. The New Order had already begun to map the various planes and routes between them. Somewhere, Mandarel theorised, was a way to compel the pagan gods without employing brute-force.

A sage said, 'Give me a lever and a place to stand and I will move the world.' Well, first we found the place to stand. We could not change the God Plane directly but we could make changes in the Essence Plane mediated through prayers addressed to the God Plane. However, if we could get to the Essence Plane, the effects of our actions there would be vastly magnified and those changes would be fed back onto the God Plane. New Order researchers found that the presence of gods on the God Plane created weak spots that could be punched through to get to the Essence Plane. Holy sites, temples, sacred grounds... all potential Gates. Huzzah!

There was still one problem. We didn't know what to do when we got there.

Just *praying* on the other side had no greater effect. The other side was a bizarre half-way point between the largely-static God Plane and our world, where the deeds of the gods and heroes were repeated endlessly by Third-Order Eransachula and demi-Eransachula and various spirits. The explorers started calling it the Hero Plane and tried to force or bind the higher-order beings there to comply. Their efforts met with little success. We were missing our lever.

The answer was found in history. Researchers discovered references to Quests and mythic adventures, to major ceremonies that involved actions on the Hero Plane. Arkat, for example, was a practitioner of this form of magic. Basically, it was a primitive form of godly manipulation. The participants would recreate the deeds

of a god and extract a reward from the god. Mandarel's successor theorised that this Quest effectively remapped the Third-Order Eransachula created by the Quest onto the Second-Order being in the God Plane, reinforcing the god's sense of self and identity. More importantly, symbolic changes and appropriate actions were vastly more significant to the gods while engaged in HeroQuesting. It was very difficult to get a prayer working from the normal world because of the spiritual differential between a god's normal, committed worshippers and a New Order researcher trying to mask himself as a committed worshipper – but on the Essence Plane, during a HeroQuest, that same researcher had vastly higher spiritual standing in the eyes of the god while masked. The upshot of all this was that Mandarel and the other early explorers from the New Order and its child, the Order of Otherworld Exploration, eventually managed to complete a HeroQuest and get the rewards from it.

The HeroQuest is still the primary tool of the God Learners. The basic modus operandi of our voyages is still the same: learn all you can about a culture's myths, enter the corresponding Otherworld, complete those myths, get the reward. We have, however, learned variations on that, which we'll come to in a moment.

For several decades, the various schools descended from the New Order continued to refine Mandarel's world. They started calling themselves the God Learner's Collective. It took a lot of time to make progress in the pagan Otherworlds, as the more potent myth cycles are always kept secret or their stations are disguised. We organised into groups called Knowledge Bands to conduct Spirit Raids. Scholars would travel to some pagan shore and interrogate the locals in an ad hoc manner. Today, there are departments for that sort of thing but Spirit Raiding is still practised unofficially.

Two great leaps forward came during this century. The first was the discovery that our efforts were capable of making actual changes in the God Plane. One of the earliest gods studied was Lankhor Mhy, the Orlanthi scribe deity, whose Quests tend to be relatively safe. The Orlanthi get Divine Magic from him but the Eransachula proved to have the ability to teach Sorcery spells too, so our heroic voyagers would demand new spells on completing the Lankhor Mhy sequences. Our spies noticed that the Orlanthi started having trouble obtaining new Divine Magic from the god. Our repeated

Questing had changed his nature slightly, associating him more strongly with Sorcery than with Divine Magic. At first, this was taken to be a disastrous omen – if the gods changed, then all the knowledge we'd spent the last century accumulating would be useless. Several panicked books, like Seven Pen's infamous *Spirit Plane Shift Theory Explained*, argued that we should stop our efforts entirely until the changes could be investigated. If we'd stopped there, we would never have gotten to the second level of HeroQuesting.

Any pagan with sufficient power can enter his myths and get rewards by mimicking the gods. So can we, and we have learned to do it more efficiently and quickly. What no one else has ever managed is *changing* the gods. The shift in Lankhor Mhy, however infinitesimal, showed that we could cause permanent changes to the Gods Plane if we wished. This opened up a whole new field of possibilities. Instead of obtaining rewards from just Pagan gods, we can also alter the Pagan gods or even destroy them if we wish. This requires a massive effort and lots of repeated Quests but deicide and deigenesis are among our most potent magics.

The second great revelation of the last century was the work of Hwaros, which is the foundation of modern God Learning. Hwaros developed a set of spells that allow us to peek behind the curtain of the Hero Plane and draw connections. Previously, most deviations from the myth resulted in the Quest ending. For example, if you were attempting to retrace the steps of how Odayla slew the griffon, you could not instead try to tame the griffon and bring its power out of the myth world. Odayla slew the griffon; he didn't tame it, so your Quest is over. With the aid of Hwaros' RuneQuest Sight, we can map correspondences and short cuts in the Hero Plane and see where we can jump from one myth to another. Instead of starting with Odayla's Griffon Hunt, for example, we commence on the tale of how Chalana Arroy Made The Healing Herbs Grow In The Mountains. Midway through that Quest, at the third station, we can jump tracks and start in on Odayla's Griffon Hunt. Because the hunt is now taking place in the mountains, the final battle with the griffon takes place at the griffon's nest, where we can take its eggs after slaying it. Odayla's tale says nothing about the fate of the griffon's eggs, so we are not forced out of the Hero Plane by doing this.

You can see the results of that trick, by the way, when you see our Aerial Riders in action. Those griffons they

ride are imbued with mythic strength and fierceness. Oh, and they're tamed using a variation on Mastakos & The Horse of Wind. Hwaros let us jump from myth to myth; he let us create alternate solutions to tasks in a Quest and mitigate the necessary damage caused by trials. He gave us creative control and that ushered in the Era of Continuous Revelation.

We shall have another short recess now and then I'll finish up with an explanation of God Learner techniques and terminology, a description of the requirements and benefits of our magic and some practical examples of how God Learning is benefiting the Empire today.

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On your desks, you'll find a scroll detailing common terms and techniques used in reference to God Learning. I don't expect half of you to understand all of them but at least you won't have quite those stupid expressions on your faces when some scholar talks to you.

As I said before the break, the basic HeroQuest is still the primary operation conducted by a Knowledge Band. The group enters the Otherworld via a Gate, completes the various stations and tasks described in the myth and then gets to demand some benefit or reward from the associated god. Learning the myths of the pagans is no mean task – the common folk-tales are never enough to successfully navigate the Otherworld. No, you need the original stories, the secret teachings known only to the priests of the gods, the variant stories, archaeological evidence, changes in the myths from generation to generation, the tales of other gods and heroes, details of past HeroQuests in related myth cycles... every bit of information you can get your hands on. Study Groups have worked on particular myths for *years*. Why, Girans Malos of Ralios spent two years living as a dwarf just for the opportunity to listen to one of their scholars tell a story of Mostal! That is the *minimum* level of dedication one needs to succeed as a God Learner.

Next, you must find a Gate, or make one, then it's off to the Otherworld Often. Multiple attempts must be made to complete a Quest. Each step brings the Questers a little closer to victory. We have developed spells to exit a failed Quest before any major Backlash can strike the Questers. When the Quest is complete, rewards commensurate with the magnitude and character of the deity and the difficulty of the Quest can be demanded.

What sort of rewards? Runes. Divine blessings. Magic weapons. Magic secrets. Enhanced abilities. Divine gifts. Personally, I am blessed with the ability to perfectly remember every word I read and my intellect is vastly expanded after several successive Quests into Elassa's Dream. That, and I once had the power to magically tolerate the idiocies of students but that gift is long since used up.

But, many of you are no doubt thinking, 'I am not a sorcerer. What use is all this to me? What can I contribute to the great work of the New Order?' Well, firstly, you do not have to be a full-fledged sorcerer to enter the Otherworld. Questers need to be skilled swordsmen, thieves, diplomats... whatever the myth requires. For heaven's sake, one Questline we discovered in Prax requires us to bring a master shepherd along! Our Study Groups find new stories that require different skills every day.

Secondly, let me be blunt. God Learning is not cheap. The research budget for a small Study Group can run into tens of thousands of gold each year and that's before you factor in the cost of the magical components and other expenses. Nobles are encouraged to consider God Learning a necessary expense, just like raising an army or maintaining a keep. Magic is the foundation of our Empire's success and God Learning is our most potent magic.

Thirdly, despite our best efforts, God Learning is still a mystery to the majority of the Jrusteli. There are still many in the church who feel that our researches are somehow immoral or dangerous or even pagan worship by another name. There are those who fear that we are meddling with forces beyond our control, or that we are wasting our power and effort chasing down stories when more conventional sorceries might yield greater results. If you take one thing away from this lecture, let it be this: God Learning is not mystic nonsense. It is a carefully reasoned, mathematically sound method for indirectly manipulating primal forces of the cosmos.

Consider common Rune Magic. A man who integrates, say, a Fire Rune becomes more resistant to the effects of fire. That Fire Rune is but a fragment of the primal Fire Rune, the First-Order Eransachula created by God. We cannot integrate that primal rune but we can draw power from it. If we could do away with the whole God Realm and access the Essence directly, we would, but

that is beyond us for the moment. Instead we use the pagan god-entities as channels and masks and tools to access the essence beyond. As a man uses a Fire Rune, we use the pagan gods. Or, to put it another way, as a man saddles a horse and rides it to market, so do we use the pagan gods. They are not conscious beings but semi-sentient essence meshes created by the intersection of the primal runes, trapped by their own mythologies.

So, what benefits can God Learning bring that conventional Sorcery cannot? Well, simply put, the Second-Order Eransachula are already massively powerful spell-like entities. Instead of tapping the powers of the cosmos directly, we can use these existing intermediaries. Just by *existing*, the pagan gods make getting cosmic power much much much easier. We can gain blessings and benefits and magical items with considerably less effort than infusing the items with power or casting beneficial spells. God Learner magic can also operate on a greater scale than conventional Sorcery – the magic required to affect a whole country is unfeasible for even a cabal of mortal sorcerers but the gods have been affecting whole tribes since the Dawn.

I see that our time together is at an end. Malkion willing, at least a little of this has sunk in. Go, go, and do not darken my lecture theatre again until you have read my *Commentaries on the 753 Compilation*.

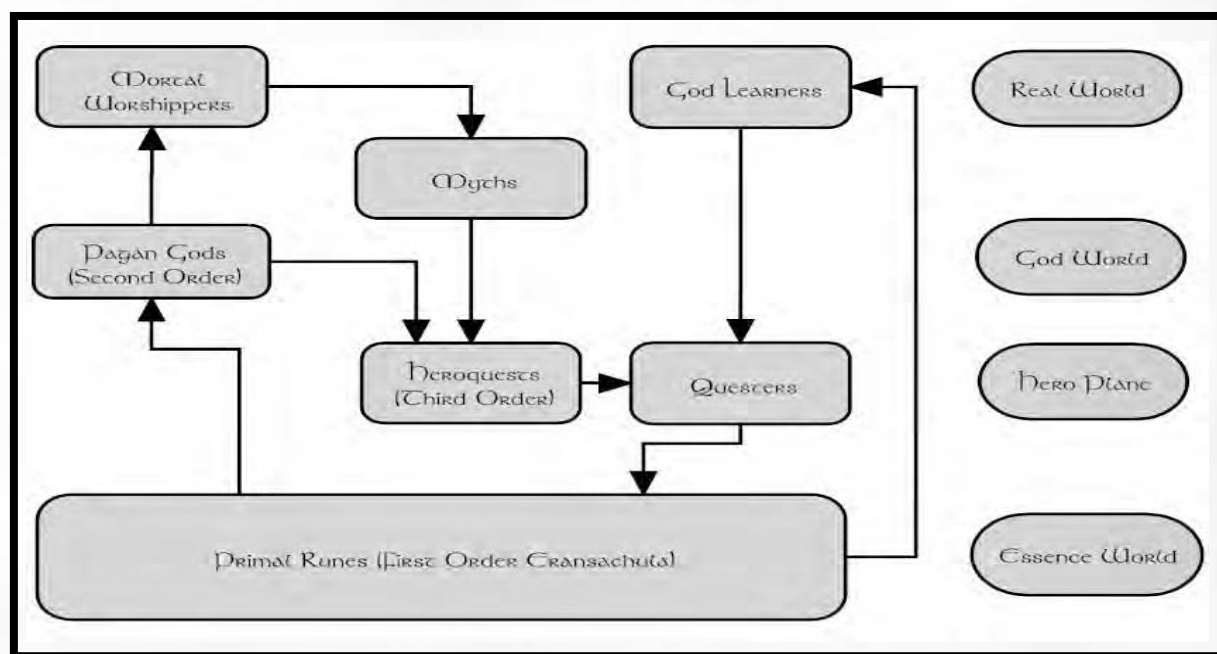
## God Learner Magic

*Magic of Glorantha* describes several basic HeroQuesting spells and techniques. Every God Learner will be taught *Sense HeroQuest Gate* and *Sense Rune* as part of his basic training. Most will also pick up *Break HeroQuest* and *Open HeroQuest Gate*.

Accessing the Hero Plane via a Gate requires a Lore (specific theology) test (difficulties are given in *Magic of Glorantha*). Normally, a character cannot leave a HeroQuest until he completes it, dies or is ejected from the Quest by violating one of its strictures or requirements. For most Questers, this limits their actions while on a Quest. If one is recreating the deeds of Orlanth Dragonslayer, one cannot bring a whole army to help fight that dragon – one must fight alone.

Unless the Quester is a God Learner who has studied the spells and techniques described here. These allow a God Learner group to violate the *spirit* of a HeroQuest while still clinging to the letter of the law and so getting the benefits. This is fundamentally disrespectful to the gods but it works (at least up until the end of the Second Age, when reality *snaps*). A knowledge of a culture's myths is still vital to any successful HeroQuest, so all God Learners will have a high Lore (specific culture) skill in their chosen field of expertise.

the magic of jrastela



### *Brief Glossary of God Learner Terms*

**BACKLASH:** Negative magical effects (curses, psychic damage and so on) caused when a HeroQuest is failed or when Questers are forced out of the Hero Plane. Backlash does not apply to negative effects incurred during a Quest, which are often necessary penalties.

**BRANCH POINT:** A point at which two versions of a myth diverge. Often, such a division is caused by a change in the culture of the cult's worshippers. For example, a tribe that were nomads who then built a city might have two versions of a story, one in which the climax takes place in the wilderness, the other in which the climax occurs in a city. At a branch point, the Questers can choose which version of the myth they are following.

**CHANGE POINT:** A point at which two myths cross over and it is possible to jump from one to the other. Common change points are visits to divine courts or encounters with figures who traditionally inspire Quests, such as messengers or wise men. For example, many Quests in the Pelorian Mythos involve a command or meeting with Yelm. It is possible to switch from one Quest to another during such a meeting. A Quest group might begin with the relatively simple Quest 'Gustbran Forges Yelm's Spear' but when they bring the spears to Yelm, they can attempt to jump to the fifth station of the Quest 'Yelmali's Terrible Trials.'

**ERANSACHULA:** A spiritual entity derived from a primal rune.

**GATE:** A portal to the Otherworld. Most Gates are located in temples and other spiritually potent locations such as sacred groves or stone circles. Other Gates are found where legendary deeds were accomplished, such as the sites of great battles, or in areas of notable magical power, or in places associated with a god's portfolio or just at random. Gates can be located using a Locate Gate spell.

**GUERDON:** An object brought into the Otherworld for the purpose of using it as a vessel for divine power by creating a correspondence between the object and a mythic item. For example, if a mundane spear is brought into the myth 'Gustbran Forges Yelm's Spear,' it can be imbued with magical power. Recent advancements in this field allow multiple items to be enchanted via a single HeroQuest by setting up a correspondence between both the Guerdon and the myth and the Guerdon and multiple other identical objects. Researchers have managed to give a lesser enchantment to a whole armoury full of spears.

**GOD BINDING:** Controlling an Eransachula by the application of direct magic. Normally, this is unfeasibly expensive (see the Battle of Tanien's Victory) when applied to Second-Order Eransachula but on lesser Third-Order beings or especially weak Second-Orders, it can be a useful way of rescuing a failing Quest. The Questers compel a god in the Hero Plane to obey them.

**GOD ENGINEERING:** Altering the characteristics of a god through repeated HeroQuests. Also called Divine Change. An advanced topic.

**H'WAROSIAN CALCULATION:** A system of mathematics enabling a God Learner to calculate the effects a particular change or action will likely have on a HeroQuest or Essence Plane configuration. Applied H'warosian Calculation is an advanced topic.

**LOOP POINT:** Many myths involve cycles; a task must be repeated again and again (usually three or nine times) before the Quester can move on. For instance, when Pole Star battled the demons, he slew first a group of three, then a group of ten, then a group of fifty demons, then the demon lord himself. With the right preparations, it is possible to break out of a loop and skip right to the final task. Loop point jumping is risky, as it can prematurely end a HeroQuest.

**MASKING:** One of our most potent techniques, masking enables a band to avoid the normal restrictions and penalties of a Quest. In a basic expedition, any deviation from the traditional specifications - the number of Questers, their skills, equipment, approach and so forth - will result in the Quest failing and the participants being ejected from the Hero Plane. However, if the deviations are masked, the Quest can continue regardless. For instance, in the 'Birth of Vinga The Heroine myth, the baby goddess is defended by two warriors. This makes the Quest very difficult to complete, as the child is attacked by a host of warriors. By using masking magic, reinforced by wearing matching costumes and wielding swords forged from the same metal, it is possible to have up to thirty warriors in that stage of the Quest without violating the 'rules.' From the perspective of the pagan gods, the thirty warriors are symbolically two individuals.

**OVERPOWERING:** Overcoming a challenge through the application of extreme force or foreknowledge. Normally used in concert with masking.

**PILOT:** A pilot is an experienced HeroQuester, adept at leading groups into the Otherworld.

**RUNEQUEST SIGHT:** A practical application of H'waros' techniques and discoveries enabling a practitioner to see the truths and connections behind the myths.

**SHADOWING:** An experimental technique involving beginning a HeroQuest then conjuring weak Third-Order Eransachula to actually complete the stages of the Quest. Often involves allowing Questers to be possessed by the gods. Controversial, but one of the few ways to investigate truly ancient Quest lines.

**SHORT CUT:** Bypassing one or more stages in a HeroQuest, usually via a Change Point or Overpowering.

**SPIRIT RAID:** Gathering information about a culture's myths by any means necessary (Questioning them, learning stories, obtaining copies of their lore and magic and so on).

**STUDY GROUP:** A group of God Learner sorcerers engaged in a long-term investigation of a particular myth cycle or phenomenon.

## Violating a Quest

Several of the techniques described below have a chance of ejecting the caster or participants from HeroQuest. Unlike simply failing a challenge or deviating by doing the wrong thing, using these potent techniques can draw Backlash from the angered gods. The form of Backlash varies from god to god and myth to myth but normally takes the form of curses, angry spirits being sent to harass the blaspheming character or dreams being sent to the god's worshippers telling them of the evil of the character.

When a spell with the Violate HeroQuest keyphrase is successfully cast, the caster may stay on the HeroQuest. If the spell fails, the caster and any participants affected by the spell are ejected and face Backlash. The caster may make a Lore (specific theology) roll before casting a violating spell to ameliorate the potential violation. Add *one-quarter* the margin of success or failure (*half* the margin on a critical or fumble) to the caster's spell casting test.

For example, Trithimis the Brazen is attempting a minor HeroQuest called Orlanth and the Ring of Kresh which

## Sample Backlash Effects

Backlash varies from god to god. Potential Backlash effects include:

**Argan Argar:** Never being trusted by trolls; losing all one's wealth; cursed with a terror of the darkness

**Barntar Orlanthson:** Physical weakness; making crops wither where one walks; impotence

**Chalana Arroy:** This goddess never gives Backlash; she is therefore a favoured target for God Learner raids.

**Elmal:** Branded with an invisible mark that informs any Initiate of Elmal that one is an enemy of the people.

**Ernalda the Queen:** One's marriage is cursed to be barren and loveless; inability to rule wisely.

**Heler:** Cursed to be followed by a magical storm or drought; betrayed by one's most trusted ally

**Humakt:** The next friend one lays eyes upon after leaving the Hero Plane is doomed to die; one's body begins to rot from the inside

**Lankhor Mhy:** Sudden illiteracy

**Magasta:** Any ship upon which one sails will be struck by terrible storms and bad weather; seasickness

**Odayla:** Devoured by magical bears.

**Orlanth The Leader:** Distrusted by one's subordinates; cursed to make disastrous decisions when in charge.

**Valind:** Preternatural sensitivity to cold; vulnerability to frostbite; any meal one attempts to eat turns ice-cold instantly.

**Vinga:** Hated by women; one's children will be taken away by fate.

**Yelm:** Unable to bear the light of the sun; preternatural sensitive to heat so that even a candle-flame feels like the heat of a forge on one's skin

### Avoiding Backlash

The *Deflect Backlash* spell allows a character to avoid Backlash. It is still an experimental technique and is known to only a few God Learners. In the years before the end, though, it became much more common and may be partially responsible for the devastation wreaked in the Otherworld.

*Deflect Backlash*

Casting Time 1, Instant

Any Backlash incurred by the caster is instead deflected back into the Hero Plane. There is a 50% chance that the Backlash hits one of the other Questers (if any are still in the HeroQuest) and a 50% chance that the Backlash hits the myth itself and dissipates relatively harmlessly.

The *Break HeroQuest* spell (see page 49 in *Magic of Glorantha*) never incurs Backlash.

describes how the young god defeated every warrior in a hillfort. Instead of taking on all the warriors in the fort in a sword-fight, Trithimis kills them all using a poison gas bomb he brought with him. This is obviously a horrible violation of the rules of the HeroQuest and so Trithimus should be dumped back on the mortal plane. However, before releasing the bomb, Trithimus makes a Lore (Orlanthi theology) test. He succeeds by 20% which gives him a +5% bonus to his casting test.

Trithimis calls the bomb 'sword' and acts as if it is a hand weapon, not a bomb. He draws it from an imaginary sheathe, describes how he forged it and then shouts that his enemies will die when he stabs them with it.

He throws the bomb, then casts Maintain HeroQuest to stay on the Hero Plane. If the spell is successfully cast, he stays on the Quest despite cheating. If the spell test fails, he is ejected from the plane and suffers Backlash.

Lore (Hwarosian Mathematics)

This special Lore skill is the study of the equations and insights of the God Learners. The use of Hwarosian Mathematics allows a character to predict events and actions on the Hero Plane. A character with this Lore skill may use it in place of Lore (specific culture) when attempting to open a Gate to the Otherworld or when casting a Violate HeroQuest spell. Unlike Lore (Specific Culture), Lore (Hwarosian Mathematics) gives no information about a culture's myths. A character with cultural lore knows who Orlanth is and why the Bones of the Dragon Shrine is a good place to open a Gate to Orlanth's myth cycle. A character with just mathematics would be able to open the Gate by calculating the intersection point of a High-Magnitude Second-Order Eransachula mytharc with the underlying Significance Nexus but would not have a clue where the Gate goes or what to do when he gets there.

Overpowering

Overpowering is the most basic and brutal of God Learner techniques. The HeroQuesters use inappropriate levels of force and magic to overcome challenges. Instead of outwitting a foe, they blast his mind with spells until he is a drooling moron; instead of beating a champion

in single combat, a dozen God Learner soldiers charge in and cut him to ribbons. Normally such disregard for the 'rules' would instantly force all participants out of the Hero Plane. With the *Maintain HeroQuest* spell, the God Learners can keep a Quest going even after blasting their way through a challenge.

Maintain HeroQuest

Casting Time 3, Violate HeroQuest, Instant  
*By concentrating, the God Learner holds the mythic structure of the Hero Plane together by sheer willpower!*

The required Magnitude of the spell varies depending on the power of the HeroQuest. The difficulty of the spell varies depending on how offensive the deviation.

HeroQuest Type	Example	Magnitude Required
Rarely-told story	Valind fighting winter spirits	3
Specific God's tale	Heler's weapon-making	6
Cultural tale	Yelmadio's duties in the darkness	9
Popular legend	Orlanth marrying Ernalda	12
Epic	Lightbringer Quest	15

Deviation	Example	Penalty to casting test
Minor	Fighting the winter-spirits in the wrong order; deviations that would not be considered wrong for worshippers of that god	-0%
Noticeable	Making a different weapon	-10%
Considerable	Battling the shadow beasts using light spells instead of swords	-25%
Major	Marrying a different goddess	-50%
Total	Bringing seven armies instead of seven companions	-100%

Masking

Masking is a technique by which a God Learner band 'hide' their deviations. It is a form of symbolic magic; the Questers disguise their deviations by symbolically linking them to the correct form for the Quest. For

example, a particular station dictates that a young girl must bring a bowl of water to Vinga. Instead of bringing a child into the Hero Plane, the God Learner dresses himself in a child's clothing and puts on a wig while casting this spell. The Sorcery reinforces the symbolic links, reducing the risk of the deviation from the true Quest forcing the God Learner out. Common masks include:

- ☒ Making multiple people into one character by having them wear identical clothes cut from the same cloth, speak in unison and so on
- ☒ Using fragments from a traditional object as part of another tool, such as embedding fragments of an Orlathi short sword into a Zistorite Blade of Many Tearing Teeth
- ☒ Disguising a zombie, golem, corpse or other unliving entity as a person so it can be sacrificed at a station that demands a loss.
- ☒ Carefully and repeatedly referring to an object or person by a different name. For example, if you

keep calling your bodyguard Dog and behave as if he is a dog, then with a masking spell you can take him along on the HeroQuest without penalty because while the story might say that the hero travelled without any companions from his tribe, that does not exclude pets.

A mask must be accompanied by a casting of Energise Mythic Mask to work.

### Energise Mythic Mask

Casting Time 1, Violate HeroQuest, Instant, Touch  
*The God Learner looks into the Essence World with RuneQuest Sight and infuses the symbolic connections with magical power.*

If *Energise Mythic Mask* is cast successfully, the masked deviation is lessened, normally by 25%. The Games Master should increase the amount the reduction for especially clever masks. The spell must be cast on each mask being used.

### Short Cuts

It is possible to skip a station or multiple stations in a HeroQuest by 'jumping.' Every iteration of a particular Quest is largely similar, so the stations of the Quest are 'engrained' onto the fabric of the Hero Plane. With enough application of magical power, the God Learners can skip from one station to another or even from one Quest to another. There must be a symbolic link between the current station and the destination. For example, these are the common stations on the Quest 'Valind Fights The Winter Demons:'

1. Valind wanders in the wilderness.
2. He hears a voice calling him and wanders east.
3. He then goes west,
4. then south,
5. then north, growing weaker each time.
6. He realises he is being tricked by demons and climbs the tallest tree in the forest.
7. From atop the tree, he leaps into the sky.
8. He catches hold of the demons and wrestles them to the ground.
9. He kills the demons on the ground, all save one.
10. He takes the last demon and sets it on fire and nails it atop the tall tree as a beacon, warning travellers not to go abroad on winter nights.
11. That is why you can sometimes see fire in the sky in the colder reaches of the north.



The obvious place to jump would be from station 2 ('Valind starts wandering') to station 6 ('Valind stops wandering'). Both take place at the same location in the myth world, so there is a symbolic connection. (This is a 'Loop Point' in God Learner slang and this spell effectively works as 'Summon Montage.') An ambitious God Learner could try to bring a dead flaming demon with him and jump from station 6 ('Valind climbs the tree') to station 11, which again takes place atop the tree. Trying that big a jump is rarely a good idea.

This spell can also be used to jump from one HeroQuest to another. For example, God Learner teams might go from station 7 of Valind's Quest to station 6 of the much harder Quest 'Orlanth in the Court of the Cloud Giants,' thus skipping the whole Trial Of The Mountain That Eats People. Both stations take place in the sky, so there is a symbolic link.

The spell used to jump is called *Force HeroQuest Jump*.

### FORCE HEROQUEST JUMP

Casting Time 1, Violate HeroQuest, Instant.

*The mythic world quakes and shudders as the God Learner attempts to skip to the end.*

The Magnitude of the spell is equal to two times the number of stations skipped (or Magnitude 5 for skipping from one Quest to another). The spell must target everyone in the Questing party. The spell casting test is penalised depending on the strength of the symbolic link between the current station and the destination.

Note that an element of risk or sacrifice *must* be present to get a reward. It is impossible to skip over all the trials in a HeroQuest and still get a benefit.

## Shadowing

One of the more passive God Learner techniques, Shadowing is used to uncover previously unknown elements of a particular HeroQuest. It is an information gathering spell but it can still have dangerous side effects. Shadowing works by tapping into a myth and conjuring up a magical copy of one of the heroes of the story. For example, when cast during the Quest *How Elmal Made The Mirror Shield*, the spell would summon a shade of Elmal (technically a fourth-order Eransachula). This shade acts in accordance with the myth, even if the caster does not know what happens in the myth.

The shade is as real as any other being in the myth world and so can engage in combat, cast spells or perform any tasks required of it. Its ability scores and skills should be determined by the Games Master but are generally similar in magnitude to those of the caster – a caster with POW 16 would create a shade of Elmal with APP 16 for instance. It is very difficult to maintain a shade for a whole HeroQuest.

The spell used in Shadowing is *Conjure Hero Shade*.

### CONJURE HERO SHADE

Casting Time 6, Duration special.

*The God Learner brings forth a spirit of the Hero Plane to continue the HeroQuest.*

Symbolic Link	Example	Penalty
<b>Very Strong</b> – location, people present and situation is virtually identical	A Feast at Orlanth's court. Such feasts occur in many stories and they are almost always merry affairs. Often a feast marks the triumphant return of a hero or is interrupted by some new danger. Characters might jump from one Quest to another at a feast.	0%
<b>Strong</b> – same location, similar situation, no major events skipped over	Skipping from one similar unnamed plane (the middle of a forest) to another	-25%
<b>Average</b> – there is a connection between the two locations and no major stations are skipped	Moving from Orlanth's hall to the entrance to the Underworld by jumping on a horse and casting this spell	-50%
<b>Weak</b> – as strong, but a major event is skipped	Skipping from station 6 to 11 in Valind Fights The Winter Demons	-75%
<b>Nearly Non-Existent</b>	Trying to skip ahead in a HeroQuest by brute force or to punch from one Quest to another	-200%

The Magnitude of the spell varies depending on the potency of the HeroQuest.

HeroQuest Type	Magnitude Required
Rarely-told story	2
Specific God's tale	3
Cultural tale	4
Popular legend	5
Epic	6

The conjured Hero Shade consumes 1d6 magic points from the caster for every station it encounters. The Shade knows vaguely what to do at each station but cannot accomplish any task without help from living Questers. For example, a Shade of Humakt might know that it has to capture Death and would be able to tell the characters roughly how to accomplish that but could not complete the task without their aid. Shadowing gives characters a clue to a missing station, not all the answers.

### God Binding

God Binding is one of the most radical of the basic HeroQuesting techniques. It is a binding spell that *forces* entities in the Hero Plane to obey the God Learner. Effectively, the Quester seizes control of the HeroQuest and makes a character in it obey him. God Binding can be used to create change points in a myth. One of the earliest uses of God Binding in the Hero Plane was during a recreation of one of the deeds of Lanbril. Instead of tricking their way into Yelm's treasury, the God Learners just seized control of Yelm and had him give the spear to Lanbril with the god's blessing.

When the God Binding spell is cast, the sorcerer is immediately ejected from the Hero Plane and lands back in Glorantha. If the spell fails, the same thing happens, plus the sorcerer suffers Backlash. If the spell is successfully cast, the sorcerer gains control of the targeted character in the HeroQuest, and controls that character for the rest of the Quest. The controlled character can then aid other Questers in future challenges. As the controlled being is part of the mythic world, it can interact with other mythic creatures in ways denied to mortal beings. A controlled divinity can open up new change points or new myths; it can exert its authority over other mythic beings and so on. Seizing control of say, a mythic version of Orlanth gives the God Learners authority over the whole Storm Tribe pantheon.

### Possess Mythic Shade

Casting Time 3, Violate HeroQuest, Duration Special, Resist (persistence)

The Magnitude of the spell varies depending on the power of the targeted shade and the potency of the Quest.

Target	Example	Magnitude Required
Bystander	One of the dead at Orlanth's court	1
Minor Secondary character	A messenger at Orlanth's court	2
Important character	One of the other gods at the court	3
Supporting character	One of the seven companions during a Lightbringer's Quest	4
Key character	Orlanth during a Lightbringer's Quest	5

HeroQuest Type	Magnitude Required
Rarely-told story	+0
Specific God's tale	+1
Cultural tale	+2
Popular legend	+3
Epic	+4

When the spell is cast, the character is ejected from the Hero Plane but his mind possesses the mythic shade in the Hero Plane and he gains access to all the skills and abilities of that character.

### Gate Switching

It is possible to enter the Hero Plane at one particular Gate then exit it through an entirely different Gate, effectively using the Otherworld as a form of teleportation. When cast in the Otherworld, Sense Gate can sometimes detect the presence of symbolic links to other places. If Break HeroQuest is cast at such a place or if the Quest is deliberately failed there, the God Learners leave the Hero Plane at the location of the second Gate.

Mapping such correspondences is obviously of great importance to the Middle Sea army.

## God Engineering

Divine engineering is not a matter of a single spell; it requires repeated powerful HeroQuesting to effect a permanent change in the God World. The first 'success' with this technique was the Goddess Switch, which showed the God Learners that a) it was definitely possible to alter the God World to their liking but b) they would need to be more careful in future.

To change the Gods, the God Learners need to construct a new myth and reinforce it in the Hero Plane. Constructing a new myth requires the following:

- ☒ Teaching the new story to the god's followers and ensuring they believe it and retell it
- ☒ HeroQuests that repeat that myth on the Hero Plane. At first, all these Quests will end disastrously and prematurely, as the Questers are obviously deviating from the truth. Spells like *Maintain HeroQuest* and *Possess Mythic Shade* are required to keep these Quests going for as long as possible before ejection. Eventually the Questers will complete these new false Quests.
- ☒ Next, that Quest must be repeated as many times as possible to reinforce the new mythic structure.

If all this is done, the God Plane is changed and a new form of pagan god arises. Difficult as all that is, it is still vastly easier than the creation of a new god, like Nysalor or Zistor.

## God Learner Orders

All of the current God Learner orders are descended from the New Order, who initially discovered this method for manipulating the Otherworld. The New Order is still extant but exists solely to run the God Learner's Collective (also known as the God Learner's Alliance).

The God Learner's Collective is an organising and administrative body for all practitioners of this magic. The Collective meets once every five years in conclave. Attending a conclave is not mandatory but as new discoveries and developments are revealed, every God Learner worth his salt shows up. Lesser conclaves are held every few months at universities in Jrustela and

in Umathela and Seshnela. Organising these academic conferences is the primary duty of the New Order. The head of the New Order school is also the head of the Alliance and so sits on the king's council. The current head is Lurghalos, a Seshnegi sorcerer (see *Magic of Glorantha*, page 93). The New Order is still considered a part of the Malkioni True Church.

## The Order of Otherworld Exploration

### *Supernatural Pilots on the Seas of Dream*

One of the oldest of the orders, this group is dedicated to exploring the Otherworld. The Supernatural Pilots, as they are known, specialise in locating Gates of all sorts. HeroQuesting is but one of their interests; while the Pilots pioneered techniques of travelling from one Quest to another in the mythic realm, they now see the whole field as being much too crowded. There are altogether too many other groups experimenting in the Hero Plane now, so the Pilots are interested in pushing even further.

The Order is working with the Zistorites to build flying machines and rockets capable of reaching the Sky World and have also launched several expeditions into the Underworld (three on metal boats, two via underground expeditions – none has yet reported back). They have also managed to trespass into the Spirit World and the God World in various forms through the Hero Plane but reaching the other side is still very difficult for them. Unlike other orders, the Supernatural Pilots have no desire for power and are politically neutral. They are interested only in brave new vistas, in going where no one has gone before.

The Supernatural Pilots are centred in Piskosol. The current head of the Order is the arachan sorcerer Catechar Sixleg. After a series of requests by other Orders, he has commanded his scribes to prepare a series called the *Blue Books*, a set of step-by-step guidelines to known HeroQuests.

**Runes:** Infinity, Luck, Movement

**Church:** Malkionerapist Wisdom Church

**Students:** Explorers and scholars

**Student Duties:** Learning Otherworldly secrets and discovering the true nature of reality



## Student Membership

**Requirements:** Standard

**School Skills:** Evaluate, Lore (world), Perception, Survival

**Rune Spells:** Detect (all), Good Fortune, Mobility, Multi-missile

**Sorcery Grimoire Spells:** All common spells plus the *Abiding Book*

## Graduate (Apprentice) Membership

**Requirements:** Participate in at least three HeroQuests in the Otherworld

**Special Sorcery Spells:** Sense HeroQuest Gate, Open HeroQuest Gate, Teleport, Break HeroQuest, Shadowing

## Master (Wizard) Membership

**Requirements:** Reach a plane other than the Hero Plane

## Special Benefits

Students of the Order of Otherworld Expeditions gain a +20% Survival bonus in Otherworlds.

Graduates gain one Hero Point whenever they open a Gate.

Masters can use Open HeroQuest Gate from other planes of existence, letting them flee back to the Hero Plane from the God World.

## Associated Orders and Schools

**All Other God Learner Collective Schools:** Access to Graduate-level spells

## The Order of Bountiful Arcana

*Architects of a Golden Age*

The sorcerers of Bountiful Arcana consider themselves patriots. They are responsible for the application of HeroQuesting to something more than personal power. It is one thing to go to the Otherworld and carry off a few handy runes but is another thing to get the blessings of a powerful god for the whole Middle Sea Empire. The Order's magic has transformed Jrustela in the last few decades, bringing unprecedented wealth, fantastic harvests and military success while also warding off disease and sorrow.

The original idealism of the Bountiful Arcanists is fading, though. The Order has been politically marginalised by its Loyalist rivals in Greater Glorification, so the Arcanists have been driven towards the Reformists. This means that Jrustela benefits more and more from the blessings stolen by the Arcanists, while Seshnela remains comparatively mundane. Where once the Arcanists dreamed of a golden age for the whole Middle Sea Empire, they are being drawn into a muddy political battle.

The Bountiful Arcanists are based in Evrowal but have Knowledge Bands throughout Genertala. The current head of the order is a quiet woman named Amaia the Golden. She has become one of the best known public advocates of Reformism despite her lack of true enthusiasm for politics.

**Runes:** Fertility, Trade, Law

**Church:** Malkioneranist Wisdom Church

**Students:** Patriotic God Learners and believers in magical utopias

**Student Duties:** Studying the myths of the pagan gods and the needs of the Middle Sea Empire

### Student Membership

**Requirements:** Standard

**School Skills:** Evaluate, Influence, Engineering, Streetwise

**Rune Spells:** Endurance, Heal, Golden Tongue

**Sorcery Grimoire Spells:** All common spells plus the *Abiding Book*

### Graduate (Apprentice) Membership

**Requirements:** Graduates must identify a problem in a Middle Sea city or province and solve it by means of magic obtained in a HeroQuest.

**Special Sorcery Spells:** Maintain HeroQuest, Sense HeroQuest Gate, Open HeroQuest Gate, Energise Mythic Mask

### Master (Wizard) Membership

**Requirements:** Masters of the School must apply their knowledge to a problem facing the whole Middle Sea Empire.

**Special Sorcery Spells:** *Possess Mythic Shade*

### Special Benefits

Initiates of the Order gain +10% to Influence when dealing with other Jrusteli.

Graduates of the Order gain +20% Influence when dealing with spirits and Otherworld entities.

Masters of the Order may demand one extra boon on completing a HeroQuest. They also generally receive a position in one of the courts of Jrustela or on a city council.

### Associated Orders and Schools

**All Other God Learner Collective Schools:** Access to Graduate-level spells

**Xemelite Nuns:** All Sorcery grimoire spells

## The Order of Greater Glorification

### *Wielders of Supreme Arcane Power*

In the three decades since its foundation, the Order of Greater Glorification has leapt from an obscure branch of God Learning to the largest and most powerful of the groups within the Alliance. Greater Glorification was created as a response to the first clashes with the Empire of Wyrn Friends. The mystics of that Empire gained vast powers though dragon worship and tales of single Dragonlords who could defeat whole armies or cow a city through sheer force of personality were causing panic throughout Seshnela and Jrustela. Sorcerers began studying ways to create Malkioni champions to meet the challenge of these supernatural foes.

At least, that was the original idea. When the ambitious, competitive Jrusteli got hold of the idea, the Order quickly became the Order of Personal Power Acquisition. Greater Glorification sorcerers enter the Hero World to obtain blessing and benefits for themselves. With this added power, Greater Glorification sorcerers have risen through the ranks more swiftly than those of other schools. The Order has grown from a single school in Irenstos to having branches in every city in Jrustela. Over half of all new God Learners have ties to Greater Glorification.

The school is being courted by both Reformist and Loyalist factions on Jrustela but its emphasis on personal power and advancement makes it impossible to treat the order as a single entity – each of the master sorcerers of Greater Glorification has his own beliefs and each school is run as a semi-independent entity. The strongest voice within the group is a dynamic young sorcerer called Karbristos, who many see as the heir to the magic of Darangor. Karbristos has already made a name for himself in clashes with the Empire of Wyrn Friends in Ralios and rumours insist that he is plotting to launch a decisive strike against one of the EWF's most powerful agents via the Hero Plane.

**Runes:** Mastery, Magic, Man

**Church:** Malkionerapist Wisdom Church

**Students:** Ambitious God Learners; those who want to make a name for themselves

**Student Duties:** Learning existing HeroQuests and discovering new ones, especially more powerful ones

## Student Membership

**Requirements:** Standard

**Special Notes:** Greater Glorificationist members are expected to help lesser members of their order advance. While competition within any rank of the order is fierce, the Order does act as a sort of 'old boy's network.' A Greater Glorificationist in a city government, for example, would try to fill the posts under his purview with other order members.

**School Skills:** Influence, Persistence, Resilience

**Rune Spells:** Countermagic, Dispel Magic, Thunder's Voice, Versatility

**Sorcery Grimoure Spells:** All common spells plus the *Abiding Book*, plus Sense HeroQuest Gate, Sense Rune

## Graduate (Apprentice) Membership

**Requirements:** Complete at least one HeroQuest, integrate at least three runes

**Special Sorcery Spells:** Maintain HeroQuest, Break HeroQuest, Open HeroQuest Gate, Possess Mythic Shade

## Master (Wizard) Membership

**Requirements:** Complete at least three HeroQuests, gaining power from each of them

**Special Sorcery Spells:** Deflect Backlash

## Special Benefits

A student of the Order of Greater Glorification can expect to take part in at least one HeroQuest as a minor Quester during his education under the protection and guidance of a more senior member. Furthermore, whenever a Student of Greater Glorification integrates a rune, there is a 25% chance he does not lose a point of POW.

Graduates of the Order have a 50% chance of not losing POW when integrating a rune.

Masters of the Order have a 75% chance of not losing POW when integrating a rune.

## Associated Orders and Schools

**All Other God Learner Collective Schools:** Access to Graduate-level spells

## The Order of Undeniable Righteousness

*God Learners on the Edge of Heresy*

The Order of Undeniable Righteousness was founded by the New Order monks as a sop to the hard-line elements within the Malkioni church. God Learning was criticised for being too close to Paganism, so a new group was set up that would present God Learning in the most favourable form to the devout Malkioni. Sorcerers from the Rightness Crusade were invited to learn the principles of God Learning and join the Order.

Initially, the Order of Undeniable Righteousness focussed on HeroQuesting in pagan myths with the aim of tapping the powers of Pagan deities, as well as using the Otherworld as a back door. It also aided the Brothers of Charitable Thought (see page 77) in keeping an eye on the more extreme God Learners. When the Empire began to prepare for war with Brithos, though, the Undeniable Righteousness sorcerers began studying ways of aiding the armies against Zzabur's minions. They began to experiment with Saint Plane travel, believing that it should be possible to use the common elements of Makanism to reach deep into Brithos. A fleet could be sailed through the Otherworld myths of Saint Waertag and some even whispered about entering the myths of the *Abiding Book* itself and calling up shades of Zzabur and Old Malkion. This caused a rift between the Brothers of Charitable Thought and the Righteousness sorcerers – paganism was bad enough but now the sorcerers were treating the holy scriptures as just another roadmap to power.

However, the Order was too close to the leadership of the Rightness Crusade to be censured directly. Exposing the Order's near-heresy would have destroyed Jrusteli morale on the eve of the invasion. Therefore, the Undeniable Righteousness sorcerers were privately ordered to cease all such experimentation. Even so, the shadow of heresy still hangs secretly over them and they no longer work closely with their former allies in the Brotherhood of Charitable Thought. They have managed to maintain the public perception that they are the 'devout' God Learners, more suitable for those with mainstream Malkioni views. In truth, they are perhaps more controversial than any other God Learner group.

The Order of Undeniable Righteousness is currently experimenting in two fields. Firstly, they are secretly continuing their expeditions to the Saint Plane. The Saint Plane is already used by the Church for Divine Magic but the Order believes it can be tapped for power, like the Hero Plane. This also opens up the possibility that the holy Saints can be engineered, just like the Goddess Switch. Their second grand project is being attempted in concert with the Sainly Bookbearer missionary sect. The order is searching for a myth of changing beliefs, which they can then adapt to their cause. They intend to spread the worship of Malkion via the Hero Plane. All they need to do is convince a pagan god of the error of his ways, repeating that Quest until it becomes true. This project is related to the Emanationalist belief common in Pamaltela but where the Emanationalists believe that the pagan gods can be returned to unity with Makan, the Righteous Sorcerers want to use the pagan gods as devices of mass conversion.

The Order of Undeniable Righteousness is based in Shenilstos but its experimental facilities and research towers are scattered across Gloranthan. It is led by Abbess Jazina the Pious. She recently led an expedition into the Saint Plane and recreated the deeds of St. Hwaros the Bender, founder of God Learning. Rumours insist Jazina is now in possession of a revelation just as transformative as Hwaros' original discoveries, a secret that will make God Learning even more powerful.

**Runes:** Communication, Fate, Truth

**Church:** Malkioni True Church

**Students:** Devout sorcerers who dislike Malkioneranism; those who want to delve into a fresh field of mythology

**Student Duties:** Study of the *Abiding Book* and works on ethics in addition to normal God Learner training

### Student Membership

**Requirements:** A Student of the Order of Undeniable Righteousness must be an obviously devout and trustworthy member of the Malkioni True Church

**School Skills:** Healing, Lore (theology), Persistence

**Rune Spells:** Detect Enemy, Detect Magic, Fate, Mindspeech

**Sorcery Grimoire Spells:** All common Sorcery spells, all in the *Abiding Book*

### Graduate (Apprentice) Membership

**Requirements:** Successfully defend your God Learner thesis from both a panel of sorcerers and a holy Insight Contest.

**Special Sorcery Spells:** Maintain HeroQuest, Sense HeroQuest Gate, Open HeroQuest Gate, Break HeroQuest, Steal (Cult) Divine Magic

### Master (Wizard) Membership

**Requirements:** Access the Saint Plane

### Special Benefits

Students of the Order gain a +10% to Lore (Malkioni theology).

Graduates of the Order may gain one Divine Magic spell by accessing the Saint Plane. This is identical to praying for a spell at a temple but can only be done in the Saint Plane.

Masters of the Order may gain up to three Divine Magic spells in the Saint Plane.

### Associated Orders and Schools

**All Other God Learner Collective Schools:** Access to Graduate-level spells

**Brothers of Charitable Thought:** Teaches Demonise (Cult, Order or Practice) and Exorcise Otherworld Entity

### Spells of the *Abiding Book*

*Cults of Glorantha, Volume 2* describes the magical contents of the *Abiding Book* and the spells available therein. For reference, they are: Bless Animal, Bless Building, Bless Corpse, Bless Crops, Bless Person, Cast Back, Damage Resistance, Mystic Vision, Neutralise Magic, Spell Resistance, Spirit Resistance, Treat Wounds and Venerate Entity.

Sorcerers using the book as a grimoire also gain Apprentice Bonding Ritual, Augment Armour, Create Familiar, Exorcise Otherworld Entity, Glow, Protective Circle, Teleport and Venom.

# RELIGION

When the Nralarites first landed on Jrustela hundreds of years ago, they brought with them the pre-eminent form of divine worship current in the West – the reformed Malkioni church founded by Prince Hrestol. While the Nralarite settlers had some theological differences with the Seshnegi they left behind, the church on Jrustela only began to diverge from that of Seshnela later in the colony's history. The divergence began when the cities of Jrustela began to use Insight Contests to resolve disputes instead of resorting to force of arms. Instead of expending money and effort on armies, the cities of Jrustela invested in universities and education, making the island into an intellectual hothouse. While Seshnela held to its caste-based hierarchy and simple, literal reading of the teachings of Old Malkion and Prince Hrestol, Jrustela became home to an increasingly baroque and bizarre procession of faiths and interpretations of Malkionism. The importance of Malkion as prophet was reduced more and more as scholars moved towards a more remote and abstract conception of the Invisible God. They venerated Makan, the cosmic principle of Mind.

By the early 600s, the Insight Contest system that had ensured peace between the cities of Jrustela was beginning to break down. Each city in Jrustela had its own set of beliefs and axioms, its own city-cult, and the Insight Contests could not reconcile the fundamental differences between these belief systems. An Insight Contest worked only if every city agreed on the same basic principles and the original Hrestolite principles had long since been outmoded by the Jrusteli philosophers. Some feared that war would soon sweep over the island; others worried that religious communication between the Jrusteli and their Seshnegi kinsmen was becoming impossible. The religious conferences at Eridinthanos in 643 and 646 was ostensibly an attempt to build connections between the various Jrusteli Makan sects and the old Malkioni of Seshnela but were really aimed at hammering out a new common ground for Makanism.

They should have failed. The various interpretations of Makanism followed by the various cities were too different and the first conference ended without any real

progress being made. The second conference seemed equally doomed. Representatives from all the cities of Jrustela were in Eridinthanos when the martyr Serezos was dragged before the conference. Serezos had argued for the veneration of Makan through a combination of magic and faith, a merger of logic and devotion and the offering up of personal power, which was close to the theories advanced by the settled north-eastern cities like Evrowal, Piskosol, Hredimorinos and Hathinelthor but quite at odds with the more traditional beliefs of Norvalela or Peresk. Then, a miracle happened. A Hand appeared in the air; a Voice commanded it to write and the *Abiding Book* was written before the assembled sages. This divine revelation united all the beliefs and peoples of Jrustela and birthed the third major form of Malkioni worship – the Malkioni True Church.



Copies of the *Abiding Book* were quickly made and sent to every city of Jrustela but tales of the miracle raced far ahead of the scribes and messengers. For months, the land was awash in revelation and rapture – the Invisible God had manifested on earth and eschatonic beliefs and cults were widespread. Other rumours were less divine; there were at least three conflicting stories of how the *Abiding Book* had appeared and enemies of the state seized upon this contradiction as ‘proof’ that the Book was in fact a forgery. This heretical theory held that the *Abiding Book* was too perfectly written to solve all the current theological debates and schisms in Jrustela and that God was unlikely to have reached down from the realm of Solace just to resolve the philosophical logjam between Irenstos and Arshu Phola over the status of the souls of their pagan ancestors. The detractors of the Book could never explain how the *Abiding Book* could contain revelations about the nature of existence and new magical spells but the heresy still crops up from time to time even in the present day.

### Church Cults?

See *Cults of Glorantha, Volume II*, for more details on worshippers and ranks within the True Malkioni Church and the Orders of St. Volanc & St. Xemela.

## The True Malkioni Church

The True Malkioni Church was formed immediately, with the first bishops being appointed at the Second Ecclesiastical Council. Initially, it was just one of dozens of cults that sprang up in response to the Book but the True Church quickly won the support of the Jrustelan lords and won many converts from the established Makan church. Within five years, it was by far the greatest sect in terms of both number of devotees and political power.

The True Church’s meteoric growth came from its endorsement by the Jrustelan political establishment (who were looking for a united church to maintain the Insight Contests), its reconciliation between abstract Makanism and the more literal teachings of the Hrestoli and most of all from its missionaries, the Sainly Bookbearers. The rise of the Rightness Crusade stemmed from the conversion of the city of Shenilstos to Malkionism and

the conversion was done by the Sainly Bookbearers who took the Text of the Book to the pagans. Shenilstos added greatly to the influence of the True Church, so much so that a century later, the True Malkioni Church was able to dictate terms and conditions to the most powerful wizards in Jrustela, the New Order.

After reunification, the True Malkioni Church absorbed the scattered remnants of the organised Malkionist churches in Seshnela and became the effective state religion of the Middle Sea Empire. While all the Emperors of Land and Sea have been crowned by the High Ecclesiast, the Emperors have always held the promise of enshrining the *de facto* position of the True Church in law, making it the *de jure* state religion. As long as the True Church is not the official state religion, it is obliged to tolerate the existence of other strains of Malkioni worship and even paganism – in the eyes of the kings, this is a necessary compromise for the running a vast trade Empire.

### Structure of the Church

At the head of the church is Old Malkion’s Shadow, the supreme agent of God on Earth, the High Ecclesiast, also known as the Lord of the Department of Religion, also known as the Holy Pontiff of the Malkioni True Church, Supremely Insightful Sage and First Witness. He is chosen from the ranks of the Council of Ecclesiastical Leaders by the Emperor, although it is customary for the Council of Ecclesiastical Leaders to choose one of their members and for the Emperor to then endorse their selection. In his role as High Ecclesiast, the pontiff advises the Emperor and the Imperial government on theological matters and sees to the moral wellbeing of the nation. He also votes for the next Emperor (which, in practice, means voting for the son of the last Emperor).

While all Emperors are crowned with the rites of Investiture that were developed by Annmak the Peacemaker and so are considered to have the direct blessing of the Invisible God, this is technically a blessing of their role as King of Seshnela. The position of Emperor of Land and Sea is not one with a divine mandate, so the church considers it purely a civil affair. (This precious act of hair-splitting allows the Church to support the Emperor wholeheartedly in his identity as King of Seshnela while also bargaining with Reformists in the church’s heartland of Jrustela.)

In his role as Lord of the Department of Education, the pontiff deals with both the moral and secular education of the Empire, with the exception of the sorcerous and

## The Pilgrimage of the *Abiding Book*

The transfer of the *Abiding Book* from its original shrine in the Old Cathedral of the Book in Eradinthanos to the Holy Mountain in Seshnela took place in 789. A precise copy of the Holy Book, perfect in every way, was placed in the shrine in its stead, while the original was brought to the harbour and placed on board a special ship, the *Bookbearer*, which was built especially for this purpose. The *Bookbearer*, escorted by the Free Men of the Sea, sailed north with great pomp and ceremony to Pasos, from whence it was carried by a procession of knights and sorcerers and nobles north to Frowal. The *Bookbearer* was burnt as an offering after the *Abiding Book* was taken ashore.

The Pilgrimage of the Book was the greatest religious event in Seshnela in centuries and holy festivals were held in every town the Book passed through. When it reached Frowal and was placed in the New Cathedral of the Book, all the knights who had escorted it took holy orders and joined the Order of St. Volanc the Crusader. To this day, every town from Pasos to Frowal celebrates the Day of Pilgrimage, commemorating the day the Book passed through.

In fact, the *Abiding Book* took a much less grand path north to Seshnela. The Jrusteli scribes had been making perfect copies of the Book for decades and the kings and lords knew that the *Abiding Book* would be the target of every enemy of the Empire while it was outside the protection of the cathedrals. Ten perfect copies of the Book were made and six months before the *Bookbearer* was launched, ten different groups of trustworthy agents left Eradinthanos in the dead of night. Nine of these groups bore a copy of the *Abiding Book*. The tenth copy was placed in the Cathedral while one of the groups carried the original. No group knew if they carried the actual *Abiding Book*.

Eight of the groups made it to Frowal; two were drowned when their ships sunk in an unseasonal and unusually violent storm that blew down from the north-west from the direction of Brithos. The few officials who knew about the ten secret travellers assured the king that the two books that drowned were just copies of the original and that the Original was now safe in the vaults in Frowal. The Original remained there until the grand procession arrived some weeks later, whereupon it was covertly switched for the copy carried by the *Bookbearer*.

The ten secret copies of the Book were a state secret, known only to a handful of people and when the last of them (Emperor Svagad himself) died, he took with him all knowledge of this deception.

military academies. He also deals with requests from other departments for the use of Church magic, such as sending Xemelite nuns to regions stricken by plague.

Finally, as Holy Pontiff, the pontiff rules over the church, appointing bishops and archbishops and granting other positions in the church to the worthy. As Supremely Insightful Sage, he is the final judge (save for God) in matters of spiritual debate and Insight Contests. As First Witness, the pontiff is considered the keeper of the original *Abiding Book*.

## The Council of Ecclesiastical Leaders

The Council of Ecclesiastical Leaders is the great deliberative body of the church. It is composed of the Short Chamber, where cardinal and the heads of certain orders (called Insightful Orders) sit and the Long

Chamber, which is composed of all the members of the Short Chamber plus all the lord abbots of the orders, large and small, and the bishops. Officially, the names of Long and Short come from the rooms where they meet but they also apply to the length of their debates.

The cardinals are the leaders of the Malkioni True Church. Most of the cardinals hold high positions with the Department of Religion and so are based in Frowal in Seshnela. There are only five cardinals in Jrustela. Beneath the cardinals are the bishops and archbishops (archbishops are appointed to certain key dioceses) and beneath the bishops are the local priests and liturgists. Not every priest or bishop is a sorcerer but a measure of magical power is common among those who rise high in the ranks of the church.

A parallel hierarchy exists among the various monastic and sorcerous Orders. Each Order has a head, often called the abbot or else by a special title unique to that Order (such as the First Pilot of the Order of Otherworld Exploration). Beneath that head are the leaders of the individual institutions or monasteries controlled by that Order. The heads of the various Orders sit in the Long Chamber; a few very important Orders are needed on the Short Chamber and so are called Insightful Orders.

Finally, an Ecclesiastical Conference calls together the leaders of all approved Malkioni churches in the Middle Sea Empire. In addition to the True Church, other approved groups include the Malkionerianist Wisdom Church (see below), the Traditionalist Seshnegi Church (who grudgingly acknowledge the truth of the *Abiding Book* while clinging to their old Hrestoli ways) and the Kralorelan People's Church. Unapproved groups are considered heretics and are declared anathema by all approved churches.

**The True Malkioni Church in Jrustela**  
Spiritually, Eradinthanos should be the centre of the Church in Jrustela but that city is entirely consumed by morally suspect philosophies like Malkionerianism. The devout crusaders of Shenilstos are respected by Malkioni but their beliefs are a little too extreme for the average church-goer. Therefore, the average Malkionist looks to Cardinal Calam of Hredimorinos for leadership. The

'people's cardinal,' Calam is a jolly man with immense charisma who is well beloved by his flock. Despite being vastly wealthy and influential, he stays in touch with the common people and often serves as the voice of the masses on the Hredimorinos city council. He has managed to avoid becoming associated with any of the myriad political factions warring for control of that city. Stories about Calam's kindness and humility abound; he is said to walk abroad in disguise as a humble preacher and it is believed that he eats off wooden plates, having sold his golden dinner service to a noble and given the proceeds to the poor.

Calam is a canny politician and is known to have his eye on the High Ecclesiast's Seat. For him to win that seat, he would have to have the trust of the church establishment in Frowal, though, and he is unlikely to win their approval if he continues to pander to the general public.

Calam's polar opposite is Cardinal Sambulos, a cousin of Arch-Duke Norlantos. One of the most able leaders in all Jrustela, the Cardinal has done more to extend Jalanite influence into the city of Orphalsketal in a decade through religion than the rest of his family has done in two centuries through politics. While some say that Sambulos is more interested in advancing his family's status than in glorifying Makan, he has established close ties with the mainland Church and is generally acknowledged to be the voice of the High Ecclesiast in Jrustela.

#### The New Order, the God Learner's Collective, the True Malkioni Church and the Malkionerianist Wisdom Church

The tangled relationship between these four entities is as difficult to elucidate as the thorniest theological dilemma. Briefly – the New Order started out as an unofficial religious group that studied the *Abiding Book*. They learned to use it as a grimoire and so gained great power. However, they backed the disastrous bid of Pilif the Magus to claim the throne and so were outlawed.

The New Order was placed under the control of the True Malkioni Church and became a religious order dedicated to Sorcery. They unlocked the secrets of God Learning, which spawned many new sorcerous groups, both religious and secular, who formed themselves into the God Learner's Collective. The Collective's studies of the *Abiding Book* gave rise to the religious belief called Malkionerianism, which in turn gave rise to the Malkionerianist Wisdom Church. This Church is today the second most powerful sect in Jrustela.

So, the New Order started as religious study group, then became a sorcerous order, then became *the* sorcerous order, then became a sorcerous order under the control of the Church and then finally became the organising force behind the Collective. As almost all God Learner sorcerous orders are descended from the New Order, they are technically religious orders but few pay any heed to the True Malkioni Church, preferring their own Malkionerian Wisdom Church.

What should be the most prized seat in all Jrustela, the title of Second Witness, is held by Cardinal Morlant of Eridinthanos. He is a mysterious figure, taciturn and almost otherworldly; he has few friends and is said to trust no-one. Several times, a bright light has shone from his tower in Eradinthanos and it is believed he has been visited by an Otherworldly being. A woman called Ferbrina, known to be possessed of incredible strength and fighting prowess, acts as Morlant's personal agent in Eridinthanos' underworld. Morlant's politics and beliefs are a mystery to all in the church; he may be a secret convert to Malkioneranism, or gathering evidence to prove that the Wisdom Church is fostering heresy.

The other two Cardinals on Jrustela are Cardinal Volanc of Shenilstos and Cardinal Daraslo of Arshu Phola. Volanc was born to a fervent member of the Rightness Crusade and named for the saintly founder of that movement; his rise through the Church has been a swift one. He is covered in tattoos made by timinit artisans – the entirety of the *Sharp Abiding Book* is written on his flesh. In the estimation of the Rightness Crusade, he is second only to Pompalic, the head of the Crusade, and Volanc's beliefs are even more extreme. He is an outspoken critic of God Learning and even called for Malkioneranism to be designated a heresy at the next Ecclesiastical Council.

Daraslo, at first, appears to be quite the opposite of Volanc. He is the only one of the five Cardinals to be of Olodo descent and was recently appointed. His promotion was an obvious attempt by the church to quell demands for reform by giving Jrustela another cardinal but it backfired on two counts. Firstly, five is an unlucky number in Malkioni circles (four is the number of Right Actions, the foursquare base of logic and reason that underlies the world, while five is the number of the Fifth Action, of decay and betrayal and death). Secondly, while Daraslo comes of an Olodo family and a theist Olodo family at that, he is a member of the Rightness Movement and a close friend of Cardinal Volanc. Daraslo is a committed Missionary and has sponsored expeditions to Pamaltela to convert the Pagans there. He differs with Volanc on only one topic – Daraslo believes that God Learning has a place in the Malkioni faith and can be used Righteously. It is known in church circles that the two made an agreement to temporarily suspend final judgement on God Learning and that Daraslo has another four years to find proof of the potential Righteousness of God Learning. Notable bishops in Jrustela include:

✠ Archbishop Forland of Hathinelthor, also known as the Fox. He has invested hundreds of thousands of gold pieces of church funds in various speculative ventures and trading cartels but has yet to make a mistake. He is one of the wealthiest men in a city of rich men.

✠ The timinit bishop, Krotic of Peresk. He is something of a miracle in timinit circles – he is one of the ephemerals, who are only supposed to live for a year. His promotion to the rank of bishop was done as a temporary measure – the previous bishop of Peresk had died suddenly and the timinit priest was popular with the army as he had served as a chaplain for several months. When ordained as bishop, Krotic experienced a spiritual awakening which he has yet to fully comprehend but it has somehow allowed him to live past his normal lifespan. At the age of seven, he has lived for five years more than the previous oldest ephemeral on record and shows no sign of succumbing to death and the Solace that awaits him despite his increasingly withered decrepitude.

✠ Bishop Telanor of Irenstos. With much of his authority taken from him by Cardinal Volanc, the increasingly eccentric bishop is free to indulge his obsession with Kralorelan culture and art. He has been working on translating the *Abiding Book* into the tongue of that land.

## Saintly Orders & Divine Magic

The vast majority of the spellcasters in any Malkioni order will use Sorcery and Rune Magic. However, those who pray for intercession from the saints can sometimes manifest Divine spells. Most of those Jrusteli who can use Divine Magic are holy innocents; some are have childlike minds, others are simply more focussed on the next world than this one. None of them has ever managed to combine Sorcery and Divine Magic.

Divine spellcasters are exceedingly rare in the Malkioni church and are distrusted and misunderstood by many of their peers. Miracles have little place in the logical, sorcerous faith of Makaan.

## True Malkioni Religious Orders

There are numerous Malkioni religious orders in Jrustela; some are dedicated to a particular Saint, others to a sorcerous purpose, others to a social cause. The island has always been thronged with a wide variety of cults and orders. While the *Abiding Book* united most of them under the banner of the Malkioni True Church, some of them still deviate noticeably from doctrine.

## The Saintly Bookbearers

### *The Text of God*

The Order of Saintly Bookbearers was formed to bring the *Abiding Book* first to all Jrustela and then to all the world. In the early days, a Bookbearer would work feverishly to create a hasty copy of the *Book*, then go out into the world dressed only in rags, reading the word of God from street corners and market squares. Thanks to the Bookbearers' heroic efforts, all Jrustela, even the formerly pagan city of Shenilstos, accepted the word of the Invisible God. Soon the Order of Saintly Bookbearers was officially established by the Malkioni True Church and they were sent forth to Seshnela and other lands to bring the *Book* to all the west. Martyred Bookbearers were the impetus that began the Rightness Crusade; the Middle Sea Empire was born from shed blood and desecrated holy books.

Today, new copies of the *Abiding Book* are made in great scriptoriums by skilled craftsmen and dedicated scribes. The missionaries dress in sturdy robes, their missionary efforts are co-ordinated from the shining House of the Bookbearers in Hathinelthor and they are a core part of Middle Sea Empire foreign policy – but their purpose and their duties are unchanged. They still travel to places that have not heard the truth of the Invisible God and they preach His message to those souls who can yet be saved.

The Saintly Bookbearers are one of the most honoured of the holy orders but they are poor and tend to draw their new members from the lower classes of Jrusteli society, so they lack political power. Donations to the Saintly Bookbearers are spent buying ships and outfitting expeditions instead of patronising artists or building new monasteries. The Bookbearers also have an unfortunate habit of getting martyred, which is wonderful for one's chances of achieving Solace but has a negative effect on attracting the sons and daughters of wealthy families. Many who join the Bookbearers do so because of their fervent personal faith and the order is also supported both by those who espouse the Missionary policy and by

anti-God Learners who believe that wiping out paganism through mass conversion will put an end to the Collective's increasingly disturbing magical experimentation.

The Bookbearers have been closely associated with the Rightness Crusade for much of their history but their beliefs are less radical than the Crusade. The Bookbearers preach a simple, uncontroversial and basic form of Makanism, emphasising faith, good works, good thought and the primacy of the Invisible God and his prophet Malkion.

**Runes:** Communication, Trade

**Church:** Malkioni True Church

**Students:** Poor and pious Jrusteli

**Student Duties:** Students of the Order are taught foreign languages and useful spells, as well as the arts of oratory, debate and conversion.

## Student Membership

**Requirements:** While those wishing to join the Saintly Bookbearers must demonstrate a basic knowledge of Malkioni theology and a willingness to serve God, there is no fee to join the order.

**School Skills:** Driving, Influence, Lore (theology), Riding, Sing, Disguise

**Rune Spells:** Golden Tongue, Emotion, Mindspeech

**Sorcery Grimoire Spells:** The basic spells of the *Abiding Book*

## Preacher (Apprentice) Membership

**Requirements:** Again, there is no fee for becoming a Preacher of the Order. Preachers need an Influence score of 80%.

**Special Sorcery Spells:** Bless Boat, Renounce Sin (see *Cults of Glorantha Volume 2*), Gift of Tongues

## Demagogue (Wizard) Membership

**Requirements:** Again, there is no fee for becoming a Preacher of the Order. Demagogues must have Influence and Persistence scores of 90%.

**Special Sorcery Spells:** Book Recital

## Special Benefits

Preachers gain a +20% bonus to Influence attempts when proselytising.

Demagogues may automatically reroll any failed CHA-based skill test once per day.

## Associated Orders and Schools

None.

## The Order of Saint Serezos

*Devotees of Revelation*

Saint Serezos was martyred at the Second Ecclesiastical Conference in Eradinthanos and it is said of him that his suffering, his faith and most of all his desire for knowledge were so great that they moved the spirit of the Invisible God, who stretched forth His hand and wrote a Book containing all the wisdom that Serezos sought. The Book we read here on earth is but a reflection of the divine book that Serezos now reads eternally in Solace. The Order of Saint Serezos exists to venerate the saint and continue his divine work. The Order of Saint Serezos are a sect of librarians, scholars and experimental philosophers.

They seek to know the mind of God.

There are no God Learners among the Order of Saint Serezos, as they hold that the pagan gods, however powerful, are just distractions, illusions of this world. They do have many powerful sorcerers, though, and specialise in the old New Order technique of reading the *Abiding Book* as a grimoire. They believe that God Learning as a whole is a foolish errand and that ultimate cosmic power lies within the more cryptic sections of the *Book*. The order has attracted a great many timinits, who endlessly combine and recombine passages from the *Abiding Book* according to complex mathematical formulae. The logical, analytical beliefs of the Serezosites resonate with the timinit mind.

The Gardens of Serezos are located outside Evrowal. Here, in a green park surrounding the Order's library, the monks have laid out an ornamental garden with paths that correspond to the True Runes and plants, statues and ornamentation that have symbolic connections to the chapters of the *Abiding Book*. To walk the paths of the garden is to walk between the lines of the *Book*. Beneath the garden, in secret vaults, Zistorite combinatorial

engines overseen by timinit programmers endlessly create new versions of the *Abiding Book*.

The Malkioni True Church supports the strangeness of the Serezosians, seeing their Sorcery as a counterbalance to the crypto-pagan excesses of the God Learners.

**Runes:** Infinity, Law, Harmony

**Church:** Malkioni True Church

**Students:** Gifted mathematical geniuses

**Student Duties:** Endless study of the *Abiding Book* and the commentaries on it. Senior students are expected to have memorised every chapter and verse of the Book.

## Student Membership

**Requirements:** In addition to memorising the book, students must pay an initial entry fee of 500 silver; this fee is usually paid for by church sponsors for promising candidates.

**School Skills:** Lore (any), Perception, Engineering

**Rune Spells:** None

**Sorcery Grimoire Spells:** All common spells plus the spells of the *Abiding Book*

## Computer (Apprentice) Membership

**Requirements:** To reach this level, a sorcerer must have recovered at least three important books from other libraries (especially well-learned Pagan ones) for the Serezosian library. Kralorela has proved an excellent source for such things. The Computer must also have an INT score of at least 16.

**Special Sorcery Spells:** Spell Sense (*Magic of Glorantha*)

## Great Witness (Wizard) Membership

**Requirements:** Great Wizards must spend at least one month every year studying and working in the Garden of Serezos. Great Wizards also need an INT of at least 18.

**Special Sorcery Spells:** Recombinatorial Matrix

## Special Benefits

Students of Serezos gain +5% to all Lore skills and sorcerous Manipulation skills.

Computers of Serezos gain +5% to all Lore skills and sorcerous Manipulation skills.

Great Witnesses of Serezos gain +5% to all Lore skills and sorcerous Manipulation skills.

### Associated Orders and Schools

**Cogs of Zistor:** Access to Zistorite mechatmagical implants, normally Mechatmagical Skulls and Eyes

### The Brothers of Charitable Thought

*The Church's Watchdogs*

The Order of Charitable Thought want to believe the best of all men. They sincerely, fervently hope that true devotion to Malkion burns in the soul of all men, that the God Learners are not treading too close to pagan ways, that necromancers are just a little misguided... The Order was created in the chaotic days after the Seshnegi throne was freed and the usurping Pilif the Magus was defeated. If the Rightness Crusade had had its way, everyone in the New Order would have been burnt at the stake for treachery, heresy, blasphemy and other crimes but the Malkioni True Church recognised the potential power of the New Order's researches. The New Order

was therefore taken under the wing of the Church and the Brothers of Charitable Thought were founded as the Malkioni religious police.

The wise founders of the Order realised that to obtain great power, sorcerers have to do and think things that seem quite objectionable or even heretical to common folk and that it would take great insight and discernment to determine which sorcerers were actually walking down forbidden paths and which were still on the path of righteousness despite the strangeness of their methods and tools. A God Learner, the Brothers point out today, might speak prayers to a pagan god, dress like a pagan, wield pagan magic and act in pagan ways – but if his soul is pure and dedicated to Malkion, all his pagan ways are but empty formulas. By contrast, another sorcerer who seems to be the most upright and pious man you could ever hope to meet might actually be summoning demons or denying the unity of God. The Brothers are encouraged to be as trusting and charitable as possible and never act without proof of heresy. Despite this, most God Learners see them as meddlers and reactionary inquisitors.

The Brothers of Charitable Thought, then, are church-sponsored detectives and spies who keep an eye on Middle Sea sorcerers and keep them from going rogue. Delecti the Inquirer, for example, left six Brothers dead behind him when he defected to the EWF. While the Brothers were originally set up to deal with Sorcery, their investigative talents are often called upon to deal with mundane or secular crimes.

**Runes:** Magic, Truth, Law

**Church:** Malkioni True Church

**Students:** Would-be detectives and Malkioni loyalists

**Student Duties:** Studying and keeping track of developments in Jrustelan sorcerous circles

### Student Membership

**Requirements:** Standard

**School Skills:** Evaluate, Perception, Stealth, Lore (any), Disguise

**Rune Spells:** Countermagic, Oath of Ordeal

**Sorcery Grimoire Spells:** All spells in the *Abiding Book*



## Watcher (Apprentice) Membership

**Requirements:** Watchers are assigned to a particular city or university to keep an eye on events there. They must also have a minimum Perception of 80%.

**Special Sorcery Spells:** Spell Sense (*Magic of Glorantha*), Demonise, Read Grimoire (*Cults of Glorantha Volume 2*)

## Keeper (Wizard) Membership

**Requirements:** Keepers of Charitable Thought are undercover agents of the Church, often infiltrating God Learner research facilities. They have minimum Stealth, Disguise and Influence scores of 80%.

**Special Sorcery Spells:** Any common Sorcery spell, RuneQuest Sight, Sense HeroQuest Gate, Open HeroQuest Gate (*Magic of Glorantha*), Renounce Sin (*Cults of Glorantha Volume 2*)

## Special Benefits

Students of Charitable Thought gain a +10% bonus to Perception and Stealth tests.

Watchers swiftly develop a network of informants and agents, bringing them news about magical events in the area.

Keepers gain a +10% bonus to any Resistance tests against spells cast by another Malkioni.

## Associated Orders and Schools

**Cogs of Zistor:** Access to Zistorite mechatmagical implants, normally Mechatmagic Skulls and Eyes

# The Rightness Crusade

*Return to Rightness!*

The Rightness Crusade, also known as the Rightness Army or the Return to Rightness Movement, began the moment the *Abiding Book* appeared. It was created by St. Volanc, who was until that instant the head of the Dolphin Guild of sorcerers and the chief tormentor of St. Serezos. When the Hand of God appeared and wrote the Book, Volanc was so consumed with guilt and the desire to redeem himself that he completely dedicated the remainder of his life to the service of the Invisible God. He accompanied the Saintly Bookbearers when they went

to convert the pagans of Shenilstos and by sheer force of personality and faith transformed that pagan city into the most fervently devout place in all Jrustela.

From Shenilstos, the righteous followers of Volanc went out and conquered the world – or at least Seshnela – for Malkion. The Saintly Bookbearers were being attacked and martyred, so the Word of God had to work with the Sword of God. With the power of the *Sharp Abiding Book*, the Return to Rightness Crusaders were the most feared military order in all Jrustela.

In modern times, many see the Rightness Crusade as weak and outdated but the Crusade secretly wield huge influence within the Church and among the common folk in Southern Jrustela. If there is a second crusade, though, it will be against the God Learners and in support of Seshnela, not Jrustela. Many in the Crusade leadership are pushing for military action against Umathela and the rebellious Pamaltelan colonies, believing that what they learn there will be vital if they have to bring down the God Learner Collective in future years.

## Crusade Structure & Orders

The Rightness Crusade is a part of the Malkioni True Church but has its own internal hierarchy. In some parts of Jrustela, especially Shenilstos, the Crusade *is* the church. The head of the Crusade is Pomphalic of Shenilstos; he is not an ordained priest but he is the heir to St. Volanc and the chosen leader of the crusaders. He is closely allied to Cardinal Volanc (sometimes called Volanc the Younger) and the heads of the various sorcerous orders within the Crusade. These orders include the Knights of St. Volanc (see *Cults of Glorantha, Volume 2*), the Monks of Blood and the New Iron Staff.

## The New Iron Staff

*Magic Hammer of Truth*

The New Iron Staff is descended from the Sons of Damolstan, an order of war-wizards based in Seshnela. A few Sons came south with the early Nralarite settlers and wandered the land blowing up threats to the colonies. They fought in the wars against the timinits and Olodo but when Jrustela was pacified, there was little place for the militant sorcerers. Some went south to the wilder colonies, others picked magical battles with the Waertagi but most gave up their warlike ways and became civilian sorcerers. The Dolphin Guild of Eridinthanos was one of these groups descended from the Sons.

When St. Volanc was converted by the appearance of the *Abiding Book*, the sorcerers of the Dolphin Guild followed their master and began combining the teachings of the book with the war-spells contained in the guild archives. The *Sharp Abiding Book* was born from this research and the Dolphin Guild's researches for a time paralleled those of the New Order in reading the *Book* as a grimoire. Twenty years after the Manifestation, the Order of the New Iron Staff had been formed from the Dolphin Guide and a magnificent tower was under construction in Shenilstos.

Today, the New Iron Staff's magics are a little outdated by God Learner Standards but when it comes to direct blasting spells, they are still second to none. The 'Blow of the Staff' is a virtually unstoppable magical attack and one the Rightness Crusade is eager to use.

**Runes:** Magic, Fire, Metal

**Church:** Rightness Crusade

**Students:** Militant sorcerers, or those who do not have the subtlety for God Learning

**Student Duties:** Students of the New Iron Staff are expected to provide whatever aid they can to the Rightness Movement and to the Middle Sea Empire as a whole. Monster hunting and battling enemies of the Empire are common tasks even for new recruits.

## Student Membership

**Requirements:** Standard, plus the student must be in good standing with the Rightness Crusade. Those not a part of the Malkioni True Church at least are frowned on.

**School Skills:** Riding, Lore (Any), Healing, Staff

**Rune Spells:** Bludgeon, Fire Arrow, Countermagic

**Sorcery Grimoire Spells:** All common spells, plus *Sharp Abiding Book* spells and Create Familiar

## Staffbearer (Apprentice) Membership

**Requirements:** Staffbearers must have at least 50% in Lore (military tactics) and Lore (theology), 50% in Persistence and must have proved their courage in battle.

**Special Sorcery Spells:** Accurate Missile, Boost Missile Range, Rapid Fire, Smite (Enemy) (*Cults of Glorantha, Volume 2*), Enhance Weapon, Firebolt, Teleport (*Magic of Glorantha*), Ironstaff, Hammerstaff, Force Wave

## High Staffbearers (Wizard) Membership

**Requirements:** High Staffbearers must be personally approved by the Head of the Order and the Head of the Rightness Crusade.

**Special Sorcery Spells:** Bind Will, Break Will, Shake Earth

## Special Benefits

Initiates of the Order of the New Iron Staff may enter the Order towers in Shenilstos and other towns.

Staffbearers may substitute their Staff skill for any one Manipulate skill when casting a Sorcery spell.

High Staffbearers gain a +20% bonus to all casting tests made in battle.

## Associated Orders and Schools

**Knights of St. Volanc:** Provide Demonise

**Monks of Blood:** Provide Siphon Life

## Monks of Blood

*Rightness' Left Hand Path*

The holy Monks of Blood were founded by Ullmal, wayward regent and first king of Seshnela. Jrusteli by birth, he parted from the Confederation when he was crowned king of Seshnela. Afterwards, the Confederation needed his help and so they retroactively approved of everything he had done in order to win his aid. One of his greatest deeds was the creation of this order, the fearsome Monks of Blood who were created to battle the last evil sorcerers of Arkat's Stygian Empire.

When Stygia fell, some of the monks stayed in Seshnela and today are closely associated with the king. Some of these monks are sometimes used as assassins. Others went south to Jrustela and joined the Rightness Crusade. The Monks of Blood are wizard-slayers by profession, equally adept at fighting in open battle or in sneaking into an enemy's fortress to quietly silence him. They wear robes of black and red and hoods that mask their faces. No one knows who is truly a member of the Monks of Blood.

In the more paranoid Reformist meetings in Hredimorinos or Evrowal, it is said that Emperor Ilontos is prepared to order his Monks of Blood to assassinate Jrusteli leaders if the island argues too strongly for Reform. Everyone is watched for signs that they are secret blood-wizards.

**Runes:** Shadow, Fire, Magic

**Church:** Rightness Crusade

**Students:** Students of the Monks of Blood are secretly trained in the arts of the warrior and the killer.

**Student Duties:** Obey the commands of one's superiors in the Order and prepare to battle the enemies of the Emperor of Land and Sea.

### Student Membership

**Requirements:** One does not ask to join the Monks – they ask you. Agents of the Order are everywhere, watching promising adventurers and scholars. Some of those they recruit are loyal and willing to serve their Emperor and their God; others merely have some skills desired by the Monks and must be coerced or bribed into service.

**School Skills:** Disguise, Mechanisms, Stealth, Any Weapon

**Rune Spells:** Counterspell, Cover of Night, Fireblade

**Sorcery Grimoire Spells:** While the Monks of Blood in Seshnela train adept sorcerers, the Jrustelan branch prefers to take already-experienced sorcerers and add to their powers. The Monk of Blood grimoire is therefore limited to Siphon Life, Teleport (*Magic of Glorantha*), Runesight (*Cults of Glorantha, Volume 2*), Deepen Shades and Seal Room.

### Agent of Blood (Apprentice)

#### Membership

**Requirements:** To become an Agent of Blood, the agent must have Stealth and at least one weapon skill at 80%. He must also have carried out at least three missions for the Order.

**Special Sorcery Spells:** Blindness (*Magic of Glorantha*), Demonise, Smite Enemy (*Cults of Glorantha, Vol. 2*), Blood Robes, Forgetful Mien and Unnerve

### Abbot of Blood (Wizard) Membership

**Requirements:** Abbots of Blood must have at least three Sorcery spells at 100%. They must also have integrated the Death rune.

**Special Sorcery Spells:** Terrible Judgment

### Special Benefits

Ullmal declared that all deeds done by the Monks of Blood are both lawful and holy; therefore, only the High Ecclesiast can say that a Monk has sinned and only the Emperor of Land and Sea can declare that a Monk of Blood has broken the law of the Middle Sea Empire.

### Associated Orders and Schools

**Order of the New Iron Staff:** Any common Sorcery spell, plus *Sharp Abiding Book* spells

## The Malkionerapist Wisdom Church

*The New Path to God*

Malkioneranism is a new Malkioni faith that draws on the knowledge accumulated by the God Learners. At its heart, it is based on the thesis that all worship offered up in the right frame of mind is pleasing to the Invisible God, regardless of the actual form of that worship. For example, the *Abiding Book* lists several prayers that a man might say to give thanks to Makan. The Malkionerapist Wisdom Church argues that the man's own words, piously expressed and meant wholeheartedly are better than a rote recital of the approved prayers by another man who is not truly thankful, that *intent* matters more than *correct form*.

From this, the Malkionerapists developed several other beliefs, such as the Just Pagan Theory (which argues that prayers offered up to Pagan deities would go to the Invisible God if the pagans were moral in intent and that some pagans could achieve Solace) and the belief that only by approaching the full knowledge of the cosmos, by apprehending all forms of magic and the Otherworlds and all aspects of reality could an individual begin to truly align himself with the will of the Invisible God. The religion appealed to the Jrustelan intellectual elite, as it declared that intelligence and logic and will were more necessary than blind faith. Many Malkionerapists held

that the *Abiding Book* was as flawed and biased as any pagan scripture, that it had been created by the Invisible God for the 'common people' and that the elect should look beyond it.

The name of the philosophy was a reference to the belief that every man was his own prophet, that just as the cosmic mind of Makan incarnated in the prophet Old Malkion, so too should each individual soul find his own truth; thus, a 'Malkioner' was one who brought forth a new truth into the world. This was quite at odds with the dogmatic True Malkioni Church with its emphasis on received wisdom and teaching by ordained priests and scholars. The extreme elements of Malkioneranism tended to quite bizarre behaviour, claiming that everything was permitted by God as long as it was done with the right frame of mind. Most Malkioneranists, though, practised their faith through study, HeroQuesting and taking the best, most resonant elements of other religions and adding them to their own. Many took Kralorelan philosophies and rewrote them in a Malkioni framework; others privately HeroQuested into the Saint Plane or Hero Plane with religious motives in mind.

### Structure of the Malkioneranist Wisdom Church

In 908, the Church is divided into numerous loosely associated lodges. Most major cities in Jrustela have at least one lodge and some even have three or four. At the lodges, members discuss and debate religion and the *Abiding Book* just as the New Order scholars did centuries ago. Each lodge elects a Mentor, a religious leader who guides the debate. By 908, Mentors were of equal importance to Bishops in the Malkioni True Church and the Grand Mentors (of which there were four) sat on the Ecclesiastical Council.

The Malkioneranist Church was tolerated by the True Church but nothing more. Both privately considered the other to be misguided at best, or even heretical, but they were perfectly balanced in terms of political sway. The True Malkioni Church was far larger but the Malkioneranist Church was virtually identical to the God Learners and God Learner power was supreme in Jrustela at least.

There were no Malkioneranist orders but many God Learner Sorcery groups used Malkioneranist liturgies.

## New Spells

### Bind Will

Casting Time 1, Resist (Persistence)

A variant on Dominate (Species), Bind Will makes the victim subservient to the caster. For the duration of the spell, the victim is unable to disobey the caster's spoken orders and cannot act against the caster's best wishes. The victim *wants* to aid the caster.

### Blood Robes

Casting Time 1, Touch

Blood Robes conjures up the ceremonial robes of the Monks of Blood. Blood must be spilled to cast this spell; the robes flow out of the blood (no matter how little) and slither into place around the caster. For every point of Magnitude, the robes give a +10% bonus to Stealth tests; for every two points of Magnitude, they give one point of Armour to all Hit Locations. The robes last until dismissed but their magical properties fade once the spell's duration ends.

### Book Recital

Casting Time 5

If this spell is cast while a book is being read out loud by the caster, the targets of the spell will magically remember hearing all the text of the book, even if the caster reads only a few words. The targets gain no special ability to remember or comprehend the book's contents; they are merely exposed to them.

### Break Will

Casting Time 1

The target of this spell suffers a -5% penalty to any Persistence tests made for every point of Magnitude invested in it. Break Will must be combined with another spell to be effect.

### Deepen Shades

Casting Time 1

This spell increases any concealment penalties due to darkness by 10% per point of Magnitude. At Magnitude 10, therefore, it creates total darkness within range.

## Force Wave

Casting Time 1, Resist (Dodge)

A wave of force explodes out in all directions from the caster, knocking everyone around him back. The spell has 2D6 points of STR per point of Magnitude. If the spell's STR exceeds the SIZ+STR of any creature caught in the spell's range, that creature is knocked back a number of metres equal to the difference between the spell's STR and the creature's STR+SIZ total. Those affected by the spell take normal falling damage if they hit a barrier.

## Forgetful Mien

Casting Time 1, Touch

The beneficiary of this spell becomes more bland and forgettable and gets a +10% bonus per point of Magnitude to any Disguise tests made, as long as the Disguise is of an ordinary, average nobody and not a specific individual.

## Gift of Tongues

Casting Time 3

The caster's words can be understood by anyone who hears them, regardless of language. This is a one-way relationship – the caster cannot automatically understand the replies of other people.

## Hammerstaff

Casting Time 1, Touch

This spell can only be cast on a staff. For every point of Magnitude, the staff gains +5% to hit and deals one extra point of damage. Furthermore, damage dealt is doubled for the purposes of determining Knockback.

## Ironstaff

Casting Time 1, Touch

This spell transforms a wooden staff into magical iron. For the duration of the spell, the staff's AP and HP are doubled.

## Recombinatorial Matrix

Casting Time 1

This complex spell must be combined with others. After it has been cast, the caster may keep the Manipulated effects

for his next spell for only one Magic Point. For example, a caster combines Fire Bolt and Recombinatorial Matrix and also Manipulates the spell's Range, Magnitude and Number of Targets (costing three Magic Points, one per Manipulation). Next round, he may cast another Fire Bolt and apply the same manipulations to that spell for only one Magic Point.

## Seal Room

Casting Time 1

When cast, this spell instantly closes every non-magical door, window and other similar aperture in the room where it is cast. Any non-magical locks in the room will also lock themselves.

## Shake Earth

Casting Time One Hour

This spell creates an earthquake. It has a basic range equal to the caster's POW in miles and is centred on the caster. The Magnitude of the spell determines the strength of the 'quake. A Magnitude one spell is barely noticeable; Magnitude 5 can knock people off their feet; Magnitude 10 can bring down walls. Magnitude 15 brings apocalyptic devastation.

## Terrible Judgement

Casting Time 1, Touch, Resist (Persistence)

If this spell is successfully cast, the victim suffers hideous pain and a great deal of damage. All his sins (as defined by violations against the caster's religion) come to the surface, burning runic marks in the victim's flesh that confess his sins and deviant ways. The spell deals a maximum damage equal to the caster's POW, divided evenly among all the victim's Hit Locations.

## Unnerve

Casting Time 1, Resist (Persistence)

The target of this spell suffers a -5% penalty per point of Magnitude to all attack rolls, skill tests and spellcasting tests that are directed against the caster. Once a test is successfully made, the penalty is removed.

# POLITICS

*To the Ascendant One, The Burning Star of the North, Dragonqueen Inevitable and Glorious, this humble servant and least Wyrms sends his greetings and best wishes; further, he sends this tract on the current political situation in Jrustela, the Sorcerer's Isle and heartland of the Middle Sea barbarians, in the hopes that it will prove enlightening, informative and most of all entertaining.*

*My lady,*

*The Jrusteli scholars have devoted a very great amount of intellectual effort to argue a few questions and those questions are these: Who should be allowed to argue? What forms should their argument take? Who decides who wins the argument? How often can we argue? Sometimes they call these arguments 'elections,' sometimes 'Insight Contests' and sometimes they wake to a measure of realism and call them 'wars' but the unarguable truth remains that the Jrusteli love nothing more than endless debate and consider counting coup by scoring an intellectual point off a rival to be more impressive and meaningful than any other victory. From its early days to its present tangled Empire, the island has been dominated by debates and arguments of all types.*

*The Jrusteli pride themselves on their ability to compromise, to create solutions that satisfy all parties instead of resorting to the rule of the sword. Look beyond their proud words though and you see the true nature of a Jrusteli compromise – there is no acknowledgement of the possible correctness of the other point of view, no grand vision that incorporates the best of both sides but instead petty legal minutiae and a settlement that pleases neither*

*side but gives both lots of little traps and restrictions to fall foul of. If a Jrustelan trader offers to compromise, he is really saying 'I cannot beat you now, so I will postpone until you fall into the trap inherent in the compromise I offer.'*

*The Jrusteli pride themselves on their freedom, saying they have thrown off the shackles of the Malkioni castes, that all men in their land are free and in some cities they practise democracy, given every man of sufficient wealth and standing a vote. In some places, men and women are considered equal in the law and both sexes can vote. All this is delusion. The 'freedoms' the Jrusteli offer are illusory; a man may have the vote but all he can do is vote for the son of the last noble. The candidates are invariably Seshnegi nobles or settlers from the founding families or agents thereof. The Jrusteli 'freedoms' are but the palest shadow of the liberating power of our Draconic mysticism, which transcends all divisions of race and gender and creed in the transcendent path to fire.*

*The Jrusteli pride themselves on their religion, believing that the Invisible God himself reached down from heaven and enlightened them – and yet their priests are like criers in the market with a hundred different sects offering discounts on salvation, each with his own interpretation of the One Book. They treat faith like something that can be bought and sold or like a thesis to be argued without conviction. The common man gains nothing from the Malkioni Church; he is told to obey his betters and to toil in the hope of a better life in the hereafter instead of trying to better himself in this world. The religion they profess to believe in has little to do with their much-vaunted freedom and progressive ways; they compromise religious faith and moral clarity alike, ending up with a grey and muddled nothingness that rewards cynicism, cleverness and exploitation of everyone and everything.*

*The Jrusteli pride themselves on freeing Seshnela, on conquering Kralorela, on settling the southlands, on being Empire builders and traders and it cannot be denied that they have done much to build their Middle Sea Empire. But consider – Seshnela, once freed, seized the reins of power and the Jrusteli were too divided by their compromises and made too craven by their milkwater religion to do anything about it. Kralorela is held by thieves who have*



only the loosest of alliances with their former backers and the southlands have broken away, just as Jrustela broke away from old Seshnela centuries ago. Mark my words, Umahela and the other southern colonies will only repeat the mistakes of Jrustela and I would not be surprised if there is not another convenient 'revelation' in New Hrestolet ere long.

In short, the Middle Sea Empire is a land of fools and charlatans and Jrustela is worse than any other part of it. It is drowning in its own delusions.

Who rules in Jrustela? First, I must point out that that question is itself a mistake. 'Jrustela' is but an island and while it may sometimes be convenient to refer to it as a single nation, it is anything but united. The highest title a ruler may hold there, Arch-Duke, rotates between the Dukes of the twelve founding cities. No single voice speaks for all Jrustela; in most affairs, it is a loose union of twelve city-states, each with their own interests at heart.

Let us briefly consider the twelve cities so that our agents can be prepared for the day that is soon to come.

Hredimorinos is torn apart by different political factions and groups. The Parliament there is the oldest democratic institution on Jrustela but is so caught up in its own petty squabbles that it cannot lead. It is the epitome of compromise. We can bring down Hredimorinos by playing these parties against each other; each one is so obsessed with defeating its rivals in Parliament that it will take aid from enemies of the state. The Reformist cause is popular here and that is a topic I shall return to shortly, as it of great potential use to us. The duke of Hredimorinos, Tyndraza, is a scholar, not a politician. As many Jrusteli traditionally look to Hredimorinos for guidance, Tyndraza's rule will be a time of great opportunity for us.

Evrowal is of even less consequence. The people there are either insane or so in love with Byzantine politics, abstruse philosophies and their own deviant desires that they appear to be insane to outsiders. When Evrowal holds the arch-dukedom, no-one listens anyway. We can safely ignore Evrowal – everyone else does. Their duke is a madman who wishes to die; perhaps we should speed him on his way.

Hathinelthor, now, there is a city of consequence. Half the wealth of Jrustela flows through this place and a man's worth is determined solely by how much gold he

commands. The duke here is allied to the Loyalists but the city will go wherever the money is. With our vast military forces, we can manipulate the fortunes of the Jrustelan traders overseas and it would be child's play to move our syndicates into positions of power in the city. My lady, we can buy Hathinelthor.

Piskosol is the city of the insect-men. There is a barely concealed current of racism and dissent in the city, though, and our agents can stir that up. Piskosol can be induced to burn.

Eradinthanos is a curious city, with many powerful wizards and priests. It is a city of the Book in many ways and politically quite united under its scholar-duke. I surmise that a change in leadership will have to be engineered in the city if it is to be dealt with. Duke Valarger has managed to avoid clashes between the True Malkioni Church and the other sects and schools but if we were to combine the removal of the duke with the sudden explosion of a major disagreement, the city would be plunged into anarchy.

Shenilstos is the crusader's city, with all the danger and irrelevancy that entails. It is a town of mighty warriors and battle-wizards but the rising tide of circumstance that led to the Rightness Crusade and the conquest of Seshnela is



no longer present. If the Middle Sea Empire were to unite against us, Shenilstos would certainly be in the vanguard of that attack and we would be hard pressed to defend our great work from these brutes – but there is little prospect of such unity and alone Shenilstos is nothing but a city of fanatics with no political power.

Irenstos and Arshu Phola are both on the fringes of proper Jrustelan society and so are largely irrelevant. The dominant political question here is the southern colonies, not Reform. Reform is important to the north because the north once had power, which it lost to Seshnela. The south was never powerful but shares much common blood and purpose with the Pamaltelan colonies. We can bring down these cities by fostering the growing spirit of resentment towards the Middle Sea Empire and convincing them to support the southern colonies.

Finally, we look to the west. Jalanswal currently holds the Arch-Dukedom and Arch-Duke Norlantos is using this to his advantage, currying favour with the Emperor of Land and Sea. The Emperor is dimly aware of the growing Reformist threat thanks to Norlantos' whisperings, so we must do what we can do discredit the Arch-Duke. The worst possible result for us is that the Reformist cause is listened to and the divisions in the Middle Sea Empire are healed. Fortunately, I do not believe there is any chance of the Emperor acknowledging the Reformists' grievances.

Peresk we can dismiss. Duke Shordone of Peresk may be of use to us given his current dissatisfaction with the Imperial leadership but I would advocate doing nothing with regard to him – if we push him too far towards rebellion, his inborn loyalty to the crown will rise up and turn him against us.

Orphalketkal is, of course, in hand.

The great political question of the day in Jrustela is Reform! They say it like that, you know – you can hear the clarion call and the excitement in their voices. Reform! Like a war cry or a trumpet note. Those who hew to the opposing Loyalist cause tend to whisper reform, breathing it like a pious man blasphemes.

If one examines the original treaties and charters that founded the Middle Sea Empire, it is plain to see that the Imperial title was intended to move between Seshnela and Jrustela. The title of Emperor is not a hereditary one. The Emperor is chosen by the High Council of the Empire

but ever since the first Emperor, the council has always chosen new Emperors from that same family. Little wonder – most of the High Council positions are nominated by the Emperor himself, resulting in a neat vicious circle of back-scratching. The Emperor always controls enough favours to ensure that his son will be chosen as his heir. The demand for Reform is like the tide, rising and falling over the centuries. There was a huge outcry over a century ago when the rot first set in but for most of the 9<sup>th</sup> century the Jrusteli were accepting of the hereditary Emperors.

This new Reformism was started by ambitious Jrusteli nobles who call themselves the Back to Glory movement. Unlike the old Reformists, who wanted an end to the hereditary Emperors and to see the throne moved to Jrustela and the other parts of the Middle Sea Empire, the new Reformists are more moderate in their demands. They want the Sorcerer's Island's contributions to the Empire to be recognised. Jrustela controls more than half the Empire's trade. The navy sails from Jrustelan ports and the nation's contribution to Sorcery and learning is unparalleled. In brute numeric terms, Jrustela is more important than Seshnela. Despite this, Jrustela has only a single permanent seat on the High Council and that seat has to rotate among the city Dukes. It has no more representation than do little places like Fonrit or Arolanit. This is because Jrustela has very few nobles compared to the other parts of the Empire. If Jrustela had more noble families and more Arch-Dukes this imbalance would be corrected but no-one can agree how many Arch-Duchies should be created or which cities would be the seats of these new dominions.

The five most important seats on the High Council are the High Sorcerer, the High Ecclesiast, the Lord Treasurer, the Admiral of the Navy and the Minister of War. Of these five, the Jrusteli can only count on one appointment – the Lord Treasurer – to be given to one of their number. By rights, the Admiralty and the High Sorcerer should also fall to Jrustela but the True Malkioni Church controls that appointment through its control of the New Order monkish school.

The moderate Reformists argue that this situation should be rectified, either by giving Jrustela more Arch-Dukes or by giving them more of the council seats. Recently, the Admiralty was given to a Jrustelan, the cousin of the Lord Treasurer, but that was not enough to satiate the Reformists. Of course, none of the Reformist groups agree exactly what solution would satisfy them. More

extreme Reformists want an end to the dynastic control of the Imperial throne, for the throne to move to Jrustela or for the Emperor to be overthrown and replaced with a democratically elected monarch or somesuch. One can distinguish the greedy Reformists (who just want Jrustela to get a bigger share of the Empire's power and wealth) from the crazed Reformists (who wish to overthrow the Emperor or believe that Ilontos's beard is a nest of spiders and serpents) quite easily by asking them whether they would endorse the Emperor's son Daros if he agreed to the Mahevi Concessions (a set of proposals put forward by Jerhar Mahevi of Hathinelthor). Those who answer yes are merely greedy; those who refuse are crazed.

The most significant Reformist group, *Back to Glory*, straddles the divide between greedy and crazed. It was originally created by idealists from Evrowal and Hredimorinos as a way to re-establishing a 'Jrustelan cultural identity,' co-opted by greedy nobles trying to put pressure on the Emperor and is now lurching back towards the 'crazed' end of the spectrum. It is known that Dukes Tydryza of Hredimorinos and Shordone of Peresk are senior members of *Back to Glory*, and that the movement is funded by Hathinelthor syndicates.

*Simple Balance* is a rival organisation, based in Evrowal under the auspices of Lord Rohlas. He's a friend of the young Emperor-to-be, sent to Jrustela to keep an eye on the suicidal Duke of Evrowal. (I'm told Rohlas got into some trouble at court in Frowal, so Daros arranged for his pal to be sent to Evrowal to get him out of sight for a few years.) Rohlas does have Daros' ear, so *Simple Balance* (who officially favour the establishment of two new Arch-Dukedoms in Jrustela, dividing the land into the Arch-Duchy of Norvalela and the Curustus, the Arch-Duchy of Northern Jrustela and the Arch-Duchy of Southern Jrustela) has a good chance of actually wringing some concessions out of the Imperial Court. As such, it would be best if we acted to sabotage them, to keep political dissent simmering in the Middle Sea Empire. (Finding out how Rohlas disgraced himself and improving on it would do nicely.)

At the extremist end (with groups like *We Do Not Approve Of Everything Ullmal Did* and *Isle Walk Alone*), Reform blends into the Secedist, who think Jrustela should break itself off from the Middle Sea Empire altogether, or invade Seshnela again or join with Umathela. The Secedists point out that a) all Seshnela does is take Jrustelan money and b) it gets the island involved in more wars, like Ralios.

Therefore, Jrustela should cut all ties with the north. It makes sense to them, apparently, and I heartily approve of this notion. Without Seshnela, Jrustela would be cut off from easy access to the myth-grounds needed by their God Learners; its standing army is a joke and its trade and industry dependant on the north. If the Middle Sea Empire were to divide itself, it would be easily defeated by the EWF (not that we need to defeat them, of course, with the Great Dragon Project so close to completion).

Opposing the Reformists and Secedists are the Loyalists, who again can be divided into the crazy and the greedy. The greedy ones (found mostly in the north of Jrustela, especially in Hathinelthor and Jalanswal) try to curry favour with the Imperial Court by stridently opposing the Reformists and shouting that absolutely everything is just fine under Imperial rule and can they have another trade concession please, Oh Mighty Emperor of Land and Sea. The crazy ones (again, found mostly in the south, in Peresk and Shenilstos) oppose Reform because their ancestors fought to rescue the throne, or because God ordained it so, or because changing the status quo scares them or because they are too busy messing around in other people's myths to bother thinking about politics. (Many God Learners are wilfully apolitical, considering mundane matters like whose arse sits on the Seshnegi Throne to be beneath them.)

Major Loyalist groups include the *Steady Boat Party* (based in Hathinelthor, composed of those who are benefiting quite nicely from the status quo and do not want change), the *Brothers of the Serpent Kings* (who, despite their pleasing name, are Seshnegi loyalist knights who believe that Ilontos' ancestry has become divine) and the *Empire Ascendant Party*, who just want to continue conquering the world.

The four-year term of Arch-Duke Norlantos is coming to an end and currently all the wagers in Hathinelthor's gambling dens are on Valarger of Eradinthanos taking the title nest, which would put a Reformist right on the High Council of the Middle Sea Empire. I have outlined a plan to put this to our advantage – if we simultaneously use all our influence to put that stubborn firebrand Valager on a boat to Frowal, while also making it seem to the Reformists that the Emperor did everything he could to interfere with the election (and he probably will), we can stir up a political storm that will keep the Jrusteli at each others' throats for the next four years.

I have written briefly of the current leaders and problems in each city, and of the dominant rulers in each and of the great question of Reform and how it affects the all-important Arch-Dukedom. For many Jrusteli, the former is much more important than the latter – they are quite obsessed with local affairs and intrigues and cannot see the larger picture. However, just as Reform has risen to such prominence that everyone has an opinion on it, there are several other issues that might become a factor in Jrusteli politics.

**Umathela:** To the Emperor in the north, Umathela & Fonrit are but names, obscure little domains in the sweltering south that mean little to his grand Empire. To the Jrusteli, these territories are almost a part of their island. Umathela was founded by Jrusteli settlers and its universities had much commerce with those of the Sorcerer's Isle. In the south, Six Legs Good is a party that aims at reuniting the Empire's wayward domains. Timinitis are flocking to its banner, although it is currently uncertain whether it will end up favouring a military solution or a diplomatic one. It is uncertain if the Middle Sea Empire can fight a successful war in Jrustela; certainly they failed last summer, leading to the disgrace of Duke Shordone and the loss of the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**The Clanking City:** Ah, the Zistorites. Even on the Sorcerer's Isle, where flying cats, rains of runes and escaped divinities are common sights, the Machine Wizards still manage to stand out. Their power and loyalty to the Empire is unquestioned but at the same time no-one likes them very much. There is a reason the Clanking City was built so far away in Kethaela rather than in Irenstos where it was conceived. Still, there are those in Jrustela who believe the Zistorites have something to offer and that the Empire should do more to defend their masterwork.

**The New Schism:** Religion in Jrustela has been pretty much settled since the Abiding Book appeared. The divide between the True Malkioni Church and the Malkionerianists (what an absolutely terrible name for a faith; the word is as indecisive and confused as the believers) has been kept out of the public eye, so much so that the average Jrusteli does not even realise there is a difference between the two churches. Of late, my agents have reported rumours in religious circles about omens and dreams and portents, which some have interpreted as signs that soon Makan will stretch forth His Hand again.

**God Learning:** It is greatly to our advantage that, despite the best efforts of the God Learner's Collective and other schools, most people still do not understand God Learning. It is an arcane discipline, one that sounds like paganism or worse. While this fear would be of little use to us if God Learning were still restricted to the topless towers of Eradinthanos and a few little Study Groups scattered across Genertela, God Learning is now intruding into every aspect of life in Jrustela. Why, not a week goes past without some new circular scroll or proclamation shouting that the God Learners have discovered some new and wondrous magic. On my desk, for instance, is a letter from the Just Shipbuilders' Commission on God Learning saying they want the city to fund their questing into Magasta's mythworld, where they will find the font of storms and bind it.

On my desk, though, is another letter; this one from the Xemelite nuns. They complain that midwives can no longer find work because the God Learners have the power of some pagan mother-goddess and so every birth in the last month has gone without complications or pain. The farmers in the east take in three harvests a year but are still poor because they must all build new barns and granaries to store all this bounty and much food rots and



goes to waste before it can be sold. In my city, a ship cannot be launched without the blessings of sea gods commanded by the sorcerers; no-one will hire a captain who has not paid the God Learners to bring him into the myth world so that he might have his commanding presence and courage bolstered. In the ultra-competitive marketplace of the Jrusteli, any advantage must be taken.

The people do not trust this Sorcery, though. Already there is grumbling that the sorcerers take too much money and have too much influence. If we could continue to chip away at their confidence in God Learning – or, better yet, bring proof that this magic can go wrong – the resulting chaos could bring down the whole God Learner Collective.

The EWF: They are not ready for us, my lady, but they do not know it. In Seshnela and the north, the armies of the two Empires have clashed but Jrustela has remained relatively untouched. The foolish attacks by long-range dragons were a mistake, as the God Learners have now prepared magics to defend against our aerial forces. With my own eyes I have seen the war-wizards demonstrate a spell of poison vapours that chokes the upper air, causing all things that fly to fall to earth. No, as the Waertagi demonstrated, any magical or monstrous attack on Jrustela must be total and all-consuming or the ever-inventive scholars of this land will create a counter-measure.

Politically, the Jrusteli are not aggressive towards us. They would prefer to trade with us, to hold their borders against us and to study our methods. (Do not trust Delecti, my lady. If the God Learners learn too much of the Dragon, they will strike at us in the very heart of our aspirations and he could be a double agent.) For our part, we must weaken the Sorcerer's Isle as much as we can through underhanded means while foiling their plans. We should encourage infighting and indolence – the hour of the Dragon is almost at hand.

The Dreos: I am almost hesitant to include this post-script, but – in the early years of the colony, and when the Olodo first arrived, earth-spirits were a constant menace in Jrustela. The Olodo learned to live with these creatures, to avoid their sacred places and to bargain with them in certain caves. The Nralarite colonists were able to blast the spirits and drive them away to the wild places.

Ever since, there have been stories of dreos. It is said they have crept into the catacombs and sewers beneath the cities, that they have taken on the shape of red-eyed

monsters with stony skin and that anyone who goes missing has been taken by the dreos. Country folk recite prayers and keep themselves clean-shaven to ward off dreos (it is believed the creatures like to kidnap grown men by grabbing onto their beards). These dreos could be of great use to us, my lady, for any strange events caused by our agents could (with the right illusions) be blamed on the dreos.

Assuming, of course, that these earth-spirits are truly gone...

Forgive me – my mind is wandering. It has been too long since I have been able to meditate and speak the dragon tongue. While my position here is obviously of far more use to us, I do miss the freedom of the open seas, of a ship of loyal men who were also committed to the EWF. When I can, I meet my old shipmates in secret ceremony but such opportunities are rare. Therefore, I must use these letters to you for more than simply passing on Jrusteli secrets; I must pass on my aspirations and worries and fears too.

Make no mistake – despite all the conflicts and foolish divisions and weaknesses I describe above, the sheer power of the God Learners and their allies cannot be lightly dismissed. Given time, they will go much further into the worlds of myth. Tarry, and we shall find every pantheon from Vithela to Brithos turned into slaves of the Middle Sea Empire. Tarry, and not even the completion of the Dragon will be able to stop the Jrusteli. Tarry, and the minds of all who now live will never know the perfection we offer.

Time is running short, my lady. This letter contains, I think, the information we need to sabotage Jrustela until the Dragon is ready. I pray you, put it to good use.

I remain your most humble servant,

Wyrms' Claw Initiate B.



# TRADE

*The value of a man's soul cannot be measured in gold or silver. The value of a god, though, can easily be determined. Currently, Vithelan gods are rising in price but keep an eye on those Fonrifi ones; they're a good pick for the canny investor!*

— *Rifhelus the Toul, Jrusteli Godbroker*

The Jrusteli trading cartels began humbly, as trappers and traders along the east coast of the island or sailors sailing down the long course of the Curand river into the southlands. They exchanged Nralarite knives, runes, glassware and fabrics for metal, furs, herbs and other treasures. Jrustela is a land of many riches but in the early days it was wild and dangerous and traders willing to risk their lives stood to make great profits. Soon the traders banded together into companies, travelling together for mutual protection and building way stations and forts. Some of these companies are still extant in modern Jrustela – the Southern Furrier Company and the Borostenorelan Free Traders date from this time.

Living as they did on an island, the Jrusteli traders soon turned their thoughts to the open sea. The first risky voyages to Umathela and back to Genertela were undertaken by the Free Men of the Sea, who started as another company of traders but soon became a spiritual brotherhood. These voyages were staggeringly profitable – a single shipload of exotic goods from the other continent could be sold for a hundred times its value at the end of its journey. Even though only one in ten ships made it across the ocean, the potential rewards were worth it.

In those days, though, sea travel was controlled by the Waertagi and they punished anyone who tried to break their monopoly. The Waertagi dragonships carried trade goods all over the world but in limited quantities. They followed their own curious routes all over the oceans and only traded in a few commodities. A Jrusteli trade galleon could make far more money if it crossed the seas than by trading via the capricious and miserly Waertagi. The trading cartels funded the development of Jrusteli sea-going ships and later gave huge amounts of silver to the sorcerers as they searched for a way to defeat the Waertagi.

Tanien's son was called down. The Waertagi were destroyed and the seas burned for a few years. Sea trade ceased during this time, as the few surviving dragonships retreated back to their home port on Brithos. Then, the first Jrusteli traders took to the seas. Initially, they tried to follow the network of trade routes established by the Waertagi, replacing the previous monopoly with their own. The Jrusteli ships lacked the range of the dragonships, though, and so could not follow on the year-long circumnavigations of the world's oceans practised by the Waertagi. Instead, they carved up the oceans into different trade routes, each of which would be serviced by a different company.

Fifty years later, the Honourable Company of Eastern Traders led by the adventurer Gillam D'estau began trading with Kralorela and soon acquired vast influence there. As the Middle Sea Empire expanded, the traders became more than simple merchants. The trading companies became the leading edge of imperial expansion and had their own armies. Company scholars and sorcerers brought myths back to the God Learner schools; company outposts and bureaucrats became Imperial forts and governors. In the modern age, trade is but part of a company's mandate – their foremost purpose is to conquer and secure territories for the Empire without force of arms.

## Creating A Company

*Gentlemen! A wonderful opportunity the likes of which you have never seen before now awaits you! For a small investment in our new honourable company, you can buy a share in the Elegance, a trade ship bound for distant Tortugax, beyond the elf coasts! Why, in a year's time when she returns bearing jewels and runes and treasures beyond compare, you can be one of the motley crowd mobbing the docks to purchase the least speck of dust from her hold – or you can own a fiftieth share of all she brings back! Invest early and often!*

— Eraiax the Ambitious, Jrusteli speculator

Most companies are born in the cafes of Hathineltor or Evrowal. Certain coffee-shops or Kralorelan tea-houses are home to certain types of investors. If an entrepreneur or syndicate has a profitable enough scheme, he can find backers. Shares are sold in the company. Initially, shares are sold for a single voyage but if the company establishes itself, further shares are sold. The initial return on investment varies wildly – some voyages barely pay for themselves while some make huge profits. If a voyage seems profitable, though, the company often compels investors to reinvest in a second voyage instead of giving them a dividend. After all, if the route is profitable, the costs of setting up a factory at the far end and dealing with native suppliers must be considered. (Unscrupulous companies sometimes force investors to throw good money after bad by lying about the potential profitability of a route; some unfortunates have been tricked into investing in a half-dozen successive doomed voyages.)

Older companies in control of established trade routes have more complex structures. Normally there are many investors who buy a few shares and get a moderate reward and a smaller number of members who control a greater number of shares and administer the company. Companies can also have employees, who do not hold shares.

In distant lands, a company will establish a factory where the factor – a company man who deals with the local suppliers – dwells. Ships might visit a factory only once a year but the factory is a constant hum of activity as local workers toil in the warehouses, filling them with local product as they sell off the trade goods brought from overseas. Factors are more than just traders; they live immersed in a foreign culture and must deal with potentially hostile local rulers, bandits, monsters, ships that show up late or riddled with disease, with charlatans and curses and thieves. They are company representatives and buyers, but often they are the voice of the Middle Sea Empire overseas. Factories tend to turn into forts, then into towns, making the company factors into governors.

## The Mercantilist's League

*The League promise to defend our businesses against protection rackets but they're as bad as any gang, taking a tenth of my money! And as for that rogue Sylark, it's well known that he's of bad family.*

— Ferit, Hathineltor Businessman (vanished two months ago)

This organisation is open to any Jrusteli business owner who can show he does 10,000 gold pieces worth of business per year. The League arbitrates disputes between companies, investigates complaints of fraud or wilful mismanagement, represents commercial interests to the Imperial Court, funds anti-piracy expeditions and magical research – and takes a sizeable percentage of Jrusteli customs duties.

All members of the League can vote for the chairman of the League, who serves for ten years. As the Chairman sits on the Emperor's High Council, it is a hugely prestigious and influential position. Many traders in Seshnela object that the Mercantilist Lord speaks for all traders in the Empire but is elected purely by the Jrusteli. Of course, if they were to expand the Mercantilist's League to the whole Empire, it would give them control over customs duties across half the world.

The largest companies wield staggering power. The Fonrit Company, for instance, virtually rule the province, with far more influence than the former Duke. The Eastern Trade Company is the Middle Sea Empire in Kralorela. These corporate entities are wealthier than many nations, with their own private armies, laws and royal courts – or royal committees, at any rate. The chairmen of some companies are ranked with Arch-Dukes and princes.

### Trading Companies as Cults

The great trading companies can be treated as cults, with their own internal hierarchies and ceremonies. Joining these cults as an investor is easy, as long as the character has the wealth to invest. Rising to a higher level in the company requires the character to take an active hand in managing some part of the company.

Instead of listing duties, the major import/export interests of each company are listed. Each company exports from Jrustela and imports to Jrustela.

## The Eastern Trade Company

*This land is a curious one but opportunities abound.*

— Gillam D'estau, in his first letter back to the Board of Directors

The oldest and wealthiest of the trade companies, the Eastern Trade Company is a Jrusteli institution to the extent that it is often simply called The Company or the Honourable Company. Shares in the Eastern Trade Company are worth more than their weight in gold, as they are sold so rarely. The company was founded by the adventurer, Gillam D'estau, and sent three ships to the

distant land of Kralorela to trade for silk and porcelain. In the course of their adventures, the expedition leaders made alliances with Kralorelan leaders and discovered secrets of their magic. Gillam D'estau and several others remained in Kralorela as factors-extraordinaire, building up trade networks and alliances all over the strange country. When the ships returned a year later, D'estau had installed himself as the chief advisor to an influential religious leader, the monk ShangHsa, and had been initiated into a mystic dragon-cult there.

As the company ships went back and forth between Jrustela and the east, Gillam sent back requests for New Order sorcerers, books and advisors to be sent to him. He managed to apply western logic and Sorcery to the Kralorelan mystic tradition, helping ShangHsa to transcend mortal form and become a draconic entity. With the power of this new discipline, ShangHsa became Emperor and the Eastern Trade Company suddenly found itself appointed Imperial Supplier of Foreign Goods to the whole nation.

The market for Kralorelan goods exploded back in Jrustela as a fashion for Eastern art and fashions seized the island. To this day, Kralorela is associated with decadence and desire in the Jrusteli mind, a place of opium dens, free thought and beautiful courtesans. It is still especially popular in Evrowal.

Gillam was elected honorary chairman for life, a position he still holds. The Eastern Trade Company is generally seen as the safest investment in Jrustela but the existing shareholders are loath to share the profits. There are rumours of trouble in Kralorela but who can understand what the easterners are babbling about?

**Runes:** Trade, Dragon, Fate

**Imports:** Porcelain, Silk, Spices, Art, Swords, Tea, Coffee, Drugs

**Exports:** Cotton, Horses, Metal Goods, Magic

### Investor Membership

**Requirements:** To become an investor in the Eastern Trade Company, a character must invest a minimum of 1,000 gold. The company rarely looks for more investors, so shares can be bought only in times of war or crisis in Kralorela (when the company needs more money) or when an existing shareholder is willing to sell.

## Member Membership

**Requirements:** To become a member of the Eastern Trade Company, a character must invest a minimum of 3,000 gold and prove himself qualified to serve the company overseas.

## Director Membership

**Requirements:** To become a director of the Eastern Trade Company, a character must invest a minimum of 7,000 gold and have served as a Member for at least one year.

## Special Benefits

A character can expect a return of 3+1D6% on his investment each year. Characters also gain the protection of the company while in Kralorela, which translates to a +10% bonus to Influence for investors, +20% for Members and +40% for Directors.

Members or Directors of the Company may learn the Path of Immanent Mastery and the Bargain Well and Irrefusable Gift Sorcery spells as well. They may learn the Shiphandling skill.

to more productive work. The strange myths of the Torvavs and their elf neighbours proved very useful to the God Learners, who invested heavily in the Company in exchange for support and protection. Then, eight years ago, Fonrit rebelled and the Company was forced out. The factors retreated mostly to Umathela – which then also declared independence from the Middle Sea Empire.

The Fonrit Company is now in the awkward position of trying to fight a war of conquest in Fonrit while having its troops in one country (Umathela) and its money and leaders in another (Jrustela). Their once-loyal investors are abandoning them and the company is now once again deep in debt as it tries to conquer a rebellious country. Unable to afford to raise a professional army and without support from Frowal, the company is employing irregular mercenaries to hold onto its remaining forts along the coast of Fonrit. Secretly, they are appealing to the God Learner's Collective to remake the slaver-god Ompalam and using HeroQuests to end the revolt.

**Runes:** Fertility, Trade, Disorder

**Imports:** Gold, jewels, jade, wood, Elf Magic

**Exports:** Horses, weapons, glass, alchemy, books

# The Fonrit Company

*We are overrun. Send help. Send wizards.  
Send them to hell.*

*— Last message received from the factory at  
Tarahorn*

This company was founded as the Middle Sea Empire expanded from the Umathelan colony into the Fonrit city-states. For many years, the company kept digging itself deeper into debt as it fought to conquer the country but investors were convinced that as soon as Fonrit was brought into the Empire, the company would become hugely profitable. As a major sideline, the Fonrit ships carried timinits from the southern jungles to Jrustela, where they became a cheap source of labour.

And, for a while, they were right. Money flowed out of Fonrit as the temples were looted and the people put



### Investor Membership

**Requirements:** To become an investor in the Fonrit Company, a character must invest a minimum of 100 gold.

### Member Membership

**Requirements:** To become a member of the Fonrit Company, a character must invest a minimum of 500 gold and volunteer to serve the company overseas.

### Director Membership

**Requirements:** To become a director of the Fonrit Company, a character must invest a minimum of 2,500 gold and have served as a Member for at least one year. The character must also obtain a writ from the Arch-Duke confirming that he is loyal to Jrustela and the Middle Sea Empire and will not consort or ally himself with the traitors of Umathela.

### Special Benefits

While Fonrit is in revolt, characters cannot expect any return on their investments. If Fonrit were reconquered, characters could expect an annual return of 7+1D10-1D10% on their investments.

Members of the Fonrit Company may learn the Sorcery spells Break Chains and Bargain Well. They may learn the Shiphandling skill.

## The Venture Trust

*Criminals? Hardly. Shrewd businessmen, quick to resort to violence, adventurers and rogues and scoundrels, yes. But not criminals. And yes, I am an investor in the company. Why do you ask?*

— Pifhrith the Justifier, Jrusteli Investor

While other Jrusteli companies have a near-monopoly on trade on a particular route, the Venture Trust prides itself on flexibility. It is a company of opportunism, with a fleet of fast ships and a huge reserve of ready cash. If war breaks out somewhere, the Venture Trust ships swoop in with a cargo of blades and arrows and hireswords. If gold is found on some distant shore, the Venture Trust arrives the next day with picks and shovels. If a God Learner

Study Group encounters a particularly potent or useful deity in the Otherworld, the Venture Trust will arrive with experienced questers and wizards in exchange for a cut of the god. They are treasure hunters, too – there are still Venture Trust bands behind enemy lines in Fonrit, for instance, looking for the lost cities of jade. The Eastern Trade Company barred the Venture Trust from entering Kralorelan waters after Trust agents tried to enter the forbidden lands of the dragonnewts in the forest of Fethlon.

Obviously, this is no way to run a company, so investing in the Trust is more like a lottery. There are constant accusations of villainy and treachery – Trust captains are said to be pirates when not employed by the company and there are rumours that the company is really a spy network for any or all of the following: the Confederation Council, the God Learners, the Mercantilist's League, the Malkioni True Church, EWF or Arkat who has risen from the dead and now lives beneath Hathinelthor.

**Runes:** Luck, Trade, Disorder

**Imports:** Whatever they can get their hands on

**Exports:** Trouble

### Investor Membership

**Requirements:** To become an investor in the Venture Trust Company, a character must invest a minimum of 500 gold.

### Member Membership

**Requirements:** To become a member of the Venture Company, a character must invest a minimum of 1,000 gold and demonstrate that he has skills required by the company.

### Director Membership

**Requirements:** To become a director of the Venture Trust Company, a character must invest a minimum of 5,000 gold and have served as a Member for at least one year. The character must also have brought word of a considerable opportunity to the attention of the Board of Directors.

### Special Benefits

Venture Trust Investments vary wildly – a character can expect a return of 1D20% per year.

Members of the Venture Trust gain a +10% bonus to Evaluate, Influence and Streetwise and may learn the Shiphandling skill.

Members and Directors of the Venture Trust may request support from the company; the Trust has many mercenaries and is experienced at aiding adventurers who have gotten in over their heads.

## Just Shipbuilders

*Risen from the sea, we abhor it. Let our ships be an affront to the ocean!*

— Just Shipbuilders' adage

The Just Shipbuilders are a church cult first and a business second; constructing the great bronze-hulled ships of the Jrusteli is an act of worship for them. The Shipbuilders began in drowned Svalwal hundreds of years ago, where they built the first ships before the Wave came. The best of the Shipbuilders were magically resurrected by the Church and those risen survivors agreed to become a religious order out of gratitude. While the Just Shipbuilder Order is not the only group who can construct sea-going vessels, they are one of the best.

The order operates as a business but most of the profit goes to the church. Its operations are based primarily in Orphalsketkal but there are shipyards in every city and the order has overseas offices in Seshnela, Umathela, Kethaela and elsewhere. It also has spies in many ports, trying to steal secrets of other ship designers and keep watch for the hated Waertagi.

**Runes:** Metal, Water, Magic

**Imports:** Bound elementals, rare materials

**Exports:** Ships

### Investor Membership

**Requirements:** To become an investor in the Just Shipbuilders, a character must invest a minimum of 500 gold and donate an amount equal to a tenth of his investment to the Church.

### Member Membership

**Requirements:** To become a member of the Just Shipbuilders, a character must invest a minimum of 1,000 gold and demonstrate that he has skills required by the company.

### Director Membership

**Requirements:** To become a Director, the character must already be a Wizard of a Malkioni True Church Order. He must then invest a further 5,000 gold.

### Special Benefits

Just Shipbuilder investments return 1+1D4% per year.

Members and Directors of the Just Shipbuilders may learn the Shiphandling skill. They may also learn the spells Bless Boat (*Cults of Glorantha, Volume 2*), Form/Set Bronze, Form/Set Water (*RuneQuest Companion*), Elemental Soul and Speed Over Waves.

### Bargain Well

Casting Time 1, Resist (Persistence)

For every point of Magnitude, the caster gains a +5% bonus to Evaluate and Influence tests related to commercial dealings for the duration of the spell.

### Break Chains

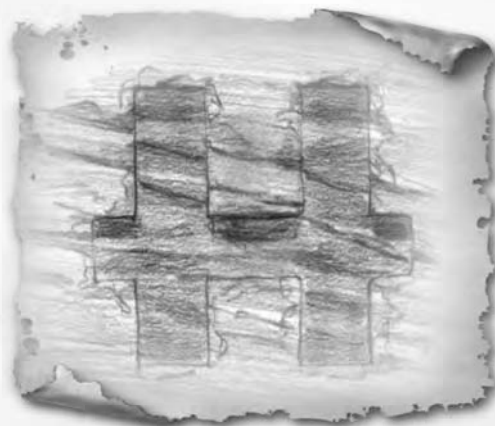
Casting Time 1, Touch

Any non-magical bonds like chains or ropes touched by the caster instantly break. These chains must be restraining a living being for the spell to work.

### Elemental Soul

Casting Time 5

Elemental Soul transforms some of the caster's soul into an elemental. The caster temporarily spends a number of POW points equal to the Magnitude of the spell to



## Notable Companies and Syndicates

**Amedsford Wine League:** One of the major investors in Kerela, the Wine League is a group of merchants and vintners who invest heavily in the Hathinelthor and Evrowal exchanges. They are shareholders in the Eastern Trade Company and the Fonrit Trade Company, although they are trying to extricate themselves from that disastrous investment.

**Borastenorelan Free Traders:** Another major investment syndicate, the Free Traders are known for their criminal ties. A new company that fails give a satisfactory return on investments will be visited by agents of the Free Traders. An ounce of flesh for every missing gold piece is the normal punishment.

**Brithosian Trust:** When the Middle Sea Empire prepared to invade Brithos, a new company was set up to deal with the expected trade from that mysterious island. With all the legends of power and immortality and magic and wonder, anticipation of vast profits was high and the new Brithosian Trust Company obtained more initial investments than any other company in history. Before the first warship left for Brithos, the BTC had more money than even the Eastern Trade Company. When the invasion failed, the directors of the BTC vanished with all the cash. Some of them are known to have fled the Middle Sea Empire but others were under magical oaths (an uncommon but not illegal practice in Jrusteli law). The Oathbound set up an underground conspiracy to conquer Brithos, which still exists to this day. Sometimes, shadowy figures hire adventurers using old gold coins or cheques drawn on BTC accounts...

**Far Eastern Trade Company:** The Far Eastern Trade Company is a hungry new consortium with the aim of making great wealth by trading in spices and magic from the Vithelan Isles. Many God Learners have invested in the company and are using its overseas factories as bases for research into Vithelan magic.

**Kethaela Traders:** The Kethaelan Traders have a monopoly on trade between Jrustela and the five Kethaela territories. Currently, a financial battle is being waged in the Board of Directors between the original investors, the True Malkioni Church (who used the company as a front for missionary work), the Zistorites (who have an interest in the region) and, oddly, the God Forgothers, who have invested a great deal of their casino money in the company through Jrusteli brokers.

**Web of Wise Investments Syndicate:** A timinit syndicate based out of Piskosol, the Web investors are known for their abstruse mathematical calculations of risk.

create an elemental. If the elemental is slain before the spell ends, these POW points are permanently lost. The conjured elemental may be of any type and has all the powers of a normal elemental of that type (see *RuneQuest Monsters*). It has a size in cubic metres equal to the Magnitude of the spell. The caster may command the elemental telepathically.

### Irrefusable Gift

Casting Time 1, Resist (Persistence)

If this spell is cast successfully, the caster may give the

target a gift. The target must then at some point in the next year and a day give the caster a gift of equal worth in exchange, or lose 1D6 points of POW permanently. If the caster is slain or willingly releases the target from this spell, the POW loss can be averted.

### Speed Over Waves

Casting Time 1

This spell increases the speed of an ocean-going ship by 20% per point of Magnitude.

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# Glorantha

## THE SECOND AGE

### Jaustela

*Jaustela.* It is here that the Middle Sea Empire began. Home to immense cities, powerful trading guilds, awesome sorcerers and the birthplace of the dominant religion in the west. Although feared by its enemies the island itself is a place of peace and prosperity, where the dreaded God Learners can practise their twisted magic in safety.

The history and geography of the island are described in detail within, explaining how this previously isolated realm became the linchpin of one of the mightiest empires to ever arise upon the world of Glorantha.

Politics, trade, religion and magic are the cornerstones of the Middle Sea Empire and all of these are examined inside this book. The teachings of the God Learner wizards, and how they manage to turn myths and even gods to their will, are explained, as is their relationship with the all-powerful church.

The island continent represents a fantastic setting where even experienced *RuneQuest* players can meet new and unique challenges.

Welcome to the home of those who dismiss even the power of the gods.  
Welcome to *Jaustela*!



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To use this supplement, a Games Master will require *RuneQuest*,  
*RuneQuest Companion* and *Glorantha - The Second Age*.