

MIDDLE-EARTH

Campaign

the inland sea

Based on J.R.R. Tolkien's THE LORD OF THE RINGS

THE INLAND SEA

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1 INTRODUCTION

On September 19th of 1997, Iron Crown Enterprises regretfully declared a moratorium on its long-standing *Middle-earth Role Playing* series. Two years later (almost to the day), ICE lost its Middle-earth license entirely. One casualty of these tragic reversals was the manuscript which you are now about to read. A brief retelling of the heroic saga of how it weathered this storm, and how it came to be in the first place, is in order.

Way back in 1989, when MERP was enjoying its heyday, Jessica Ney-Grimm, ICE's Middle-earth editor, received an enthusiastic letter from a young gamer named Mike Campbell. An avid MERP fan, Mike was eager to see more, especially in the virtually undescribed lands on the eastern frontiers of Wilderland (Rhovanion). After examining some notes Mike had written up on the region, Jessica promptly invited him to write a module himself.

ICE's usual procedure for cultivating new writers was to start them off with something manageable, so Mike was assigned the task of authoring *Shrines of Rhûn*, a short, Ready-to-Run adventure module set in the strategic corridor between the Ash Mountains of Mordor and the southern shores of the Inland Sea of Rhûn. Its adventures were to center upon shrines built by an Easterling tribe to honor their fallen heroes.

But *Shrines of Rhûn* was destined to become something greater. Fortuitously perhaps, Mike's manuscript sat unread upon Jessica's overworked desk for a very long time—long enough for ICE's publication goals to expand into its second edition "realm module" format. Having read through the draft of *Shrines*, Jason Hawkins, Jessica's right-hand man, gave Mike an 80-page budget and told him to get cracking on *Southern Rhûn*. Meanwhile, unbeknownst to Mike, his future partner in crime was about to be discovered.

In the fall of 1995, *Other Hands* was approaching its fourth year of existence, *The Kin-strife* had been published, *Southern Gondor* had been written, and ideas for a *Northern Gondor* follow-up were germinating in my mind. In the course of my wanderings, I stumbled across Luke Potter (or maybe he stumbled across me—I don't remember the details), who was then devising a history for the Balchoth, the Easterling hordes that ravaged Wilderland in the late-Third Age, which set the stage for the heroic entry of the Rohirrim into Calenardhon.

Luke's history was published in *Other Hands* 12 (January 1996); and sometime between then and the publication of the April issue, Jessica Ney-Grimm offered me the job of assistant series editor for MERP. My first task was to seek out potential authors for new modules, and Luke was ready to hand. Like Mike Campbell, he too was interested in fleshing out the blank spaces on the edge of Rhovanion, and offered to write a realm module for *Dorwinion* (an essential tie-in for *Northern Gondor* as well as for *Southern Rhûn*).

My new duties as assistant editor ultimately doomed *Northern Gondor* to oblivion, but they succeeded in making Mike and Luke next-door neighbors. From then on, we coordinated all of our efforts to ensure consistency among

our respective projects. At some point we were joined by a fourth musketeer, Justin Morgan-Davies, who contributed additional content to the Forest of Rhûn. Justin had wanted to write an adventure module set in that area, but Jessica felt it wasn't "high profile" enough to be marketable, so we just absorbed him into Mike and Luke's projects.

Then, sometime in mid or late 1997, Mike submitted his draft of *Southern Rhûn*. I then discovered a problem with the whole undertaking. While Mike had produced some excellent material, it would be artificial to slice in half a region that was so clearly unified by its geography, its culture and its narrative themes to Luke's work on the northern half of the coastlands surrounding the Inland Sea.

Of course, ICE had readily bisected *Southern Gondor* and the second printing of *Arnor* into separate volumes, but that was a product of financial necessity, and sales were showing that it was not a desirable way to market parts of Middle-earth. Why cut the Inland Sea in half when it could be presented as a single module? Jessica agreed with this reasoning and authorized Luke to meld Mike's finished manuscript into his own (which was nearing completion). *The Inland Sea* realm module had been born.

Alas. That decision was to thwart the realization of Mike's dream; for had I accepted *Southern Rhûn* for editing when it was submitted, it would have been finished in time to see publication. But by the time Luke was nearing the end of his titanic labor of combining the two, it was September of 1997. ICE pulled the plug, and *The Inland Sea* went down the drain along with so many other promising projects.

But not all was dark. I had *Other Hands* and a growing circle of subscribers to help support the independent publication of Mike and Luke's magnum opus. It was only a matter of time before *The Inland Sea* would become a reality.

Unfortunately, it has proved to be a *long* time in coming. For the next two years my free time was taken up doing my part to keep ICE's Middle-earth products alive. But it wasn't what I *wanted* to be doing. I wanted to carry on the torch of the classic realm module genre that had reached its zenith in Wes Frank's *Arnor*. Plans were laid, but "one thing or another drove them out," as Barliman would say.

Not that *The Inland Sea* was ever forgotten, but when you're a full-time grad student with a magazine to publish four times a year, "free time" for other projects is a sparse commodity indeed. For this reason, the demise of ICE's Middle-earth lines came more as a relief than a grief. At last I would have the time to get *The Inland Sea* done.

Well, sort of; there was still an interminable backlog of other projects to deal with (like the still unfinished *Oathbreakers*), and each project worked to keep the others from completion. Originally I had intended to publish *The Inland Sea* as a hard copy book, complete with lavish artwork and quality binding. That may still come to pass someday; but for the present, I think it is better to get it out there so that people can start using it, rather than sitting upon it until some utopic respite appears which may never come.

And so we come to it: *The Inland Sea* version 1.0. "Glory and trumpets!" Now I think I know what Sam must have felt like

when he first awoke on the Field of Cormallen. I'd like to thank Mike and Luke for their patience and long-suffering—and for their friendship. May their eyries receive them at the journey's end. Long live MERP!

—Chris Seeman

August 1st, 2000

2 OVERVIEW

To most of the people of western Middle-earth, the land called Rhûn is shrouded in a haze of myth and rumor. It is at once the domain of mysterious cultures and mythic cities, a boundless expanse of wild plains and uncultivated lands rolling to the ends of the world, and a perfect horizon that might, at any moment be marred by an ominous smear of dust: the tell-tale sign of an approaching horde of riders. The majority of Western maps end in a great swath of tan, sometimes filled with the fanciful creatures of the artist's mind, but more often bearing only a single word: Rhûn.

To a choice few, however, Rhûn is a diverse land of tremendous opportunity, where an individual with a handful of silver coins can build an empire. These few have glimpsed the snow-capped peaks of the Pinnon Rhûn from the deck of a ship sailing the Inland Sea. They have looked down on the green valleys of Folyavuld, which the west knows as Dorwinion. They have seen the forested shore of the sea, the tall spires and glittering domes of Mistrand, and the myriad Easterling campfires dotting the great plains like stars in the night sky. To these few, Rhûn beckons; calling out to the heart of the explorer.

In actuality, the Inland Sea and its surrounding lands have from the beginning acted as a gateway between the realms of far-eastern Endor, where the Children of Illúvatar first awakened, and the great civilizations of the west. More than any other single factor, it has been the migration of people from east to west that has shaped the history of the Inland Sea. And because Rhûn is a natural portal between the west and east, its wars have often spilt over across the borders of neighboring lands, drawing foreign powers into wider conflicts that have wrought great destruction on the lands surrounding the sea. In the instances where western and eastern peoples have fought against one another, Rhûn has been the battleground. Its people have repeatedly absorbed the damage of foreign wars and have been persecuted in the name of foreign causes, both of eastern and western origin.

Rhûn's role as passage between west and east has also been a great boon to the region, and many of the Inland Sea's cultures are organized specifically around the carrying of trade between distant lands. Though a route south through the Gap of Khand and west across the lands of Northern Harad spoils Rhûn's monopoly on the east-west trade, many is the local merchant whose purse has grown fat transporting eastern goods to western markets. Politics among the peoples of Rhûn is largely based on the control of two competing trade routes that crisscross the land and span the wide sea. So important are these routes to the economies of Rhûn's neighbors, that foreign powers have repeatedly found it necessary to intervene in local rivalries so that the routes

could remain open. It is a common local joke that the mighty realm of Gondor would crumble if the wolves were to catch a certain nomad lord's best cow, or the wrong Ehwathrumi caravan guard slept past sunrise.

At the root of the joking, however, lies an important truth about the region. The security of the trade routes is a deadly serious matter to the people of Rhûn, and many have died trying to make their fortune in commerce, be it on the sea or along the dry trade roads of southern Rhûn and Rhovanion. The city of Mistrand stands perched on the choke-point between west and east, regulating the amount of goods that cross the line of the Sûrûbeki River and pass further west into Gondor. Mistrand, however, is under the thumb of a conservative eastern religion that has, in recent years, shunned most contact with the western-facing peoples of Rhûn in the interest of strict isolation from foreign influences. Gondor enjoys a long-standing relationship with both Folyavuld and the towns of the Ibnótithuida, an Eriadoran Northman culture on the Warwater River. Both of these peoples have enjoyed for many centuries the role of middle-man between Mistrand and Gondor, and have developed a bitter rivalry with one another for the best goods and profits. The Northmen, the Dúnedain and the Men of Dorwinion (the Folyavuldok) have all invested a great deal of money and effort to create a dependable means of delivering trade goods to the wealthy citizens of the western kingdoms. Mistrand's insularism now threatens to destroy the rival trading empires, redefining the balance of power along the littoral of the Inland Sea.

The erosion of Gondor's influence in Rhûn since the closing of Mistrand's market is no simple side effect of a random cultural change. The religion that has swept the countryside in southern Rhûn and seeped into the power structure of Mistrand is an artifice for the worship of Némol the Ring-Wight, a devoted servant of Uvatha the Nazgûl. Under the guise of the plains-god Kérkassk, Némol has gradually taken advantage of the latent feelings of mistrust between Easterling and Dúnadan. The people of Mistrand have institutionalized their hatred of the west,

and though they know it not, they are now numbered by the lord of Dol Guldur as one of the many peoples at his command.

This is Rhûn and the Inland Sea in the mid-Third Age; a borderland in every sense. It is where east meets west, civilized meets wild, order meets chaos, and good meets evil. Just as Gondor faces its time of crisis at the end of the Third Age, when the shadow threatens to engulf all, so is the mid-Third Age the time of crisis for Rhûn. Nations, souls, and history itself hangs in the balance, and there are no white wizards here to save the day. The shadow spreads subtly; inexorably through the cities, the pastures, the homes, and even the hearts of the people. The recently departed Great Plague brought death and chaos to this land, and tore great gaping wounds in the fabric of Rhûn's societies. Now in its wake, the servants of the Dark Lord swoop in to weave a new pattern, one in which every thread radiates from the dark center of the cloth. The strong who would attempt to put Rhûn back on the road to order are now the targets of Sauron's assassins. In their absence who will stand against

the rush of this dark tide, to oppose the momentum of a mountain as it slides into the sea?

3 HISTORY

Because so many of the cultures that have occupied the lands around the Inland Sea have practiced nomadism, the history of the Inland Sea is largely one of migration and continual change. The area of Rhûn is too vast, the time-span too deep, and the cultural geography too complex for an exhaustive history of the Inland Sea and its bordering lands. Since most of the recorded history of Middle-earth has taken place west of the River Anduin, much of the following narrative will be completely new to the reader. With other events, such as the Wainrider Invasions, readers will probably be familiar with the story, if only from the western perspective. The following account of Middle-earth history is cast in an "eastern" perspective, and will refer to events in the west only when they directly impact the inhabitants of Rhûn.

GM Note: The following history and timeline represents the compiled knowledge and recordings of innumerable scholars, kings, priests, and simple residents of the region surrounding the Inland Sea. No single inhabitant of the region would ever have access to a comprehensive document of this kind.

3.1 THE FIRST AGE

As those who are familiar with the history of the west will know, the First Age was a time when the makers of Ea, the Valar, still walked Endor and strove in a direct manner to mold the world to their own tastes. Like all the other regions of Middle-earth, the northern center of the continent was shaped, torn-down, and reshaped by powerful hands. In its primordial form, the Inland Sea was a perfect reflective pool, a tribute to the glory of Varda, and the starlight that was her legacy to the world. Hallowed forests grew around its shoreline, framing the unmarred reflection of the star-filled sky in deep greens and browns. The creatures of Middle-earth, both the wandering Kelvar (animals) and the Maiar (lesser servants of the Valar) could not pass by the wondrous sea without being snared by its beauty.

3.1.1 THE AGE OF STARS

The first of the Children of Iluvatar to pass through the lands of Rhûn were the Eldar, who heeded the summons of the Valar and accompanied Orome the Hunter in the great journey west. But as is told in the Silmarillion, many houses of the Eldar tarried beside the various wonders of Middle-earth as they encountered them for the first time. So it was that a group of the Eldar related closely to the house of Olwe first looked out on the calm waters of the Inland Sea and were transfixed. These Elves were led by Folwe, brother of the Telerin King, and their pause along the shores of the Inland Sea caused them to fall behind the rest of the Eldar host. They made for themselves a realm in the forests north and east of the sea and thus joined the ranks of the Umanyar; the Eldar who never beheld the light of Valinor.

The Elves of the Agasha Dag named themselves the Uialrim (S. "People of the Twilight"), for they held a great love for the light of Varda's stars, particularly as it was reflected in the waters of the Inland Sea. For countless years they dwelt in isolation beneath the canopy of Agasha Dag, divorced from the rest of their kin, and unwilling to open their society to the other races of Middle-earth, as they too came to settle in the lands surrounding the Inland Sea.

3.1.2 THE AWAKENING OF THE DWARVES

Many years after the awakening of the firstborn, Aule's children, the Dwarves, stirred in their earth-bound resting places and began their unending toil to shape the land. The seven fathers of Dwarves awoke at seven separate sites within the great Iron Mountains that dominated the north of Middle-earth in those days. As the population of the seven houses grew, so too did their dominions. North of Rhûn lay the original homes of two of the seven fathers, Bavor and Thelor; while Durin's folk awoke at Mount Gundabad and populated the lands north of Rhovanion.

Morgoth also made his home in the Iron Mountains, however, and the seven houses were oppressed by his evil servants from their earliest days. The houses of Bavor and Thelor quickly put any rivalry between them aside and joined to defend their northern homelands. In the end, however, the Dwarves were unable to hold their ancestral homes, and were forced to migrate south or face total enslavement by the dark enemy of the world. Thelor's people migrated south and west, and established kingdoms under the worn peaks of the Grey Mountains. Durin's folk wandered over the western lands and settled in several places, the easternmost of which was the Iron Hills stronghold of Azanulinbar-dum (Khuz. "Red Valley Mansion"). The folk of Bavor struck south through the lands of Rhûn and Rhovanion to settle in the Ered Angurath, part of Mordor's mountainous fence. Midway through their trek across the plains of Rhûn, however, a young Dwarf named Runin the Headstrong led a small minority of his people along a separate path to find mountains he had seen in a vision. He found the peaks he sought on the western coast of the Inland Sea, in a range later to be named the Uldona Spine. To these coastal mountains he gave the name Zinaramahal (Khuz. Aule's Heart"). There, under the peak they called Hathur-na-bundurok, they delved the small but elegant limestone and marble kingdom of Kablik-madur.

3.1.3 THE FIRST MIGRATIONS OF MAN

Sometime in the early years of the First Age of the Sun, Man made his appearance in Rhûn. He came across the wide plains of the east as a fugitive, leaving behind him a dark past. The first group of men were few and poor in material. These were the ancestors of Beor, and they settled briefly in the western foothills of the Uldona Spine before moving on. Shortly after their arrival, a new and more numerous kindred of Man entered the region. These were closely related to the ancestors of Beor, but had split from them long before. In

their travels across the eastern plains, they learned to domesticate horses and sheep; a feat that greatly contributed to their strength. These men passed north along the eastern shore of the Inland Sea, and filled the lands surrounding the forest of Rhûn all the way to the Iron Hills. This second group was far more diverse than their cousins in the Uldona Spine. Those that settled along the northern and western eaves of the Agasha Dag made their camps under the shelter of outlying woods, while pasturing their beasts on the plains. A few tribes even made their homes on the northern shore of the Inland Sea and over time developed the skills of boating and boat-making. Taken together, these tribes would form the basis of the many Northman cultures of Rhûn; great societies who would leave their mark on the history of the region.

Following close in the footsteps of the Northmen were the Daen folk. They were a more private people than their Northman predecessors and tended to shun contact with the other kindreds of Man. The tribes that settled around the Inland Sea were among the second great wave of Daen to migrate out of the east. Instead of following in the footsteps of the first Daen wave, who passed well to the south of Rhûn and do not enter this history, the second wave gave the hostile land of Khand a wide berth and passed around the eastern and northern sides of Mordor until their progress was halted by the Warwater. It was here that the Daen of Rhûn were first sundered, as a few of the tribes found their way across the river and continued west while others remained on the eastern bank. Those that remained in Rhûn named themselves the Donath, and their history is entirely separate from that of their western cousins who passed onward to Gondor.

The Donath remained for years along the Warwater, hunting and gathering in the fertile river valley and occasionally stalking the larger game of the plains. It was the lure of more bountiful game on the Talath Harroch that eventually forced another split among them, this time drawing two tribes into the southwestern foothills of the Uldona Spine, into the now deserted lands of Beor's ancestors. While the remainder of the Donath tribes gradually adapted to life along the southern coast, these families took shelter in the abundant natural caves and rock shelters of the highland hunting ranges, following the migration pattern of wild kine. This mobile existence eventually brought them to the hills and high valleys that form the water-shed of the Uldona river. The highlands of the Uldona Spine turned out to be an ideal setting for the tribes, offering abundant shelter and fertile grounds for hunting and gathering.

The more numerous of the two highland tribes was the Broendon (Dn. "People of Broen"), who claimed for themselves the headwaters of the Uldona River and the line of broken hills that extend northwest into Rhovanion. The smaller of the two tribes was the Rhídon (Dn. "People of Rhí"), a collection of twelve clans who made their homes on the northern slopes of the Uldona Spine, from the river's watershed to the coast of the Inland Sea. Both tribes made early contact with Runin's folk, and a trade of fur and meat for dwarven tools and hunting spears was established within the first century of Donath settlement.

3.1.4 THE ALLIANCE OF DWARVES AND MEN

In the later years of the First Age, Morgoth's attacks upon the free peoples increased dramatically. Just as the siege of Angband in Beleriand guarded its people from the ravages of Morgoth's armies, an alliance was formed in northern Rhûn aimed at denying the passage of the servants of evil into otherwise unguarded lands. This league was formed between the well-armed Northmen of northern Rhovanion and Rhûn and the three local houses of Dwarves. The area under the vigilance of Northman and Dwarven scouts stretched from the eastern slopes of the Misty Mountains to the western shore of the Inland Sea. Both peoples profited immensely from this alliance. In exchange for the products of Northman pastoralism, the Dwarves traded iron tools and weapons. The success of the Northmen led to their expansion throughout northern Rhovanion and into the Anduin Vales. Eventually, three great tribes of Northmen migrated even to the borders of Beleriand and entered the tale of the War of the Jewels. These were the ancestors of Hador, whose people did glorious deeds in the west.

3.1.5 THE GREAT CATAclysm

The wrath of the Valar that brought Morgoth's reign to an end wrought profound changes on the geography and history of Rhûn. The sinking of Beleriand in the west sent destructive tremors and increased the volcanic activity of the region. The floor of the Inland Sea cracked and the Uldona Spine highlands rose many hundreds of feet into the sky. The sea-floor fissure actually penetrated and drowned portions of the Underdeeps that ran below the bed of the sea, though the ramifications of this were not to be felt for centuries. The uplift of the Spine of Rhûn resulted in a mountainous plateau along the western shore with sheer rock cliffs towering sometimes hundreds of feet above the level of the sea. Entire portions of the eastern shore crumbled and fell into the sea, nearly doubling the sea's surface area. Many an Elvish coastal village was destroyed by the deluge, prompting a permanent migration by that folk to the higher ground of the forest interior.

This great cataclysm claimed the lives of many Dwarves and Men living in the Uldona Spine. Whole clans and families were buried alive in their cavern homes as rockslides and earthquakes transformed the landscape. Pleasant wooded mountainsides became steep, barren slopes as they were thrust well above the treeline. Great systems of caverns were exposed, carved out by years of underground karst action and now drained by the sudden change in elevation. The most stirring evidence of the uplift can be found along the line of the Gweléth river gorge where runoff water plummets hundreds of feet from the plateau top in a spectacular fringe of waterfalls to the river bed below.

3.2 THE GREAT PEOPLING OF RHÛN

"And after the victory of the Lords of the West those of the evil Men who were not destroyed fled back into the east, where many of their race were still wandering in the

unharvested lands, wild and lawless, refusing alike the summons of the Valar and of Morgoth. And the evil Men came among them, and cast over them a shadow of fear, and they took them for kings."

— The Silmarillion

3.2.1 THE BARADHRIM SCOURGE

Prior to his defeat at the hands of his Valarin brethren, Morgoth had gathered to himself a large army of evil Men. These were recent arrivals out of the east, known to the peoples of the west only as "Swarthy Men" or Baradhrim. The martial strength of these tribes: their mastery of mounted combat and their unquenchable penchant for brutality, allowed them to become slavelords, captains and master iron-smiths in the service of Angband. Among the Mannish and even Elven foes of Morgoth, the Baradhrim were feared as competent and ruthless adversaries. None of the servants of Morgoth could withstand onslaught of Tulkas, however, and it was only through their mastery of horsemanship that they were able to flee fastest and farthest from the ruin of Beleriand.

The flight of the Baradhrim took them through northern Eregion and over the northern passes of the Misty Mountains. At the headwaters of the Anduin, however, they were opposed by the alliance of Dwarves and Northmen. Though they were unable to defeat the alliance and win dominion over northern Rhovanion, the bulk of their numbers eventually allowed them to force their way across the Anduin vale and pass north of Greenwood into the lands bordering the Inland Sea.

Eventually they adopted ranges east of the Iron Hills and north of the sea. Bordered only by poorly organized Northman tribes on their west and southwest, the Baradhrim found these wide plains relatively empty, and established chiefdoms of their own. In their new lands, the Baradhrim led a nomadic existence, moving whenever the plains grasses could no longer sustain their herds. The passage of time did little to assuage the rivalry between the Baradhrim and their Northman neighbors, and warfare along the border between these two cultures was constant.

3.2.2 THE GOBLINS OF THE ULDONA SPINE

The Great Cataclysm was the ruin of the Dwarven halls at Kablik-madur, and Runin's line began the construction of a new mansion in the Uldona Spine. Led by their new king, Relin son of Runin, the Dwarves discovered a great complex of water-carved caves under a pristine highland lake south of their old homes. For three centuries they expanded and modified the caverns until they surpassed in beauty the homes that had been left behind. Their mines reached the farthest corners of the mountain range and their highest halls looked out through windows onto the Sea. The three gates to the kingdom were enclosed in three great spires called the Bundusulzinbur (Khuz. "Cloudy Horns"). Besides the aesthetic majesty of this new domain which they named Falek-dim (Khuz. "Home of Moving Waters"), Relin's people

also found a generous store of gems and precious metals, making them a wealthy kingdom.

As is always the case, rumor of the newfound wealth of Relin's people spread quickly through the lands of Rhûn, and it was not long before word of it reached the numerous but impoverished Uruk-marzguram (Or. "Orcs of the Crushed Skull") of the Ash Mountains. In late S.A. 521, the envious Orcs crossed the plains of Gathod and launched strikes against Falek-dim. The folk of Relin were not a warlike people, and within a year the Orcs successfully seized two of the three towers and all of the easternmost halls of the kingdom. Relin and his people abandoned their mansion to the Orcs and headed south to seek the rest of their kin in S.A. 522.

3.2.3 THE ULGATH ARRIVE

Early in the third century of the Second Age a new and massive wave of Mannish tribes began to migrate into the Talathrant Vale from their birthlands in the east. The first of these peoples were the Nardhrim, and they laid an early claim to the whole of the Talathrant Valley. Behind them, however, came a much more fierce collection of tribes called the Ioriags who made constant war on their Nardhrim kin. In S.A. 262 an Ioriag alliance led by the warlike Variag tribe evicted the Nardhrim from much of the Talathrant Valley and took it for themselves. Warfare continued throughout the next century between these two peoples until the further arrival of peoples allied to the Ioriags tipped the balance against the Nardhrim tribes.

These new Ioriag allies were dominated by a large collection of tribes calling themselves the Ulgath (Ul. "First People"). The Ulgath were a diverse people from the beginning, and soon after their arrival along the Talathrant divided into two distinct cultural groups. The southern Ulgath were equally committed to their tradition of worshipping Morgoth (whom they named Kragul) and the Variag demi-god king Rakadsaol (a demonic spirit). Under the tutelage of the Variags they learned to master the horse and became feared warriors in their own right. They dominated large holdings of fertile land north of the Ioriag region of Relmether and did much to protect the Variag kingdoms northern flank.

By contrast, the northern Ulgath tribes sought to establish independent ranges for the grazing of their cattle and refused to ally themselves with the Variags. They crossed the Talathrant and wandered into the northern grasslands known as the Empty Plains, ever on the borders of their more organized southern brethren. Because they never came under the direction of the Variags, they learned to master horses only very gradually, and always preferred flight to direct combat. As the southern Ulgath became more powerful and aggressive, the northern tribes were forced farther and farther west into the plains, and in the seventh century made contact with the Baradhrim.

3.2.4 VASSALS OF THE BARADHRIM CHIEFTAINS

The heavy-handed Variags dominated the Talathrant Vale for

several centuries before their grip over the other Ioriag peoples began to weaken. In S.A. 596, the river valley was again engulfed in war as an Ioriag led uprising overthrew the Variags, despite the loyal support of the southern Ulgath tribes. This new Ioriag confederation seized the upper river valley (the region of Relmether) and made war on the southern Ulgath for their part in supporting the Variags. Despite this, the southern Ulgath were able to defend their lands well into the eighth century. In S.A. 730, several key defeats forced the southern Ulgath to push into lands farther north, displacing the northern Ulgath completely.

On the Empty Plains, the wandering northern Ulgath made easy prey for the fierce Baradhrim. Initially, herds were seized and the people punished for living on land claimed by the Baradhrim chieftains. As more and more Ulgath tribes began to appear on under-utilized Baradhrim land, the Baradhrim stopped driving the Ulgath away (as they always came back), and began demanding a tribute of cattle and women from the Ulgath as payment for the use of the land. The northern Ulgath had little choice, ringed as they were by hostile peoples, and most accepted the rule of the Baradhrim in exchange for relative peace. Since the Ulgath were a matriarchal people, Baradhrim tribes soon acquired a legitimate claim to the leadership of the northern Ulgath, binding these two peoples further. The vassal tribes of the northern Ulgath began calling themselves the Murgath (Ul. "The Bound People"), and many of their Ulgath traditions were transformed under the circumstances of their enslavement.

3.2.5 FLIGHT

Though their migration to lands further north gave them a short respite from persecution, the southern Ulgath again were attacked by the Ioriags of Relmether in the tenth and eleventh centuries of the Second Age. Many tribes found shelter in the wild hills of the Kykurian Kyn, or in the forbidding lands of the Talathrant's northern limits. The remaining tribes formed a core of battle-hardened warriors who faced ever stronger attacks by their enemies. As the twelfth century dawned, the tribes could withstand no more, having now been wholly driven from their original holdings. Accordingly, the tribal matriarchs decided that the vale would have to be completely abandoned and the people moved into the trackless expanse of the Empty Plains.

The flight of the southern Ulgath was an epic journey across lands claimed by the hostile Baradhrim and Murgath. In the end, the tribes were driven to the southeastern shores of the Inland Sea. In their new homeland, the worn and weakened tribes took a new name, the Urgath (Ul. "The Wandering People"), and tried to rebuild some semblance of their former glory. It would be many centuries before the Urgath tribes achieved anything to rival their past.

In the north, not all the northern Ulgath were willing to take the name Murgath and live as thralls to the cruel Baradhrim. The return of the practice of slave-holding to Baradhrim society led that culture to a rediscovery of its dark roots, and the return of the dark worship of Morgoth which had once so dominated its traditions. More and more, Murgath tribute was paid in victims for blood sacrifice rather than head of cattle.

Many of the Ulgath would not stand for this type of enslavement, even if it meant abandoning their herds and living as wild refugees.

In the mid-twelfth century of the Second Age, scattered bands of Ulgath began appearing on the eaves of the Agasha Dag and in the rough hills north of the Sea. These ranges were the domain of the easternmost dwelling Northmen of Rhovanion, bitter enemies of the Baradhrim. Despite their common hatred of the old Easterlings, resources were too scarce and the land too poor for the two cultures to peacefully coexist and the Northmen frequently drove the wild Ulgath into the forest. In S.A. 1148, groups of Ulgath refugees reached the more fertile and sheltered forests surrounding the Agach vale. Here they came upon the villages of a vibrant Northman sea-culture that had thus far escaped the ravages of Baradhrim raids.

Again, the Northmen and Ulgath were alien to one another and relations between the two were initially strained. The forest, river and sea, however, provided resources aplenty for those who knew how to exploit them. The vitality of the Northman villages was little affected by the arrival of the Ulgath, and relations between them never turned openly hostile. At the onset of winter, the Ulgath were in desperate need of assistance. Their herds were too few, and their surroundings too new for them to successfully endure the long months of cold. In their need, the Northmen took pity on the refugees and helped support them through the long winter.

Though their numbers were few the following spring, the Ulgath benefited greatly from their close contact with the Northmen. While many Ulgath remained to dwell near their new-found friends, others used the boating and fishing skills they learned from the Northmen to exploit areas of the coast further to the west. The latter group expanded west throughout the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries until they reached the mouth of the mighty Fola Salenin (known in the west as the Celduin River) and the territory of the Rhídon Donath. The Donath and Ulgath became fast neighbors and a healthy trade began between the two cultures almost from their first meeting. Instead of expanding further down the western coast of the sea and encroaching on Rhídon lands and fishing grounds, the Ulgath migrated upriver and settled the Salenin valley. These riverside villages and the culture that evolved along the banks of the river came to call itself the Gargath (Ul. "River People").

3.3 MORGOTH'S LIEUTENANT

As the second millennia of the Second Age began, the regions surrounding the Inland Sea filled with Men from every corner of Endor. East of the sea was the domain of the Baradhrim and their subject tribes. To the north were Rhovanian Northmen and a small collection of Ulgath refugees. Along the western and southern shores Donath fishing villages prospered. In the southeast, the Urgath roamed the plains with their herds and called no man master. Such was the setting when Sauron, spirit of fire, first turned his gaze on the land called Rhûn.

3.3.1 THE RINGS OF BINDING

In the mid Second Age, Sauron the Maia recounted his repentance of past deeds as the chief servant of Morgoth and again committed himself to the domination of Middle-earth and its peoples. In S.A. 1000, he chose Mordor as the land that could most properly serve as the center of his realm and began the construction of the Barad-dûr. From the first, Sauron recognized Numenor and the kingdoms of the Elves as his chief rivals for domination of the continent. To combat the growing influence of Numenor and her colonies in Middle-earth, Sauron realized he would need many powerful servants. As Morgoth's Lieutenant in the First Age, Sauron knew well how the hearts of Man might be turned against one another. To this end, Sauron devised the Binding Rings, powerful artifacts that could bind the spirit of a Mannish servant to Middle-earth indefinitely.

The three Rings of Binding which have dominated much of the history of Rhûn were relatively early works in Sauron's career as a ring-smith. When Sauron forged them he had not yet discovered the secrets that led to the more potent Rings of Power he would make in later years. For this reason, the Binding Rings impart to their wielders a great deal less than the Rings of Power, and carry with them important restrictions that make them inferior. For one, Sauron knew that the original bearers of the rings must have substantial power themselves, as well as a strong will and devotion to the service of Mordor. Secondly, the Binding Rings could neither extend the life of the bearer, nor allow the spirit of the bearer to maintain any physical form after the expiration of his body. Instead, the Binding Rings would bind the bearer's undead spirit to the ring after his body had expired. The spirit might then possess the body of the next bearer, assuming that the new bearer was not so strong-willed that he might resist the possessing spirit. Choosing a successor-host then, was a delicate matter where strength of body and mind had to be weighed against the strength of the will to resist. This was a matter that was not completely understood by Sauron and his servants until many centuries later.

By the end of the thirteenth century of the Second Age, Sauron completed several Binding Rings and was ready to begin the long search for a suitable Mannish servant to become the first bearer. At the time, however, his attentions were being drawn to the more urgent and promising matter of binding the Elves of Eregion, and so Rhûn was spared for some years more before Sauron was able to properly focus on the task of subjugating its peoples.

3.3.2 THE ODHRIAGS AND THEIR COUNCIL

In S.A. 1641, a new people entered the lands of Rhûn and made their mark on the cultural tapestry of the region. These were the Otyassi tribes, an Aharic people distantly related to the Ioriag and Ulgath tribes of Rhûn, who journeyed from their homeland in the far south of the continent after being expelled by colonists from Numenor. In Acana, the Otyassi were an advanced people who knew of writing and reading, of the benefits of trade, and of the crafts of stone-masonry and metallurgy. Years of migration across the heart of the

continent, however, reduced them to a small collection of the stoutest individuals who lacked in all things save will-power. The route of their migration brought them north along the eastern slopes of the Ered Harmal and through the Ioriag land of Nurad. There the tribes would surely have come to an end as an independent people were it not for the keen intellect and shrewd eye of a young tribal leader named Muhlmek the Strong.

Besides being a warrior and military leader of some talent, Muhlmek was a great diplomat and student of history. Upon his people's entry into Nurad, Muhlmek was quick to see the deep cultural rifts between the Ioriag tribes of the region that drove these people to constantly persecute one another. Rather than allow his kin to become another of many tribes struggling for survival in this new land, Muhlmek identified one desperate group, the Aivriags, and offered to them the immediate assistance of his people in exchange for a pact of mutual non-aggression. The Otyassi and Aivriag leaders met for three days and on the evening of the third day of council sealed a blood pact that forever bound the two cultures into one people. Calling themselves the Odhriags (Od. "Dusk tribes"), they each swore to protect the other, forming an alliance that was just strong enough to allow them to survive, where individually they would have been destroyed.

But while the Odhriags survived their introduction to Rhûn, they did not initially prosper. The Variags of Khand were a strong and brutal people and conflict between the Variags and the Odhriags was constant. Eventually, the Odhriags were driven west, through the ranges of the Urgath and into the dry grasslands between the Inland Sea and the Ash Mountains. The proximity of their new land to the domain that Sauron was establishing in Mordor made the Odhriags natural targets of Sauron's attention, a fact that would shape the history of the Odhriag people for centuries to come.

3.3.3 THE KEEPER OF SOULS

Despite the hardships encountered by the Urgath in their long journey to the shores of the Inland Sea, many facets of Urgath culture remained, in the mid Second Age, basically unchanged from their eastern origins. Because the Urgath were a pastoral people from the beginning, the Urgath pantheon was filled with mobile deities, tied more to the people and the herds than to a landscape that so frequently changed. For this reason, the Urgath priesthood was one of the steadiest traditions of Urgath culture, and Second Age priests were as committed to the worship of Morgoth as had been the First Age priests who had actually seen the Enemy of the World.

When Sauron was finally able to venture among the peoples of Gathod, he was quick to recognize the opportunity present in these left-overs from his master's domain. Beginning in S.A. 1688, he made periodic appearances to prominent Urgath priests posing as Kragul, Keeper of Souls. The re-appearance of their chief deity threw the Urgath priesthood into a chaotic revivalism that engulfed all other tribal concerns and authorities, and bound the Urgath to the edicts of Mordor. Two years later, Sauron chose one named Lokuthor, the shaman of a prominent Urgath tribe, to be the first bearer of a Ring of Binding. As the appointed High

Priest of Kragul and the wielder of a lesser ring, Lokuthor became the most powerful individual in all of Gathod. As Sauron's most powerful servant in Rhûn, it fell to Lokuthor to consolidate the Dark Lord's hold on the local cultures while Sauron himself concentrated on events in western Middle-earth.

3.3.4 THE EARTH-MAIDENS OF FOLYAVULD

In stark contrast to the religious revolution engulfing the southern shore of the Inland Sea, the cultures of northwest Rhûn were being radically changed in an entirely different way. In S.A. 1690, three Entwives came to the highlands that form the watershed of the Uldona and began a great labor that would transform the landscape and the local cultures. They appeared to both the Donath of the region, and also to the refugee Gargath and instructed each in the methods of agriculture. To the peoples they influenced, the Entwives were servants of the earth itself; parts of the landscape come to life to reveal Arda's secrets to the eyes of Man. Indeed, while acquiring the technology of agriculture was an important step in the evolution of the local cultures, the impact that the Entwives made on local religious belief was at least equally real.

Each of the Entwives who came to Rhûn had her own preferred plants, and focused much of her energy in particular regions. In the highlands, many species of grapes were sown and the local Broendon Donath became expert viticulturists within only a few generations. In the lowlands, particularly along the lower Fola Salenin and Uldona, grains such as wheat and corn became the staple crops of Gargath villages. The forests were filled with wild flowers whose nectars yielded thick honeys, and with herbs of great healing potential.

Within a hundred years, Donath and Gargath villages that once struggled for subsistence became great store-houses of agricultural surplus. And as more of the population turned away from fishing and hunting as a means of subsistence, those who continued to fish and hunt enjoyed larger catches and became suppliers in their own commodities of dried meats, leather and shell. By the late eighteenth century of the Second Age, the cultures of Folyavuld (Fo. "Land of Rivers") dominated trade in northern Rhûn; a fact that would carry with it new dangers as events unfolded on the northern plains.

3.4 THE LONG ARM OF MORDOR

"In the east and south well nigh all men were under his dominion, and they grew strong in those days and built many towns and walls of stone, and they were numerous and fierce in war and armed with iron. To them Sauron was both king and god; and they feared him exceedingly, for he surrounded his abode with fire."

— The Silmarillion

3.4.1 THE WAR OF THE NORTH

At the end of the seventeenth century of the Second Age, Sauron took up more direct means of making his bid for the domination of Middle-earth. Many of those familiar with the history of western Middle-earth will know that Sauron made war on the Elves of Eregion to seize the Rings of Power. What is less known is that Sauron also made war on the Northmen of Rhûn in those days, through his ability to guide the Baradhrim tribes. Sauron first heard word of the Baradhrim and their dark history centuries before, through Lokuthor's Urgath scouts. Though legends of their defeat at the War of Wrath were still remembered in the oral traditions of the Baradhrim, the tribal wise men foretold the return of their dark master and the glory to which he had once elevated them. For Sauron, it was a small matter to appear before them in the guise of their most ancient deity Rakana-Kiral (Ar. "King of the World"), who was once Morgoth.

In this role, Sauron urged the westernmost Baradhrim, the brutal Szreldor and Vulszev tribes, to make war on the Northmen of Rhûn. Besides weakening a proud and valiant people, the displacement of the Northmen would help solidify Sauron's control of the Inland Sea, a region that dominated Mordor's northern flank. Over two seasons of warfare the two Baradhrim tribes devastated the disunited Northmen, driving them deep into Rhovanion by the winter of S.A. 1696. Ardatha Szrel, warlord of the Szreldorn people, laid claim to the fertile lands along the courses of both the Fola Salenin and Redwater, and the wide plains northeast of the Szreldor were filled with Murgath tribes loyal to the Baradhrim. Szreldorn warlord nobles established holdings from the mouth of the Redwater to the river's northern courses, where iron ore was found in abundance. Competition for these iron resources brought Ardatha's warriors into brutal conflict with the Dwarves of Azanulinbar-dum, and the northern banks of the river were heavily reinforced with primitive forts. In fact, Ardatha raised the first Szreldorn capital within sight of the Iron Hills, at a place called Adumovas (Sz. "Ironpoint").

For the Vulszev, the war against the Northmen was less a conquest of lands to settle and more an instance of war for war's sake. The feud between the Vulszev and Northman tribes was long-standing and filled with injustices on both sides. For this reason, the Vulszev were not content to call off their aggressions after the second year of warfare. Conflict between these two peoples would continue for years, drawing other cultures and races into the fray and reaching lands as far west as Greenwood the Great.

Along the northern coast of the sea, the fishing villages of the Northmen and refugee Ulgath were attacked without mercy. Rather than be utterly conquered by their attackers, a substantial part of the population banded together and migrated by boat east along the forested sea-shore. In this manner they escaped their pursuers and eventually found a sheltered bay fed by a strong forest river. To both the bay and the river they gave the name Kug (Ul. "Mist") because of the great banks of fog that could sometimes shroud the bay entirely.

At the mouth of the forest river they made a clearing and

raised a tall wooden palisade to separate that clearing from the perils of the surrounding forest, which was filled with the wary Uialrim. The Elves debated over this encroachment on their territory, but ultimately took mercy on these pathetic refugees and chose not to interfere. They did, however, set a constant guard to monitor the spread of the Easterlings. The town that grew up there was called Kugavod (Ul. "Town of Mists"), and came to house a successful fishing and forest culture.

3.4.2 THE EVOLUTION OF FOLYAVULDA CULTURE

While Ardatha Szrel's realm took shape along the banks of the Redwater River, the changes instigated in Folyavuld by the coming of the Entwives intensified. Under the tutelage of the Earth-maidens, the Gargath became rich in surplus grain, which they traded to the Broendon for wine and the Rhídon for the goods of the sea. Broendon wine became a staple among all the tribes of Folyavuld, and though the secret of wine production spread to the Rhídon and Gargath, Broendon wines remained the most prized vintages of the land.

Highland Broendon culture was centered around the site of Killindrow (Dn. "High Hold"), a large village located on the banks of the swift-flowing Uldona River. In the days of rock-shelter dwellings, the Broendon enhanced a vast complex of natural caverns in the hills surrounding the village. As their society shifted to above-ground structures, the caves were used as family tombs and later as wine cellars. The Rhídon were the least agricultural of the three tribes, preferring to take their livelihood from the sea. Still, homesteads along the Gweléth vale grew hardy highland grains and grapes for a small domestic wine industry.

The three tribes of the Gargath people were by far the most prosperous of Folyavuld's cultures. With the help of the Earth-maidens, they transformed the vale of the Fola Salenin from swamp and primary forest, to a land of bountiful grain and corn fields. Under the tutelage of the Entwives they learned to make bread and later beer. Before the War of the North, the Northmen of Rhovanion were their allies and partners in trade. Using their knowledge of rivercraft, they carried on a continuous trade with the Broendon by ferrying goods up the Uldona. The town of Uldonavan (Ul. "Uldona's Town") was founded in S.A. 1735, at the lowest year-round ford on the Uldona's course, and rapidly grew into Folyavuld's first and greatest town. It was here that the great marriage of Gargath and Donath cultures first began, as merchants from both cultures made their homes in the town. First a dialogue, and later an alliance between Gargath and Donath was made at Uldonavan, and the town served as an informal capital to the emerging realm for over 150 years.

3.4.3 THE SZRELDORN INVASION OF FOLYAVULD

Into the vacuum left behind by the westward advance of the Vulszev and Szreldorn peoples settled the Murgath tribes. These peoples were loosely tied to the Baradhrim, having acted as scouts and auxiliaries during the War of the North.

To placate their Szreldorn neighbors, these tribes paid a yearly tribute of cattle. Those that refused to pay the tribute risked the wrath of the Szreldor, which might include the complete enslavement of their people and seizure of their herds. Each Murgath matriarch knew that every other Murgath tribe coveted her herds and ranges, and would eagerly join in the persecution of her tribe were she to give them any excuse. This air of mutual distrust kept the Murgath from ever organizing themselves above the tribal level, and from ever uniting to throw off the yoke of Szreldorn rule.

With the base of wealth among the Szreldor shifting from horse and cattle to tribute rights and slaves, Szreldorn society became dominated by warrior nobles. This caste was further elevated by a decree made by the Bromarja (Sz. "Seers") of the tribe which stated that the right to rule the Szreldor fell by divine right to the strongest of the tribal patriarchs, the current Szrel overlord. As instruments of the Szrel-King's strength, warrior nobles were servants of the divine will of Rakana-Kiral, and thus were holy men in their own right. The only honorable professions for Szreldorn males were weapon-smithing, warhorse-raising, and making war. Clan patriarchs built fortified manors in imitation of the Szrel-King, and lived off the tribute of Murgath subject tribes. For the next two centuries, the Szreldor terrorized their nomadic neighbors and ruled the northern plains unchallenged.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of the Second Age the Fola Salenin acted as an effective barrier between unorganized Szreldor raiders and the prosperous villages of the Gargath. The descendants of Ardatha Szrel were relatively lazy, and too frequently challenged by other petty Szreldor nobles to achieve anything comparable to their progenitor. Though it was obvious that raiding Gargath villages could be a prosperous enterprise, the lack of a practical ford precluded any sizable Szreldorn raid over the river.

This period of inactivity ended in S.A. 1886, when Korlana Szrel took the throne. Korlana had passed his time as heir raiding on the eastern frontier and scouting out the Fola Salenin valley. During these travels he devised a plan for crossing the Fola Salenin in force using large rafts for transporting the horses and weapons upon which Szreldor warriors depended. The crossing was undertaken at the future site of Ilanin in the late spring of S.A. 1887, the first year of Korlana's reign.

The Gargath were wholly unprepared to face the Szreldorn assault, and entire village populations were caught and enslaved. Over the next two years, Korlana Szrel managed to seize all of the Fola Salenin lowlands from the River Uldona to the Inland Sea, though in the east, the territory of the Szreldor narrowed sharply between the forested and broken highlands and the wide river. Those few who escaped the invaders fled into the highlands where Donath and Gargath warriors working together were able to use the terrain to their advantage. Along the Uldona, Korlana's men ran into a stiff resistance of Broendon and Gargath fighters and his offensive stalled. At the end of his second season of making war on the Gargath, Korlana's troops were able to seize Uldonavan, and drive what was left of the Gargath resistance into the highlands. The Szrel-King then proclaimed a great

victory and turned his attention away from conquest and toward the administration of his new holdings. Though a warrior at heart, the Szrel King was wise enough to realize that he would be better served by seizing control of the Gargath economy rather than wrecking it. The Szreldor had no inclination to become agriculturalists nor to manage the day-to-day activities of a large plantation, so the King allowed whole Gargath clans to remain intact. The dismantling of the kin-based structure of the villages would most certainly lead to the collapse of the remarkable Gargath economy. The village matriarchs, therefore, were allowed to retain their authority among the villagers, but were ultimately forced to obey their appointed Szreldorn overlords.

The young Szrel-King spent the next five years away from his father's capital on the Redwater, settling disputes in his new territories and leading reprisal raids against highland warriors who proved to be both relentless and elusive. The Szrel-King came to learn that his mounted warriors were ill-suited to melee in the forested and broken terrain of the highlands, and any gains made against the highland warriors were temporary at best. Korlana himself fell in S.A. 1893 to an ambush while leading a small group of Szreldor into the hills south of the river and within sight of the sea. His own son Markova managed to recover his body and take it to the river's edge where he raised a great mound in honor of his dead father. Markova Szrel decided to build his own capital at this site and named it Szrel-Arkasa (Sz. "The Glory of Szrel").

3.4.4 THELOR'S FOLK

In S.A. 2797, the Dwarven King Thelor moved his tribe from their home in the Grey Mountains to the wrecked halls of Falek-dim. With the aid of a Ring of Power, which Sauron gave to Thelor in hopes of enslaving the Dwarf King, the Dwarves made war on the Uruk-marzguram to reclaim the Uldona Spine. The Orcs, however, were deeply entrenched in the ruined Dwarven mansion, and would not yield it to the fierce onslaught of the Dwarves. Thelor's war against the Orcs lasted seven years, and greatly diminished both peoples. In the end, however, the Dwarves won several great victories, forcing the Orcs out of whole sections of Falek-dim and re-establishing the Dwarven presence in Rhûn. They renamed their kingdom Nurunkizdin and renewed the search for precious stones and metals in the Uldona Spine.

3.4.5 THE REIGN OF THE SZREL-KINGS

Markova Szrel proved to be a much more capable administrator than his father Korlana, and quickly turned his attention to the formalization of land rights for Szreldorn nobles settling in his new territory. River ferries were permanently established at the Donu confluence and Szrel-Arkasa to handle traffic between the new territory and the northern plains. Enticed by the lure of the bountiful Gargath economy, the majority of Szreldorn nobles claimed new lands along the lower Fola Salenin, abandoning the forts they built along the Redwater. The only Szreldorn nobles of note to remain in the old territories were wealthy horse-breeders,

and those who ran the iron panning camps along the Redwater. The Old Iron Road which ran the course of the Redwater and connected many of the old Szreldorn forts was now extended to the Donu river ferry, and a notable settlement grew there under the administration of a powerful Szreldorn clan named Hos. This new town was known in later years as Ilanin, though in its roots it simply bore the name of its noble lord. In both Ilanin and Szrel-Arkasa great iron forges were built, and both settlements came to be recognized by the black smoke of its forge-fires.

Personal slave raids into the interior highlands of Folyavuld were still encouraged by the Szrel-Kings. Most of the slaves captured were taken back to the estates of the noble who sponsored the raid. These small additions to the work force helped get the estates through the more labor-intensive seasons of the year. Once the noble no longer needed the supplemental slave, he would typically sell them to another noble or give them to the King. Slaves given to the King spent the remainder of their lives carting iron on the Old Iron Road, or laboring at the large construction sites of Szrel-Arkasa.

3.4.6 LIFE IN THE HIGHLANDS

For the peoples of Folyavuld, the physical and economic trauma of the Szreldorn invasion was compounded by a spiritual loss. The Earth-maidens viewed the invasion as a sign that these lands, though abundantly fertile, would never be any safer than the gardens they had already left behind in the Anduin vale. Their works here were just as sure to succumb to the fires of war as were the Anduin gardens to the foul poisons of the Dark Lord of Mordor. The only way to reasonably ensure that the Olvar they treasured would survive the ages was to depart in search of a new sheltered land to become their gardens. They reasoned that the more gardens they made, the better chance that one would survive unmolested. The Earth-maidens left Folyavuld in secrecy one autumn night, bound for the trackless plains of the east.

Reverence of the Earth-maidens was a thread woven deeply into the fabric of Folyavulda society. Though the Entwives themselves departed Folyavuld forever, the surviving peoples of Folyavuld continued their reverence for the Earth-mother Aldena and her servants. Around the highland gardens that the Earth-maidens had planted, the clan lords raised great citadels. These were both to protect the sacred gardens from the depredations of the outside world, and also to further glorify the memory of the Earth-maidens. Over time, these citadels and the caste of men and women who were their stewards learned great secrets in the arts of medicinal healing. The citadels became vast storehouses of healing knowledge as well as monuments to the glory of the Earth-mother. The servants of the citadels came to be known as the Gyogarasag (Fy. "Society of Healers"), and in them was trusted the health and fertility of the people and the land.

Though Gargath society was largely destroyed by the invasion of the Szreldor, the Broendon and Rhídon were relatively safe in their highland refuge. Donath scouts and hunters kept a watchful eye out for would-be Szreldorn raiders. Ambushes were laid in areas of particularly close terrain where Szreldorn cavalry was at a pronounced

disadvantage. Life in the highland villages, however, took a turn for the worse.

Though each harvest yielded better grapes, the trade economy of the Donath was crippled by their loss of Gargath trading partners. A modest trade persisted between the Donath tribes, but in the end, the Broendon were forced to rely more and more on hunting. The steady number of Gargath refugees into the highlands magnified the problems. The Broendon and Rhídon were honorable allies, however, and Gargath families in need of assistance were usually admitted into Donath communities, despite the accompanying social strain.

Over the years of Szreldorn occupation, these Gargath families became integrated into the highland village communities. The Gargath proved to be valuable hunters and wood-workers, and eventually achieved some success in adapting certain grains to the highland soil. Because of their shared experience with the Entwives, the religious beliefs of the Gargath closely mirrored those of their Donath hosts. Though the authority of the Donath patriarchs was universally recognized and respected, Gargath matriarchs retained much of their customary authority over their own people. Gradually, the two peoples became so intertwined through marriage that village authority fell to a ruling couple, though lineage was still traced through the male.

The Gargath refugees did not entirely sever themselves from the Gargath who remained in the lowlands as slaves. Gargath hunters prowled the fields of lowland Szreldorn estates at night, keeping in touch with the enslaved Gargath and occasionally raiding for supplies and weapons. They also offered shelter to slaves who had found the displeasure of their Szreldorn lords and were at risk of being sold into the King's slave camps or worse. Wherever the slaves of a Szreldorn estate revolted, the conflict was supported and often instigated by Gargath from the highlands.

3.4.7 THE PRIEST KINGS OF THE SZRELDOR

Over the span of three centuries the Szreldorn kingdom in Folyavuld emerged as the strongest in Rhûn. The combination of a stable slave economy with the martial prowess of the Baradhrim brought the Szreldor to a pinnacle of power unrealized since the fall of Morgoth. In the Szreldor, Sauron saw a potential subject people with a distinguished history, a predisposition to evil, and a proven record of effectiveness. The Szreldor represented a great asset that he might someday use against the growing might of Numenor, and finding a servant to secure his control over that kingdom became a top priority. To this end, Sauron sent Oraishapek the Dispossessed, a bearer of a Ring of Binding, to the Szreldor in S.A. 2204 (see sections 9.7 and 10.1 for more details on the Dispossessed).

Upon his arrival at the court of the Szrel-King, Korlana Szrel IV, Oraishapek declared himself as an emissary of Rakana-Kiral who brought to the Szreldor many gifts of knowledge. The Bromarja of the clan had long foretold the return of Rakana-Kiral, so his claim went largely uncontested. Once Sauron's emissary had demonstrated to the assembled

Bromarja his command of sorcery and deep knowledge of the history and disposition of their god, the Bromarja accepted him as their superior and High Priest. The King accepted the Dispossessed as his trusted advisor, and made few decisions without first consulting the will of Rakana-Kiral.

Under the tutelage of this newest High-Priest, the religious caste of Szreldorn society was instructed in the black arts of sorcery and taught to read and write both their native tongue and the black speech of Mordor using the letters of the Tengwar. To the nobles and artisans of the kingdom, Oraishapek taught stone-masonry, and the craft of galley-construction for the plying of rivers. Szrel-Arkasa was transformed into a fortress of stone, where iron forges made some of the finest tools and weapons in Rhûn, and oared river galleys transported materials from all corners of the kingdom. Bolstered by these new skills, the Szreldorn economy soared. Prospectors located valuable building stone in the hills south of Szrel-Arkasa and also north of the Inland Sea, prompting military campaigns in these areas. Shallow river barges and galleys were designed to move ore and stone from the panning and quarry sites, to the forges and monumental building projects of Szrel-Arkasa. The passage upriver from Szrel-Arkasa to the northern quarry sites was so dreaded by the galley-slaves that the tributary itself became known by the name Ulumur (Fy. "Great Labor"). The urban slave market grew in importance as the demand for galley-slaves and construction workers increased. Slave-raiding in the highlands again became a very profitable enterprise, and conflict with the cultures of the highlands took on a renewed intensity.

The faster the wealth of the kingdom increased, the more influence Oraishapek and his growing order of priests gained. The Bromarja of Rakana-Kiral soon dominated every facet of Szreldorn society, and Sauron's emissary had his choice of Szreldorn males to train as adepts, or to choose from for a new host to bear the Binding Ring. This he first accomplished in S.A. 2236. The adepts he trained provided perfect hosts, being strong of body and mind, yet completely devoted to the cause of Sauron. Among the Bromarja, it was believed that on accepting the High Priest's ring, the wisdom of Rakana-Kiral was revealed to the bearer, thus transforming him from his former self, to one wiser and infinitely stronger. The elder High Priest (the old host) was invariably left dumbstruck by the withdrawal of Rakana-Kiral's presence (the removal of his ring), and was therefore ritually sacrificed by the priests. So what seemed to the Bromarja as a succession of powerful High Priests was in actuality the uninterrupted reign of Oraishapek's Dispossessed spirit. Oraishapek changed hosts sixteen times over the next four centuries, and in this time transferred much of the Szrel-King's authority to himself.

The first Szrel-King to fully place the powers of his seat into the hands of the Dispossessed was Ardatha Szrel X, who in S.A. 2576 became an adherent to the priesthood. At the suggestion of his High Priest, Ardatha turned over his son and heir to the Bromarja for education and indoctrination into the order of Rakana-Kiral. Young Lokor Szrel grew into an avid learner and mastered the fundamental teachings of the Bromarja at an early age. In S.A. 2603, Oraishapek chose Lokor as his successor, thus positioning himself to gain

control of the throne in Szrel-Arkasa. By S.A. 2612, the Disposessed was both the High Priest of Rakana-Kiral, and the Szrel-King. His subjects named him Kromarsza Tarvas (Sz. "The Sorcerer King"), and he was feared throughout eastern Rhovanion and northern Rhûn.

3.4.8 THE DARKENING OF RHÛN

As the third millenium of the Second Age drew to a close, the power of the kingdom of the Szreldor reached its zenith. It was at this time that Oraishapek perceived through sorcerous means the evil things that dwelt in dark caverns beneath the Inland Sea. His efforts revealed to him the deep fissure in the seafloor which penetrated those caverns, and which might be used as a way of perverting the waters and bringing chaos to the shores of the Sea. The Kromarsza-Tarvas then began a great personal effort to discover a way of raising some horror from the depths of the world and unleashing it upon the unsuspecting peoples of Rhûn.

To further his research, Oraishapek initiated the construction of a great temple and laboratory on the high western coast. The agents of the Disposessed soon discovered a labyrinth of caverns in the Gweléth River gorge which the Rhídon Donath knew as the Grob Norachd (Dn. "Hidden Falls"). Slow and careful exploration of these caverns eventually brought the explorers through to their end, the bottom of a great sinkhole on the mountainous plateau above. A perfect construction site, within short travelling distance of the sinkhole and overlooking the great Inland Sea was found shortly thereafter.

The construction of the Dradorny-Arnas (Sz. "High Citadel") temple complex was the greatest architectural and logistical feat of the Szreldor. The gathering, moving, and erecting of the materials needed to complete the structure commanded a large proportion of the kingdom's resources for nearly two centuries. Marble was quarried from the nearby mountains and moved on rollers to the construction site. A road was made from Szrel-Arkasa to the Grob Norachd, which was renamed Narsza Trador (Sz. "The Shaded Road"). Stone cutters transformed these natural caverns into a series of underground stairs and bridges capable of handling the traffic necessary to feed the slave camps of the construction site. The traditional Rhídon inhabitants of the Gweléth gorge area were brutally persecuted. Captured village populations swelled the slave camps on the plateau above.

The completed temple was used for isolating and instructing adepts, and became the new focus of the dark worship of Rakana-Kiral. More importantly, however, was Oraishapek's use of the site for performing the magical rites necessary to arouse the beasts of the Underdeeps from the centuries old slumber. Many a Donath and Gargath slave became the human sacrifice called for in the rite, and the rocky shore at the foot of the cliffs surrounding the Dradorny-Arnas became littered with the bones of Oraishapek's victims. The efforts of the Disposessed paid off in S.A. 2814, when Kraszapol (Sz. "Red Fin"), a greater Sea Drake, was drawn out of the subterranean tunnels. This was the first of many such successes, and the Inland Sea soon became an even more perilous place for sailors and fishermen.

3.5 THE WAR OF THE LAST ALLIANCE

As the fourth millennia of the Second Age dawned, Sauron tightened his grasp on the peoples of Rhûn. Both Lokuthor and Oraishapek busily prepared their nations for the war that must surely come, when the Dark Lord would assert his right to rule all of Middle-earth. Though their preparations were briefly interrupted in S.A. 3261, when Sauron was taken to Numenor as a prisoner of the Dunedain, no outside influences challenged the servants of the shadow for the allegiance of the cultures of the Inland Sea. Still, the peoples of Rhûn had some valiant individuals among them who were able to achieve great deeds in dark times.

3.5.1 LOKUTHOR'S FAILURE

The return of Sauron's spirit to Mordor in S.A. 3319 was a signal to Oraishapek to begin preparing for the war that would determine the destiny of Rhûn, and indeed all of Middle-earth. The forge-fires of Szrel-Arkasa burst into full flame. Religious zealots roamed the kingdom, stirring the populace into a fervor with apocalyptic sermons. Szreldorn companies toured the northern plains, there to remind the Murgath of their commitment to fight alongside the armies of Sauron. When the call to arms was issued by Mordor, Oraishapek's people would stand ready.

In Gathod, Lokuthor made great strides in converting the many cultures of the region to Sauron's cause, but was still somewhat doubtful of his ability to bring them to war. The Urgath had many capable warriors among them whose allegiance to Lokuthor's Priests and ultimately to Mordor were beyond question. The Donath of the southern coast, however, were generally too peaceful a people to expect a great contribution of arms from their area. Lokuthor was able to make some progress in building a base of support along the southern coast to help provide valuable foodstuffs to Sauron's armies, but little more could realistically be expected from the fisher-folk of the southern shore.

The Odhriags, on the other hand, were accomplished warriors who could provide valuable strength of arms to Sauron's cause, were Lokuthor able to deliver them. This proved to be a greater task than Lokuthor anticipated. The Odhriags were a fiercely independent people who were used to fighting against unfavorable odds to maintain their cultural integrity. Despite the best efforts of the Disposessed, the total allegiance of the Odhriags continued to elude Sauron's servant right up to the call to arms, which was issued in S.A. 3430. At that time Sauron commanded his servant to use all means available to secure the Odhriag warriors to the banner of Mordor before the coming of the host of Elendil and Gil-galad.

In S.A. 3430, the Odhriags were led by Kasagul Hotun, a man of great strength and keen mind. Kasagul perceived that serving the Dark Lord of Mordor would achieve little for the Odhriag people other than the untimely deaths of their sons. He therefore used all of his influence among the tribes to resist Lokuthor's edicts. In S.A. 3431, Lokuthor resorted to a desperate ploy when he had Kasagul seized and brought

before him. There, Lokuthor forced the Binding Ring on the Odhriag chieftain, and entered Kasagul's body with the intention of possessing him, and using his influence to bring the Odhriags into the service of Mordor. The Dispossessed underestimated, however, the willpower of the aged chieftain, and was forced to wrestle with Kasagul's will over every move and each spoken word. In the absence of Kasagul, his son Khorgul Hotun continued to argue against serving Sauron. Later in the year, Lokuthor-Kasagul resurfaced among his people, professing a change of heart and backing Odhriag participation in Sauron's cause. Khorgul, however grieved, refused to submit to his father's councils and led an ever growing band of dissenters against the servants of the Dark Lord who now frequented Odhriag lands.

In the late months of S.A. 3433, the armies of the Last Alliance were moving on Sauron's borders, and the Dark Lord called on all his servants to deliver the strength they had to defeat Mordor's enemies. Despite his master's command, however, Lokuthor remained paralyzed on his throne in central Gathod, striving with Kasagul Hotun for mastery of himself. Though Lokuthor had momentarily prevailed over Kasagul and was able to use his body to secure the allegiance of many Odhriag tribes, he now realized that Kasagul was actually the stronger. Lokuthor now no longer possessed the strength to remove the ring from Kasagul's finger, and thus free himself from the power of the Odhriag chieftain's will. When Sauron found Lokuthor in this state, and realized that the Dispossessed was no longer able to hold together the many peoples that might follow him into battle, the Dark Lord was infuriated. With one terrifying word, Sauron leveled the marble structure of Lokuthor's temple, sealing the Binding Ring and the trapped spirits of Kasagul and Lokuthor under many tons of ruin. Thus ended the first servant of Mordor in Rhûn, along with much of what had been accomplished in his name.

3.5.2 THE GREAT MUSTER & THE RISE OF DROZA KADAR

The early months of S.A. 3430 brought word to Mordero of the alliance between Elendil and the Elves of Lindon. Aauron recognized his greatest chance of defeating all of his greatest chance of defeating all of his enemies with one blow and assuring his domination of Middle-earth. Envoys were sent to each of Morder's vassal kingdoms, summoning them to war. All of western Middle-earth began to converge on the lands around Mordeor to play their part in cataclysmic battles that would determine the balance of power in the west for hundreds of years to come.

The Szrel-king was prepared for the summons and arrived in Mordor within the year, at the head of a army containing three thousand of his own warriors together with nearly fifteen thousand Murgath warriors. Taken together with the warriors of Khand and the southern Ulgath host, the armies delivered by the Szrel-king comprised the entire mounted force fielded by Morder. Companies of Szreldor and Murgath scouts left the Black Land almost immediately, making camps along the Anduin Vale and seeking signs of the enemy.

The departure of the war host left northern Rhûn a relatively empty land. For the few warriors left to guard the forts and towns of the Szreldor, missing the chance to fight in the most glorious war of their lifetime carried with it a sense of indescribable shame. Only the very old, the very young, and the women were left to manage manors with large populations of slaves. Activity in the capital came to a crashing halt. The skeleton garrisons left to guard the hill-forts retreated behind their walls and left the countryside entirely to the Donath.

Given the poor morale of the Szreldor warriors left in Folyavuld, it was only a matter of time before they lost control of the huge slave population. Small scale revolts had not been uncommon in the backwaters of the kingdom, even during the height of Szreldor strength. The Great Rebellion itself began in S. A. 3434, on a rural estate along the River Uldona. The revolt leader, Droza Kadar was the intelligent young son of the Gargath-slave matriarch of the region. Being young and proud, he often openly defied his Szreldor master and was frequently beaten. Five years prior to the departure of the Szreldor war-host, Droza's master gave up on trying to break him, and despite the unrest it would cause among the rest of his slaves, he sold Droza into the Ilanin slave-market.

Droza suffered cruelly as a barge-slave and attempted numerous escapes. In S.A. 3432 his barge was toiling up the Ulumur when it was caught by a ferocious storm. As the crew struggled to bring the barge to the river-bank, Droza slipped his bonds and dove into the river. After eluding what little pursuit was offered, Droza made his way through the agricultural lands south of Szrel-Arkasa and into the highlands. The Rhidon he encountered helped him find his way west until he crossed into Broendon lands. These were the highlands that surrounded his mother's lands and he was intimately familiar with the region and the prejudices of its inhabitants.

Making his way deeper into the Broendon highlands, Droza was eventually approached by a party of Donath scouts who were willing to lead him to their patriarchs at Killindrow. In the spring of S.A. 3433, Droza was finally led into the presence of the highland patriarchs, where he laid out his plans of returning to Kadar lands and leading a revolt to oust their present masters. During his journey across the kingdom he had witnessed the emptying of the land as the Szreldor war-host rode from Szrel-Arkasa. Donath scouts had also marked the passing of the war-host, and the patriarchs recognized the opportunity that was before them. After some deliberation, the patriarchs pledged highland support for his rebellion in exchange for assurances that Droza would deliver Kadar-Gargath assistance to the patriarchs when the Szreldor responded.

3.5.3 REBELLION

Droza found it surprisingly easy to lead a small band of highlanders onto the estate lands and into the slave village under the cover of night. There he found that his mother had died shortly after his departure and that Kadar authority had passed to his eldest sister. His sister was eager to avenge her mother's death and placed her support behind Droza. In

silence, Droza led a large group of highland warriors and freed slaves to the estate manor where they made short work of the aged slave-master and his guards. The manor itself was put to the torch as Droza led his motley band to the nearest neighboring estate. By night's end, three Szreldor estates on Kadar land were liberated, and Droza commanded a force of several hundred freed slaves. Several days later all Kadar lands south of the Sorona and Maraki Rivers, including the town of Uldonavan, were in the hands of the rebels.

When the captain of the nearest Szreldor hill-fort learned of the Kadar rebellion he immediately ordered a reprisal force to put down the uprising. The Donath, however, were ready to honor their part of the alliance with Droza, and ambushed the Szreldor relief column as they sortied. So savage was the Donath assault that the gate was taken before it could be shut and Broendon warriors were soon in control of the outpost. Once the fighting had died down, Droza again met with the highland patriarchs, this time to determine what future course of action to take.

Droza and his allies realized that, by now, the Szreldor at Ilanin must surely know of their rebellion, and be making plans to respond. The allies decided that their first priority should be to defend the lands they had liberated. Despite this conservative plan, the rebellion itself spread largely of its own accord. The rural Szreldor were nearly powerless to prevent the tide of rebellion from engulfing the entire Uldona river valley and spreading into the eastern interior. Meanwhile the allies sent scouts into the lands north of the River Sorona to learn the progress of the enemy. The leading noble of Ilanin had gathered nearly every capable Szreldor warrior west of the River Uldona and was advancing south.

After a brief contest at the Sorona, Droza and his highlander allies retreated to Uldonavan and the hills surrounding. The Szreldor column was ambushed mercilessly as it made its way through Broendon land, but the lord of Ilanin still had a sizable force of warriors as he descended on Uldonavan. Though they suffered terrible casualties, the initial charge of the Szreldor cavalry broke Droza's pike-line and sent the army of former slaves into a rout through the town. Droza was able to rally many of his men and retreat from Uldonavan in some semblance of order, but the morale of his army was seriously damaged in the defeat. Over the next week, the rebel army made many valiant stands against the Szreldor, but were constantly forced to retreat farther into the lands they had liberated.

3.5.4 THE BATTLE OF DAGORLAD

The year S.A. 3434 also saw the culmination of the monumental conflict brewing on the plains north of the Black Gate. Though word reached the Szreldor of the rebellion blooming in their homeland, events on the Dagorlad were hastening to their conclusion and even had Sauron allowed them to return to their kingdom, few would have voluntarily missed the chance to fight for their god.

Word of the rebellion, however, had an entirely different effect on the Murgath. The majority of the Murgath had no desire to stay and fight for Rakana-Kiral. Many Murgath began to watch for their best opportunity to flee the

battlefield and return to lands no longer dominated by the Szreldor. When the course of the battle turned against the forces of Sauron, they became increasingly optimistic that they could hold their lands against the return of a defeated Szreldor army.

At the height of the battle, the Dark Lord committed his greatest servants to the fray, the Ringwraiths. Caught between the superior armies of Elendil and Gil-galad and the terrifying presence of the Witch-king and his cohorts, many of the Mannish servants of Sauron were thrown into complete disarray. Under the direction of Kharish Ibar, leader of a strong but little devoted Murgath clan, most of the Murgath warriors took advantage of the chaos of the moment. Together with their steeds, whole companies fled from the battlefield rather than remain where they would surely perish in defense of lords not of their choosing. Under the dire circumstances of the battle, the Szreldor were powerless to hold the Murgath rout in check. Rather than pursue an enemy that had obviously lost their heart for battle, Elendil and Gil-galad allowed the Murgath to flee into the eastern and northern plains unhindered and concentrated on exploiting the weakness that their flight left in the ranks of the enemy.

Once the rout of Sauron's forces was in full bloom, Elendil ordered the pursuit of the enemy in the hopes of preventing some of them from reaching the Morannon, thus separating them from the main host of the enemy that was passing into Mordor. This is exactly what happened to a large company of Szreldor and Murgath who had remained loyal to Sauron's cause. While the majority of the Szreldor retreated into Mordor to take part in the defense of Barad-dur, these were forced to flee into the eastern plains.

3.5.5 REBEL REINFORCEMENTS

While Droza was fighting his war with the army of Ilanin, the rebellion continued to smolder on the eastern side of the River Uldona. Several successful slave revolts in Kadar and Londu lands north of the Maraki tributary had liberated over twenty Szreldor estates. Tarnesus Polsa, the husband of an influential Londu matriarch went from estate to estate, raising a large force of men to add to Droza's army in the south. Tarnesus reasoned that Droza could be convinced to lead a war against Ilanin and thus liberate the remainder of Londu lands, including those of the Londu clan matriarch herself. When Tarnesus arrived at the Uldonavan ford, however, the town was nearly deserted and the only signs of the rebel army were the still smoldering funeral pyres raised by the town's populace for their dead sons.

Tarnesus made a very cautious advance south into Kadar lands following the path of the retreating rebel and pursuing Szreldor armies. Along the way he was joined by many survivors of the Uldonavan defeat who had been sundered from the rebel army during Droza's retreat and knew something of the Szreldor army's size and position. When his scouts finally happened upon the Ilanin war-host, they were preparing to charge a pike line thrown up by the rebel army to cover a rebel withdrawal into the highlands. Tarnesus led more than six hundred disorganized rebels into a chaotic, mob-style battle against the unwary Szreldor.

When Droza's scouts brought word to him of the battle, he moved quickly to capitalize on this unforeseen chance to do lasting damage to his enemy and committed what little strength he had remaining. Together the two slave armies hemmed in the Szreldor and prevented them from executing another of the well-organized massed cavalry charges that had been so effective against the rebels in past battles. Some of the stronger Szreldorn units succeeded in breaking the ring of foes and fled piecemeal from the battlefield. The majority, however, were trapped between the two armies and crushed. The lord of Ilanin himself was dragged from the saddle by arms made strong by years of toiling in the fields.

Grateful for the timely aid lent by Tarnesus and his army, Droza agreed that Ilanin must fall and Londu lands must be liberated from the Szreldor. Droza appointed Tarnesus as his chief captain and advisor in the coming battle. In accordance with the alliance Droza had struck with the highland patriarchs, a sizeable portion of his army also consisted of Broendon warriors. The attack was launched from Uldonavan and proceeded across the Londu countryside relatively unopposed.

The ranks of the rebel army swelled as slave estates were liberated. Rather than face the slave army, many of the Szreldorn families abandoned their estates and fled to the relative safety of Ilanin. From there, many were able to flee by boat to Szrel-Arkasa and escape the fall of the town. Some of the Szreldorn units that had escaped the disastrous defeat in the south managed to return to Ilanin to help defend the town against the coming attack. Still, their numbers were few and the Szreldor found themselves outnumbered twenty-to-one when the rebel army arrived outside the town walls.

Droza initially decided to starve out the town garrison, but word of a strong relief force from Szrel-Arkasa advancing along the Fola Selanin forced his hand. He would soon be forced to commit his strength east of the Uldona and north of the Maraki to prevent this new enemy column from reaching the ford at Uldonavan. In the spirit of this new-found urgency, Droza himself led a mass assault on the town walls with the intent of scaling them and taking the town by storm. His forces were inexperienced at this sort of warfare, and rebel casualties were very high. The break he needed came when the fighting along the walls reached its peak. The sizeable population of barge-slaves penned within the town took advantage of the garrison's concentration along the walls and led a revolt of their own. Trapped between two enemies, the Szreldorn defenders were utterly defeated and the town taken by the rebels. As winter set in, only the Edru-Gargath and the Rhidon clans remained under the yoke of Szreldorn oppression.

3.5.6 THE SIEGE OF THE BARAD-DUR

On the plains east of the Morannon, many Szreldor and Murgath companies were able to separate themselves from the battle raging around the gates of Mordor. The hosts of Elendil and Gil-galad were so intent on the capture of the gates, that little attention was paid to those that were separated from the main host and forced east. After a brief

council, the Szreldor resolved to make a last try at relieving the Black Gate and thereby attempt to win passage to fight by the side of the Szrel king within Mordor itself. To prevent a repeat of the defection of the Murgath, the Szreldor divided their company and took charge of their Murgath allies directly.

After a cautious advance back to the battlefield, the Szreldor charged the companies surrounding the gates. The forces of Elendil and Gil-galad were now in complete control of the Morannon and were advancing into Udun in good order. A contingent of Eriadorian cavalry completely routed the Szreldor and pursued them deep into the Talath Harroch. There the Szreldor took to hiding among their Murgath charges, completely abandoning all thought of returning to the battlefield.

On the barren plain surrounding the Barad-dur the retreating host of Mordor again turned to face their pursuers. Chief among Sauron's captains to fight in the rearguard was the Szrel king, Lokor Szrel XII, current host of Oraishapek's spirit. Together with his most trusted guards, Lokor-Oraishapek withstood the charge of Elendil's host and allowed a large number of the servants of Mordor to retreat within the Dark Lord's vast fortress. The Dispossessed himself took a mortal wound at the hands of one of Gil-galad's most valiant warriors and was borne from the battlefield by what remained of his guards. Retreating through the throng of warriors and heavily pursued, the small Szreldorn company made it to the shelter of the Ash Mountains where they eluded their enemies. In a high valley among the bleak mountains of Mordor they raised a small mound for their king and in it interred his body, along with the precious Ring of Binding that was the chief heirloom of his house. Oraishapek, like every other servant of Mordor, passed out of knowledge for hundreds of years.

3.6 A NEW ORDER

With the defeat of the Dark Lord and his many servants, the peoples of Rhûn were left for a while to their own devices. This does not mean, however, that there was peace. The last years of the Second Age and the early years of the Third Age were filled with strife, as new powers seized whatever lands they could hope to hold in the absence of Mordor's guiding authority.

3.6.1 FLIGHT OF THE LOGATH

Once free of the battlefield, the Murgath deserters of Dagorlad rallied around young Kharish Ibar. For his role in organizing the Murgath's successful withdrawal from the Battle at Dagorlad, most Murgath warriors acknowledged a debt owed to Kharish and his clan. A council was hastily called, and it was decided that the Murgath had played their part in the great war, and that they should return directly to their homelands and prepare themselves to defend their ranges against the Szreldor who must eventually return. Furthermore, they renounced the name given them by their Szreldorn overlords and thereafter called themselves the Logath (Ul. "The Refusers") to distinguish themselves from those who remained at Dagorlad to fight for Rakana-Kiral.

Though it was customary to leave issues of alliance to the matriarchs of the tribes, due to the unusual circumstances, the company elders decided that an alliance should be made with any rebels within the Szreldorn kingdom to increase the tribes' chances of gaining passage over the Fola Salenin. The tribes owed no further allegiance to the cruel Szreldor, and any aid that could be given to a rebellion within the Szreldorn kingdom would further weaken their ability to attack the Logath.

The Folyavulda rebels were enheartened to hear of the trouble that the Szreldor were facing in the south. Convinced of the sincerity of the Logath's rejection of Szreldorn authority, the Folyavuldok decided to let the Logath pass over the river and into their homelands to the north. While most of the Logath warriors crossed immediately, some stayed on to fight with the rebels against what Szreldor remained in Folyavuld. The help of these battle-tried veterans would prove invaluable in containing the Szreldorn winter advance.

On returning to their camps and families, the Logath found that Szreldorn agents had demanded from the tribes a heavy tribute to support their war effort against the rebellion. Payment of this tribute immediately ceased when the warriors returned to their ranges and camps. When caught, Szreldorn tribute collectors were cruelly executed, sending a strong message to Szrel-Arkasa. The lands north of the river were now hostile to them, and flight in that direction was now blocked. Szrel-Arkasa was ringed with enemies.

3.6.2 A NEW REALM

In Folyavuld, the offensive against Szrel-Arkasa quickly turned into a drawn out siege. The final end to the capital was sparked by the execution of all the slaves within the town, a move intended to prevent a repeat of the disaster that befell the Ilanin city garrison, and also to conserve the food supply. This tactic enraged the Folyavuldok, who resolved to burn the capital and allow no one to escape. The fires of Szrel-Arkasa burned for three days, and eventually engulfed every structure in town. The Szreldorn kingdom in Folyavuld was reduced to a smoking ruin.

The rebellious army that destroyed the Szreldor consisted of several allied cultures: the Broendon and Rhidon Donath tribes, as well as the Londu, Kadar, and Edru houses of the lowland Gargath. Together, they resolved to preserve their alliance and guard against the return of the main host of their enemy, who even then was fighting a losing battle within Mordor. For a year the alliance was held together by the capable Droza Kadar. At year's end, the men of Folyavuld were tested by returning Szreldor and Murgath warriors fighting under the leadership of a Szreldorn noble named Yorga Hos, and the riverside town of Ilanin was lost.

The ensuing winter (S.A. 3435) Droza Kadar called a council in the town of Uldonavan to negotiate a more permanent relationship between the tribes. This meeting came to be known as the First Council of Clans, and largely defined the structure of the Third Age realm of Folyavuld. Droza was universally appointed first Realm-master, and was given broad executive powers to combat the enemies of the clans.

Just managing the significant logistical problems of supporting the army was complex, and the young Realm-master's powers were soon extended to cover issues of tax collection and the allotment of those goods. By the following year's Council of Clans, the Realm-master was much more than a general. His influence extended into the commercial and diplomatic sectors as well. These significant and wide-ranging powers allowed Droza and his successors to successfully maintain the realm throughout the chaos of the early Third Age.

3.6.3 THE SAGATH

In the wake of the War of the Last Alliance, the cultural geography of Rhovanion altered radically. The great armies of the Alliance returned to their homes in the west, leaving a vacuum in the plains north of the Ash Mountains. Into this gap migrated the various nomadic folk left in Rhovanion after the Battle of Dagorlad. These were Murgath, Szreldor, Urgath of Southern Rhûn, and countless other kindreds of Easterling who had been hopelessly separated from the bulk of their people by the chaos following the defeat of Sauron's armies. Their military companies were reduced to small bands of armed warriors whose existence depended on the speed of their horses. Some still possessed small herds of livestock that were brought along to support the men as they served the Dark Lord. Most, however, were desperate; left without means of sustaining themselves. For these, the turn to banditry was natural.

Those Eriadorians whom Elendil deployed in the plains to protect his armies from this raiding now largely abandoned their guard. At Burh Armenrik a population of Eriadorian Northmen persisted, but otherwise the plains became a domain of complete disorder. Small companies of armed men raided settlements in all corners of Rhûn and Rhovanion for livestock, food, supplies, and most importantly for women. Though these bands consisted of men from countless different tribes and cultures, they were collectively referred to as Sagath (Ul. "Raiding People"), and were feared and hated among the settled peoples of the region.

Droza's loss of Ilanin in S.A. 3435 marked the beginning of troubles for the Logath. Thinking that the remainder of the Murgath would not return from Mordor, many Logath tribes had migrated out of their own pastures in the north to less severe areas along the Fola Salenin, ranges that were once occupied by the loyal Murgath. Women and children left behind by the Murgath were welcomed into female-dominated Logath tribes. Murgath males had learned cruelty under the tutelage of their Szreldorn overlords, and would not be overly missed. The Logath believed they had paid a heavy price in blood for the right to move into this land, and would not cede it to the returning Sagath tribes. Though conflict between the Logath and Sagath would rage for the next several centuries, the Ibar clan and their allies never lost any land east of the Athorn.

3.6.4 THE RISE OF TRADE

Despite the proliferation of bandits throughout Rhûn, trade emerged rather quickly between the settled peoples of the

early Third Age. The Eriadorian Northmen founded a plains settlement named Burh Armenrik, and actively sought trading partners among their new neighbors on the Talath Harroch. Separated as they were from the centers of Northman culture, the men of the Cairn Angle turned east and south in their search for allies. Along the southern shores of the sea, Donath fishermen proved easy friends, and Northman iron began appearing in places as far east as Dilgul. Their search for iron ore took Northman prospectors into the southern highlands of the Uldona Spine, where they met tribes of the Bergothiuda (descendants of other Eriadorian watches set by Elendil) and also Thelor's Dwarven folk. In the south, the Ibotithiuda found a surprising ally and trading partner in the westernmost Odhriags. The fiercely independent Odhriag tribes recognized a similar fire in the Northmen, and the two peoples frequently fought together to drive away raiding Sagath bands.

In northeastern Rhûn, Kugavod grew apace and small portions of the population began splintering off to build their own sea-side villages. One such village was built scarcely twenty miles east of the Agach mouth and the western border of the Agasha Dag. In T.A. 50, Kugath fishermen came upon a Logath wain-camp along the Agach and thus established contact between two long-sundered cultures. From that contact was born a prosperous trade in fur, wood, leather, horn, and herbs that soon reached as far as the Ibar town of Sadvar, and from there to the emerging trade center at Szrel-Kain.

3.6.5 THE DWARVEN BLIGHT

King Thelor's people labored long in the halls of Nurunkizdin, that were once called Falek-dim. With the aid of Thelor's Ring of Power, the Dwarves seized two-thirds of the ancient kingdom of Relin from the Orcs of the Uruk-marzguram, and brought light back to halls long forgotten in the darkness. Still the highland Orcs were both numerous and tenacious, and the Dwarves were unable to force them entirely out of the Uldona Spine. Instead, they sealed the halls connecting Nurunkizdin with the Orc lair and maintained a constant vigil over their greedy and warlike neighbors.

Turning their efforts inward, Thelor's folk repaired the crumbling works of their predecessors and fashioned new marvels where there was ruin. And of course, the Dwarves opened new mines. Tunneling deep into the heart of the highlands, Thelor's people brought to light untold wonders; penetrating natural chambers of crystals and vast underground lakes. But as has often been the case, the desire of the Dwarves to reveal the secrets of the earth became their undoing, for in T.A. 58 the miners were stricken by a lethal disease that infected most of the mineshafts. In each case, the disease followed closely behind the discovery of deposits of an unknown ore that glowed of its own pale green light. The Dwarves named these stones the Bilak-khald (Khuz. "Green Stones"), and closed their mines whenever they were encountered. The closing of the mines served as a catalyst to set off tensions that had been building among Thelor's folk since the mid-Second Age. Envy and greed, magnified by Thelor's Ring of Power worked its way into the hearts of his

kin, prodding them to resent the commands of the king. And though closing the mines was the only real alternative for the Dwarves, many resented the command and spoke openly of rebellion. In T.A. 62, fighting erupted in Nurunkizdin, and Thelor XIV was secretly murdered by his brother Thulin, who immediately laid claim to the throne and his brother's ring. Thelor XIV's daughter, Thris, however discovered the secret of her father's death. Driven by her need for revenge, she arranged a secret meeting with Thulin where she pushed the greedy Dwarf, and his precious ring, into a deep chasm. Her son, Threlin, was named successor to the Throne amid clamor and turmoil. Fearing a civil war, he led sympathetic followers out of Nurunkizdin to the central Ered Harmal where they began to build the Namagaluz. Meanwhile, many of Thulin's kin remained behind under his son, Thralin. They tried in vain to recover Thulin's body, but were never able to find it.

3.7 THE FIRST EASTERLING INVASION

"And the Captain of the Morannon came to the small hillock that bore the shattered standard of the king and cried: 'Say that the King himself came not to this cursed field to do battle with the enemy, for my heart bids me otherwise.'"

And a man of the King's Guard, bearing a mortal arrow wound himself replied with unsteady voice: 'Tis true, the King was ridden down at this very spot, and the enemy has removed his body from the field, and done great insult to the house of Elendil.'"

And then the Captain of the Morannon knelt, weeping, and hiding his face with shame, and to his lieutenant he commanded: 'Send word to Osgiliath, to the heir, King Turambar. Tell him what has passed, and that the army of Mordor awaits his command. And also fill the field with mounted scouts to shadow the movements of the enemy. The new King will want to know our foe's disposition.'"

— excerpt from the Annals of Elendil's Line

3.7.1 THE URGATH CATALYST

Of Rhûn's many peoples, the group most severely impacted by Sauron's loss at the end of the Second Age were the Urgath. Since Lokuthor's first appearance in the region, the Urgath tribes were wholly devoted to the service of Mordor. The loss at Dagorlad left the surviving Urgath warriors to find their own ways back to their homelands, through a region held against them by the rebellious Odhriags and Eriadorian Northmen loyal to Elendil (the Ibotithiuda). Those who made it home were swept up in internal conflicts as each individual matriarch made her own bid to rule the tribes in the absence of Lokuthor and his priests. In the end, none of the matriarchs were able to unite the tribes. The first four centuries of the Third Age saw the Urgath tribes mired in petty territorial disputes.

Events in the westernmost Urgath ranges along the Surubeki, took a different turn. These tribes enjoyed a long standing relationship of trade and cultural exchange with the Donath of the sea coast. In fact, it was this relationship that led to the

Donath acceptance of the worship of Lokuthor so many years before. When the Urgath tribes erupted in warfare, these western Urgath bound themselves more closely to their Donath friends, forming an alliance that benefited both people. Together, the pastoral Urgath and the sedentary Donath formed a stable partnership which enabled them to ride out the coming storm.

In T.A. 480, a horrible blight borne on the eastern wind struck down the herds of the Urgath, turning an unstable situation into chaos. Deprived of their primary means of living, the Urgath turned to wide-scale raiding. One year of devastation accomplished what four hundred years of warfare could not, and in the spring of the following year, a great host of Urgath bound themselves to the leadership of one man, Atyoli Sahd. Sahd gained the leadership of his tribe by deposing his daughter who was supposed to succeed as tribe matriarch after the death of her mother. Promising to lead them to a better land, Sahd was then able to orchestrate the rebellion of the males of many other tribes.

3.7.2 THE URGATH IN RHOVANION

Sahd's confederacy took what little material goods that remained to them and embarked on a great migration west, through the lands of Gathod. The Odhriags, however, were a watchful people who brooked no trespass on their lands. Together with their Northman allies at Burh Armenrik, the Odhriags defeated Sahd's warriors in several fierce contests. Sahd decided that the Odhriag lands were not worth the effort it would take to evict its residents, and so he turned his attentions further west. Though half of the town was destroyed, the Ibotithiuda and Odhriag warriors defended Burh Armenrik successfully and forced the Urgath into the western plains, temporarily ending their involvement in the conflict.

Their entry into the plains of Rhovanion, however, brought Sahd's tribes into conflict with a new enemy. For several centuries these plains were claimed by the Sagath, many of whom were over-proud descendants of the once mighty Szreldor. These bands fought against the Urgath intrusion, but were eventually overwhelmed and forced west onto the Dagorlad. Sahd's tribes then expanded into lands taken from the Sagath, and for a while were content in their new ranges, supporting themselves on herds seized from the tribes they defeated.

3.7.3 THE ILANIN CAMPAIGN

Through his border patrols, the Realm-master watched the events of Rhovanion with growing interest. The Urgath were obviously a dangerous group who might pose a threat to the realm. On the other hand, they were also at odds with the Sagath of Rhovanion, and their great victories over the southern Sagath tribes left the Hos clan exposed in Ilanin. The security of that town was largely dependent on Hos' ability to rally the southern Sagath to his cause. Now that Sahd's Urgath had moved in, Hos was weak and Ilanin ripe for the taking.

Accordingly, the Realm-master and the Londu matriarch (whose seat of power once lay in Ilanin) combined their

influence and together were able to convince the Council of Clans that an army should be raised for a campaign against Hos. The attack in the spring of T.A. 492 took the warriors of Hos completely by surprise. Mounted companies of Folyavuldok kept the Hos cavalry largely contained within the confines of the Donu valley, where Folyavuld infantry and archery was most effective. Ilanin was taken by storm and a siege was laid around the walls of the Crim (Sa. "The Rock"), the stone fort that was the seat of Hos power. Trapped within the walls of the fort was the Hos patriarch himself, though his son managed to escape with many followers over the Fola Salenin. After a siege of two months, Hos surrendered his stronghold and took his own life. Ilanin was again part of the Realm, and the mighty Fola Salenin was no longer blocked to Folyavulda explorers and adventurers.

3.7.4 ROMENDACIL I

The Sagath who were defeated by Sahd and forced into the Dagorlad were no strangers to hardship. Deprived of their herds and forced into poor pastures, they reverted to their old mainstay: banditry. The Gondorian homesteads of Ithilien were rich when compared to the average target of Sagath raids. Committing violence within the boundaries of the southern Dunadan kingdom was not without its risks, however, as the Sagath soon found out. Shortly after the first raids were made in T.A. 493, king Tarostar began moving companies of rangers into the forest to safeguard Gondorian citizens. When the raids persisted, Tarostar resolved to teach the bandits a lesson, and organized an expeditionary army to punish them.

In T.A. 498, Tarostar led his army through Ithilien and onto the Dagorlad. Initially, the Sagath banded together and confronted the Dunadan army. Sagath leaders quickly realized, however, that their warriors were overmatched by the stronger and better armed Gondorians. The Sagath therefore contented themselves with quick strikes to harass the Dunadan columns. Whenever Tarostar sought to bring them to battle, the Sagath would take to their horses, fleeing further into the northeast and leading Tarostar further afield.

After two years of campaigning against the Sagath, Tarostar's army still had not been confronted in a battle of significant size. Instead the Sagath leaders focused on the Dunadan lines of supply and communication which were several hundred miles long. Though Tarostar was frustrated by the inability of his army to force the enemy to battle, he felt relatively secure in the notion that the Sagath had been driven far from the borders of his kingdom, and had been taught a lesson about raiding within the borders of Gondor. In T.A. 500, Tarostar therefore resigned his campaign against the Sagath and declared a great victory over the Easterling bandits. He returned to Osgiliath as Romendacil, "East-Victor."

3.7.5 THE CAROS ALLIANCE

In driving the southern Sagath out of Dagorlad, Romendacil's campaign brought great troubles to the Northmen of the East Bight region. Several large Sagath tribes moved into the area east of the forest, where they came into conflict with outlying

Northman settlements. Northman cultures were sworn enemies of the Sagath and the Easterling traditions from which they sprang. Bitter feuds between Sagath and Northman tribes raged for decades, deepening the general animosity between the two cultures. Fighting along the eaves of Greenwood was bitter and few prisoners were taken by either side.

The conflict took on a renewed intensity in T.A. 538, when several Sagath tribes were united under one tribe patriarch, Agonoth Caros. Caros had a feud with the most prominent Northman clans of the East Bight. In T.A. 539, Northman homesteads all along the southern and eastern edges of the East Bight were looted by Sagath warriors under the direction of Caros. His successes against the Northmen won him great popularity among other Sagath bands, and soon Caros had effectively united most of the Sagath under his control. With his new found power, Caros began looking at the wider pattern of recent history and decided that there was more wealth to be won by making war on Gondor than could be found in all the Northman settlements combined. He also realized, however, that to attempt such a war, he would need strong allies. To this end, Caros himself took an expedition into the territory of his father's enemies, the Urgath.

Though they possessed new lands and herds in southern Rhovanion, the Urgath were not thriving. The grasses of the eastern Talath Harroch were poor, and tribesmen were forced to graze their herds over large areas of land to support them. This dispersion of the Urgath people severely weakened their confederation and left them vulnerable to attack. On meeting with Sahd's successor, Caros pointed to the weakening of the Urgath tribes, arguing that warfare and mass migration would make the Urgath stronger, and more united. Caros proposed an alliance between himself and the Urgath overlord for the purposes of making war on that wealthiest of neighbors: Gondor.

3.7.6 TURAMBAR'S WAR

In T.A. 540, the tribes of the Caros-Sahd alliance filled the lands south of Greenwood and menaced the borders of Gondor. Later the same year, large-scale raids into Ithilien began driving Gondorians to Osgiliath in a mass exodus from their forest homes. Remembering his prior experiences with the Easterlings, and infuriated by their audacity at having returned to his borders, Romendacil gathered a small fighting force from the immediate region and attacked. Romendacil undoubtedly expected that the Sagath would again melt back into the countryside, content with the gains won by raiding a few Gondorian homesteads. Caros directed his warriors to avoid battle with the small Gondorian army, thus drawing them further from their base of support.

In early Ivanneth, on Dagorlad and within sight of the fortress-gate of the Morannon, Caros sprung his trap. The King's army was surrounded by a foe that had lain in wait for his approach. The speed and ferocity of the initial Sagath charge caught the Dunedain by surprise. Though the king knew that his enemy possessed superior numbers, he miscalculated their willingness to confront the Dunadan army in direct combat. The Gondorians were glad for the more conventional battle, but were completely unprepared to face

the sheer numbers of their enemy. Too late, Romendacil realized that he had been tricked, and his army must retreat from the battlefield or face utter defeat. Mounted messengers were able to break the ring of enemies and bring word of the king's peril to Morannon, but the relief force was too late to save the king. Romendacil and his guard were ridden down by a charge of Urgath cavalry.

Romendacil's heir, king Turambar called for the temporary abandonment of Ithilien and sent companies of rangers into the forest to help contain the advance of the Easterlings. Meanwhile at Osgiliath, he mustered a great army to rid the kingdom of their enemy and avenge his father. In the spring of T.A. 541, Turambar led his army against the Caros-Sahd alliance. Again the Easterlings withdrew from the forest, drawing their enemy out onto the Battle Plain. This time, however, they were met by a second Gondorian army that had issued from Mordor. Seeking a victory similar to that of the preceding year, Caros committed a large portion of his strength to the battle, nearly overwhelming his enemy. The army of Mordor stood firm, however, fending off the Easterling charges until Turambar's army could join the battle; turning the tide of the battle to Gondor's favor.

Seeing that his armies were clearly overmatched, Caros ordered the retreat of his warriors into the wide expanse of Talath Harroch. Like his father, forty years prior, Turambar led his army into the plains in pursuit of the Sagath, resolving to bring them to battle or drive them far into the east. The warriors of the Easterling alliance harried the advance of their enemies, but continued to withdraw further into central Rhovanion, and into lands occupied by Northmen. In the late spring, mounted scouts of Turambar's army made contact with the Northmen and offered them the king's gratitude for an alliance against their common enemy. Word of the offer spread through the Northman settlements and several Northman "princes" quickly seized the chance to do their Easterling enemies lasting harm.

Their chance came later in the year. Caros and his allies had been forced into a steady northern retreat. Eventually their flight brought them to the foot of the escarpment that the Northmen call the "High Hand." Caros recognized his danger immediately and attempted to withdraw east, but his escape was blocked by a large army of Northman cavalry. Trapped in this vice, the Easterlings had no choice but to face the advance of the Gondorian army and fight their way out. The Battle of the High Hand was a savage conflict that lasted several days. Caros was slain in a desperate charge against the Dunadan line. The Easterlings began fleeing by whatever means possible. Some struggled up the steep canyons of the High Hand and escaped into the north. Others joined Sahd in a mad charge into the ranks of the Northmen. Though the Urgath overlord himself was killed in this charge, some successfully found a way out of the trap and into eastern Rhovanion to join their kinsfolk. Thus ended the first Third Age contest between Gondor and invaders from Rhûn.

3.8 THE GOLDEN AGE OF TRADE

After the disaster at High Hand, the Urgath and Sagath that remained in Rhovanion sought shelter in the wide plains along the western escarpment of the Uldona Spine. Their stay

in Rhovanion, however, was short-lived, for within a decade well-armed Northman tribes calling themselves the Ehwathrumi (For. "Horsed People") extended their grazing ranges to the farthest corners of the land. Because of the role they played at High Hand in aiding the armies of Gondor, Turambar granted these Northmen rights to all the lands vacated by the eastern invaders. The fierce Ehwathrumi sought out their Easterling adversaries, pursuing them even to the Warwater, to the very borders of the Odhriags. The Urgath remembered well their experiences with the Odhriags, and passed through those lands as quickly as possible on their way back across Gathod. Upon entering their old ranges, these Easterling tribes began calling themselves the Brygath (Ul. "People led by males"), to distinguish themselves from those traditional Urgath who never rebelled against their matriarchs, and never joined Sahd's alliance. For a time, Rhovanion and western Rhûn were nearly devoid of bandits, ushering in an age of unprecedented contact and trade between the region's settled inhabitants.

3.8.1 THE DISCOVERY OF DORWINION

Contact between the men of Folyavuld and the Northmen of Lake-town actually dated back to several years before Turambar's great victory - to T.A. 503, when Folyavulda explorers passed up the recently opened Fola Salenin and reached the falls at Lindal. Expeditions in those early years were dangerous and expensive, but could yield fantastic profits if successfully completed. The men of Lake-town and the Elves of Oropher's realm developed a keen thirst for Folyavulda wine, and several families grew very wealthy from this new trade.

In the decades immediately following High Hand, the expanding Ehwathrumi tribes also discovered Folyavuld and its many culinary delights. Like their cousins at Long Lake, they too became frequent consumers of Folyavulda wine, and trade expeditions to the border towns of Ilanin, Karfas, and Uldonavan were common. In these days the Ehwathrumi town of Othlebed (For. "Warfinger") grew into an important trade center, and its presence was instrumental in the eventual exposure of Folyavulda goods, particularly fine wines, to distant Gondor.

Unlike his father, King Turambar was not content to return to Osgiliath and assume that his Easterling adversaries had been forever vanquished. Though he supported the right of Northman clans to claim Rhovanion, he was not entirely comfortable with their ability to live together peacefully. He therefore maintained an active Dunadan presence in Dagorlad to keep watch over the trackless eastern plains and his often unruly Northman allies. A system of forts and patrols were organized across the Battle Plain to secure the kingdom's northern border and maintain peace. As time passed, settlers from the kingdom migrated over the Anduin to settle this frontier territory. Towns sprang up in the shadows of Turambar's fortresses and the military occupation of Dagorlad evolved into the Royal Territory of Dor Rhûnen.

Dor Rhûnen was organized specifically to keep watch over the eastern plains, and the military governor who ruled the

territory realized that this could best be accomplished by cultivating a close relationship with the Ehwathrumi. In doing so, he could effectively increase his force of mounted scouts one-thousand-fold. Because Ehwathrumi scouts were so often trading with or gathering information for the forts of Dagorlad, it should not be surprising that goods from Folyavuld were reaching Dor Rhûnen as early as T.A. 546. By T.A. 570, people as far away as Pelargir knew of the exotic wines of distant Dorwinion (S. "Land of Wine").

3.8.2 THE SOUTHERN TRADE ROUTES

The Ehwathrumi also discovered the Northman town of Burh Armenrik in the years following High Hand, and the tribes that moved into the region around that town formed very close ties to its inhabitants. The plains west of the Cairn Angle have always been the wildest in Rhovanion, and even in this new age of peace, there was still a strong Easterling presence in the area. Despite every effort of the Ehwathrumi and Ibnotithiuda, bands of Sagath raiders remained in this farthest corner of Rhovanion.

Yet Burh Armenrik's fortunes continued to grow in the early Third Age, and the town's merchants reached out to more distant markets. In the years just prior to the return of the Brygath, merchants from Burh Armenrik reached the mouth of the Surubeki, and made contact with the culture developing there. The odd mix of Donath and Urgath cultures made for a strong and diverse economy. Their town, which they named Mistrand (Ga. "Merged Waters"), grew into the most stable and influential settlement in eastern Rhûn. The availability of Northman steel in Mistrand brought tribesmen from all corners of the Urgath ranges. On the return of the Brygath, however, the trade-routes between Mistrand and Burh Armenrik were blocked. The Brygath had no love for any of their neighbors: Northmen, Urgath, Donath, Odhriags, or the men of Mistrand. Their experiences in the west had taught them little, and they continued to raid the camps and towns of other people and fight amongst themselves. In the meantime, what was once a profitable trade between two growing towns was completely severed.

In T.A. 572, an enterprising merchant reestablished this contact. Freolof of Burh Armenrik made a voyage to the mouth of the Warwater to speak with the Donath of the coast and try to pay them to carry himself and his trade goods by boat to the distant shores of Mistrand. Several fishermen agreed to transport his goods, and the first sea-borne trade expedition between Burh Armenrik and Mistrand was launched. Freolof's trade mission was successful, and soon other merchants were emulating his methods. At the mouth of the Warwater, the town and port of Lest (Do. "River-mouth") emerged as the western hub of this new and profitable trade-route.

3.8.3 SAILORS OUT OF THE NORTH

In Folyavuld, similar events were transpiring that would transform that society into the premier sea-going culture in Rhûn. In the five decades since the opening of the Fola Salenin to trade, the merchant families of Riavod and Szrel-

Kain rapidly became some of the wealthiest families in the Realm. As profits from the long trip upriver accumulated, these merchants began to experiment with the traditional flat-bottomed galley and barge designs useful on the lower course of the river to develop a more streamlined hull. Coupled with an increased preference of sails to poling and oaring, these design changes gave birth to a renaissance in the ship-building industries of the realm. The new merchant ships that began to appear along the quays of Szrel-Kain and Riavod in the late sixth century of the Third Age had slightly deeper draughts, equal and sometimes greater capacities for cargo, and larger and more efficient sails. Enterprising sailors found them ideal for both river and sea travel along the northern coast.

In T.A. 562 a Rhidon explorer successfully navigated and mapped the entire northern coast of the Inland Sea as far as the Kug Bay. On the calm waters of that bay he made contact with Kugath fishermen and became the first outsider ever to visit Kugavod. Thereafter, the bulk of Kugath trade with the west was carried by sea on Folyavulda merchant ships, effectively cutting the Logath market of Sadvar out of the trade route. While this hurt the coffers of the Ibar Logath, it provided a great boost to Riavod's economy and launched an age of Folyavulda exploration on the Inland Sea.

Initially, however, little progress was made in exploring the western coast, south of Riavod. The farther south one sailed, the rockier and more treacherous the coast became. The cliffs of the Uldona Spine plateau towered hundreds of feet high and landing sites were few and dangerous to approach. All these difficulties were compounded by a steady and strong wind out of the east; a result of the wild temperature gradient on the arid plains east of the sea. Most explorers who spent time along the west coast lost their lives to violent storms and high seas that inevitably dashed ships against the cliffs.

In T.A. 568, the ships of an Edru trade voyage were caught in a storm near the waters of the Kug Bay that blew them several miles south of their intended course and swamped all but one of their ships. The surviving vessel was the Tengaran (Fo. "Sea Spray"), and her captain, Montal Edru, battled the winds of the southern sea for a week in his damaged ship before running her aground. Montal's efforts had brought them well south of the Agasha Dag, to the Bay of Mistrand. Living as castaways, these Folyavuldok became the first of their kind to encounter the peoples of southeastern Rhûn.

3.8.4 TRADE WITH GONDOR

Intrigued by the notion of a potentially stable ally in eastern Rhovanion, the Governor of Dor Rhûnen in T.A. 573 organized a diplomatic expedition to Folyavuld. The expedition was warmly received by the Realm-master at Uldonavan. The Gondorian embassy spent the better part of a year traveling throughout the realm, learning the native tongue, and discussing with the Realm-master the benefits of a close relationship with Gondor. When it returned to the Governor at Dagorlad, the ambassadors bore extravagant gifts and samples of the finest wines of the realm.

The embassy returned to Folyavuld in T.A. 575 bearing an offer from king Turambar himself for an alliance of mutual

support and exchange. The alliance was eagerly agreed to by the Council of Clans, and goods began to flow between the realm and Dor Rhûnen almost immediately. The most established mode of transport for bringing goods to western markets was the Fola Salenin, and for a decade this route was most popular. Goods were off-loaded at Widuwaed (For. "Forest Ford") or Lake-town and from there caravanned along the East Bight to Dagorlad. In the late 580's of the Third Age, however, the Governor of Dor Rhûnen began the survey and construction of a raised road to connect Dor Rhûnen with Folyavuld. This was the Men Rhûnen, and it ran from the South Undeeps, through Rhûnost and to the Ehwathrumi town of Othlebed. From there a merchant could take one of several ways into Folyavuld depending on his destination.

3.8.5 NEW RIVALS

Between the years of T.A. 575-700, several developments on the Inland Sea touched off a new rivalry between Burh Armenrik and Folyavuld. Members of the Edru expedition in Mistrand began a journey through unknown lands to return home. Others settled into new lives in Mistrand, becoming wealthy and influential quickly because of their cosmopolitan nature and keen minds for commerce. Trade expeditions up the Surubeki and across the wide, Urgath-controlled plains brought Mistrand into contact with new sources of southern and eastern trade goods such as spices, herbs, pottery, and precious stones. Though these goods came in only very small quantities, their exotic nature made them expensive luxury items throughout Gathod. As the routes between Rhûn and the great markets of Gondor became more established, Burh Armenrik and Folyavuld became embroiled in a race to deliver these eastern exotics to the wealthy Dunedain.

The return to Folyavuld of several members of the ill-fated Edru expedition brought stories of Mistrand to the ears of the realm's merchants. Explorers redoubled their efforts to conquer the western coast, resulting in Berul Rhidon's discovery of the haven at Scarakikot in T.A. 652. Rather than purchase Mistrand's goods second-hand from the Northmen and Donath of Lest, the merchants of Folyavuld could now reach Mistrand themselves in a single day's sailing. With this new trade-route, and the use of the Men Rhûnen, Folyavuld now held an advantage over its trade competitors. The merchants of Burh Armenrik still had to deal with Sagath bandits and unsure routes across sometimes-hostile plains. Some merchants in Burh Armenrik began looking for a way to even the playing field, even if it meant destabilizing Rhovanion, and setting the stage for a new era of bloodshed and fire.

3.9 THE RISE OF VIDUGAVIA

As the eleventh century of the Third Age dawned, the spirits of Sauron and his Ringwraiths again took shape in Middle-earth, and began to conspire on how best to effect their return to power. Because Gondor's might still grew in those days, and the Dark Lord himself was so weak, Sauron knew that his return would be a long and secret process of subverting Gondor's allies and eroding her influence abroad. And so Sauron's servants went out into Middle-earth, to lurk in the shadows and sow the seeds of dissension wherever they may.

Rhûn, which even then was becoming part of Gondor's sphere of influence, was a natural front-lines in this new covert struggle for supremacy.

3.9.1 THE CLAN WARS AND GRACHEV HOS

In their new place as middle-men between Gondor and Folyavuld, the Northman tribes of Rhovanion and the East Bight prospered during the eleventh and twelfth centuries of the Third Age. Besides carrying goods between the two realms, they also offered their services as mounted guards to protect the caravans that carried trade across Rhovanion. Bandits, both Sagath and Northman in origin roamed the edges of Rhovanion looking for easy prey. As individual Thyns (For. "chiefs") gained more wealth, they began to look for ways of expanding their influence and extending their rule over other tribes. This was the beginning of a series of bloody feuds between T.A. 1208-1222 that came to be known as the Clan Wars.

The divisions between Northman tribes ran along complicated lines of kinship, but in the end generally pitted Rhevain versus Eriadorian tribes. The Rhevain claimed descent from the original Northman settlers of Rhovanion, the tribes that migrated to Rhûn during the First Age and fought long wars with the Baradhrim. The Eriadorian Northmen came to Rhovanion during and after the War of the Last Alliance, and many of the first migrants arrived with Elendil's army. Both claimed a right to rule in Rhovanion, or at least to remain independent of the rule of others.

Along the East Bight, these feuds began with a series of duels and assassinations, one victim of which was the leader of the powerful Waluslahandona tribe. The successor to the position of chieftain was then still an infant, and his uncles were left to lead the defense of the tribe's people and land against their neighbors. After 1222, fighting between the tribes died out for a span of years, and the Waluslahandona were a fractured people, each uncle claiming part of their brother's domain as his own.

In T.A. 1228, a new Easterling threat descended out of the northern plains to menace the Northmen of the Fola Salenin. This new power was Grachev Hos, leader of the now repudiated Hos tribe. With him he brought new allies, Logath tribes bound to his house by marriage. Together they stormed Northman and Folyavulda lands along the Aizadraka and Donu and Ilanin again changed hands. Grachev was a shrewd leader, and he successfully played the Waluslahandona brothers against one another, and within a year Grama settlements almost as far as Long Lake paid tribute to the new lord of Ilanin.

Under the care of his uncles, Vidugavia, heir to the Waluslahandona chieftain, grew to be a proud and powerful warrior, and the enslavement of his rightful domain by Sagath bandits enraged him. At the age of eighteen, he left his uncle's side and rode across Grama lands promising to protect them from Hos if they would swear allegiance to him. Though terribly outnumbered, he and a band of loyal warriors made many successful raids against the Easterlings, winning them fame across northern Rhovanion and rallying

the Waluslahandona people against their oppressors.

Word of Vidugavia's deeds spread to all corners of Rhovanion, and it was not long before the Realm-master in Szrel-Kain heard of this new leader, and also of the Logath participation in the Easterling incursion. The Realm-master now enjoyed a great deal of influence over the Ibar Logath, and in exchange for some revenues associated with the trade of Kugath goods, he was able to convince the Ibar matriarch to condemn the Logath association with Grachev Hos. By T.A. 1232, many of Grachev's Logath allies had returned to their lands rather than earn the scorn of the Ibar matriarch. Two years later, agents of the Realm-master contacted the now famous Vidugavia and offered an alliance to the Northman hero, for the purpose of evicting Hos from his position between their two realms. Weakened as he was by the loss of the Logath, Hos fell easy prey to the combined armies in T.A. 1234, and the Sagath again retreated into the northern plains.

3.9.2 TROUBLE IN SOUTHERN RHÛN

Early in the twelfth century of the Third Age, Uvatha the Ringwraith returned to Khand to reclaim his throne. This was the first land bordering Mordor to return to the shadow, and became an early point of departure for Sauron's servants in their quest to secure Rhûn and fortify Mordor's northern borders. Uvatha was a warrior at heart, and war followed close on the heels of his return. Variag hordes lashed out at their Nuriag neighbors, renewing their ancient domination of these peoples and inadvertently driving many other peoples from the arid plains of southeastern Rhûn and into Gathod. The Odhriags turned back many of the refugee Asdriag bands that sought to pass through their lands, but many eventually found their way into Rhovanion. These new Easterling tribes stirred up a fresh era of banditry and warfare in southern Rhovanion.

More Easterling bandits meant only more trouble for the merchants of Burh Armenrik. Despite the construction of the Barad Ithil and the presence of a small garrison of Gondorian soldiers in Burh Armenrik, the trade routes to Mistrand were again interrupted, and the road to Gondor made more dangerous. The victory of Folyavuld and Vidugavia in the north insured the security of Folyavuld's trade roads, and further doomed Burh Armenrik to be a distant second in supplying eastern goods to Gondor. Faced with the certain death of their businesses, several prominent merchants in Burh Armenrik decided to take an active role in the politics and power of Rhovanion.

Though the violence of the Clan Wars died for awhile, Vidugavia's victory in northern Rhovanion had resulted in a unified and dangerous Rhevain domain from Lake-town to Othlebed, and the extension of Waluslahandona influence sparked a new conflict between Northman clans. The men of Burh Armenrik were universally descended from Eriadorian settlers, and many traced their ancestry back to Elendil's army. Burh Armenrik and Vidugavia's capital at Burh Widu became the centers of a rivalry that soon engulfed all of Rhovanion. Though the council of Burh Armenrik never overtly tied itself to the Easterling and Northman bandits of southern Rhovanion, some of the most prominent merchants

of the city (many of them council-members themselves) funded the bandits to make trouble along the trade roads connecting Folyavuld with Gondor. The goods they pillaged from trade caravans were bought by Ibnothiuda merchants, in exchange for horses, weapons, and shelter from reprisal. Unfortunately for the merchants of Burh Armenrik, the widespread violence that they supported soon drew the attention of Gondor.

3.9.3 MINALCAR THE REGENT

Through years of economic and military success, both in Wilderland and lands south of her borders, Gondor grew lazy in the mid-Third Age, and the King sought to relieve himself of all responsibility and simply enjoy life as master of the foremost realm in Middle-earth. When chaos threatened to engulf the kingdom's northernmost borders, King Calmacil appointed his son Minalcar as Regent of the kingdom, and placed the responsibility of calming the northern frontier on him. Unlike his father, Minalcar was a driven man who sought to bring an everlasting peace to Gondor's borders, and even to extend the influence of the King into the wide expanses of the east.

Upon accepting his Regency in T.A. 1240, Minalcar sent many spies into Rhovanion to seek out the roots of the conflict in Rhovanion, rather than marching clumsily into a complicated situation. Minalcar's agents traveled to every corner of Rhovanion to gather the information Minalcar would use to find a solution to the problem. In Folyavuld, the Dunadan scouts heard great praises for Vidugavia of the Waluslahandona: how he had driven bandits out of the region and helped secure the trade-roads that connected Rhûn with the South-kingdom. In Lake-town, men spoke of Vidugavia as a civilizer, one who imposed great order on northern Rhovanion and sought to extend that order to the benefit of all. Only in Burh Armenrik and the southern tribe-holds were opinions of the northern chieftain less than enthusiastic. The Gondorian presence at Barad Ithil meant that Minalcar's spies enjoyed support in the city, which enabled them in T.A. 1247 to penetrate the conspiracy among the city's merchants.

After learning of the activities of Burh Armenrik's merchants, Minalcar arranged to meet with Vidugavia to discuss an alliance. The Regent found his guest to be an impressive if somewhat vain leader with very strong views of how Rhovanion should be ordered. Foremost were Vidugavia's opinions of nomads and the nomadic lifestyle. Through much debate, the Northman chieftain convinced Minalcar that banditry was a natural extension of nomadism, and that order could only be imposed on Rhovanion once the nomadic peoples of the region were driven far beyond the Inland Sea. Minalcar eventually conceded the point, and promised to support Vidugavia's claim as King of Rhovanion if their combined armies were successful in driving the nomads far into the east.

3.9.4 THE CAMPAIGN OF TERROR

Late in T.A. 1247, the captain of the garrison at Barad Ithil levied charges before the council of Burh Armenrik against the conspiring merchants of the city. The captain knew well

how the council would receive the charges, particularly since some of the accused sat on the council. Nevertheless, Burh Armenrik was faced with a choice between bringing the accused to justice and disavowing themselves of the deeds of their merchants, or standing against the combined armies of Minalcar and Vidugavia who had sworn together that these men would be punished. The council chose the former, and opened their gates to the armies of the west. Thereafter they would enjoy the status as a semi-autonomous township within Vidugavia's realm. Unfortunately they also became unwitting contributors to the military campaign of the following year.

At the advance of the western army, Northman and Easterling bandits alike sought shelter in the open plains. Minalcar's army, however, was well supplied with light cavalry that contained their foes and brought them to battle. In a series of short and brutal clashes, Rhovanion was virtually swept of bandits. After re-supplying at Burh Armenrik and crossing the Warwater, Minalcar pressed on into the plains of Gathod. Despite the urgings of the men of Burh Armenrik and the captain of Barad Ithil himself, Minalcar and Vidugavia demanded that the Odhriags submit to the authority of their kingdoms. Although they had not participated in the Easterling invasions that brought chaos to Rhovanion, they led a nomadic existence, which suggested to Vidugavia that they could not be trusted. Just as they had refused to submit to Sauron thirteen centuries before, they likewise refused to allow the passage of the western army through their lands. The battles fought between the Odhriags and Minalcar's army were as fierce as they were unfortunate, and inasmuch as they alienated the Odhriags for centuries hence, they did much more harm than good.

In the end, great injury was done to the Odhriag tribes and they were forced to seek shelter in the passes of the Ash Mountains. After razing several Odhriag shrines, the western army turned north and east to renew their ancient contest with the Brygath. Though the descendants of the Sahd confederacy fought desperately, they were forced completely east of the Surubeki by mid-summer. As the hot months descended on the arid plains of Gathod, the armies of Vidugavia and Minalcar rode through the gates of Mistrand. The Gathmarig population of Mistrand were a settled people with a long history of trade contact with the Ibnothiuda. Since they did not seek to oppose Minalcar, the city was spared on the promise that it would support the army through the summer.

At summer's end, the western army crossed the Surubeki in force and pursued the Brygath into the plains. Turning north, they also persecuted the Urgath, who had never participated in an invasion of the west. Nevertheless, all the nomad camps on the eastern shore of the Inland Sea were put to the torch, ensuring that every Easterling culture in Rhûn had a reason to hate the west. At the southern borders of the Agasha Dag, Minalcar and Vidugavia called a halt to their advance. Any further campaigning would be across open plains, with no sure lines of communication or supply. Their army was even now dangerously extended, and were it not for shipments arriving from Folyavuld at the site known as Elgaer (S. "Sea-jewel"), they might well have faced a crisis. The army therefore passed back into the west, leaving an augmented

force at Barad Ithil to maintain a vigilance over the plains of Gathod. The Easterlings had indeed been taught a lesson; they now knew to despise and fear the men of the west.

3.10 THE DARK LORD'S DESIGNS

"..For countless years I lay in that dank tomb, pondering the meaning of immortality. It seemed then that the Dark One's promises were empty, and that my soul would be bound forever to this stinking pile of decay that was my last vessel. Bitterness gnawed my soul as the vermin gnawed the bones of Lokor Szrel..

"In the thirteenth century of my imprisonment a great light penetrated the tomb, and a spirit I thought had long vanished entered the main vault. It was the Longrider, great servant of the Dark Lord, come to rescue me from the torment of undying death.

..It was then that I understood the true meaning of immortality, for though I lay for so many years in my tomb, here I walk again under the stars. Oraishapek is reborn! Let the men of Rhûn tremble at my coming!"

—Excerpts from the Diaries of the Many-Voiced

3.10.1 THE PRICE OF SUCCESS

Minalcar and Vidugavia's Campaign of Terror resulted in a great rift between the settled peoples of Gathod, and the nomadic cultures that slowly returned to fill the lands as the armies of the west retreated. The Urgath looked with distrust on the new Folyavulda outpost of Elgaer. The Brygath saw that the Donath and Gathmarig survived the campaign nearly unscathed, and reasoned (correctly) that they must have been party to it. The Odhriags mistrusted the Ibnotithiuda, long-time trading partners who did nothing to help protect them from the west, after the Odhriags had fought often and valiantly to preserve Burh Armenrik from roving Easterlings. This was the kind of mistrust that played best to Sauron's favor, and he thought long on how best to capitalize on the deeds of Minalcar and Vidugavia.

Sauron recognized that his own servant Uvatha of Khand had inadvertently caused the entire campaign, and thereafter allowed the Longrider to expand into Rhûn only sparingly. The armies of Vidugavia and Minalcar had actually come very close to instigating a war with Khand, which would have forced Sauron to withdraw Uvatha from that country to avoid a western discovery of his own return. Had the two western leaders pushed only slightly farther, an engagement between the Men of Khand and Gondor would have been inevitable, which might have led to a much expanded conflict. The circumstances called for subtle subversion, not for open warfare.

To this end, Sauron sent servants with stealth into Mordor to recover the Rings of Binding, powerful artifacts stowed in secret places since the end of the Second Age. Once suitable hosts could be found to bear the Binding Rings, Sauron would have some of his eldest and most trustworthy servants

to send into Rhûn. The first of these servants to be reborn was Nemol of Dir, former servant of Hoarmurath the Ice King and a powerful sorcerer in his own right. Nemol was placed under the command of Uvatha the Ringwraith in T.A. 1247, and commanded to journey among the peoples of southeastern Rhûn to see how he might best win them to the cause of the shadow.

The following year he witnessed the Campaign of Terror, and saw how the Easterlings learned to hate the west. At that point he took on the guise of Kerkassk, a plains-god featured in the pantheons of several peoples of Gathod as an ancestral warrior spirit who achieved great power by fighting in the spirit world for the safety of his descendants. In this role, Nemol appeared to the shamans of the Brygath and Asdriags, demanding that they heed his commands if they would be led to greatness. He claimed to have battled long years against the foul spirits of the west, who were the true enemies of Easterling peoples. The war still raged, he claimed, in a far distant land called Angmar, and the strength of mortal warriors was needed to finally destroy the infidel kingdoms of the west. He claimed to have an alliance with the spirit-leader of Khand, and that the Variags no longer posed a threat to those who accepted the rule of Kerkassk. Many eagerly accepted Kerkassk as a patron deity, and subsequently joined the ranks of his Kharg Huka (As. "Plains Warriors"), the elite mercenaries who would make the holy journey to Angmar and fight the Men of the West.

The worship of Kerkassk began among the pastoral peoples of the arid plains, among shepherds who lived their entire lives on the verge of starvation. The tenets of the religion emphasized the similarities between the Ulgathic and Ioriag peoples of Gathod, suggesting that together they could be strong, and prevent any repeat of the events of 1248. As members of the Kharg Huka began to return from their service in the northern wars, bearing with them the rewards of their service and fabulous stories of the retribution wrought on the Men of the West, people began to truly view Kerkassk as the savior of Easterling peoples. His religion spread like wildfire across the plains, into central Gathod, and into the ranges of the Urgath along the east coast of the Sea. Mistrand's ruling clique of merchants alone resisted the influence of the plains-god, seeking to maintain the western ties that had so enriched them rather than shutting the city's gates and becoming insular, as Kerkassk demanded.

3.10.2 THE FALL OF MISTRAND

By T.A. 1280, Nemol was frustrated at his lack of progress with Mistrand and turned to Uvatha, his overseer, for solutions. Uvatha judged that enough time had passed since Minalcar's campaign, and that he might now move in southeastern Rhûn without drawing attention to himself. Later that year his figure-head king, Nomid Achef, led a host of Variags and Nuriags through the lands of the Brygath and down onto the city of Mistrand. The Variags swept away the few opposing soldiers that resisted and began an occupation of the city that would last nearly two hundred years. In that time, the osvoda-thi (Va. "Lords") of Mistrand built a citadel and wall around the city, and renamed it Nomida-nar (Va. "City of Nomid"). The first osvoda of Mistrand was Achimov

Shulv, a cavalry officer who played a role in the city's capture. Nomid sent Achimov herders and peasants who caused trouble in the homeland by fighting with their neighbors. The result was an increase in security in Khand, and an increased Variag presence in the empire's newest colony. The walls, the fortress, and the new Variag minority remained long after the occupation ended, but the name never stuck, and even the Variags adopted the traditional Gathmarig name for the city.

Mistrand's new leader was, at first, very harsh on his subjects. Achimov focused on creating a new satellite of the Variag empire which would be exclusively under his control, and resisted outside influences such as the various sects of Variag religion. He also largely cut off all trade between Mistrand and the western ports of the sea, which was the only real command that Nomid gave him when he placed the city under Achimov's control. What little trade passed between Dilgul and Mistrand was closely regulated and heavily taxed, so that prices of eastern goods rose steeply and Achimov's wealth continued to grow. The heirs of Mistrand's new tyrant, however, soon faced a rapidly growing problem.

Though the merchant rulers of Mistrand had resisted the worship of Kerkassk, the general populace of the city had long been sympathetic to the message of the plains god. Kerkassk was originally an Asdriag deity, and had a nearly identical counterpart in the Variag, Nuriag and Ulgath pantheons. Most of Mistrand's population had long-standing ties with these peoples and shared many common roots. The people of Mistrand became acutely aware that they alone suffered the despotic rule of the foreign osvoda. Kerkassk had promised protection from the Variags, and had largely delivered it to the people who accepted him. The Gathmarig now began to eagerly accept Kerkassk as their patron deity, and plead in their prayers for deliverance from their Variag oppressor. This was, of course, exactly how the servants of Sauron had arranged it, and Mistrand now rapidly fell under the control of the Dispossessed Nemol. The worship of Kerkassk quickly grew to be the most influential religion in the city and the priestesses of that religion began to resist the will of Achimov's heir, Shivalu Sulv.

By T.A. 1320, Kerkassk was firmly entrenched in Gathod. Mistrand was a vassal city to his lord, Uvatha the Ringwraith. The Brygath and Asdriags were completely under leadership of petty overlords and religious leaders that he himself had chosen. Among the more traditional Urgath, the settled Donath, and the more independent Odhriags, Nemol enjoyed some influence, though he was not yet able to control them as he was his "core" peoples. As a test of his power, he decided in T.A. 1331 to end the Folyavulda presence in eastern Rhûn by declaring a war of revenge on the trade outpost at Elgaer. The defenses at Elgaer were meager, and by itself the outpost would not have lasted one week against the might of Kerkassk's warriors. The Men of Folyavuld, however, were well aware of their vulnerability, and had spent the last five decades building goodwill among the Urgath by funneling wealth to the local Urgath matriarchs.

The profits from dealing with smugglers in Mistrand made this method feasible, if not entirely successful. The majority of Urgath tribes joined in the raid of Elgaer; a testimony to

the growing influence of Kerkassk in Gathod. After Nemol's orchestration of Elgaer's fall, Uvatha judged that the Dispossessed was ready to take complete control of southeastern Rhûn, and permitted him to take over Mistrand by his own means. This Nemol accomplished by appearing before Shivalu as a spirit of wrath, demanding that he yield before the authority of Kerkassk if he wanted to continue to hold a place of importance in Mistrand. Shivalu was stricken with fear, and readily accepted Kerkassk's offer to make him the religious leader and head oracle of his cult. Shivalu accepted from Kerkassk the Hitav Yurna (Ga. "Scepter of Spirits") as a symbol of his divine right to rule the city, and Mistrand was transformed to the center of Kerkassk's power. Prominent local priestesses were appointed as councilors to the osvoda, who retained that title as a concession to his position in the Variag empire. Though still ostensibly part of the Variag empire, Mistrand now became the focus of a new and dangerous realm of shadow in southeastern Rhûn.

3.10.3 SPEARS FOR THE KING OF THE NORTH

The road to Angmar was now more than ever filled with the warriors of the Kharg Huka. The holy pilgrimage was a long and arduous journey through foreign and often hostile lands. The Witch-king began searching for ways of establishing a secure route from Rhûn to Angmar. So he sent great numbers of spies into Rhovanion and Rhûn to spread promises of the wealth and glory one could attain in his service. Travelers in Dale, Esgaroth, Ilanin, Sadvar, Othlebed, and even Szrel-Kain spoke of the King of the North and his wars against a hated foe. Northman, Logath and Folyavulda spies made large purchases of foodstuffs and weapons to provision the troops on their long journey west. Great bands of Orcs issued from Mount Gundabad and took residence among the foothills of the Grey Mountains there to watch over the migration trail. In T.A. 1384, the Witch-king struck a deal with the overlord of the Sagath Huz tribe (descended from the infamous Hos) which allowed the Easterling overlord to collect a toll on the northern migration route, in exchange for defending it against increasingly frequent raids by Northmen under the employ of Arthedain.

The greatest obstacle to the migration route, however, was the realm of Folyavuld and its intimate ties with the west. Minalcar's heir, King Valacar had dwelt for awhile in Rhovanion with Vidugavia and had even taken the Northman King's daughter as wife. He was aware of the connection between the migrating Easterlings of Rhûn and the enemy that the North Kingdom faced. Not only did he encourage raids on the Winithos (For. "mercenary") road, but he also used his political influence to turn the Realm-master against the migrants. Szrel-Kain in turn held influence over the Ibar matriarch, who forbade the Logath tribes from sending their males to fight the battles of Angmar.

To further his own goals in northern Rhûn, the Witch-king requested from his lord the use of Oraishapek's Ring of Binding, which Uvatha had recovered from its place of resting in the Ash Mountains. This request was granted and a new host was found for Oraishapek the Dispossessed. As the fifteenth century of the Third Age dawned, Oraishapek and a

company of Orcs left Dol Guldur to enter the Uldona Spine in secret. With the aid of the Orcs, Oraishapek quickly seized control of the Uruk-marzguram and re-inhabited his old citadel at Dradorny-Arnas. The peoples of northern Rhûn had a new enemy in their midst, one who remembered his days as the Szrel-King and longed for a return to that lofty title.

3.10.4 THE WANING OF DOR RHÛNEN

Minalcar's campaign in Gathod marked the peak of Dor Rhûnen's influence on its neighbors. The governor of Dor Rhûnen continued to work in cooperation with Vidugavia and his heirs to keep the Talath Harroch free of enemies, but never again would western armies campaign so far into the east. Often the expeditionary companies sent into Gathod proved little more than western "Sagath," who passed their time raiding Asdriag villages or making war on the Brygath who had little taste for battle after the catastrophe of T.A. 1248. Dor Rhûnen's governor had no answer for the rumors that Mistrand had fallen to an eastern empire. Moreover, little could be done about the steeply rising prices of eastern exotics. The markets of Burh Armenrik were depressed, and were it not for their domestic production, Folyavuld would have followed suit. Smuggling and piracy made some goods available, but the asking prices became more and more outrageous as the danger associated with smuggling in the realm of Kerkassk increased.

In northern Rhovanion, Vidugavia's kingdom lived on. The Northman King's family enjoyed a close relationship with Elendil's heirs, ensuring the cooperation of the two peoples well into the late Third Age. In fact, it was the product of this relationship that brought about the Kin-strife in T.A. 1432, a dreadful rebellion that engulfed Gondor and greatly weakened her ability to project her will into the distant lands of Rhûn. During the ten years of fire and bloodshed between T.A. 1437-1447, many of Rhovanion's finest warriors participated in the war in Gondor, and little attention was paid to events in the east.

In fact, during this time the transfer of power in Mistrand from the Variags to the disciples of Kerkassk was completed, as the line of Achimov came to an end and power reverted to a new osvoda appointed by Kerkassk. All manner of Easterling in Gathod now paid homage to the plains-god and his capital city. His influence extended well into the Urgath plains, south into Odhriag country, and west into the settlements of the Donath. His priestesses doubled as assassins, walking among the population and seeking out the plains-god's enemies. In this day he also opened the city to a choice few merchants who often doubled as spies, collecting information for Mistrand's leaders on foreign peoples and markets.

3.10.5 THE WAR OF CLAY JARS

Though revenues had died somewhat for the merchant families of Folyavuld, there were still a few with tremendous wealth and influence. Chief among the merchant houses was the Kosvar house, a prominent family in the Rhidon clan. In T.A. 1538, the Kosvar family acted on their frustrations with

Mistrand and its leaders, and organized an expedition to reclaim Elgaer. The outpost they founded was renamed Kelepar (Fo. "East shore") and for many years it remained small enough to escape the attention of Kerkassk. Again, nearly all the profits gained from the smuggling operations of Kelepar were reinvested in buying influence among the local Urgath. By the turn of the century, Urgath matriarchs depended on the money received from the merchants of Kelepar to maintain their wealthy lifestyles.

In Lest and Burh Armenrik, merchants began to feel the sting of Kelepar's success. There were only so many eastern goods to go around, and the merchants of Kelepar were buying a larger share than in previous years. Some merchants in Lest began funding privateers to raid the shipping lanes between Kelepar and the ports of Folyavuld to reclaim part of the catch that had been lost. To combat this growing menace, the Kosvar family hired their own pirate-hunters (Fo. "Kalo-z-vadasz") who operated from Scarakikot and made war on the pirates of Lest.

In T.A. 1620, Yanos Kosvar took matters into his own hands by developing new routes to Relermindu in the Talathrant vale, rather than dealing with the ever-difficult leaders of Mistrand. Hiring Urgath guides, Yanos led an expedition through the Urgath controlled eastern plains, circumventing Kerkassk's domain and cutting Mistrand out of the trade-loop. The haul of ceramics and spices he returned with funded more construction of quays and defenses in Kelepar. By T.A. 1629, Yanos' sons were leading regular caravans to the Talathrant, and Yanos himself had fortified the outpost at Kelepar and secured alliances with several powerful Urgath matriarchs. These developments drew both the attention and anger of Kerkassk.

The following year, the plains-god called for a new war against the "infidels" at Kelepar, launching the region into bitter conflict. The Brygath and Asdriags were eager to do Kerkassk's bidding, thus further glorifying themselves in the eyes of their god. The Urgath, however, were not so given to the dictates of Mistrand, and enough tribes resisted to protect the outpost from a repeat of T.A. 1331. The trade routes, however, were vulnerable, and in T.A. 1633 the eldest Kosvar son was captured, tortured and executed by Brygath raiders. Later that same year, the ships of Mistrand sailed up the coast in an attempted blockade of Kelepar. Yanos, however, was able to escape on board a pirate-hunter's ship and found his way back to Folyavuld, where he used every bit of his considerable influence to draw the realm into the conflict. In 1634, the considerable Folyavulda navy sailed to the rescue of Kelepar. After a sea battle of many days, the ships of Mistrand were defeated and forced to flee back to their port. The naval victory, however, could not alone save the imperiled outpost, for renewed attacks by land brought defeat on the allied Urgath tribes. The two sides settled into a siege of the outpost, which might surely have lasted years with the support of the Folyavulda navy, if other events had not conspired to end the standoff.

3.10.6 THE GREAT PLAGUE

In the year 1634 of the Third Age a black wind came across the eastern plains and descended on the peoples of Rhûn.

This was the Great Plague, one of the chief disasters in the history of Middle-earth. The Plague ended the War of Clay Jars as it laid both sides of the conflict to waste. The Folyavulda navy returned home, bringing the disease with it across the Sea and infecting the Land of Rivers. From Folyavuld, the disease spread rapidly across the plains of Rhovanion, and by 1635 had reached the borders of Mirkwood. The effects of the Plague in Rhûn were similar to those recorded in lands further west, if slightly less devastating. Death tolls never approached those reached in Osgiliath or the other great cities of the south, yet the disaster was real and its repercussions long-lasting. The population centers: Szrel-Kain, Riavod, Mistrand, and Burh Armenrik were hit hardest, and some places lost as much as 40% of their population to the vile disease. The nomads were not hit as hard, though it was still enough to halt all warfare and migration for years. By T.A. 1640, populations were just beginning to rebound, and trade again beginning to move. The Folyavulda experiment at Kelepar was over, but the contest for the fate of Rhûn continued unabated.

3.11 THE INVASION CORRIDOR

As the effects of the Great Plague subsided and life returned to normal in Rhûn, the servants of Sauron sought to consolidate their power and capitalize on the weakening of Gondor. Oraishapek continued his efforts to subvert the peoples of northern Rhûn and Rhovanion by deepening the division between the Logath and Folyavuldok. The leaders of Sadvar and Folyavuld had placed themselves in a precarious position by adopting their hard stances against the Winithos. As people began to realize the wealth that could be had by migrating to Angmar, the authority of Sadvar and Szrel-Kain began to suffer. In the back-alleys of Szrel-Kain and Riavod, a dark order of spies and assassins devoted to the service of Oraishapek took shape. Out among the Logath camps, the word of the Ibar clan was no longer law. The worship of the hunter god, Vadan, had given rise to a new source of authority, a collection of priestesses who secretly served the Dispossessed.

3.11.1 THE WAINRIDERS

After the second destruction of Elgaer, Kerkassk redoubled his efforts to convert the Urgath. Any influence that the west may have enjoyed with the Urgath tribes disappeared when Kelepar was abandoned. The collection of tribes that had opposed the will of the plains-god were utterly destroyed, and new loyal tribes were given their ranges. Over the next century a revivalism swept through Gathod and well out into the vast plains east of the Inland Sea. By T.A. 1750, Nemol was able to achieve unprecedented centralization of authority among the widely scattered nomads, and appointed a king of Mistrand and its vassal peoples. This new super-tribal confederation called itself the Igath (Ul. "All people"), and together they represented one of the strongest collections of Ulgath peoples ever brought under one authority. Urgath, Brygath, Gathmarig and even Logath peoples all adhered to the edicts of Mistrand.

The Igath king ruled southeastern Rhûn for two hundred years. By the mid-nineteenth century, Sauron judged that the

peoples of Rhûn were ready to test the strength of Gondor, so he set in motion a plan to pit the two against one another. In T.A. 1854, Uvatha was sent back to Khand after a long absence. Upon resuming his reign in Khand, the Ringwraith again assumed direct control over Nemol. Uvatha directed Nemol to wage a war to destroy the territory of Dor Rhunen, thereby soften Gondor's frontier and allow Khand to reassert itself in the south. Nemol had long held among the chief tenants of his religion that the plains-god would one day lead the peoples of Gathod on a war of revenge against the kingdom of the west. The coming war was seen among much of the nomad populace as a natural extension of their religious belief, and a bold assertion of cultural pride.

Later that year, the Igath invaded Rhovanion, sweeping their Northman enemies from the field and occupying many of the population centers of the region. Buhr Armenrik was overrun and put to the torch. The northman garrison found it impossible to stand against the invasion out of the east. A small portion of the population was able to flee to the Pinnon Rhun and were absorbed by the Bergothuida tribes, but the majority were slain in the defense of their city. While the Odhriags refused to participate in the slaughter of their one-time allies, neither did they help defend the Ibnotithuida in their hour of need. The divisions between them, wrought by Minalcar's campaign of terror, were too deep. Lest and the Donath settlements were overrun and the navy at Lest captured and put to use by Avas I.

For a time, the men of Folyavuld were able to use terrain to their advantage and defend their borders against the Wainrider armies. Their doom was eventually sealed when Oraishapek, in the guise of the god Vadan, succeeded in bringing the Logath into the war against the Land of Rivers. The Realmaster and the Council of Clans abdicated to the port of Scarakikot and waged a harassing naval war against the ships of Mistrand and Lest. The highlands of the northern Pinnon Rhun again became a bastion of resistance against a mounted foe, and like their ancestors of the Second Age, the highlanders were able to fend off bands of encroaching Wainriders and safeguard their villages from enslavement.

The Rhevain suffered a fate similar to their southern cousins. The Ehwathrumi fled under the easterneaves of Mirkwood as their warriors fought a bitter plains campaign against the Wainriders. Led by their high Thyn Marhari, the Ehwathrumi fought valiantly but were consistently overwhelmed and forced to give ground. In his desperation, Marhari sent an envoy to the Dunadan King to plea for aid. The King of Gondor, Narmacil II had received tidings of war a year prior, but stayed his hand to allow the Northmen to defend the kingdom they claimed as their own. Marhari's request was granted swiftly, and the army of Gondor crossed the Anduin to give battle with the Wainriders. Unfortunately, neither Marhari nor the King had any notion of the size of their enemy, and though the Northmen and the Dunedain joined forces against the Wainriders, the eastern hordes were victorious and the Gordorian army driven from the field with great loss. Narmacil II fell in a volley of easterling arrows upon the Dagorlad. Only the courage of Marhari and his son Marwhini saved the western army from being utterly destroyed. Marwhini led the northman cavalry in a rearguard action that allowed the western army retreat into the shelter

of Ithilien.

After the Battle of the Plains, the Ehwathrumi were a shattered remains of their former self. Many fled over the Celduin river and helped the Northman settlements of Dale and Esgaroth maintain some form of independence from the Wainrider empire. Northern Rhovanion was given to a Tros Sagath warlord who administered from Ilanin and demanded stiff tributes from Folyavuld and the Northman settlements of the Celduin. A stalwart band of Ehwathrumi found their way through or around the vast expanse of Mirkwood and settled the northern headwaters of the Aduin and Langwell rivers. There they founded a new people named the Eotheod.

3.11.2 THE FALL OF THE WAINRIDERS

The new King of Gondor would not long suffer the shame of his father's defeat at the hands of the Easterlings and began to muster a new army. What few tidings from the east came into Gondor spoke of constant battle on the borders of the new realm that the Wainriders had seized. Indeed, the Wainriders found pacifying the peoples of Rhovanion to be an impossible task, and the constant feuds they fought drew much of the strength away from the strike their leaders were planning into Calenardhon. In the end, the house of Avas was never able to seize any more than the upper reaches of Ithilien from the south kingdom in their 45 years of occupation of Rhovanion. By the time the Wainriders had mustered the strength to strike, Calimehtar, Narmacil's son, was leading an army on their borders. Calimehtar was a student of history and was determined not to allow the easterlings to draw his army into the plains where they might be defeated. Ironically, his strategy for defeating the Wainriders was aided by the fact that the enemy he faced was actually stronger than Turambar's foe so many years earlier. The strength of the Wainrider army was such that they believed themselves able to invade and subjugate the people of Gondor, and so they were willing to pursue Calimehtar's army in order to give battle.

Marwhini, too, had not sat idle over the years of the Wainrider occupation. The Eotheod had many lasting contacts with the men of Esgaroth and Dale, and promised Calimehtar that the Rhevain would revolt if the Wainriders drew their strength away from their northern borders and attacked Gondor. As the Wainrider army moved to pursue Calimehtar's retreating forces in Ithilien, Marwhini returned to Rhovanion with a host via northern paths and led a northman uprising that destroyed much of what the easterlings had built in the last half century. The wainrider army was trapped in the confines of Ithilien and crushed by the army of Gondor, effectively ending their rule in Rhovanion.

In Folyavulda too, the yoke of Igath rule was cast off and the rulers of the realm returned from their exile in Scari. The Sagath and Logath of Rhovanion dropped their demands of tribute in the north, but largely retained the lands they had conquered. This pattern was repeated throughout much of Rhun and Rhovanion, for though the Wainrider had been militarily defeated, the price to their enemies was such that

Rhovanion was largely unpeopled. The Ehwathrumi did not return to Rhovanion. The Ilnotithuida were not able to return to the ruins of their city. Rather, a new town grew in the heartland of southern Rhun which remained dominated by Easterlings. This town was named Kravod (Ul. "Steel-town") and sat on the ruins of Thorontir, the once proud seat of Gondorian power in Dor Rhunen.

3.11.3 AN UNSTEADY PEACE

Gondor's victory over the Wainriders resulted in the death of the Igath King and the temporary dissolution of his confederacy, but the Ulgath people remained in eastern Rhovanion. Rebellion in Folyavuld had ousted the invaders and allowed the Realm-master to return from his exile at Scarakikot, but both northern and southern borders of the realm were now hostile. Northman rebels had liberated Esgaroth and Dale, but the Ehwathrumi tribes that were forced to flee Rhovanion in T.A. 1854 were not able to reclaim their lands from the nomads who now occupied them. Camps were put to the torch, armies pursued into the plains, and towns recaptured, but the Wainrider menace was far from over. In Mistrand, the line of Avas continued, and the Igath confederation was slowly reassembled for another try at the south kingdom.

3.11.4 THE SECOND WAINRIDER WAR

Avas III, new King of the Igath realized that though powerful, his confederacy could not defeat Gondor alone. In T.A. 1940, he turned to his southern counterpart in Khand for an alliance against the south kingdom. Uvatha had again departed, leaving a mortal King in his stead. The two Easterling monarchs met, and devised a plan for their joint venture against their common enemy. Half the Igath advanced through Khand, and together with an army from that land, marched on the southern borders of Gondor by way of Near Harad. In the north, a massive assembly of Logath, Brygath, and Urgath moved against Dagorlad and what remained of the territory of Dor Rhunen.

Gondor was warned of the approach of the Wainriders, and met her enemies on both fronts. In the north, King Ondoher and his heirs were surprised by the swift advance of the Wainrider army and Gondor suffered a terrible defeat in which were killed Ondoher and all his sons. In the south, Earnil led the Dunedain in an overwhelming victory over Avas III and his Variag allies. The Gondorian captain was not able to pursue the defeated enemy, however, for on receiving word of the King's defeat, he was forced to quickly move his army through Ithilien to confront the northern host. There he surprised the Wainrider army and again won a glorious victory, driving the invaders out of Gondor entirely.

3.12 THE LATE THIRD AGE

After the second defeat of the Igath confederacy, Sauron and his servants realized that the Ulgath would not be able to defeat Gondor themselves. Kerkassk remained a powerful figure in Gathod, but the ability of Nemol to organize large

nations under that guise was largely destroyed with the end of the line of Avas. The plains of Rhovanion and Rhûn became a domain of desperation. No longer was law respected or enforced. The remnants of the Wainrider armies roamed Rhovanion in bands, grazing cattle where they might and looting whenever necessary. The proud Ehwathrumi were a distant memory, and all that remained of Vidugavia's once extensive kingdom were a few settlements along the East Bight of Mirkwood, and the twin towns of Esgaroth and Dale.

Folyavuld became a settled realm in isolation from the contacts that had once made them strong. Trade was a risky business at best, with Sagath tribes in control of the Fola Salenin and the trade roads. Hostile Logath tribes in the north now menaced the borders of the realm and desperate pirates prowled the lanes between Riavod and all viable trading partners. Oraishapek amused himself with the Orcs of the Uldona Spine; making war on what remained of Thelor's folk and launching raids into the lowlands of Folyavuld. Rhûn decayed into a shadow of its former self, and even the servants of Sauron were forced to look beyond the borders of the region for a people with promise.

3.12.1 THE BALCHOTH INVASION

In T.A. 2063, Gandalf the Grey made a journey to Dol Guldur to uncover the identity of the Necromancer who now dominated Mirkwood forest. Sauron judged that the time was still not right to reveal himself as the enemy returned, so he fled his abode and ventured into the east in search of ways to make new trouble for Gondor. Whether by his design or not, new trouble did indeed come out of the east in T.A. 2460, in the form of a new Easterling confederation calling themselves the Pultai Dynasty. Pushed out of their former lands by a severe drought, the Pultai moved through eastern and Gathod, absorbing the Ulgath tribes as they went. By 2472, the Pultic army contained most of the peoples who once comprised the Igath confederation; eager at the prospect of exacting revenge on Gondor, their ancient foe.

Had they crossed the Anduin immediately, they would certainly have done great harm to Gondor. They tarried in Rhovanion for fifty years, however, oppressing the Northmen of Rhovanion and massing strength for the invasion. Their delay gave the Northmen time to warn Cirion, new Steward of Gondor, of the imminent danger than his kingdom faced. By T.A. 2510, when the Balchoth host crossed the Anduin, the Steward had assembled a small army and sent messengers to his allies for aid. Aid arrived just in time to save Cirion and his army from certain destruction at Parth Celebrant, for Eorl the young led a great host of mounted warriors down from the home of the Eotheod at the sources of the Anduin. The warriors of Eorl, who were descended from the Ehwathrumi of Rhovanion caught the Pultic armies in a great charge that killed their King and left their troops in great disarray. The Balchoth confederacy melted back into the wilds of Rhovanion to lick their wounds and look to their next best chance to do harm to Gondor.

3.12.2 THE WAR OF THE RING

In the wake of the defeat of the Balchoth, Rhûn enjoyed peace for a brief while. After the Battle of Five Armies in T.A. 2941, Northman culture in northern Rhovanion was reborn. Reconstructed Dale and Esgaroth became the centers of the Free Kingdom of Rhovanion. Between Folyavuld and the new Northman realm there arose a trade rivaling the early years of the Third Age, and the river's course was again cleared of encroaching Sagath. The peace was short-lived, however, for a mere decade later Sauron revealed himself at Barad-dûr, surrounded by the vast strength he had assembled in secret. His dark servants renewed their efforts to dominate Mordor's northern fences.

Rhûn was still full of Easterlings who hated Gondor, and who readily flocked to the black banner of Mordor when it was unfurled. Nemol's hold over Gathod ensured that those Easterlings would fight for the shadow in the coming war. In the north, Oraishapek could still muster a great deal of support among the Logath. In addition, his Orcs virtually controlled the Uldona Spine and his spies had thoroughly infiltrated the Land of Rivers. As Sauron unleashed his armies on the free peoples of the west, assassinations destabilized the alliance between Folyavuld and Dale. The Orcs of the mountains descended in force and laid waste to the Folyavulda countryside. In Szrel-Kain and Riavod, high-placed spies led a revolt against those who would succeed the assassinated Realm-master, paralyzing the realm. Oraishapek himself led an Easterling army against the Northmen of the Free Kingdom, defeating Dain II and Brand and laying siege to their armies at Erebor.

But just as the Dark Lord's plans fell apart at the Morannon, so too were his armies defeated in Rhûn. The siege of Erebor was eventually broken and Oraishapek forced to flee into the north. The spies of Riavod were exposed and a united Folyavuld turned their attentions on the invading Orcs. The Orcs were eventually trapped between the Men of Folyavuld and Dwarves from Nurunkizdin, eager to put a final end to foul tribe that had plagued the highlands for so long. The Narsza-trador was taken with the aid of the Dwarves, and the Dradorny-Arnas burnt to the ground, a final end to the dark legacy of the Szreldor.

3.13 THE TALE OF YEARS

The First Age

The Maiar pass into Endor to do their masters' bidding. The Maia Quelbaras of Yavanna's folk lingers by the northeastern shores of the wide and unmarred Inland Sea to tend the newly emerging Olvar there, and to watch for the future time when the Children of Iluvatar should wake.

The Eldar awake in Cuivienen and after Orome appears to them in council, many kindreds choose to follow the Vala and pass into the utter-west. Their voyage takes them through the deep forests of northern Rhûn. The second sundering. The way west is long and filled with fear and wonder. Folwe's people tarry and falter along the way pausing too long by the shores of a great Inland Sea. Left behind, the kindred settle the sweeping forest and are discovered by Quelbaras therein.

They take the name of Uialrim.

ca. 150 — The Lintadorin kindreds of man arrive in Rhûn. Various Northmen tribes settle the lands surrounding the Sea.

ca. 250 — Bavor's folk, weary of conflict with the denizens of the frozen wastes head south leaving the utter north to King Thelor's people. The mighty Khazad pass through Rhûn leaving a small group of folk to found a mining colony in the Uldona Spine.

ca. 400-450 — A great wave of Men out of the east pass through Gathod. Many of their folk settle the southern and western shores of the Inland Sea. They call themselves the Donath.

ca. 500 — Two Donath tribes, the Broendon and Rhidon settle in the region later known as Folyavuld.

ca. 550 — Cataclysmic forces shake Rhûn as the Valar make war on Morgoth. The great forests retreat and Varda's Mirror is marred. Elven settlers of the coast move into the deeps of the Agasha Dag.

The Second Age

ca. 1 — Relin, son of Runin, constructs a new home at Falek-dim.

12 — The Baradhrim, ancient Mannish servants of Morgoth, attack the Dwarves and Northmen of Rhovanion. They are defeated and eventually settle the sparsely inhabited lands north and east of the Agasha Dag.

ca. 220 — The Talathrim, a great collection of Mannish cultures out of the far east, reach the Talathrant.

262 — Led by a demonic spirit, the Variags and many allied cultures attack and defeat the Nardhrim peoples of the central Talathrant.

ca. 400 — The Ulgath split into northern and southern branches over the issue of alliance with the warlike Variags. The southern Ulgath occupy the fertile lands on either side of the Talathrant, while the northern Ulgath migrate into the lands west of the river, seeking a land for themselves.

521 — The Uruk-marzguram migrate from the Ash Mountains to the Uldona Spine where they lay siege to Relin's kingdom at Falek-dim.

522 — Relin is forced to abandon Falek-dim.

596 — The Variag domain in the Talathrant collapses in the face of determined attacks by their Ioriag cousins, and the Variags are pushed west. The southern Ulgath are able to retain much of their land north of the former Variag holdings.

680 — Variag tribes first settle in the Gap of Khand.

ca. 730 — War grips much of the Talathrant vale as the southern Ulgath defend their holdings against attacking Ioriags of the Relmether region. Many southern Ulgath tribes migrate north into the Kykurian Kyn. Tribes of the northern Ulgath are forced into the Empty Plains, where they are dominated by the Baradhrim chiefdoms.

800-1000 — Reinvigorated by a return to the practice of

slave-holding, Baradhrim culture rediscovers its dark roots. The worship of Morgoth again becomes popular as do ancient traditions of blood sacrifice.

ca. 1000 — Sauron chooses Mordor as the site of his return to power in Middle-earth. He begins the construction of the Barad-dur.

ca. 1100 — The Ioriag tribes of the Talathrant succeed in forcing the southern Ulgath out of the river valley and far into the Empty Plains and Kykurian Kyn. Their knowledge of horsecraft allows them to largely resist the Baradhrim.

1148 — Northern Ulgath refugee clans reach the Agach vale. There some clans settle and are able to befriend the Northmen of the region.

1149 — A group of Avari fleeing the awakening of the Balrog Muar in the east are accepted by the Uialrim and add their number to the Elven population of Rhûn. However, friction between the leaders causes a sundering of friendship and the Eastern Elves pass south of the Kug to dwell in the empty forest there. The Uialrim close their borders to other elves.

1250-1300 — Having adopted to life by the Sea, the Ulgath of the Agach expand their territory west, eventually coming to the mouth of the Fola Salenin. Calling themselves the Gargath, these clans settle lands along the lower Fola Salenin vale and have frequent contact with the Rhidon Donath.

ca. 1600 — Sauron secretly forges the One Ring. The Barad-dur is completed.

1602-1675 — Sauron gains control of the Variags of Khand through the establishment of a cult of dark priestesses.

1641 — The people of Muhlmek the Strong migrate along the eastern slopes of the Ered Harmal and into Gathod. They make quick alliances with refugee Ioriags from the Talathrant and form a new confederacy of tribes called the Odhriags.

1688-90 — Sauron appears several times to the Mannish cultures of southern and eastern Rhûn as a powerful deity called the "Black Master." He founds a cult devoted to the worship of himself, and establishes Lokuthor, first of the Dispossessed, as his high priest.

1690 — Seeking new lands to cultivate, three Entwives bring agriculture to northwestern Rhûn.

1692 — Sauron's servants discover the Baradhrim and their dark religion. They begin to stir the Easterlings against their ancient enemies, the Northmen to their west.

1695 — The Dark Lord's servants succeed in stirring the Baradhrim against the Northmen. Two powerful Baradhrim tribal confederacies drive the Northmen across Rhovanion to eaves of Greenwood the Great. The Szredlor settle the lands north of the Fola Salenin. The fishing Northmen and Ulgath of the Agach are driven into the forest where they found the settlement of Kugavod. Many are set upon by the elves when straying too far from the coast and are slain.

1700 — Sauron is defeated by a Numenorean fleet sent to Lindon.

1887-90 — Jealous of the economic success of the cultures

of Folyavuld, Korlana Szrel campaigns south of the Fola Salenin, subjecting many Donath and Gargath clans to slavery. The Szreldor establish a powerful kingdom in the Folyavulda lowlands that dominates eastern Rhovanion and northern Rhûn. The Entwives flee the violence of the warring tribes and pass east under the eaves of Agasha Dag. They are not heard of again by Man.

2000 — Uvatha Achef becomes the first king to unite all the tribes of the Variags.

2002 — Uvatha accepts a Ring of Power from Sauron and becomes the ninth Ringwraith.

2004 — At his halls in the Grey Mountains, Thelor VII accepts one of the Seven Rings from Sauron.

2176 — Oraishapek of Dir goes to Mordor and receives a Ring of Binding.

2204 — Korlana IV, king of the Szreldor accepts Oraishapek as Sauron's embassy to Szrel-Arkasa.

2236 — Oraishapek dies and becomes one of the undead Dispossessed. His ring is passed to a Szreldorn successor.

2251-53 — Oropher founds the Woodland Realm in Greenwood the Great. A group of Silvan folk under Lanthir, their leader, reject Oropher's hegemony and migrate from Greenwood to the Agasha Dag. They try to settle deep within the forest but the Uialrim reject the outsiders and allow them to settle only in the narrow band of forest between the Uialrim realm and the expanding population of Kugavod. Lanthir's Elves take over the border-watch.

2258 — The Ringwraith Hoarmurath gives a Ring of Binding to one of his most trusted mortal servants, Nemol of Dir.

2603 — Lokor Szrel, king of the Szreldor, is passed Oraishapek's ring, cementing Mordor's control over the Szreldorn kingdom.

2772 — Lokor Szrel begins the construction of the Dradorny-Arnas.

2797-2804 — Thelor's folk migrate from the Grey Mountains to the Uldona Spine, reclaiming the halls of Falek-dim from the Orcs.

2814 — The sea-drake Kraszapol is raised from the depths of the Sea by Lokor Szrel's sorcery.

3261 — Ar-Pharazon the Golden lands a large Numenorean fleet at Umbar. Sauron is unable to match their strength and is forced to become Ar-Pharazon's captive.

3319 — The Downfall of Numenor. Elendil and his sons escape.

3430 — The Great Muster is called. Warriors from across Rhûn flock to Sauron's banner.

3433 — Lokuthor, one of Sauron's Dispossessed servants, refuses to submit to Sauron's authority. Sauron destroys him, effectively dissolving his own influence in Southern Rhûn. An Odhriag overlord, Khorgul Hotun, unites the tribes and refuses to honor Sauron's call to arms.

3434 — The Battle of Dagorlad. Sauron's armies are

decisively defeated by the Last Alliance. Many of Sauron's northern Ulgath servants desert well before the battle is decided. Elendil sends large companies of Eriadorian Northmen into southern Rhovanion to guard against the return of the deserters. Droza Kadar leads a slave rebellion in Folyavuld.

3435 — Szrel-Arkasa falls. Yorga Hos leads a confederation of Sagath tribes against Ilanin. The Ibar Logath matriarch establishes the town of Sadvar.

3441 — The Barad-dur is broken. Sauron is overthrown and the Ringwraith pass into the shadows.

The Third Age

1 — The Northman watch at Algiwidaus is abandoned. Bands of these Northmen migrate to the sheltered highlands of the Uldona Spine, where they become known as the Bergothiuda.

11-21 — The Ibotithiuda found Burh Armenrik. They make contact and begin to trade with the Donath, the Odhriags, and the Dwarves of Uldona Spine.

50 — Contact between the Logath and Kugath is made and trade commences between these two cultures.

58-62 — The release of a terrible blight forces Thelor XIV to abandon his mines, causing civil unrest among his subjects. Much of the king's family succumbs to the pestilence, and most of the Dwarves flee their home in the Uldona Spine.

150 — Logath expansion reaches the Redwater and contact is made with Rhovanian Northmen tribes.

472 — Several Urgath tribes migrate across the Surubeki and settle in the Mistrand region.

480 — A terrible disease strikes the Urgath herds of southeastern Rhûn. Large numbers of Urgath migrate through Gathod and onto the eastern and central Talath Harroch.

485-488 — Urgath/Sagath wars. The Urgath succeed in displacing large numbers of Sagath onto the Dagorlad.

492 — Folyavuld retakes Ilanin from the Hos confederacy.

493 — The Sagath begin raiding Ithilien provoking King Tarostar to mobilize a sizable army to deal with the nomads.

497 — The construction of the tower at Or-Sarn completed.

498-500 — Tarostar's army drives the disunified Sagath north into the Eastern Bight. Tarostar's army is never confronted in numbers and Tarostar has trouble bringing the Sagath bands to battle. Tarostar takes the name 'Romendacil' and withdraws his army back to Gondor.

503 — Folyavulda explorers reach Lindal and make contact with the Northmen of Lake-town.

500-540 — Northman culture expands onto the plains. The Ehwathrumi culture develops and competes with the Sagath for limited plains resources. The Sagath warlord Caros unites the Sagath in opposition to the Northmen and Gondor. Caros seeks an alliance with the Urgath of the Eastern Talath Harroch.

540 — The joint forces of Caros and the Urgath make war on Ithilien and Dagorlad. Romendacil is slain in battle.

541 — Tarostar's heir, Turambar, launches a determined campaign against the Easterling alliance. The King makes an alliance with the Northman princes of the Ehwathrumi. The Easterling alliance dissolves. The remnants of the Urgath tribes are driven with great loss across the Talath Harroch and back into Southern Rhûn. Turambar grants much of Rhovanion and the Talath Harroch to his Northman prince allies.

546 — The Ehwathrumi make contact with the western border of Folyavuld. Folyavulda trade goods are exchanged through Ehwathrumi lands and begin to reach Gondor.

550-650 — Folyavulda age of exploration on the Inland Sea. Many of the first voyages result in tragedy as high seas capsize the shallow draft vessels of Folyavuld.

562 — The first successful trade expedition to find the mouth of the Kug river and trade with Kugavod by sea.

568 — The Edru expedition is blown off course, and eventually finds its way to Mistrand.

ca. 570 — Dor Rhûnen trades heavily with the Ehwathrumi. Tales of the exotic land of "Dorwinion" and the Inland Sea reach Gondor.

572 — Lest is established by the Ibnotithiuda.

575 — Contact is made between Burh Armenrik and Folyavuld.

ca. 585 — Initial construction projects of the Men Rhûnen. Some Ehwathrumi make a living protecting trade caravans from the depredations of Sagath tribes. Founding of Thorondir.

ca. 596 — Gondorian merchants take up residence in Burh Armenrik.

600 — Two members of the doomed Edru expedition reach Folyavuld and tell their tale. A strong effort to reach the ports of Mistrand and Dilgul ensues.

652 — A Rhidon explorer finds the hidden natural haven of Scarakikot and establishes a small town there. The town and haven become known popularly among Folyavulda sailors as "Scari."

ca. 700 — The markets of Lest, Dilgul and Mistrand are opened to sea-going Folyavulda merchants.

784 — The Dunadan presence in Burh Armenrik increases. The Governor of Dor Rhûnen sends a small company to oversee the security of the town.

790 — Following an Asdriag raid in which most of the town took fire, the Gondorian detachment in Burh Armenrik oversees the building of the Barad Ithil.

999 — Esgaroth established on the Long Lake.

1000 — Sauron stirs again in Middle-earth.

1050 — Uvatha returns to Khand.

1100 — Uvatha crowns himself King of Khand. He begins

the long process of securing the borders of Mordor in preparation for his master's return to the Black Land.

ca. 1110 — Fleeing Uvatha's Variag hordes, Asdriags migrate into the lands of southern and southeastern Rhûn.

1208-22 — The Northman Clan Wars.

1228 — The Hos Sagath clan invades and occupies Ilanin and the surrounding valley.

1229 — Vidugavia and Hos fight over hegemony in northern Rhovanion.

1231-34 — Folyavuld sides with Vidugavia and together they drive Hos back into the north..

1235-46 — Vidugavia and the Eriadorian clans of the Talath Harroch fight for control of all the Northmen clans of Rhovanion.

1240 — Minalcar becomes Regent of Gondor and sends spies into Rhovanion.

1247 — Minalcar makes an alliance with Vidugavia. Gondor and the Northmen make war on the Easterlings of the Talath Harroch. The Easterlings are defeated and the region again becomes stable.

1248 — Minalcar and Vidugavia campaign across Gathod in an attempt to permanently rid the area of nomads. The Easterlings of Gathod are indiscriminately persecuted by the crusading army, fostering their later hatred of Gondor and the west. Uvatha pulls back his armies to avoid a western discovery of his return. The town of Elgaer is established by Folyavulda merchants as a supply outpost for the western army.

1250 — Minalcar officially recognizes Vidugavia's kingship and sends his son Valacar as ambassador to the new realm. Anduin is fortified and construction of the Argonath is begun.

1265 — Oraishapek the Dispossessed is reborn as Uvatha reclaims Oraishapek's Ring from the tomb of the Szrel King in the Ash Mountains.

1272 — The Witch-king enters Angmar.

1274 — Uvatha finds a new host for Nemol's Ring, and helps this new servant gain influence among the peoples of Gathod. Posing as various deities to the Urgath, Brygath and Odhriag tribes, he begins to exacerbate their hatred of the west.

1280 — The Variags of Khand launch offensives into Gathod that sack Mistrand and further unify Nemol's followers.

1300-1385 — Agents of the Witch-king work to popularize migration to Angmar among the Logath and Sagath of northern Rhûn.

1327 — A group of Orcs are sent from Dol Guldur to the Uldona Spine to take control of the Orc tribes there.

1314 — Nemol appears before Shivalu Sulv in Mistrand, demanding his obedience.

1331 — Nemol stirs the Brygath against the Folyavulda merchants of Elgaer. The outpost is completely destroyed in a Brygath raid.

1384 — The Witch-king strikes a deal with the Huz clan that gives them control over the migration road north of the Iron Hills.

ca. 1400 — Nemol's influence in Mistrand grows as Variag power wanes in Gathod.

1418 — End of Achimov's line in Mistrand.

1432 — Eldacar assumes the throne of Gondor, plunging the kingdom into civil war.

1437 — Eldacar is exiled to Rhovanion.

1447 — Eldacar returns to claim his throne with the help of his Northman kinsmen.

1538 — Folyavulda merchants build a fort on the ruins of Elgaer in an attempt to re-establish the eastern trade routes that had once made them wealthy. The new outpost is renamed Kelepar.

ca. 1600 — Piracy on the Inland Sea hits an all time high as the merchants of both Folyavuld and Burh Armenrik sponsor privateers against one another's ships. Lest and Scari become rival ports, each harboring large privateer populations.

1500-1600 — The Dragons begin to stir in the Grey Mountains.

1620 — The merchants of Kelepar make inroads with the Urgath of the sea's eastern coast in an attempt to establish trade routes with the Talathrant vale that circumvent Mistrand.

1629 — The rivalry between Folyavuld and Mistrand manifests itself as a division between the Urgath and Brygath tribes of the Sea's southeast coast. Warfare erupts among the nomads of Gathod.

1633 — Despite Folyavuld's naval superiority, several key losses among the Urgathic allies of Folyavuld imperil the outpost at Kelepar.

1634-36 — The Great Plague strikes eastern Rhûn with devastating results. Kelepar is abandoned.

1640 — The Sagath Tros clan invades the Ilanin region and seizes the ferry there. Tros demands a toll from the peoples of Gathod who wish to join the Witch-king's armies.

c. 1750 — A new confederacy rises among the nomads of southern and eastern Rhûn. The religious state that forms is centered on Mistrand, and calls itself the Igath confederation.

1854 — Uvatha returns to Khand after a long absence and launches attacks against his neighbors with renewed vigor. The Igath under Avas I and with the councils of Nemol decide to migrate into the richer lands of Rhovanion rather than fight the more powerful Variags.

1855 — Oraishapek stirs the Logath and Sagath into joining the Wainrider Confederation in their war against Gondor and the Northmen.

1856 — The Battle of the Plains. King Narmacil II is killed in the battle and Dor Rhûnen is abandoned.

1856-1899 — The Wainrider Kingdom dominates all of

Rhûn and Rhovanion. The Ehwathrumi are forced to migrate into the Anduin Vale. The Northmen of Rhovanion are driven into Mirkwood and Lake-town is occupied by Easterlings. Folyavuld is occupied and resistance to the Wainrider regime is confined to the highlands, where it is persecuted by Oraishapek's Orc servants.

1899 — Rebellion against the Wainriders sparks in several places throughout Rhovanion simultaneously. At the same time, King Calimehtar and the Ehwathrumi confront the Wainriders at Dagorlad. The Wainriders are defeated and retreat into the eastern Talath Harroch, but the Ehwathrumi are unable to return to their former ranges.

1940 — The Wainrider Confederacy again rises to power. Avas III, high king of the Wainriders makes an alliance with Ovatha of Khand.

1944 — The Wainriders and Variags launch a two-pronged assault on Gondor. In the south, the Easterling alliance is defeated by Earnil. In the north, King Ondoher and his two sons are slain as Gondor is defeated by the Wainriders. Earnil surprises the Wainriders at the Battle of the Camp and drives them out of Ithilien with heavy losses. Rhovanion is largely unpeopled.

1975 — Angmar and Arthedain destroy one another. The Witch-king gathers the Ringwraiths in Mordor.

1977 — The Eotheod move into the upper vales of the Anduin.

1980-81 — Durin's folk awaken a Balrog in Moria and are forced to abandon their hallowed home.

2050 — Earnur slain in single combat with the Witch-king, thus ending Minardil's line and initiating the rule of the Stewards of Gondor.

2063 — Gandalf goes to Dol Guldur but fails to discover the Necromancer's identity. To avoid discovery, Sauron eludes the wizard and flees into the east.

2370 — A new group of Easterlings, the Pultai Dynasty of the Talathrant vale invades the Urgath and Brygath lands southeast of the Inland Sea.

2392 — The Urgath and Brygath tribes are assimilated into the Pultic hordes.

2444 — The first scout companies of the Pultai Dynasty reach the Talath Harroch and Rhovanion.

2460 — Sauron returns to Dol Guldur out of the east.

2472 — Many Asdriag and Odhriag tribes are assimilated into the Pultic armies as the dynasty migrates through Gathod and into Rhovanion itself.

2505 — Pultic scouts thoroughly survey the Wold as the dynasty's armies begin amassing south of Mirkwood for a crossing of the Anduin.

2510 — The Bom, leads his armies in an invasion of Calenardhon. The Balchoth are joined by a host of Orcs from Moria. Together they hem in the Gondorian army, but are surprised as they close in for the kill by a great host of Eotheod cavalry led by Eorl the Young. The Battle at Parth Celebrant is a decisive victory for Gondor and her allies.

2590 — The Dwarves of the Grey Mountains are forced out of their homes by a resurgence in Dragon activity.

2758-59 — The Long Winter.

2770 — Smaug the Golden invades Erebor, destroying Lake-town and Dale in the process. The Dwarves are forced out of the Lonely Mountain.

2941 — The death of Smaug. The Battle of Five Armies. Lake-town is destroyed.

2944 — Dale is rebuilt on the ruins of the ancient Northman town.

2947-90 — Bard of Dale and the Realm-Master of Folyavuld form a free kingdom in Rhovanion.

2951 — Sauron openly declares himself in Mordor.

2987-3017 — Conflict erupts between the nomads of northern Rhûn and the kingdoms of Folyavuld and Dale. Oraishapek's dark cult in Folyavuld is responsible for many key assassinations in Folyavuld, including the killing of the Realm-master.

3018 — The War of the Ring. Oraishapek the Dispossessed leads a large army of Easterlings and Orcs against the free peoples of Rhovanion. Dain II and Brand of Dale are slain and the remnants of their armies are besieged at Erebor. Folyavuld is gripped by a civil war.

3019 — The siege at Erebor is broken and Oraishapek is driven into the utter-north. A new Realm-Master prevails in Folyavuld and the Dradorny-Arnas is burnt to the ground. Sauron falls in Mordor as the One Ring is consumed by the fires of Mount Doom.

4 THE LAND

The geography of Rhûn is dominated by the area's role as an interior drainage basin for the continent of Endor. With only two exceptions, the Mayzri Archipelago and the Pinnon Rhûn, the entire region is composed of layer upon layer of sedimentary deposits. The region's many rivers carry silts from every corner of Endor. Limestone, sandstone, shale and chalk are found in most locales throughout Rhûn. Though there are a few dramatic examples of vertical relief, the vast majority of the land consists of rolling grasslands. The inability of the thin layer of topsoil to support anything but grasses has greatly inhibited most attempts to permanently settle and tame the region. In most areas, herd-grazing is the only viable economic pursuit, and nomadism the only successful way of life. Only in the fertile river valleys have sedentary cultures taken root. Geography, as much as any other factor, ensures that much of Rhûn will remain an untamed wilderness.

Rhûn's geography can be generally divided into five distinct

zones: the Inland Sea, the Plains, the River Valleys, the Agasha Dag forest and the Uldona Spine. The following sections provide an overview of the geological character of each of these regions. For more details on the specific sites within each zone consult the Gazetteer.

4.1 THE SEA

Filling the lowest portion of the large natural basin that makes up the lands of Rhûn is the great Inland Sea. Much of the eastern half of the Sea is shallow, having been drowned during the War of Wrath, when the Valar rent the continent to lay open the subterranean kingdom of Morgoth. The drastic effect that the far off cataclysm of Beleriand had on Rhûn is due to the composition of the basin itself. Being mostly sedimentary rocks, the tremors that broke Beleriand were amplified in the relatively loose strata of the basin floor, resulting in great fissures that weakened the thin crust of the eastern shore and caused it to subside. This period of settling was characterized by entire portions of the eastern coast gradually sinking below the level of the sea. As the waters advanced over the crumbling eastern shore, mountain summits were transformed into islands and the Mayzri Archipelago was born. The greatest of these volcanic islands is known by the Kugathig name Egil Dorn (Tol Sulereb, or "Isle of the Lonely Cloud" in Sindarin). It is the only island in the chain that is still volcanically active, and sailors generally give it a wide berth. The fumes that rise constantly from its central cone are visible from many miles away, thus earning the island its name.

As the area of the Sea expanded, the overall level of the water dropped, exposing the steep western shore as a new line of cliffs. In the years since their exposure, the pounding of storm-driven waves has eroded great portions of the mostly limestone western coast, leaving a dramatic sea-scape of sharp shoals and vertical spires of resistant igneous rock. A brief recurrence of volcanism in the Uldona Spine provided additional uplift, further exaggerating the vertical relief of the western coast. The sailors of Folyavuld have long referred to the dangerous western coast as the Parta Rokantha (Fo. "Skeleton Shore"), both for its well demonstrated ability to claim ships, and also for its reputation as being haunted by the souls of men sacrificed at the mythic Szreldorn citadel of Dradorny-Arnas, which is said to be hidden somewhere along the jagged shore.

The southern and eastern shores of the sea are much different than the Parta Rokantha. Many of the river mouths that feed the great Sea were completely drowned in the cataclysm, resulting in long, narrow bays of shallow and silty water. Both the Kug and Mistrand Bays were formed in this way, and have since developed into some of the best fishing areas in the entire Sea. The sturgeon beds of Mistrand Bay are a constant source of wealth for the sea-going peoples of that region, and have been an important factor in the rise of cities on the southern coast. The eastern seacoast from Mistrand Bay to Kug Bay is mostly brackish swamp, giving way to mangrove as one progresses north.

The Inland Sea may be most widely known for the violent storms that sometimes rage across it. These are caused primarily by the temperature gradient of the surrounding

plains, which creates a constantly blowing wind. These winds pick up moisture as they blow in from the east and cross the coast of the Sea. The moisture invariably comes down as torrential blowing gales that can easily push ships along the western coast onto the jagged rocks. The ability to sense the coming of these storms is a matter of survival for the captains of the western sea, and their skill in this area is uncanny.

4.2 THE PLAINS

The plains surrounding the Inland Sea are geologically typical of the entire basin. The bedrock is a mix of sedimentary strata laid in the youth of the world by great flooding. Overlaying the bedrock is a layer of dry and relatively nutrient-poor soil that is capable of supporting only tall grasses and small shrubs. Besides the gentle swell of the endless plains, there are occasional outcrops of hills that provide the only real shelter within which larger trees can grow. These small stands are prized campsites among the regions nomadic folk, and the local camping and grazing rights are frequent sources of intra-tribal conflict.

Weather on the plains is often violent. High winds are a constant presence, and can occasionally develop into a much more serious phenomenon known to the nomads as an *Onterad* (Ul. "Dark One's Breath"). The weather and temperature tends toward the extremes mainly because of a lack of humidity in the air. Lightning is also a very common occurrence, and will occasionally fill the sky in dramatic displays of natural pyrotechnics. In the winter, the constant push of the eastern wind takes on an edge of frost, and the storms blowing across the Sea can dump massive amounts of snow in a very brief amount of time. All these conditions are made harder to endure on the plains because of the lack of cover. To be caught unprepared by bad weather on the open plains can sometimes be a deadly mistake.

4.2.1 THE RIVER VALLEYS

The region of Central Endor that drains into the Inland Sea spans over 500,000 square miles, from eastern Mirkwood to the arid plains beyond the east coast. Nearly all of the rainwater in these diverse regions is gathered into small streams that meander their way across the plains, joining their strengths to form the great rivers of Rhûn. The river valleys stand out as lines of vibrant green against the sometimes bleak tans and greys of the plains. Rich alluvial soils support forests along the riverbanks, creating an ecological niche that is very different from the surrounding grasslands. Rhûn's settled cultures universally depend on the nourishing sediments deposited by these rivers.

More than any other local region, Folyavuld (which means "Land of Rivers") exemplifies the potential richness of riverine life. The combination of cover provided by the hills of northeastern Rhovanion and an abundance of rivers has allowed that land to achieve the height of agricultural success. To those who have mastered boating, the rivers also provide avenues of passage across otherwise hostile lands bringing cultures together and allowing trade to be conveniently carried over long distances.

At the same time, the rivers of the region can also act as

barriers to the peoples of Rhûn. The vast majority of Rhûn's inhabitants are nomadic pastoralists; people who depend on the movement of herds across the land. Most of Rhûn's rivers, particularly in the north, make deep cuttings in the sedimentary rock of the plains, forming steep forested banks and deep channels that preclude good fording places. As a result, nomads are forced to parley with the settled boat-faring people of the river valleys for passage over the river.

4.2.2 THE AGASHA DAG

The Agasha Dag is a vast forest that blankets the land northeast of the Inland Sea. Though its size has been much reduced by climatic changes, geological upheaval, and the encroachments of Man, this wilderness is still one of the largest west of the Talathrant and north of the great deserts. Geologically speaking, the Agasha Dag is much like the rest of the basin, composed of sedimentary strata laid down while the world was young. The Kug, which flows through the heart of the forest on its way to the sea, has cut deeply into these strata, exposing layers of limestone to the elements. The same is true of the hills west of the river and north of the forest. Run-off water has carved out hundreds of subterranean caves, some of which are large enough to house a troll.

4.3 THE ULDONA SPINE

Forming much of the great Sea's western shore is an old and weathered mountain chain known as the Uldona Spine (S. "Spine of Rhûn"). To the trained eye, the mountains are comprised of three separate areas that formed in two distinct periods of uplift. The center of the chain, commonly called the Wornpoints, is the barren remnant of intense volcanic activity very early in Endor's history. This is the oldest part of the Spine, and dates back to the original formation of the continent. Since their formation, the Wornpoints have seen periodic episodes of renewed volcanic activity, putting a fresh look on the ancient range.

As is often the case, the Wornpoints are both the most inhospitable region of the Uldona Spine, and also the area with the greatest mineral worth. Only the true masters of stone, the Dwarven colony at Nurunkizdin has explored or mined the Wornpoints to any extent. Their kingdom lies at the southern extremity of the central massif, and much of their fortune has come directly from their exploration of these mountains. Because the mountains reach well above the treeline, and they are covered in great blankets of snow and ice for most of the year, none of the other peoples of Rhûn have ever attempted to mine the Wornpoints.

The ranges north and south of the Wornpoints are much younger, having been formed during the general volcanic episode that shook Rhûn after the War of Wrath. Most of these ranges consist of metamorphosed rock, as the earth was bent and gnarled by competing pressures below. The result are ranges of low, twisted hills and mountains that provide pleasant highland refuges to the peoples that live among them. In the north, the Donath tribes of Folyavuld successfully resisted the unwanted advances of the Szreldor by hiding in the forested highlands. In the south, the

Bergothiuda have found a bountiful mountain ecology to support their primitive society.

The northern and southern ranges of the Uldona Spine have long been known for their numerous deposits of brightly colored marble. The metamorphic limestone deposits are everywhere, and some have a worth nearly equal to more traditionally precious stones. The range of colors and texture is truly astounding, and both the Folyavuldok, and the peoples of Gathod have imported the beautiful stone to build some of the more celebrated structures of the region. Most impressive in the green and black streaked marble that was used to build the Realm-master's Hall in Szrel-Kain. The logistics of carving and transporting such heavy stones, however, has made such construction projects extremely rare.

5 FLORA AND FAUNA

From the sharp and nearly desolate crags of the central massif, to the teeming waters of the Inland Sea, the regions of Rhûn support a wide range of life. The ecologies of the region are quite varied, and each has its own assortment of plants and animals adapted to exist within them. For further information about the varied flora and fauna of a specific region, please consult that region's heading in the Gazetteer (section 11.0).

5.1 THE FLORA

In its primeval youth, the Inland Sea was almost entirely surrounded by the great trees of an ancient forest that provided a home to countless species of plant life. Over the course of history, climatic and cultural changes have considerably reduced the amount of primary forest surrounding the Inland Sea. Though great stands of trees still exist all over Rhûn, only in the high reaches of the Agasha Dag, which are protected by the vigilant Uialrim, has the original deep forest ecology been preserved. The loss of the ancient forests of Endor, and of Rhûn specifically, is a great pain to the Vala Yavanna, who has always worried most for the Olvar, who had no means of protecting themselves from the whims of the Children of Iluvatar.

Changing patterns of rainfall and temperature have wrought the most change on Rhûn. The climate became more arid, increasing the temperature gradient between noon and nightfall. This aridity is what drives the winds of the eastern plains, which have stripped the land of much of its richest topsoil. When rain falls on the plains, it falls in torrents. Much of this water is channeled into seasonal river beds which carry the water away as runoff, rather than allowing it to soak in and feed the local flora. The plant life of the plains is a relatively poor collection of tall grasses and shrubs, suitable only for the grazing of livestock, or the plotting of small irrigation farms. Only along the fresh water courses is flora more abundant, and then only in as much as Man will let it flourish.

5.2 THE FAUNA OF RHUN

For all of Man's attempts to dominate the lands of Rhûn, it is still predominantly a wilderness. While the greater Olvar of

the land have mostly given way to grasses, Rhûn is still filled with all manner of animals, both wild and tame.

5.2.1 THE SEA

The waters of the Inland sea are brim with all manner of aquatic life. Many species of fish and shellfish are harvested daily in the shallows of the Sea by the peoples of the coast. The king of the sea, however, is the great sturgeon, which migrates up the gravel-bedded southern rivers in the spring to spawn. These fish can grow to the size of a man, and sport a coat of bony exterior plates that are used by some cultures to make a type of light weight scale-mail armor.

Because of the its location in the center of the continent, the Inland Sea serves as a refuge in winter for birds who summer near the great bay of Utumno in the north. Likewise, several species of migratory fowl from the Bay of Belfalas make their homes among the crags of the Sea in the summer. The high cliffs of the west coast are riddled with small nooks and fissures, providing excellent roosts for gulls, cormorants, and other species of sea-faring birds. The shallow inlets and bays elsewhere serve as perfect nesting and hunting grounds for crakes, coots, bitterns, and kingfishers. At anytime of year, the skies above the Inland Sea are dotted with birds wheeling in great circles, skimming just above the waves, diving steeply after small fish, and filling the air with their constant cries. Only just before the coming of a powerful storm does the sea become quiet and deserted, an eerie and ominous sign to those who know its portent.

Man is not the only, nor even the greatest predator to prowl the waters of the Sea. The historians of the coastal peoples recall attacks on ships and villages by great serpents, though these creatures have apparently lain dormant for many years. Still, ships are lost on the Inland Sea with no sign left of their demise, and who is to say whether wind and wave, pirate, or something else might have been responsible for the disappearances. Certainly many people have seen the dreaded Festiqan (Ga. "Death Claws"), a large crab-like creature that can sometimes grow large enough to prey on Men. Some even claim to have seen schools of the beasts, or to have stumbled upon great nesting grounds where hundreds dwell. The variety of life on the Inland Sea is abundantly clear to those who have eyes to view it, and certainly there are creatures that have not yet been named. Seemingly every sailor has a story to tell of a strange sighting on the waves of the Inland Sea, and if nothing else, the fear that is sometimes audible in their voices is enough to lend some credibility to their fantastic tales.

5.2.2 THE PLAINS

Like the Sea, the plains of Rhûn are filled with many different kinds of creatures. The majority are domesticated species that are central to the nomadic cultures of the region. The Ehwathrumi and Easterling tribes herd all manner of domesticated animal, including horses, cattle, goats and sheep. Each culture favors one herd animal over the other, and local herd distributions closely mirror the tribal distributions over the land. One of the main differences between the Easterling and Northman herd distributions is

that the Ulgathic Easterlings maintain large herds of the Kine of Araw, a huge white ox with great horns that is used to pull the great wagons for which many of these Easterling tribes are best known. The Northmen respect and the Asdriags fear this animal too much to subject it to the whip, and what herds exist on their lands typically roam free. Another difference among the pastoralists is that the Asdriags keep great herds of goats, while the Ulgath and Northmen consider this animal of secondary importance.

The horse is central to every culture of the plains, and the rights to trap horses is the single most frequent source of fighting among related tribes, regardless of the cultural affiliation.

Not all of the creatures of the plains are domesticated. Antelope, deer, boars, a wide variety of rodents, and wild versions of the domesticated species all frequent the plains on both sides of the Sea. In the vast stretches of the Empty Plains, the most common beasts are wild herd animals, especially antelope. Preying on this host of game are all sorts of predators, including foxes, wolves, feral dogs and even wild cats. These predators have learned to fear humans, for the Easterlings are cruel to those creatures that threaten the herds. The Ulgath in particular have a custom of hunting wild cats for sport, and Ulgath wains frequently display rows of cat skulls as trophies of the kill.

The northern and western plains are more tamed, though the wild herds and the predators who stalk them may still occasionally be encountered. Man has roamed these plains longer and with more consistency, and the presence of large settlements such as those in Dor Rhûnen and the East Bight have been a great detriment to the herds. Wild dogs such as the Undarlaif will occasionally prey on the domesticated animals of Northman homesteads, or raid a village chicken coop raising the ire of the village inhabitants. When this occurs, money can be made by hunting the wild animals, thereby driving them away from the settlements and teaching them to fear Man. A reward is paid for each left front paw brought before the village or homestead master. It is a barbaric custom, but it is effective.

5.2.3 THE ULDONA SPINE

The ranges of the Uldona Spine occupy a special niche in the ecology of the Inland Sea. The mountains that form the Inland Sea's western shore have within them a great variance in topography, and therefore provide numerous different habitats. The gentler slopes of the northern and southern ranges are home to many species that may also be found in the plains, including antelope, wild sheep and goats, and also wolves. There are also beasts unique to the forested highlands, including black bear, elk, and rodents such as the marmot. By contrast, almost none of these are found on the high slopes of the central ranges. Only the reclusive mountain goat and a collection of smaller, specialized rodents are able to exist off the sparse vegetation of the rocky slopes.

6 THE PEOPLE

While the Inland Sea is home to riches of many sorts, the true wealth of this land may lie in the diversity of the cultures who call these lands home. Because of its unique geographical locale, at the frontier between civilizing western influences and the wild ways of the eastern plains, a myriad of peoples and varying cultures can be found inhabiting the regions around the Inland Sea. The section that follows is designed to give an overview of these peoples, but additional information about individual cultures in specific places can be found in the Gazetteer.

6.1 THE FOLYAVULDOK

The Folyavuldok (Fo. "River landers" sing. Folyavulda) represent the unique blending of Ulgathic Easterling and proto-Daen cultures. Their common persecution at the hands of the predatory Szreldor, combined with their shared experiences with the Entwives allowed them to overcome cultural barriers that might have otherwise held them apart, forging a single and diverse society. They are an outgoing and cosmopolitan people, in many ways representing the best parts of their two parent traditions.

Society and Culture

Many know the Folyavuldok as a free-speaking and open-minded people with a great love of oratory debate and the art of negotiation. This passion for public speaking translates to all sectors of urban Folyavulda culture and contributes to the successes of the merchants and diplomats of the realm. Intelligence, charisma, and a sharp wit mark the successful Folyavulda, giving him or her an advantage when dealing with most foreigners.

Competition between two traditions of kin-based authority: one patriarchal and the other matriarchal, resulted in an equality between the sexes in Folyavuld which enables them to negotiate effectively in all manner of foreign environments. These are the Folyavuldok that most come to know: shrewd and worldly individuals, often abroad in distant lands. Within the Riverland itself, outside the lowland cities, in the rural heartland that is the real strength of the Folyavulda realm, a more traditional, conservative aristocracy quietly live comfortable lives producing some of the finest agriculturally-based goods in Endor. Whether in the rural lowlands where the Gargath matriarch's word is law, or in the rugged highlands dominated by the patriarchs of the Donath tribes, travelers in Folyavuld's back-country are invariably surprised by the provincial perspective and deep respect for tradition observed by the people they encounter. Here, justice lies in the judgment of traditional tribal authorities whose jurisdiction extends to all matters save those of tax collection and the security of the wider realm.

Each tribe is composed of several clans, and collectively controls a contiguous region of clan-held estates. Settlement in the rural clan holdings is centered on large farms managed by the heads of prominent families. Manual work is done by the members of less privileged houses within the clan. Rural towns are often located near the boundaries of several estates

and fall under the local tribal authority. Towns serve as collection centers for locally produced goods and often sit on navigable rivers that connect the tribe lands with the wider realm. Taverns and inns house merchants who come to purchase the fine wines, honeys, and grain products that are carted in from the outlying countryside. Towns also contain markets, and house the Realm-master's tax collector as well as some of the more skilled artisans and craftsmen of a given locality. For the finery that graces the more successful estate manors, however, the wealthy are often forced to journey to the larger markets of the lowland cities.

Religion and Worldview

One hold-over from the parent cultures of Folyavuld is the importance of local spirits to the rural peoples of the realm. Both the Gargath and the Donath believed in spirits tied to specific locations who held powers over a region's security, health, and agricultural bounty. Small stone shrines dot the landscape, each devoted to a particular spirit thought to inhabit the surrounding land. The Folyavuldok pay their respects to the spirits by lighting incense and candles at the shrines and spending time in meditative prayer, asking for protection and blessing. In this form, nearly every deity of the old pantheons are preserved in the image of some local deity (often more than one, each in a different region).

Contact with Gondor, however, has discouraged the worship of smaller local spirits, especially in the urban centers, in favor of the greater deities of the realm, each of whom corresponds to one of the Valar that the Dunedain revere. Chief among the deities of Folyavuld is the Earth goddess Aldena, who it is believed sent the legendary Earth-maidens to Folyavuld so long ago. Other deities enjoy increased importance in specific areas (such as the Lord of Winds in Scari, and the Great Shaker in the highlands), but only Aldena is so universally recognized as a benefactor of the realm. Indeed, the reverence of Aldena is the only institutionalized religious tradition in Folyavuld.

The priests and priestesses of Aldena are sought by the ill and the wounded for their extraordinary skills as healers and herbalists. The worship of the Earth-mother is centered at three citadels in the highlands, each the site of a sacred spring and garden. Together, these sites comprise the spiritual heart of the Land of Rivers, and pilgrims in search of physical, mental, and spiritual healing travel from all corners of the realm.

Warcraft

The present realm of Folyavuld was born in a violent rebellion, and since that day war has never been too far from its borders. The raising of an army in the Land of Rivers, however, is a monumental task, involving a unanimous vote of the Council of Clans and the setting of negotiated quotas that each tribe must meet in conscripted soldiers. This arrangement is unwieldy when it comes to emergency defense of the borders, so the Realm-master is empowered to keep a large number of men under constant arms to garrison the various border forts and strongholds. In addition, the Realm-master has the ability to impose a conscription on a single tribe for the purpose of immediately defending its

lands from an imminent threat.

This device has been used effectively throughout the Third Age to slow down invaders while a proper army could be raised to expel them from the realm.

The Realm-master's men, the professional soldiers and officers of the realm, are invariably well armed and organized. Among the units maintained on a permanent basis are the Horsemen of Uldonavan, the Highland Rangers, the Ilanin Guards (reorganized at Uldonavan following their recent loss of Ilanin to the Tros Sagath tribe), the garrisons of all the realm's fortresses, and the navy at Szrel-Kain and Riavod. These are the elite units at the Realm-master's disposal, and they invariably impact the battle when they are committed. Often their organization and battle-discipline alone is enough to turn back the typically disorganized light cavalry of the Sagath, or the unruly crew of a pirate ship.

At all levels of the military, the use of bows and javelins is universal. In addition to their mounted lances, the Horsemen employ short bows. The Guards supplement their famous pike line with long bows and javelins. The soldiers of the navy preface any boarding action with a furious barrage of arrows and ballista bolts. It is only after this prolonged missile attack that the scimitar-wielding soldiers cross planks and swing down from the rigging on to the enemy vessel. Even the conscripts spend the bulk of their time training with the battle spear, a weapon that can be used either in melee or as a thrown missile.

Armor is invariably light among the ranks of the Folyavuldok. Only the Guards and the garrisons employ heavy chain, as they are often required to absorb the charge of the enemy or face heavy missile-fire themselves. The Guards pike-line also uses square wall shields that shieldmen raise to protect the line from the enemy's missiles. The Highland Rangers and the soldiers of the navy favor leather armor and small round shields which leave them free to maneuver. The naval soldiers take cover behind obstacles on board their vessel until the missile barrage has forced the defenders to cover. Casualties from a mis-timed assault are often staggering, as the light armor and small shields offer little protection from enemy missile-fire. The Horsemen employ a light chain mail and small jousting shields, and rely as much on their mobility as their armor to protect them from enemy missile-fire. Conscripts are typically given pot helmets and studded leather coats reaching below their knees. Shields are of medium size and spears may be thrown or discarded in favor of short swords in close melee.

Appearance

In height and stature, the Folyavuldok span the full range of Rhûn's Mannish inhabitants. A full-blooded Donath man might reach a height of six feet or taller, while a Gargath woman may barely reach five. Most represent a mix of the two blood-lines, being generally taller than the plains nomads, and shorter than the Northmen. They almost universally have dark brown or black hair, very often curly. Men keep well-groomed mustaches and beards. Their skin coloration is darker than their neighbors, a testimony to their Donath ancestry.

Both men and women are fond of jewelry, though they have sense enough not to display it when traveling the dangerous plains outside the realm. Clothing tends toward loose fitting garments in all but the coldest seasons. Women wear flowing skirts and blouses, and are fond of colorful vests. The clothing of both sexes favors earth-tones, bright tans and orange-yellows contrasted by deep navy, burgundy, brown and green designs that are often geometric or stylized natural forms.

6.2 THE IBNOTITHIUDA

The Ibnotithiuda (For. "Plainsfolk") were originally the descendants of Eriadorian Northmen who allied themselves with Gil-galad and fought in the Last Alliance of Elves and Men. During the Battle of Dagorlad, they were sent to guard the eastern flank at the Battle of Dagorlad. Their ranks have been joined over the years by numerous other peoples from surrounding lands including Odhriags from Gathod, Donath from the Dacranamel, Gondorians, and Northmen from Rhovanion. They make their homes at the junction of the Warwater and the Fikstaig Rivers, in a region they call the Cairn Angle. Their population is spread over many small farms and fiefdoms centered upon the fortified town of Burh Armenrik.

Society and Culture

Daily life among the Ibnotithiuda is similar to that found among the settlements of other Northmen in Rhovanion. They are a practical people who place much emphasis on the virtues of a hard days labor. While wealth is the object of all working men, opulence, particularly in the public eye is generally regarded as a vice. What has set the Ibnotithiuda apart from many of their Northman cousins is their cosmopolitan nature. Most local merchants take pride in their reputation as diplomats among the varied peoples of Southern Rhun. The very survival of the settlement, surrounded as it is by so many different and sometimes alien cultures, is a testament to the open-mindedness of its citizenry. The Ibnotithiuda and their homesteads in the Cairn Angle stand as a single constant presence in a land that is an ever-changing patchwork of cultures.

The men of the Cairn Angle are also great lovers of festival. Celebrations are raucous events involving public games and demonstrations of strength and skill. Drinking, loud singing, and dancing are community events that serve to bind people together. Because of their love of fun and hard work, both kept in good balance, the Ibnotithiuda are generally an amicable people to deal with.

Like most of the settled peoples of Rhun, the Ibnotithiuda value free commerce as the dearest cultural values. Nearly every citizen of Buhr Armenrik is involved in some aspect of trade. One of the most interesting aspects of life in the town is that at any given time, up to twenty percent of the population can be absent while participating in commerce abroad. The remaining townsfolk are usually artisans, farmers, herders, local merchants, or caravaneers waiting to journey abroad.

Like most Northmen, tribal Thyns preside over small collections of rural homesteads. In the city, a Town Master is

appointed to act as a judge and oversee the affairs of the town. The Town Master meets frequently with a Town Council consisting of thirteen advisors that represent the people and guilds of the city. In times of crisis, festival, or at the request of the Town Master, the rural Thyns will travel to the city to form a super-council in which decisions of great import may be debated.

Religion

Religion in the Cairn Angle is a complicated issue. Religious belief varies greatly from tribe to tribe, culture to culture, and sometimes family to family. Among these traditions are beliefs that center on the natural spirits of Northman tradition, the hero-ancestors of the Odhriags and even some of the deities worshipped by the Urgath and Brygath. A large interjection of Gondorian influence in the early Third Age brought reverence of the Valar to the populace. All of these traditions tend to merge together during festivals. For example, while the local harvest festival hearkens back to sacrificial ceremonies practiced by the local Donath peoples, the Northman cult of the Tree also uses the same four day span to celebrate its Festival of Colors. Many superstitions of local origin add to the corpus of belief, creating a truly unique blend of religious practice.

Though ritualized ceremonies are rare among the Ibnotithiuda, numerous festivals and holidays do exist. Some, like the Shogmar (Od. "Joining"), are borrowed from neighboring cultures. Originally celebrated by the few Odhriag families of Buhr Armenrik to commemorate the alliance that gave birth to their culture, this holiday now serves to reinforce the identity of the town as a place distinct from other Northman settlements. The heroes that are worshipped are figures prominent in the history of Burh Armenrik, and their particularly eastern branch of Northman culture. Other holidays exist that recall their roots in Eriador, commemorate the victory of Elendil, and even demonize the treacherous merchants that ruled the town in the days of Vidugavia.

Warcraft

Buhr Armenrik and the culture of the Ibnotithiuda was one born out of warfare. In their roots, the Eriadorian settlers of the Cairn Angle were members of a military company, and this martial tradition has not died over the years. Just as military readiness was highly regarded in the ranks of Elendil, so too is it valued among the garrison of the town. This emphasis on personal strength and martial skill has been augmented as Ibnotithiuda culture was infused with Odhriag values. A close alliance between these two peoples over much of their history allowed both cultures to exist in a land that has frequently been the domain of nomads driven to violence by desperation. The defense of the town was again bolstered when the governor of Dor Rhunen decided to build a Gondorian frontier outpost on the outskirts of the town to safeguard the interest of the King along the eastern trade routes. The Barad Ithil is a stone tower that stands watch over the eastern approaches to the city. Though the Gondorian garrison has been recently withdrawn, the tower is still constantly manned by a troop of the town's garrison.

In personal combat, the armed men of Buhr Armenrik favor the weapons of their fathers. Northmen use the mounted lance, the broadsword, the small shield, and scale or chainmail armors. Men of Odhriag descent typically favor the scimitars, target shields, and short bows for which their parent culture is known. Mounted combat is universally preferred, as it gives the town's defenders the ability to maneuver with their most common foe, Sagath war bands.

The town is guarded by men paid out of the coffers of the Town Master (which are fed by taxes). This permanent guard is readily supplemented by armed citizens in times of strife. The citizenry may also take up arms to form a possie if it becomes necessary to hunt down fugitives from the rulings of the Town Master. This can be particularly dangerous for the accused, since the wronged are allowed and even encouraged to organize and lead the possie. It is felt that this policy leads to the swift enactment of the Town Master's judgements. This policy has also increased the occurrence of Northman vigilantism, and even blood-feuding since it encourages individuals to exact their own revenge.

Appearance

As virtually none of the ethnic groups and races present in Buhr Armenrik have passed the years without some sort of mingling with the other groups present, the Ibotithiuda are a very diverse people in regard to appearance. This slow merging of genetic lines has muted many of the most notable features of the contributing peoples. The result is that most people of Easterling descent are not quite so short as their nomadic cousins. Northmen of the Cairn Angle tend to be shorter than the Rhevain clans of the north. The individual features usually associated with each of the races represented among the Ibotithiuda can be found mixed to varying degrees among all the townsfolk.

Clothing among the Men of the Cairn Angle is also diverse. While many wear garb similar to that of Northmen, others can be found sporting garments of Easterling origin. For the most part though, the Ibotithiuda employ the most sensible apparel from each of the cultures represented based upon climate, occupation, and individual choice.

6.3 THE DONATH

Most Donath are direct descendants of the early Daen that migrated to the Inland Sea. They discovered and settled a strip of fertile land they named Dacranamel (Do. "Greenlands") along the southern coast of the Sea in the First Age. They dwelt in relative seclusion throughout the Second Age, largely escaping service on either side during the War of the Last Alliance. In the early years of the Third Age, their settlements experienced an influx of Eriadoran Northmen migrants, fleeing the failed watch at Algiwidaus, which was established by Elendil to guard against bandits. Over the years, this small Northman minority has been absorbed by the Donath culture, and only an occasional Northman name remains to remind the people of the southern shore that their ancestry is a mixed one.

Society and Culture

Donath society is nearly as diverse as the number of settlements found in their quiet land. Long before the arrival of the Northmen, the Donath (Do. "People") made their villages and towns all along the green shores wherever they found a strand to launch their fishing vessels and enough fertile land to support their gardens. Though the people of the villages made occasional contact with one another to trade and marry, the settlements stood largely as isolated pockets of civilization on a wild coast. Isolation from one another led to a gradual diversification of Donath customs, so that no wider Donath authority emerged. Instead, the Dacranamel is made up of a patchwork of sub-cultures, each with its own unique customs and manners for administering its lands. Northman traditions of wider reaching and more unified authority structures has gradually been integrated into Donath society causing a slow shift towards greater communication between communities. Greater centralization of authority along the coast has also been facilitated by the increase in leisure time that came with the implementation of Eriadorian agricultural techniques which boosted harvests. Farmers are growing more powerful in relation to their fishing counterparts, signaling the first differentiation between classes not intimately tied to the kinship structure.

Family life among the Donath is close, and most of the Donath dwell either in the same or in adjacent homes with their extended family. Men spend much of their day procuring and preparing the family's meals, while women busy themselves with the maintenance of the home, the rearing of children, and care of elderly family members. Most villages have a tribal father who adjudicates small disputes, and apportions use rights for local land among the families of the village. In larger towns, councils of these leaders govern over individual families who usually own the land they farm. For the most part, the people of the Greenlands are an egalitarian people, and everyone within their village is afforded the same privileges and rights. The traditional authority of the tribal leader has been diminished since the days when his word was absolute law, and leadership now carries as many time-consuming obligations as it does privileges.

Religion

Left to themselves, the Donath are a people of little organized religion. During the many long years of their solitude along Rhûn's southern shores, Donath religion was confined to superstition and fear of the unknown. Spirits are, for the most part, considered to be evil entities that must be appeased. The most powerful spirits of ancient Donath belief are a variety of nameless demons of the Sea that would rise and abduct isolated individuals during thick foggy nights. To appease the demons, small tokens or sacrifices were commonly left near the shore to satiate the need for flesh thought to be held by these spirits and prevent them from taking human prey.

Since the arrival of the Northmen, the Donath settlements have been exposed to other religious beliefs and many of the traditional Northman cults are represented to some degree along the Donath shore. Of particular importance are the cults of the Bear, Stag and Stars, the last being a composite

of Northman and Daen beliefs found only in and around Dilgul.

Twice now, religions with Sauronic roots have attained a certain popularity among the Donath. Lokuthor's Second Age cult was a dominant force just before the War of the Last Alliance. It was primarily the labor of Donath adherents that built his legendary temple in the Kuka Posladni, which served as the center of Sauron's influence in Gathod before it collapsed into ruin. Similarly, sympathy for the worship of Kerkassk has recently gained popularity among the Donath settlements, and the dictates of the religious leaders of Mistrand have a growing deal of influence over the Donath, particularly in the easternmost villages and towns. The peaceful Donath have yet to serve a dark religion in warfare, however, and the servants of Sauron have come to the realization that the Donath are more valuable in other roles. As allies to Kerkassk, it is hoped that the stable Donath settlements can provide a strong infrastructure to support the armies of the East in their future struggles. Whether the Dispossessed of Mistrand can bring this plan to fruition remains to be seen.

Warcraft

For the most part, the Donath are a rather quiet and unassuming people. They are considered by many to be a simple, rustic folk who remain in the shelter of their small farms, fishing villages, and isolated towns. While they are content to let the larger events of history overlook them, they are extremely protective of their lands and families, and are capable of defending themselves when threatened.

The military history of the Dacranamel is a short one, for the Donath have had little cause to go to war. In fact, their lands have never come under a concerted attack by an organized foe. Occasionally, Sagath or Brygath war-parties will roam the back country in search of easy prey, but never in numbers great enough to threaten the larger villages. Large deposits of conductive metals along the shoreline and under much of the Kuka Posladni combine with savage storms along the coast to produce violent displays of lightning that keep the superstitious Asdriag and Sagath bands from lingering in the Dacranamel (Easterlings are very superstitious about lightning). Still, the Donath do maintain small guards in each of their larger towns, and if needed, the townsfolk can be marshaled. Despite the fact that local leaders occasionally arrange for the people to practice this contingency, it is still an event of great confusion and clamor, and the companies fielded are ill-equipped and poorly trained.

Appearance

Even though the bloodlines of the Donath represent two distinct races, their coloration is distinctly Daen in origin. Some few individuals do possess lighter hair and eyes, and these are usually considered attractive individuals, if only for the rarity of their look. On average though, most of the Donath resemble their Daen cousins in other lands, though they are a little taller and have somewhat more narrow features. Adult males average 5'11" in height and women about 5'8."

6.4 THE GATHMARIG

The Gathmarig (Ga. "People of the Bay") are as diverse a collection of people as are to be found on the Inland Sea. A proud and industrious city, Mistrand (Ga. "Merged waters") is an amalgam of various cultures and traditions synthesized to form a unique entity that has come to dominate politics across the Sea. Perched as it is upon the bottleneck of goods flowing through Rhûn, Mistrand subjects many distant lands to its policies on trade, and influences the merchants of many realms through its ability to destroy their profits by ostracizing them from its markets. Though their land holdings are small in area, the Gathmarig of Mistrand have achieved a dominant role on the Inland Sea as arbitrators, spiritual leaders, and champions of the eastern perspective.

Society and Culture

The many contributing cultures of Mistrand include Donath fishers and farmers, Urgath and Brygath nomads, displaced Variag peasants and frontiersmen, and even a few castaways from Folyavuld. Individual occupations within the city vary greatly from family to family, but most are involved in some urban facet of their traditional, rural lifestyles. Merchants of Brygath descent deal in the goods of their rural cousins. Donath commoners are sailors and fishermen. Wealthy Donath are shippers, naval captains, and expert boat-wrights. Before the Variag occupation of the city, the Gathmarig viewed their diversity as the single factor which allowed them to influence so many facets of life on the Inland Sea. Rather than relying on any common bloodline, religion, or set of cultural traits to unite them, the people interacted with and depended upon one another in a spirit very similar to the Folyavuldok. In fact, before the closing of the city by the followers of Kerkassk, Mistrand was one of the most cosmopolitan cities in Rhûn.

This changed drastically in T.A. 1280, when Nomid Achef led his Variag horde into the city. The Variag occupation was crafted by the servants of Sauron to allow the very anti-western religion of Kerkassk to penetrate the city. Before the occupation, the citizens of Mistrand had staunchly opposed the religion of Kerkassk as being destructive to the position of influence they had cultivated. Under the boot of Variag imperialism, however, the once cosmopolitan city was transformed into a fortress of eastern conservatism. The new religious authority in Mistrand placed stiff controls on the amount of goods passing through the city and on to western markets.

Daily life in and around the city comprises most of the elements of life found among the surrounding cultures. Farming, herding, and fishing have always been prominent activities, and those among the Gathmarig who earn their living in such pursuits are frequently found in the city markets, exchanging the products of their labor for fine wares of the local artisans, or goods brought to market by merchants. This is still the case under the present regime, though passage in and out is more restricted than it used to be.

Local craftsmen and merchants are organized into guilds that meet frequently with the Osvoda of the city to legislate the

rules that govern trade. The traditional tribal heads who once ruled the city together, now function as stewards of the various districts of the city safeguarding the interests of their particular group in the decisions of the ruling body of priests.

Religion

The religious roots of the People of the Bay are as varied as the people who hold them. Perhaps one of the most interesting facets of old Mistrand was that her citizens reinforced their unity by universally celebrating the traditional celebrations and festivals of the city's various ethnic groups. Holidays devoted to the animistic beliefs of the Donath, the Ulgath days of hero worship, and celebrations unique to the Gathmarig were all observed. Many of these traditions lost some of their original meaning in the adaptation, but also took on new significance as the altered customs reinforced the commitment each people had made to the success of the whole community.

With the establishment of the religion of Kerkassk as the dominant religion of the city, all these traditions were officially abandoned, though many of the more resistive segments of society continue to observe the old festivals privately. Still, what freedoms the people of Mistrand have lost in their adoption of the cult of Kerkassk have been exchanged for the strength of purpose that comes with a monolithic authority. The worship of Kerkassk is prevalent throughout the surrounding countryside, and Mistrand's position as the center of the new religion has given the city an unprecedented amount of control over the Easterling tribes. There are many official sects within Kerkassk's organization, including several orders of priestesses, spies, and assassins. Most notable among these is the Kharg Huka, an elite order of traveling warriors who fight religious wars in foreign lands (most notably Angmar, though in later years they have also traveled extensively with the armies of Khand). The assassins, known as the Ramanin (Ga "Fists of Dark Sorcery") are another of the most influential sects.

Warcraft

The Gathmarig have always had to employ and train a large number of troops to ensure the safety of their lands among so many raiding Easterling tribes. They learned quickly, however, that more could be accomplished with soothing words and favorable trade dealings than could be won by the sword. The leaders of old Mistrand always preferred to engage their neighbors rather than shutting their doors to them, which only led to curiosity and resentment, both equally dangerous qualities in an Easterling warlord. Relations remained cordial between Mistrand and her neighbors until T.A. 1248, when Minalcar and Vidugavia's offensive into Gathod began the great backlash of hatred for the west among the Easterlings.

Now, professional soldiers are hired yearly by the osvoda to man the walls and citadel of the city, and to patrol the streets to maintain peace among the populace. Numerous thieves, smugglers, and even spies from Dorwinion are all good reasons for vigilance on the streets of Mistrand. The Ri-anov

(Ga. "town soldiers") wear uniforms of black clothing covered with lamellar or scale armor, with brilliant cloaks of purple, green, red, and orange denoting unit and rank. Weapons are a matter of personal preference, but most employ some type of pole-arm and a sword. Another special unit, the Khulpova (Ga. "rangers"), is a company of cavalry drawn up from nomadic Ulgath warriors who patrol the lands around Mistrand. Like their street-bound compatriots, these warriors wear colored capes denoting rank, but also utilize more traditional Ulgath designs of clothing and forms of armor. Many of their cloaks are adorned with intricate designs denoting their lineage and social status within their clan.

Though the Gathmarig have rarely been attacked in their homelands, they are very confident warriors. Indeed, they carry the haughty demeanor of those who believe they fight a holy cause. It is an attitude that leads them to great examples of self-sacrifice, which in itself is often enough to unnerve an opponent. Since they have so much confidence in their virtue as holy warriors, they often jeer and taunt their enemies as infidels and barbarians, which can sometimes lead their opponents to become rash.

Appearance

While Gathmarig blood contains elements from Urgath, Donath, and Variag ancestors, this does not begin to describe the variation of people of Mistrand. An odd assortment of other races also make their homes in Mistrand, including Folyavuldok, Asdriags, Odhriags, and even Northmen from Burh Armenrik. The occasional trader from as far away as the Harad might also be encountered in Mistrand, creating a very interesting and varied collection of features and traits on the streets and in the markets. The bulk of the Gathmarig are either of Daen or Ulgathic ancestry, so the majority have dark hair and eyes. Men and women tend to stand a bit taller than their Easterling counterparts, and be of slightly stockier build. Women, for the most part, prefer to keep their hair short above the base of their neck, and men usually tend to wear their hair long and intricately braided, with large mustaches and the occasional goatee.

Dress among the Gathmarig is varied as well, with a vast array of styles and fabrics, both domestic and imported. Vibrant and bold colors are popular, especially crimson, yellow, bright blues and greens. Because the Gathmarig put such stock in one's clothing, most have at least one fine set of garments that are worn on every practical occasion. Earrings, nose-rings, bracelets and necklaces of very fine workmanship complement the variety of ornately embroidered cuffs and collars worn by all.

Cloaks and wide brimmed hats are extremely popular, which help the Gathmarig stand out no matter where they go. In fact, most of their caravans and ships sport huge banners or sails that are ornately decorated and often very rich in color. Though the Gathmarig have few physical traits that unite them, their manner and choice of apparel make them readily identifiable as citizens of Mistrand.

6.5 THE EASTERLINGS

The vast expanse of Rhun and Rhovanion are filled with nomadic tribes who have born the name "Easterling" through the years. Most cultures in western Middle Earth have only heard or used the word "Easterling" in the context of the wars that have periodically raged on the borders of Gondor. For many, the term carries with it an implied penchant for thievery and brutality. The fact is that the nomadic tribes of Rhun vary greatly from one to the other. While there are tribes who should not be trusted, and who represent an immediate threat to the people around them, most shun violence and respect rights to property and territory. The vast majority of "Easterlings" are private, withdrawn individuals who favor the open plains and the closeness of family over the ways of sedentism and development. There is a general emphasis on free-will among the tribes, and a great reluctance to form alliances or super-tribal organizations which may impinge on their right to govern themselves.

Society and Culture

Generally speaking, Easterling societies are based on the herd. Easterlings are a pastoral people who travel with the animals upon which their livelihood depends. The material wealth of the tribes can be measured by the size of the herds that they claim and the expanse of territory over which they roam. Personal possessions are limited by the amount of material that can be transported by horseback or wain. Rather than being true nomads, most Easterlings live a semi-sedentary lifestyle in which the tribe moves several times a year between well-established sites that are chosen for their proximity to necessary resources. The cycles of migration followed by these tribes have been followed for decades and sometimes centuries. To the knowledgeable, the ranges and campsites claimed by a tribe are well marked by totems, petroglyphs and other natural landmarks. When easterling tribes encroach on one another's territory or resources, it is not out of ignorance.

The manner in which a tribe traces its lineage varies greatly between cultures. Most tribes hailing from Ulgathic roots trace their lineage through the female, though there are important exceptions. Since there is so little material wealth among the tribes to reinforce heritage through inheritance, identity and familial honor is of supreme importance to most easterlings. The distinctness of the family and tribal units is reinforced by linguistic differences that have arisen because of the sometimes vast distances that separate people. While most tribes can communicate effectively with their immediate neighbors, the Ulgath tongue has diverged wildly over the years, so that communication on the open plains is a constant problem.

Subsistence for most easterlings consists almost exclusively with the goods that can be extracted from the herd. Very little agriculture is practiced among the tribes. Vegetables and fruits in the easterling diet come from what can be gathered from the surrounding countryside. Where tribes exist near population centers, they generally take advantage of them to purchase metal tools and weapons, agricultural products, and luxury goods. Local population centers are also important as a place where herd surplus can be sold or bartered for other

goods that the nomads cannot produce themselves.

Religion

At its root, easterling religion generally focuses around the themes of life on the plains. Natural spirits embodying the strength of the wind, the bounty of rain, the ferocity of weather (particularly lightning), and the strength of the animals upon which the tribe depends all feature heavily in the belief systems of the nomads. There is also a near universal reverence of heroic ancestors. This is particularly true of the Odhriags, who have inherited the practice of ancestor worship from their Aharic ancestors.

Since the easterling lifestyle is so mobile, religious practice necessarily focuses on elements that can travel with the people. Religious dance and festival are common to all the easterlings of Rhun. Totems, amulets and portable shrines are also occasionally used in religious practice. Most tribes have individuals who are recognized for their spiritual gifts and act as mediums between the spirit world and the tribal commoners. The status of these individuals cannot be generalized among the tribes, for it changes to greatly from tribe to tribe and age to age. The nomads of Rhun tend to be a very superstitious people, and tribe mediums are very seldom ignored.

Sauron has played with varying degrees of success on the darker side of Easterling religions in an attempt to gain control of the tribes. Some cultures, such as the Odhriags, have largely succeeded in preserving their own independence in the face of these attempts. Other cultures have bent readily to the shadow and have done much through their history in aiding the cause of Mordor. By the mid-Third Age, most Easterling tribes are under the sway of religions that place them as servants of the shadow and enemies of the West.

Warfare

Among the nomadic tribes of the eastern plain, mastery of the horse is nearly universal. Since the day of their entry into Rhun, the tribes have travelled and fought on horseback. This factor has shaped the easterling choice of weapons and tactics in battle. The lawlessness of the open plain makes combat skill and training a necessary part of the nomadic existence. The plains are a perilous place, and one must be prepared to defend one's family and possessions against bandits and predators.

Combat tactics lean heavily toward individual action and away from group formations and organization. While Easterling cavalry make excellent light scouts, they do not excel in set-piece battles involving large armies. Their flanking tactics and general unwillingness to commit decisively to a battle have given western armies problems over the years. The pattern of a western foe over-extending itself trying to bring an Easterling mob to battle has been repeated many times over the history of Rhun. This brand of combat fits the Easterling mindset perfectly. A lack of ties to the land keeps Easterling warlords from committing their strength to defend or take any one landmark.

In personal combat, most Easterling warriors favor mounted lances and light swords with a long reach. Armor and shields

are lightweight as maneuverability is most important to the Easterling way of fighting. Javelins and arrows are also favorite weapons of the Easterling warrior and are commonly thrown or shot from horseback. In fact, many pursuers of Easterling bands have learned the hard way that Easterling warriors are often as accurate with their short bows when riding backwards as when riding forward. Poison is also widely used among the tribes, giving opponents an added reason to be wary of Easterling projectiles.

Appearance

While it may be safe to say that to the Men of the West, almost all Easterlings look alike, it is equally valid to say that Easterlings in no way think that to be true of themselves. As most are descended from the same bloodlines, however, they do share a number of similar physical qualities. Dark hair and eyes are predominant Easterling traits, while skin color ranges from the olive-tan of many of the Ulgath tribes to the dark and even greyish skin of the Asdriags and Odhriags. Most Easterlings of Ulgathic descent tend to be short, averaging only 5'4" among males and 5'0" among females.

Clothing is extremely diverse and ranges from highly decorated to unbelievably mundane. Coloring is also a matter of divergence, as many Easterlings love to flaunt brilliant fabrics while others prefer not to attract the jealous eyes of their cousins. Jewelry is also on similar par with clothing, though most who choose to wear it prefer ornately carved and fashioned motifs displaying either sacred spirits, the visages of hideous beasts, or intricate geometric designs used to symbolize key religious concepts.

6.5.1 The Tribes

Asdriags

The Asdriags are a collection of nine Ioriag tribes that dwelt for much of the Second Age among the arid foothills of the Pustrava. In T.A. 1100 the tribes were forced to flee the region they called home because of mounting aggression from their stronger neighbors in Nurad and Khand. In T.A. 1640 these scattered bands inhabit areas of central Gathod and eastern Dor Rhûnen. The Gondorian military governor at Thorondir blames much of the recent instability of Dor Rhunen's frontier on the Asdriags and has led repeated excursions into the plains to drive these tribes back into the east. The westernmost tribes are the most desperate of their kind, sheltering where possible in the foothills of the Dwergabergos and the Ash Mountains, living on what can be hunted or scavenged in the wild.

In Gathod, the Asdriags have enjoyed a bit more success. Some tribes have laid claim to lands on the fringes of Odhriag and Brygath ranges. Other than the occasional territorial squabble, these Asdriags dwell for now in relative peace. They have settled into a stable migration cycle across their territory, which while poor by the standards of their neighbors, is a place of abundance in comparison to the Pustrava. In the end, however, the Asdriags are an Ioriag people and are sometimes wont to revert to the martial ways of their ancestors. Odhriags, Donath, and Ibotithuida alike

cast a wary eye toward Asdriag lands. While their lack of numbers has never allowed them to dominate their neighbors, their fierce warriors are more than capable of wreaking significant mayhem in Gathod should the need arise.

The easternmost Asdriag tribes dwell in ranges near the city of Mistrand and have become entwined in the politics of that city. Nemol has recognized in the traditional tribal priestesses of the Asdriags a rare talent for witchcraft. As a result, Asdriag priestesses enjoy some degree of respect within the city. Some of the more prominent priestesses have even worked their way up through the ranks of Kerkass's religious organization and now sit on the osvoda's personal council in the city. There is now even the rumor of a union between the current osvoda and Taran Karkuva, the chief priestess on the council. This coupled with the increasing reputation of Asdriag warriors within the Kharg Huka promises to raise the Asdriags to a new level of prominence in southeastern Rhun.

Odhriags

Like the Asdriags, the Odhriags also have in them a measure of Ioriag blood. In their case, however, Ioriag ancestry has been combined with the Aharic traditions of the Otyassi, forming a unique cultural mix. The Odhriags prize independence from foreign influence as their greatest asset, and guard their lands jealously from encroaching neighbors. Their history is largely one of resistance. They have consistently resisted attempts by servants of the Shadow to bring them under the influence of the Dark Lord. They have resisted the momentum of mass-migrations out of the east, which has threatened to displace them several times throughout the ages. They resisted the mandates of Gondor, which demanded an opening of their lands for the passage of Minalcar and Vidugavia's armies in T.A. 1247. Though they paid dearly for this defiance, they were never wholly conquered by the western army, and have since grown to reclaim the ranges that were stripped from them.

The Odhriag homeland lies along the northern slopes of the Ered Lithui, between the Warwater and the Surubeki watersheds. While much of Odhriag culture comes from their Ioriag forefathers, they are also the only group of Easterlings with their own set of formalized laws. These laws, known as the Vasagh, have their roots in the ancient Aharic laws which were brought into Rhun by the Otyassi in the Second Age. The laws were again formalized by Khorgul Hotun at the end of the Second Age. This occurred after the defeat of Sauron's army at Dagorlad. In celebration of the end of Mordor's oppressive treatment of the Odhriags, Khorgul had the Vasagh carved into the sheer side of a peak which towers over the main Odhriag settlement of Khurvasagh (Od. "Place of the Law").

Sagath

In the Ulgathic tongues, the word Sagath means "Raiding People". The actual collection of tribes which call themselves Sagath is limited to those in Rhovanion and southern Rhun who still trace their ancestry back to the Szreldorn survivors of the Battle of Dagorlad. These tribes exist mostly in central and northern Rhovanion, though there are still scattered

bands who prowl the plains west of Buhr Armenrik. These Sagath lead a life of mayhem, stealing what they need or desire from their neighbors and the caravans that still cross the open plains. Theirs is the most mobile culture in Rhun, for they lay no legitimate claim to any of the lands they traverse. Instead, the bands are always on the move, keeping all of their possessions in the great wagons for which they are known.

The Sagath are a male dominated society. Women hold no social standing except between themselves, and have no say in the movements or actions of the band. A Sagath band normally consists of several dominant male warriors who vie constantly for prestige among their peers. Power within the band is a constant test of strength, which has sometimes led a Sagath band to destroy itself. This greatly inhibits their ability to organize themselves into a fighting force to challenge the sedentary peoples of Rhun, though there are a few notable exceptions to this rule. The Huz (formerly Hos) tribe is an example of a succession of Sagath warlords who have consistently been able to dominate their peers and vie for real power in Rhovanion. The Hos tribe was founded in the opening days of the Third Age by a member of the Szreldorn family who once owned the lands upon which Ilanin sits. Subsequent warlords in the tribe's history have used this extra evidence of legitimacy to maximum advantage.

Beyond those who consider themselves Sagath, there are many other tribes in all corners of Rhun who are called Sagath by others. Particularly warlike bands of Logath, Urgath, and especially Brygath are all named Sagath by their neighbors. In most areas of Rhun, the term simply connotes an aggressive band who is prone to take from their neighbors what they cannot make of buy for themselves. This has led to a great deal of confusion for visitors to Rhun. Vidugavia and Minalcar made the mistake of asking the question, "Where are the Sagath?" Any tribe, when posed this question, is libel to point out the biggest rival. This led the western army, in their ignorance, to commit grievous mistakes in southern Rhun and to alienate most of its residents.

Logath

The Logath are the most numerous of the easterling cultures. Their ranges extend from the wilds of the northern Empty Plains to the Carnen River Basin. Like most other Easterling cultures, they are nomadic pastoralists whose lives center around the migration of their herds. Their material wealth is measured in head of cattle and acres of grazing land. Most of the sustenance of the Logath tribes comes from the products of the herd: leather, horn, meat, and dairy. They are a matriarchal society, and most of their cultural traditions revolve around the woman as the center of family and culture. Most males travel across the tribe's ranges with the herd, returning every so often to the tribe's semi-permanent settlement to be reunited with their wives and children. Several times a year, the entire tribe is packed into great wains and moved to another base camp. Though travel by wain is a trait associated universally with Easterling nomads, it was actually the Logath who invented the tradition. The trade has spread from the Logath ranges into other areas of Rhun, and is now commonplace in all corners of the region.

Logath culture is centered around two sites which compete for influence among the tribes. In the west, along the banks of the Ulumur River is the town of Sadvar, the seat of the Ibar matriarch. The Ibar clan has reigned as the ruling clan of the Logath for the entire Third Age, and remains a powerful influence in the post-Plague era. In the east, the priestesses of Gazu Darshan-Zar seek to undermine the authority of the Ibar matriarch and unite the Logath under their religious rule. The priestesses have been beguiled by Oraishapek the Disposessed, who has duped them into believing him a god. The swaying of the Logath to the side of Oraishapek threatens to upset the balance of power in northern Rhun.

Urgath

The Urgath are a loose collection of matriarchal tribes descended from the Southern Urgath of the Second Age. Their ancestors dwelt for centuries along the banks of the Talathrant River and were allied to the Variags before both peoples were evicted by rebellion. In their journey to Rhun, they were transformed into a much smaller collection of tribes and were content to dwell in peace along the southeastern coast of the Sea and along the Surubeki River. The Urgath developed into a pastoral semi-sedentary people, and their cultural traditions have had a great deal of influence on the Gathmarig culture which evolved in their midst.

Over its history, Urgath culture has shown itself to be prone to outside influence. The shadow gained control of the tribes through religion in the Second Age and the Urgath fought on the side of Mordor at Dagorlad. Later, the Urgath were heavily influenced by Folyavulda traders and sided with the men of Kelepar against the servants of Kerkassk in the War of Clay Jars. Since the plague, however, the Urgath have been thoroughly dominated by Mistrand and are again counted among the subjects of the Dark Lord.

Brygath

Brygath culture is a direct descendant from Urgath culture. The divergence of traditions occurred during the traumatic fifth century of the Third Age. Disease took root among the herds of the Urgath, causing a desperate shortage of food and wealth among the Urgath tribes. Desperation bred change, and several Urgath tribes bound themselves to an opportunistic and power-hungry male elder of the Sahd tribe. Sahd's followers rejected the matriarchal and semi-sedentary ways of the Urgath and turned to the large-scale raiding of their neighbors for sustenance. Before the great rebellion of the Brygath was complete, the tribes had journeyed into the west, been soundly defeated by the armies of Gondor, and driven back to their homelands in eastern Gathod.

In the mid-Third Age, the Brygath share the plains of Gathod with scattered Asdriags, Odhriags and Urgath. The Brygath are the most warlike of Gathod's tribes, but a lack of organization above the tribal level keeps them from doing any lasting harm to their neighbors. Despite the thorough penetration of the Brygath by the servants of Kerkassk, the Brygath persistently bleed away their own strength through constant feuding. Though Nemol has succeeded in channeling some of this aggression toward the peoples of the west through the migration of the Kharg Huka to Angmar,

much of the strength of the Brygath continues to be wasted.

Much of the instability of the Brygath can be attributed to their lack of seasonal cycling between pastures. Rather than laying claim to any one collection of pastures, the Brygath move constantly. There is a general refusal among the settled peoples of Gathod to allow the Brygath to trade at market, which leaves them little choice but to steal what goods they cannot make for themselves. For this reason, the Brygath most closely resemble the Sagath of Northern Rhovanion, and have occasionally been referred to as the "southern Sagath".

6.6 THRALIN'S FOLK

The small house of Dwarves that dwell in the mansion of Nurunkizdin beneath the Hathur-na-bunderok, are a remnant of the great and once united tribe of Thelor's Folk. Thelor's people were not the first to delve a home beneath the cloudy head, however, and many of their halls date back to the early Second Age, when the folk of Runin dwelt in the area. Runin's artisans carved great wonders under the central Pinnon Rhun before they were evicted from their home by the Uruk Marzguram. After S.A. 522, these goblins fouled the beauty Falek-dim with their presence. Most of the old kingdom was reclaimed by Dwarves in S.A. 2797 by the folk of Thelor. Thelor was a possessor of one of the Dwarven Rings of Power, and his people made war on the Uruk Marzguram to reclaim the mansion for the bearded folk.

Thelor's people wrought wonderous works in the halls of Falek-dim, which they renamed Nurunkizdin (Kh. "-----"), and the power and prosperity of the Dwarves of the Pinnon Rhun was in full bloom at the dawn of the Third Age. The Dwarves discovered the Bilak-Khald, a type of green gemstone which became much sought after for its sparkling, fluorescent inner-light. The goblins had been completely defeated and were on the verge of fleeing the Pinnon Rhun entirely when disaster befell the kingdom. Miners working deep beneath the cloudy head unearthed a new vein of the Bilak Khald which carried inside it an energy that killed any living thing exposed to it. The horrible sickness spread throughout the colony as the new stones were brought into the kingdom to be cut and sculpted. The great majority of Thelor's Folk deserted Nuruunkizdin and moved to the mountains of central Endor under Threlin, son of Thris. Those who remained in Nurunkizdin under Thralin, son of Thulin, became known thereafter as Thralin's folk.

Nearly fourteen centuries passed in the highlands and the people of Nurunkizdin slowly regained the strength and vitality of their diminished kingdom. War continued between the Dwarves and the resurgent goblins of the highlands, and the kingdom was divided so that the northern third of the halls remained in the hands of the Orcs. In T.A. 1423, under King Thralin IV, the blight associated with the Bilak-khald was again unleashed upon the kingdom when the miners of the colony disregarded the warning of their ancestors and reopened the deep mines under Hathur-na-bunderok. Nearly two thirds of the population of the Dwarven city lost their lives to the foul blight, significantly changing the lives of the survivors.

Society and Culture

Life among Thralin's folk has taken a radical departure from Dwarven norms since the sickness of T.A. 1423 which claimed such a large portion of their population. Though Nurunkizdin's inhabitants remain Mahal's children at heart, they have achieved a degree of independence from the materialistic obsessions of their Dwarven brethren. The Dwarves of the Pinnon Rhun are a pensive lot as their kind go, taking moments in their day to simply meditate, celebrate Mahal (Aule) their maker, and admire the aethsetic beauty of their home. This attitude is reflected in the architecture of their home, for the artisans of Nurunkizdin are slower to pick up the chisel and hammer, preferring to study a work in great detail and plan out everything before beginning a job. They also have a heightened appreciation for the natural beauty of the caves of Falek-dim, and have made a greater effort to preserve that natural beauty in their works rather than imposing order upon them.

The political organization of Thralin's Folk mirrors the layout of the mansion itself. The King, of course, wields the most power, and with his advisors is ultimately responsible for the welfare of his subjects. Three Herd-Lords under him are given stewardships for the three major population centers: the "Great Hall," and the two "towns" which lie below the two Bundusulzinbur still held by the Dwarves.

Servants of the Herd-Lords are called Gate-Lords and are held as experts on their own special facet of life in the Kingdom. There are military, religious, social, and economic Gate-Lord's in each center who serve as a cabinet to the Herd-Lords. These leaders deal directly with the artisans, merchants and warriors of the kingdom, representing their interests to the Herd-Lord, and in turn, the King.

Religion

Thralin's Folk are widely peceived among Dwarves as being more vocal and active in their religious practice. The people hold of particular importance their relationship to their creator Mahal. When in need they frequently call upon him for assistance. In fact, nearly all of their ceremonies and organized worship revolve around their association with him and his creation of them. A people of perfection and rigid structure, all rites and ordinances are performed by these Naugrim nearly exactly as they were by their First Fathers. Very little deviation occurs or is allowed. Despite the repetition and seeming monotony of their frequent worship, it never becomes vain or trivial ritual. To them, it is very sincere and very meaningful. While many of their rites and performances seem superstitious to outsiders, most are in fact deeply symbolic of the creation of the Seven Fathers and Mahal's protection of them before and after their birth.

There is also among Thralin's Folk a great deal of ancestor reverence. They, like all Dwarves, believe that each of the Seven Tribes has an individual spirit which binds all within it together. They too look forward to the next incarnation of their father, Thelor, and wonder how his coming will change their society. Many have prophesised that Thelor will reunite Thralin's folk with their brethren to the south, leading the folk to a cultural renaissance. Communication with the folk

of the Ered Harmal is erratic, and the Kings of Nurunkizdin and been willing to involve themselves in the politics of the tribes of Man in order to make the lines of communication with the south more secure.

Warcraft

Thralin's folk have wrestled with the Orcs of Gaurblog Lug for centuries over the Pinnon Rhun. In this time they have become a society where martial readiness is foremost among the responsibilities of the King. The Dwarves practice the arts of warcraft habitually, both on a personal and tactical scale. This stems as much from their love of physical activity as from any fear of a goblin attack. Thralin's folk take great pride in being physically fit and enjoy the challenges provided by sparing with one another. Wrestling, contests of strength, and mock combat are enjoyed pastimes of all. Consequently, when they go to war, they are formidable opponents despite their small numbers.

The physical prowess of the Dwarves is matched by the quality of their equipment. Only the finest materials are used when outfitting the warriors of the kingdom. Because of this, few foes will stand to face the grim host of Nurunkizdin's army when arrayed for battle. While specialized warriors and guards often employ scale hauberks and full greaves, the non-specialized bulk of the Dwarf herd, or Vabnadur (Khuz. "Weapon host"), of Nurunkizdin choose to bedeck themselves in long shirts of steel mail that reach to their elbows and knees. Hoods of mail are sometimes worn under steel helmets, but more often the helmets made by Thralin's Folk are hemmed at the base with mail (or scale) that hangs down to their shoulders to protect the neck. Highly decorated, these helms come in many colors and are covered with horns, eyes, or other hideous visages of animals and beasts. Though the helms are very cumbersome, they provide excellent protection and contribute to the fear that most foes experience when confronted by a Dwarven war-host. Square shields almost three-quarters the height of their bearers are made of strong laminated and lacquered wood.

Among the Naugrim, armor and shielding are of the utmost importance in battle. For Dwarves, much as elsewhere in their lives, are very forward and are prone to aggressive charges into battle. In this they rely on their armor to protect them from the blows of their enemies. The courage displayed in these charges is often enough to break the moral of their enemy and cause a rout. Weapons, like armor, are always of the finest quality and construction. Most of the Khazad prefer using a variety of weapons, and those of Thelor's line are no exception. Heavy crossbows, Axes, Hammers, pole-arms, and other aggressive weapons betray their bellicose and strait-forward battle tactics. Few use swords, deigning their overall shape and style to be lacking in brute strength, a quality they rely upon heavily in combat.

Appearance

For the most part, Thralin's Folk are like Dwarves everywhere. Their thick dark hair and ruddy complexions make them instantly recognizable. Dark eyes peer from deeply recessed, bushy brows. Unlike the folk of the three houses of the West (Durin's, Dwalin's, and Thar's Folk),

many of Thelor's Folk have strains of very dark red hair. In stature, they are like their kin as well. Men stand between four and five feet tall (women are slightly shorter) and have very sturdy limbs and frames. They are very powerful physically, which lends itself well to their love of work. All but Dwarven women grow long beards, and among Thelor's folk, these are usually worn splayed out, or occasionally braided in complex patterns like their hair.

Clothing among Thelor's tribe is usually very practical. Most enjoy wearing well designed garments of wool and linen which are adorned with intricately embroidered designs near the hems, seams, and collars. Unlike most Dwarves, Thelor's Folk are not very fond of hoods, and only wear them during rainy seasons at home or occasionally while traveling abroad. Instead, they prefer to wear large and elaborate scarves and simple leather hats. Brims on these hats vary from 1"-3" in width, while the tops of these hats are sometimes very tall. The scarves borne by the folk are commonly brought to just below the eyes, though occasionally are wrapped above them as well, leaving a narrow slit. Large and squared, these scarves are crafted from linen and colored to denote kinship and lineage.

7 LIFE ON THE INLAND SEA

7.1 7.1 MARKETS OF THE INLAND SEA

Burh Armenrik and Lest

The two towns of the Ibnotithiuda are grouped together because goods may be transported between them without a duty being levied. Indeed, many of the merchants of Burh Armenrik also have shipping or pirate enterprises in Lest (and vice-versa). Together, they make up a market which is the chief rival of Folyavuld for delivering eastern goods to the west. In an effort to keep them from competing in the wine trade with the west, Folyavuld's wine-merchant's guild has imposed an embargo on trading wine to the Ibnotithiuda, making that commodity extremely scarce in the twin towns. In most other commodities, however, Burh Armenrik's close proximity to both Dilgul and Thorondir allow it to compete favorably with the Land of Rivers for Dor Rhûnen's business. A 5% tax is levied on all goods destined for Scari, and proven evasion of this tax carries a very stiff penalty fine. The markets of both Burh Armenrik and Lest both are enriched by low priced goods sold by pirates, which also contributes to their ability to undercut Folyavulda merchants in Dor Rhûnen.

Dilgul

The Donath town of Dilgul is perhaps the most important town on the Inland Sea. The Gathod peninsula juts far out into the center of the sea, making Dilgul a central hub in the trade that is carried to the sea's distant corners. Long standing ties of friendship with the other cultures of the Inland Sea have placed Dilgul in a unique position, for Donath merchants are welcomed in many places where their rivals

are not. The Kugath trade extensively with the Donath. The merchants of Mistrand, both sanctioned and otherwise, trade their goods to the men of Dilgul, who then relay them elsewhere. The ports of Folyavuld welcome the Donath merchantmen, as does Lest, allowing them to carry wine between Folyavuld and the Ibotithiuda, which the merchants of Folyavuld are themselves prohibited from doing. The market at Dilgul is a very diverse one, with people and products from every culture in the region peddling all manner of goods. The authorities in Dilgul take 2% in taxes when goods are brought into the town.

Kugavod

Kugavod is the primary source of furs, forest herbs, and wood products in Rhûn. Though they do import food such as fruits, grains, and livestock for meat, the Kugath largely subsist on what they gather from the forest and take from the waters of the Kug Bay. Imports are largely confined to fine western goods, Folyavulda wines, and weapons and tools of iron or steel. Trade is balanced by using carved bone beads, the only currency native to Kugavod. Each small bead is worth roughly one piece of copper, and merchants who deal with the Kugath on a regular basis normally carry many strands of bone beads for making change with their Kugath counterparts. No taxes are imposed on the goods that are traded in Kugavod, though Kugath merchants do owe a tribute to the Kugath matriarch each year as part of their concession to her authority. Though the journey to this distant port can be a treacherous one, profits from trading with the Kugath are customarily high.

Mistrand

Though Kerkassk closed the gates and piers of this city to free trade in the fourteenth century of the Third Age, a great deal of commerce still takes place here. The only goods to legally enter or exit the city must be carried by one of the few merchants sanctioned by the osvoda and councilors. These are universally devoted to the worship of Kerkassk, and function in some capacity as spies for the rulers of the city. The only taxes they pay are in the form of information gathered. The sanctioned merchants trade overland with Burh Armenrik, or, more commonly, by sea to Dilgul. Nevertheless, eastern goods continue to reach western markets because of smuggling along the coast by Gathmarig and Donath merchants who are less devoted to the policies of Mistrand than is perhaps prudent. The penalty in Mistrand for a smuggler is a slow and painful death on the torture racks of Ily-amana (Kerkassk's temple in the Kuka Posladni). Of course, the dangers involved in the smuggling business serve to drive the price very high indeed.

Nurunkizdin

The Dwarves of the Uldona Spine and the Iron Hills enjoy a unique position in the region. The goods they offer are of such high quality and value that they can customarily dominate a trade negotiation. Dwarven weapons, tools, and jewelry are exceedingly rare, and are made even more valuable by the metal-poor peoples that surround their domain. The Dwarves have managed to subsist off many

resources found within their caves, or obtained easily from the Bergothiuda mountain-people nearby. They trade most commonly for fine wood, bone and fur which they then render more valuable by using them in their crafts. Their most common trading partners are Szrel-Kain, Burh Armenrik and Lake-town (in the case of Azanulinbar-dum).

Sadvar

Sadvar is the most important market in the lands of the Logath. Goods from Szrel-Kain are brought to the town via the Ulumur, and are traded to Logath tribesmen who bring their cattle to market. In addition to livestock, other Logath products include horn and leather goods, as well as furs taken along the edge of the Agasha Dag. All manner of goods are on demand by the Logath tribesmen. Most sought after are iron and steel tools, weapons, and garnet jewelry. The Logath matriarch imposes a 1% tax on all goods brought to her market. This is most commonly extracted in the form of goods (e.g. one of every hundred head of cattle).

Scarakikot

Scari is a very specialized market. Many of the goods needed for daily survival: fruits, grain, meat, and clothing must be imported from Szrel-Kain, Riavod, or foreign markets. Prices on all of these commodities are usually high, though since they are dependent on domestic consumption, they may be depressed by large shipments. Where Scari makes its money is in selling to Szrel-Kain goods gained through raiding the traffic between Dilgul and Lest, and also through supporting pirate-hunters funded by wealthy merchants of the realm. These goods are mostly eastern spice, ceramics, furs, and iron tools. In addition, a healthy smuggling operation exists in Scari that is focused on trading Folyavulda wine to the markets of Lest and Burh Armenrik, which is forbidden by the Realm-master's law. The marketplace is duty-free, so no taxes are paid on goods bought, sold or consumed in Scari.

Szrel-Kain and Riavod

These twin markets are truly bountiful. Fueled by Folyavuld's rich agricultural resources, Szrel-Kain and Riavod enjoy profitable trade relations with Lake-town, Dor Rhûnen, Scari, Sadvar, and Kugavod. It is also the source of the many bottles of Folyavulda wine which are traded (and drank!) in the ports of the sea. One of the most profitable trades is the domestic consumption of luxury goods, purchased by the rich merchant and wine-growing families of the realm. Pieces of art, rare spices and herbs, jewelry, gems, and expensive furniture from Gondor are all purchased at the main market of Szrel-Kain, and transported to their highland or countryside destinations. The Realm-master's taxes vary by commodity, but are generally imposed at the point of sale, and range between 2% and 5%.

Dor Rhûnen

Thorondir, Rhûnost, and the fortress-towns of the Dagorlad are all viable markets in Dor Rhûnen. These towns lie on the main routes between the urban centers of Gondor and the trade centers of Rhûn and Rhovanion. As such, nearly every

commodity that passes between the two regions may be found in the market. Many of Rhûn's merchants sell their goods here, rather than making the trip into Gondor itself, for the profits are very good in these towns, and there is customarily a healthy population of Gondorian merchants to deal with, who make their living transporting goods to the markets of their homeland. In addition, the merchants of these towns will normally have the goods that Rhûn's merchants seek to purchase from the southern cities. Surrounded by the plains of Rhovanion and the Talath Harroch, these towns always offer good prices for fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as grains. Livestock and its by-products are abundant, as they are in many of the surrounding markets, and little profit can be made in that trade.

Optional Rules for Handling Trade

Being able to exchange goods in the cities surrounding the Inland Sea without losing one's shirt is a valuable skill. The MERP rules set provides a secondary skill within the Influence group called Trading (RMSS users should use the Trading Skill within the Influence Skill Category). This skill should be developed like all other secondary skills, and should can be used for all dealings within the markets of Rhûn; whether buying, selling, or bartering.

Resolving a trade is a two step process, involving first the determination of a Market Price which is independent of the character's skills. Table 7.1 is a table of Market Multipliers, dependent only on the locale, and the type of commodity being bought, sold or bartered. Every item in the marketplace should fall under one of the Commodity Classes found at the top of the table. To determine the Market Price, one must simply multiply the Base Price of the goods (found on any equipment, weapon, or accessories table) by the factor obtained from Table 7.1. Table 7.2 provides a list of trade goods unique to the markets of the Inland Sea, along with their Commodity Classes and Base Prices.

Once a Market Price is obtained, the player and his trading partner must haggle over a final price. To resolve this negotiation, the Player should make a Trading Static Maneuver Roll. Modifications to this roll depend only upon the cultures of the two traders, and the results of any previous rolls. Table 7.3 lists modifiers due to the interaction between cultures. The result of the roll should be looked up on Table 7.4, the Trading Static Maneuver Table. The result will identify what percentage of the Market Price is the result of the haggling. If the Player fails, that percentage may well be higher (if buying) or lower (if selling) than the Market Price. The Player should then be given the choice of buying/selling, or refusing the price. If he refuses, no further haggling may be done with this partner.

If the player is attempting to barter, each commodity should undergo the above process to determine a final buying/selling price. The two prices may then be compared to come to some kind of equitable rate of exchange between the two commodities. As always, the player may choose to turn down the final price.

Example: *Brean is a food merchant in Burh Armenrik who has pooled his resources for a trip to Dor Rhûnen, where he*

hopes to score high profits. Brean owns two wagons (1,200 lb. capacity each), and has 25 gp to spend on goods. Through contacts in town, he hears news of a shipment of spice just in from Dilgul, and soon makes contact with the ship's captain.

Brean has a Trading skill bonus of +52, and wishes to buy as much of the spice as possible. The Captain is Donath, and states that all but 30 lbs. is already promised to other merchants. Brean rolls a 43. Consulting the Base Price Table, the GM notes that Eastern Spice is 6 sp/lb. The Market Price Determination Table says that Spice in Burh Armenrik has a modifier of 1.3.

6 sp x 30 lbs. x 1.3 = 234 sp. which is the Market Price.

Being a Northman, there is no Racial Interaction Modifier, so the total of his Skill and Roll is 95. The Trading SM table indicates Near Success, allowing him to purchase the spice for 234 sp. This leaves him with 16 sp.

Turning now to a fellow member of the Ibnothiuda food merchants guild, Brean decides to fill out his wagons with wheat. Wheat sells at 50 cp/100 lbs, and has a Market Price modifier of 1.2. He rolls a 62. He decides to purchase 2,000 pounds.

50 cp x 20 units (each 100 lbs.) x 1.2 = 1200 cp = 12 sp. which is the Market Price.

Both parties are Northmen, so there is no Racial Interaction Modifier.

The total of his Skill and his Roll is 113, indicating Success. He buys the 2,000 pounds of wheat for 90% of its Market Price, which is 10 sp, 8cp. He now has 1sp and 2 cp remaining. He now turns to the matter of hiring guards for the long trip across the plains. With a little luck, his trip will be uneventful, and he will return to Burh Armenrik with a handsome profit.

7.2 SHIPS OF THE INLAND SEA

All the ships of the Inland Sea are shallow draught galley ships, with primitive sails and at least the option for rowing. Table 7.5 lists ship statistics for use with ICE's Sea Law optional Rule set.

Korburaq (Ga. "Merchantman")

The shipbuilding tradition of Mistrand represents the most primitive designs being sailed on the Inland Sea. The Korburaq is intended as a general purpose ship, and is primarily used by the city's merchants to carry trade goods to other ports along the southern coast. These ships range from small 40' vessels, to an 80' version popularly used to supplement the navy of Mistrand. The ship is propelled by a single square sail at midships, and a crew of 25 to 60 galley slaves to man the single bank of oars. Steering is accomplished using two steering oars, one on either side of the stern. Small platforms on the bow and stern allow archers a perch from which volleys may be launched at an enemy. Cargo is carried below the two platforms, or along the centerline, between the oarsmen's benches.

Voshnarok (Ga. "Ship of War")

The Voshnaroks of Mistrand form the backbone of the Gathmarig navy. Ranging in size from 50' scout ships to the massive 100' Gathmarig capital ships, these vessels function well in the shallow waters of the Bay of Mistrand and the southern coast of the sea, but are quickly outmatched by Folyavulda designs when venturing into deeper waters. Typically larger and with a higher freeboard than the Korburaq, the oarsmen of the Voshnarok are better protected and trained in ramming maneuvers. These ships will typically carry the full compliment of marines, these being staffed permanently on board. Otherwise, the Ship of War is much like the Korburaq design. Many of Mistrand's greatest ships were destroyed in the waters surrounding Kelepar during the War of Clay Jars (T.A. 1635), when the Folyavulda navy broke Mistrand's blockade of that outpost. Mistrand's greatest surviving ship is the Marda-Kerkassk (Ga. "The Breath of Kerkassk") which was instrumental in preventing the Folyavulda navy from assaulting the city. In one particularly glorious day of battle, it engaged and sank two Folyavulda warships on the Bay of Mistrand.

Tenchara (Fo. "Sea-wolf")

The Sea-wolf has been the staple ship of the Folyavulda navy since the thirteenth century of the Third Age. Little about the basic design of the ship has changed in its four hundred years of service. The Tenchara ships in service in T.A. 1640 can be divided into two classes, a greater and a lesser version.

The greater Tenchara is the largest warship on the Inland Sea, spanning some 125' in length. Though it is even less agile than the primitive Voshnarok of Mistrand, the greater Tenchara is faster by virtue of a larger sail and three times the number of oarsmen. The sail is square and the ship sports one great mast, slightly forward of midships. Unlike its Gathmarig rival, the greater Tenchara has a full deck, with a raised archery platform at the fore which will typically support two or three medium ballistae capable of punching a hole in the side of ships made of inferior timber (a technological advance borrowed from Gondor). Another advantage of the Tenchara over the Gathmarig Voshnarok is that the oarsmen provide a large defensive force to repel an opponent's boarding attempts, while a Gathmarig oar-crew is typically a bound group of slaves who will seek only to flee if given the chance. The Tenchara also has a larger compliment of marines than does the Voshnarok.

Rarely exceeding 90,' the lesser Tenchar is often called a Tenchal (Fo. "Sea-pup"). It is more agile than the Tenchara, and just as fast. It lacks the ballistae, however, and also the advantage in marines and archers that the Tenchara enjoys over the ships of Mistrand. The Tenchal is used tactically as a shield, blocking attackers from the exposed sides of the Tenchara so that the larger ships are not vulnerable to ramming attacks, and can concentrate on bringing their own formidable rams to bear against the enemy.

Arka-Vadasz (Fo. "Serpent hunter")

This is a relatively new design for the Inland Sea. The original Arka-Vadasz was built with the aid of ship-wrights

from Gondor to hunt a sea drake that was attacking Folyavulda fishing villages along the coast. Slightly smaller than the Tenchara, this ship has nevertheless proved itself vastly superior to all other ships of war on the Inland Sea. Unlike its peers, the Arka-Vadasz has two masts and lateen rigged sails for improved tacking into the wind. Like the Tenchara, it can support one and sometimes two ballistae, which combined with its speed and maneuverability make it deadly even from a distance.

The Fokrana (Fo. "Black Wind"), a large Arka-Vadasz class warship is the most feared vessel on the Inland Sea. Its hull is made from the rare renor tree, a wood of unparalleled strength. One rumor popular with the sailors who served during the War of Clay Jars claims that the ship's hull actually turned away the spur of a Gathmarig Voshnarok that caught the ship directly broadside as it was extricating its own ram from the shattered hull of a second Gathmarig ship that was sinking.

Havorsaga (Fo. "Shoal-sprinter")

The Havorsaga is the smallest ship to appear in the Folyavulda navy, where it is used as a fast scout. The basic design dates back to the first Folyavulda experiments with the traditional river galley model, and in the mid-Third Age most of the river traffic consists of Havorsagas or smaller, personal skiffs and barges. The Shoal-sprinter has an extremely shallow draft, making it ideal for river or coastal travel. If caught in a storm on the open sea, however, the Havorsaga is quick to swamp, leaving the crew in desperate straits. These are typically small ships, only exceeding 50' in the rarest of cases. Crews are typically small, approaching the 50 person limit only when a great deal of rowing is expected. Unless the ship is intended to be used on the river, or is designed as a warship, oar crews usually number around 24.

The pirates of Lest are by far the most numerous users of the Havorsaga design. The ship is small, fast, and capable of racing over jagged shoals that will rip the bottom out of most pursuers. Ships rigged for warfare will frequently have a mounted ram, and may also be fitted with small fore and aft fighting decks. Some few wealthy captains have even mounted a ballista on the rear fighting deck to punch holes in the sails of their quarry and slow them down. The Shoal-sprinter is a flexible design, requiring a minimal sized crew, and reconditioned ships can normally be found for reasonable prices. It is the perfect ship for a party of adventurers expecting an eventful voyage.

Aravihar (Fo. "Swift Tempest")

The Swift Tempest design represents the union of Gondorian technologies with the specific needs of pirates and merchants on the Inland Sea. At around 60' in length, it is typically only slightly larger than the Havorsaga. Though it only has room for a single mast, it employs the lateen sail that makes the Arka-Vadasz design so successful. It is equally impressive when mated to the Aravihar hull. An Aravihar will out-maneuver and out-race all other ships on the Inland Sea. The most prominent merchants and pirates use this design, almost to the exclusion of all others. Indeed the merchants of the Folyavulda Gyogarasag (Fo. "Society of Healers"), the

richest guild in the entire region, will sail nothing but Aravihar, laden with defensive warriors as they make their journeys to distant ports to acquire rare medicinal herbs.

Like the Havorsaga, the Aravihar is a very flexible design, and can be rigged to accommodate an augmented crew of 40 warriors, an extra-large hold for bulk cargo, or an extremely light configuration for making fast runs across the Sea. Pirates have, on occasion, mounted a single medium ballista on the aft deck for crippling enemy ships. These are expensive ships, and only a wealthy party of adventurers could afford to purchase one.

Kereskep (Fo. "Merchantman")

The name Kereskep is a catch-all word used to label the many other vessels on the sea that don't neatly fit into one of the above classes. This class describes the vast majority of ships. They can range anywhere from 40' to 150' in length, and carry between 20 and 80 tons of cargo in their holds and tied down on their decks. Since the typical ship captain is not a rich man, crews often have to be very flexible, going from working and repairing rigging and sails, to grabbing an oar and rowing to escape the pursuit of pirates, or battle an uncooperative wind. Several Kereskep of various sizes and states of repair may be found at any of the sea's ports.

7.3 NAVAL TACTICS

7.3.1 FLEET TACTICS

Engagements between naval vessels on the Inland Sea are typically very bloody affairs with high rates of casualties. This comes from the limited fighting space, and the inability of the participants to disengage in most situations. The principle tactics are the ramming maneuver, and the boarding maneuver, both of which will customarily leave the two involved ships bound together. The fighting crews of naval vessels are some of the best trained and most skilled warriors in the region, for ships are valuable commodities on the Inland Sea, and owners, be they merchants, pirates, or a military organization, will pay high prices to protect their investment.

Actual fleets on the Inland Sea are rare. Only Folyavuld and Mistrand have the ships to fill out large formations. In Mistrand, fleet tactics are crude, for little distinction can be drawn between the ships that make up a squadron. The Voshnaroks are the main ships of the fleet, and are used to rush straight into a melee and ram whatever ship presents itself as the best target. If Korburaq's are present, these will typically enter the battle behind the Voshnaroks, skirting the sides of the enemy ships that have been rammed and raining arrows onto their decks. This is very often a deadly attack, for the enemy crew now faces two missile barrages from opposite directions.

Thanks to their long exposure to Gondor and its rich maritime traditions, the Folyavulda navy is much more diverse, featuring a number of different classes that are intended to fill distinct roles. The heart of any Folyavulda squadron is the Tenchara, a massive ship that bristles with

archers and mounted ballistae. Though equipped with a ram, the captain of the Tenchara (who is usually also the commander of the entire squadron) will normally lurk outside a melee, letting the smaller and more agile ships of the squadron engage the enemy. The Tenchara will then make its entry into the combat at the most critical time, keeping its distance from the enemy and punching holes in its hull and rigging with great ballista bolts, and showering its decks with arrows and javelins. The Tenchara also supports the largest contingent of marines of the Inland Sea ships, and can easily overwhelm the crews of most other ships.

More agile ships such as the Tenchal and rare Arka-Vadasz are used to guard the flanks of the Tenchara, and also to engage and ram enemy ships. The Arka-Vadasz, in particular, is an excellent platform for outmaneuvering enemy Voshnaroks and breaking their backs with a well-placed ram. Larger versions of these ships are sometimes used as the flag for smaller squadrons. The Arka-Vadasz has also been used as the center of a scout squadron, for it has been found to be just as fast as most of the smaller Havorsaga and Aravihar scouts. This is only done in relatively open waters, however, for the Arka-Vadasz is not a adept at running in the shallows, as an escaping scout is often forced to do.

In both the Gathmarig and Folyavulda fleets, orders are given to outlying ships by running distinctly patterned flags up the stays of the flagship. Knowledge of this code is valuable to anyone sailing the sea, but particularly to those who would face the fleets of the sea as an adversary.

7.3.2 PIRATE TACTICS

Most of the ships used to carry trade between the ports of the Inland Sea were constructed to serve exclusively as merchant or fishing vessels, and are not equipped to defend themselves against a military platform. This is what pirates depend on, for the Aravihar and Havorsaga designs used most often by pirates stand up very poorly against a ship with many defenders. The raiding ships are fast and agile, and have weapons to slow down their enemy. Eventually, however, all pirate confrontations come down to a boarding maneuver, and a determined, numerous and well-armed defensive crew will often turn back a pirate's boarding attempt. Pirate captains are well versed in the art of boarding, and are usually very careful in selecting their targets. Expensive Gondorian telescopes allow pirate captains to shadow their quarry, counting the defenders and sizing up their abilities before a strike is launched.

When the attack comes, a pirate captain will normally attempt to force his target toward shore, restricting its ability to maneuver, and potentially bringing the ship near a dangerous shore that is unfamiliar to the merchant captain. The objective of an attack very often focuses as much on the rival ship as it does the cargo it carries. Cargo holds on the Havorsaga and Aravihar raiders are small, and ships are expensive. The pirate will focus his attacks on the rigging of the enemy, attempting to slow it down so that a boarding attempt can be made. An attacking captain must focus his attention on crew numbers, for mortality rates in these attacks are often high, and it is critical that the captain have remaining to him enough men to sail both ships to his home

port. Many a captain has been forced to bury excess cargo on the nearest shore, and limp back to port with a full cargo hold, and a crew barely sufficient to pilot his own raider. This is when the pirate is most vulnerable, for pirates are a cannibalistic lot, and a rival will often jump at the chance to seize the prize and eliminate his peer. Many a buried treasure has gone unclaimed, as the only people who know of its whereabouts have died at the hands of rival pirates!

This, of course, is not the only danger involved in piracy. Many powerful merchants have grown tired of the pirate's lack of respect, and have hired pirate-hunters to bring the bandits to justice. One particularly effective tactic of the pirate hunters is to sail in a merchant ship with no obvious defenses, but with a large, well-armed crew that is kept hidden below the deck. From afar, these appear to be the best targets of all: lightly defended, and heavy with cargo. The attacking pirate soon learns his mistake, however, and is unable to cut his grappling lines before his own deck is inundated with hostile warriors. Some of the more notorious pirate-hunters can be recognized through the looking-glass, for their sketches adorn the tavern walls of Lest. Alternatively, these men sometimes hire others to act as the apparent captain of the ship, while the actual pirate-hunter works among the crew or hides below decks.

7.4 USEFUL SKILLS

The following is a listing of the MERP, RMSS and RM2 skills that should be used when sailing the Inland Sea:

MERP: Acrobatics (Secondary Skill), Boat Handling (Secondary Skill), Climbing (General Skills), Mapping (Secondary Skill - Lore), Rope Mastery (Secondary Skill), Signaling (Secondary Skills), Sky-Watching (Secondary Skills), Swimming (General Skills), Trading (Secondary Skill - Influence)

RMSS: Acrobatics (Athletic - Gymnastics), Ballista (Weapons - Siege Weapons), Boat-Pilot (Technical/Trade - Vocational), Climbing (Athletic - Gymnastics), Grappling Hook (Weapons - Thrown), Mapping (Technical/Trade - General), Navigation (Technical/Trade - Vocational), Rope Mastery (Crafts), Rowing (Athletic - Endurance), Signaling (Communication), Star-Gazing (Outdoor - Environmental), Swimming (Athletic - Endurance), Weather-Watching (Outdoor - Environmental), Various other Crafts (Carpenter, Cooper, Net-Maker, Sail Maker, Shipwright)

8 FIGURES OF NOTE

Diomav Feluv

With little doubt, Diomav Feluv is one of the most powerful mortals in all of Rhûn. As the Oracle of Kerkassk and the osvoda (Ga. "lord") of Mistrand he wields considerable power, both at home and abroad. In his youth, Diomav was a zealous adherent of Kerkassk's cult, and an ardent supporter of Mistrand's role as the capital of the surrounding lands. Slowly but surely his faith and devotion to Mistrand's religion lead him to greater and greater callings of authority within the plains god's kingdoms. Within time, he even

caught the attention of Nemol himself, who briefly considered using him as a host but reconsidered when he realized the strength of will that Diomav possessed.

When the osvoda Evik Polumas was brutally murdered and robbed of the Hitav Yurna (Ga. "Scepter of Spirits") in T.A. 1636 by the assassins of the Rachorod (see section 13.0 for more information), Diomav took advantage and made his own play for the seat of ultimate power in Mistrand. Kerkassk was much impressed by the strength he observed in Diomav and chose him to be his new head-of-state in Mistrand. Grief and mourning for the deceased osvoda were replaced by an overwhelming sense of responsibility to lead his people to the glory foretold in the prophecies of Kerkassk. His first, and current task, is to recover the Scepter of Spirits and return it to Mistrand, thereby restoring the pride and honor of his people and exacting revenge for the murder of the osvoda.

While the young Lord may be the puppet of Kerkassk, he still has come to a position of relative trust and therefore enjoys quite a bit of freedom. Nemol makes visitations upon his new head priest on occasion to give advice or council on matters important to Mordor, but generally leaves the osvoda to run the city independently.

Diomav has many qualities that make him an effective tool in the hands of Kerkassk. He has a great store of personal patience for one of his years, and understands that the longer tack is often the winning strategy. He is keenly aware that the power of Mistrand is on the rise in Rhun, and is careful not to take actions to adversely affect this phenomenon. Diomav has taken interest in one of the more powerful Asdriag priestesses who advise him. Such a relationship suits the designs of the Disposessed perfectly, and so he has encouraged this union. The union between the Asdriags and Gathmarig people is likely to result in a solidifying of Mordor's control over the Asdriag tribes, bringing more of southern Rhun under the shadow.

Though he is mostly of Donath and Ulgath descent, Diomav does have a smattering of Variag blood in his veins. This is most obvious in his somewhat stocky figure (he stands 5'10" and weighs 185 lbs) and attractive dark looks. His eyes are a striking shade of gray, which adds to the aura of power and intelligence that he projects. Diomav wears his brown-red hair long and partially braided in the back.

DIOMAV FELUV		
Level : 14	Hits: 67	AT: No/2 (20)
Race: Gathmarig Profession: Mage/Sorcerer Home: Mistrand Aka: the Avenger, the just, the patient, and the Champion of Kerkassk. RMSS Stats: St-97; Qu-98; Em-98; In-93; Pr-90; Ag-87; Co-84; Me-80; Re-96; SD- 78. MERP Stats: St-97; Ag-87; Co-84; Ig- 90; It-93; Pr-90. Appearance: 96 Skills: Climb 35; Swim 88; Body painting 38; Story telling 88; Public Speaking 88; Intimidation 54; Public Speaking 76; Sailing 70; Sky watching 87. Languages (RMSS): Gathmaradja (rank 7/7), Ulgathig (rank 7/7), Odhradja (rank 4), Donath Daen (rank 3), and Asdradja (rank 5). Languages (MERP): Gathmaradja (rank 5), Ulgathig (rank 5), Odhradja (rank 4), Donath Daen (rank 3), and Asdradja (rank 5).		
Diomav Feluv's Items		
Robes — Special robes of an imported dark blue fabric (symbolic of the sky over Kerkassk's plains) serve as a X2 Essence PP multiplier and also add +35 to Diomav's DB. Yitavak Yalbala (Ga. "Thunder's Companion") — Special family sword of excellent make (+15) that has been in the Diomav's family for seven generations.		
Diomav Feluv's Special Powers		
Spells: All base Mage, open channeling, and open Essence lists to 10 th level (MERP), and all base Sorcerer to 14 th level, three closed essence and two closed channeling to 10 th level (RMSS).		

Nemol

The Dispossessed spirit that now inhabits a Ring of Binding was born in S.A. 2194 near the icy bay of Utumno. In the small and isolated region of northern Dir, Nemol entered a life of prestige among his people, as the only child of his mother, Queen of a tribe of strictly matriarchal Dirians. In consequence of his gender, plans were made to have one of his female cousins take the throne when his mother died. Nemol, however, had other plans and arranged for the death of all those with any claim to throne he believed to be his birthright. Nemol became only the second king in all of his people's history after the death of his mother. He proved to be a strong monarch and leader of his people and won great concessions from his neighbors.

In S.A. 2228 Nemol launched a series of wars against neighboring Lossoth and Dirian neighbors, conquering many of their number and increasing the holdings of his people. By S.A. 2235 he had carried his aggressions as far south as the rugged hills of the Kykurian Kyn. By S.A. 2240, Nemol had pacified many of the unruly western tribes of Dir and established himself as a potential rival to the authority of

Hoarmurath the Ringwraith, who ruled the eastern tribes of Dir. Rather than lead his people into a war against the Ringwraith, Nemol presented himself to Hoarmurath as a subject and placed western Dir at the feet of Mordor. Hoarmurath welcomed Nemol into the fold, making him a trusted advisor.

Though Nemol's alliance with Hoarmurath ultimately lead to the end of his empire, it served as the catalyst that allowed him to become one of the Dispossessed of Mordor. In S.A. 2250, the Nazgul of Dir was summoned to Mordor, and he left Nemol to govern in his stead. For ten years, Hoarmurath returned infrequently to make sure everything was in order and to continue instructing Nemol in the Dark arts of sorcery. In S.A. 2258 the Ringwraith returned bearing a Lesser Ring of Power for his ally and student. Eleven years later Nemol formally entered the service of Mordor and journeyed to Nurn to do the Dark Lord's work. There he resided until Sauron was taken to Numenor by Ar-Pharazon. Like many of Sauron's servants, Nemol went into hiding until the Dark Lord's triumphant return. For the rest of the Second Age Nemol assisted in the strengthening and ordering of Mordor, jumpingbodies often enough to remain young and strong. During the siege of Barad-Dur, Nemol's host body was hopelessly trapped in the rubble of Dark Tower and the Dispossessed passed out of knowledge for a millenium.

Given the close proximity of his evil spirit to Sauron's fell capital, Nemol was on of the first of the Dark Lord's servants to return to power in the Third Age. Unearthed by servants of the Dark Lord, the Ice Demon's Ring was given a new body and in T.A. 1050. Nemol reborn was commanded to go to Rhûn to begin ordering its peoples to help in the return of the Shadow to Middle Earth. Under the mantle of Kerkassk, God of the Plains, he galvanized Easterling opposition against the influences of the West, something that exterior powers were never able to accomplish.

As a Dispossessed, Nemol has no true visible form in Arda as his body ceased to exist long ago. Since then he, like all Dispossessed, has existed as a possessing spirit, moving from host to host as the mortal vessels wore out. With each transition comes the possibility that his will and essence will be overcome by the new bearer of the ring, but Nemol has been wise and thoughtful in selecting his hosts and only two have ever given him serious challenge.

When abroad, his hosts always wear black robes that leave only his head and hands exposed. On his right hand is a plain and unadorned galvorn ring, one of the first five lesser rings created by Sauron, before he perfected his skill. To increase the terror of his presence and achieve the illusion of being a deity, Nemol uses sorcery to amplify and distort his image and presence. Indeed, when he appears to the Easterlings as Kerkassk, the art of sorcery allows him to appear with super-human proportions and a visible aura of power surrounding him.

NEMOL		
Level : 24	Hits:	AT: No/2 (20)
Race: Dirian (and that of his host) Profession: Mage/Sorcerer (and that of his host) Home: Dir (the western shore of the Bay of Utumno); later Dir; then Nurn; and still later the fortress of the Ily-amana. Aka: The King of Utumni; the Ice Demon. RMSS Stats: St-86 (102); Qu-96; Em-82; In-88; Pr-93; Ag-98(102); Co-84; Me-97; Re-97; Sd-80. MERP Stats: St-86(102); Ag-98(102); Co-84; Ig-100; It-88; Pr-93. Appearance: 88. Skills: Climb22; Swim20; Ride24; S&H10; Perc88; Rune75; S&W20; Dsp40; Amb4; AMov34; MAst15; Acro10; Admin48; Fals21; Lead68; Nav18; Sed62; Smith64; Wea18. Languages: Labba (rank 5), Dirian (rank 5), Urdax (rank 3), Umataisir-Umitic (rank 3), Westron (rank 2), Sindarin (rank 4), Nuradja (rank 3), Asdradja (rank 5), Odhradja (rank 5), Logathig (rank 5), Gathmarig (rank 5), and Morlam (rank 5).		
Nemol's Principal Items		
Ring Of Frost — a Ring of Binding. Turns wearer into a Dispossessed, <i>see section 9.1 for more on the powers of the Rings of Binding.</i> Staff —x3 PP (Sorcerer or Essence) multiplier. Allows four spells of any level to be stored, but they must be cast in the same order as they were stored.		
Nemol's Special Powers		
Spells: 64PP; x3 PP (Sorcerer or Essence) multiplier (192 total). Nemol knows six Open Essence (MERP and RMSS) lists to 10 th level, he also knows two Open Channeling (MERP and RMSS) lists to 10 th level also. In addition he also knows Spirit Mastery and Gate Mastery to 5 th level (both RMSS Closed Essence lists). And he also knows all of the RMSS Sorcerer lists to level 20. Directed Spells OB is 40, Base Spells Bonus is 18.		

Thulor II

The Dwarf Lord Thulor II does not fit the mold of the sober, hard working, possessive, and selfish Dwarven leader. Most Dwarves in other areas of Middle Earth would consider Thulor II to be a flighty and somewhat impractical chief of his people. Rather than concern himself with the expansion of his domain and the destruction of those who contest his people's hegemony over the highlands, he plays practical jokes and involves himself in foreign intrigues. He has been known to call for large celebrations and holidays, sometimes for no better reason than the desire for good food and drink. Strangest of all, Thulor II is not particularly insular in thinking (as Dwarves go). He has been known to take interest in the affairs of Men. Of late, the Dwarven monarch has become interested in the Asdriag villages in the outer bounds of the Dwergabergos which are being destroyed by

Gondorian soldiers. He has gone so far as to send representatives of his kingdom to the Asdriags to learn their tongue and culture.

In reality, other Dwarven monarchs mistake his open-mindedness and cosmopolitan nature for dimwittedness and lack of practicality. Thulor II is simply a manifestation of a wider change of attitude that has taken hold in the mansion of Nurunkizdin. Because the Dwarves of the Pinnon Rhun were forced to renounce so much of their wealth in the mines of the Bilak-Khald, they have achieved a degree of freedom from the materialistic fixations that normally consume others of their kind. Thulor is just beginning to turn the keen mind of the Dwarf to questions normally beyond the pale of Dwarven thought. As a result, the halls of Nurunkizdin are less austere and the doors of the kingdom more often stand open to travellers.

Like most Dwarves, Thulor II has a build which suggests strength and endurance. He is 4'4" tall and weighs 115 pounds, at the young age of 88. His hair and beard are a dark red, and his eyes are light blue. He attires himself as he pleases, but always wears his magical ring, that helps in pranks and stunts. Thulor's favorite saying among friends is "A good prank should always scare a few years of life off of the receiver."

THULOR II		
Level : 14	Hits:	AT:
Race: Dwarf Profession: Scout/Rogue Home: Nurunkizdin. Aka: The Scourge. RMSS Stats: St-94; Qu-101; Em-82; In-88; Pr-77; Ag-101; Co-84; Me-90; Re-98; Sd-48. MERP Stats: St-94; Ag-101; Co-84; Ig-94; It-88; Pr-77. Appearance: 91. Skills: Climb44; Swim62; DTraps42; Plock68; S&H68; Perc62; Rune14; Act48; Appr18; Arch14; Cave18; Dipl31; Fals38; Trick84; Lead87; Smith18; TrapB88; Wood12. Languages: Khuzdul (rank 5), Folyavuldok (rank 3), and Bergothiudan (rank 4)		
Thulor's Principal Items		
Ring of Mischief — +35 to Trap Building. War Hammer ("Thralin's Delight") — +35 war hammer with mithril inlays, slays Orcs. Boots of Silent Passing — Allows wearer to walk silently. Armor — +20 Chain mail, half encumbrance.		

Gabmog the Dimwitted

Gabmog is the Orcish lord of the tower at Gaurblog Lug and the halls that run beneath it. He rules his small domain with authority, presiding this small foothold in the highlands of Rhun for the shadow. The orcs that serve him are committed to the service of Oraishapek the Dispossessed and, by extension, the Dark Lord. Though there numbers are not

great, the goblins of the Pinnon Rhun are fierce and ruthless warriors, and constitute a definite threat to the security of the highlands.

Gabmog earned his sobriquet during an unfortunately timed raid in the highlands of Folyavuld. His goblins descended on a rural manor only to discover that the Gondorian ambassador to Folyavuld was visiting the Folyavulda noble accompanied by a full retinue of Gondorian soldiers. Though Gabmog does not tolerate the "nickname" to be used in his presence, he knows for certain that it is used behind his back. Gabmog is a large Orc at 6'2" tall, weighing 220 pounds. His skin is dark gray and very coarse, his eyes yellow, and his sparse hair is black.

GABMOG		
Level : 11	Hits:	AT:
Race: Orc Profession: Warrior/Fighter Home: Garblog Lug in the central Pinnon Rhun. RMSS Stats: St-96; Qu-96; Em-34; In-38; Pr-90; Ag-97; Co-98; Me-84; Re-86; Sd-42. MERP Stats: St-96; Ag-97; Co-98; Ig-84; It-38; Pr-90. Appearance: 72 Skills: Climb50; Ride52; S&H70; Perc72; Amb6; AMov28; MAST56; MASw32; AthG22; FAid12; Gamb28; Lead68; S&T12; Track28. Languages: Orkish (rank 5), Westron (rank 4), and Morlam (rank 2).		
Gabmog's Principal Items Morning Star ("Head-smasher") — a +25 Orkish Rand-maj (heavy-spike) that slays Humans, and doubles all head criticals. Helmet — +20, negates 50% of head and neck criticals.		

9 ARTIFACTS OF POWER

9.1 The Rings of Binding

Before Sauron and the Elves of Eregion crafted the Rings of Power, Sauron spent many long hours in the bowels of Mount Doom developing the process of ring-making. Sauron mastered much of the art in Mordor before ever approaching Celebrimbor and his smiths, making him a teacher among students rather than a smith among peers. In these early experiments, Sauron tested many ways of Binding the immortal souls of Iluvatar's Children to the inanimate gold of lesser rings, so that he could secretly craft this property into the later Rings of Power, and thereby snare the Elven-smiths. The rings he crafted in Mordor were fantastic items, capable of binding the souls of Man for eternity to the material world. In this way, Sauron could defy the doom of Man, and impart to his mortal servants some measure of the immortality he had so often promised them.

These items he named the Rings of Binding, and he almost immediately began searching for suitable candidates to wield them. Soon, however, the Rings of Power failed in their purpose to enslave the Elves, and he made war on Eregion to recover them so he could use them to another purpose. When given to mortals, the Rings of Power made them exceedingly powerful and useful undead servants, and once recovered, they became the primary tools that Sauron would use to enslave Man. They were bound to the One master Ring that he wore on his own finger, while the Rings of Binding were subject only to the allegiance of their bearers. For this reason, the Rings of Binding were given to those who were sent to regions considered peripheral, while the Rings of Power were allocated in a way to best secure critical areas of Endor.

The Five States of Possession

The Rings of Binding function much differently than the Rings of Power. They provide to the wielder's soul a shelter when their body fails them, and allow them to attempt to possess the living bodies of subsequent wielders of the Ring so that they may continue to serve the Dark Lord in their original capacity. When the ring is placed on the finger of a viable host, the bound spirit in the ring begins attacking the will of the host. The new host of the ring is said to be "exposed" to the bound spirit, and must endure a possession attack the following midnight or he will lose control of his body to the bound spirit.

When a bound spirit first gains control of a new host's body, he must struggle to act through it, and all his actions are penalized by a -50. The host is now said to be "infested." Each noon after becoming infested, the host is allowed to make his own possession attack to take control back from the bound spirit. If the attempt succeeds, he becomes exposed again, and must abide by the guidelines associated with that state. If the attempt fails, the bound spirit will make a possession attack against the host the following midnight.

If this possession attack succeeds, the host becomes "possessed," in which case the bound spirit is free to act without penalty using the host's bodies and powers, as well as his own inherent powers, and also the powers of the particular ring. Once possessed, the host is allowed a weekly possession attack to attempt to lessen the degree of his possession. If the attack succeeds, the host moves back to the infested state.

When a host is first exposed to the bound spirit, he is allowed to make a Use Item (Attunement in RMSS) attempt in order to learn more about the Ring of Binding. Table 9.1 provides guidelines for resolving this roll. If a result of Absolute Success is obtained, the host learns enough about the ring to make an attempt at forcing the bound spirit out of the ring entirely, so that the host's spirit may bind itself to the ring, and thus rob from Sauron's servant the immortality promised him. This process begins after the host resists the first midnight possession attack of the bound spirit. The host then makes an immediate possession attack of his own. If this attack is successful, the host's spirit moves into the "aggressive" state, and neither controls the body. Once in the aggressive state, the host's body will remain in a comatose condition for 48 hours while the spirits strive against one another. This is the very state that Lokuthor and Kasagul

were in when Sauron found them at the end of Second Age (see section 3.5.1). Realizing that Lokuthor had lost control of the Ring, Sauron destroyed Kasagul's body and buried the ring under several tons of ruined temple.

At the end of the two days of inactivity, the host is allowed a single possession attack. Success means that the bound spirit of Sauron's servant is forced out of the Ring of Binding, and is now houseless; banished to the Halls of Mandos until history's end. The host is now said to be "dispossessed," and his spirit is bound to the Ring of Binding until he finds a host that is able to accomplish the same feat against him. If the attack fails, the host moves back to the exposed state and must begin anew. The entire process is summarized in Tables 9.2 and 9.3.

Possession Attacks

A possession attack consists of a Resistance Roll modified by the difference between the attacker and defender's Presence stat bonuses (use the Cleansing Trance skill bonuses in RMSS, or simply SD stat bonuses if the involved parties have no Cleansing Trance bonus).

9.1.1 Rhûn's Rings of Binding

In addition to the rings' powers involving the binding of spirits, they also typically endow their bearers with some magical ability. Three different Rings of Binding have been wielded against the peoples of Rhûn. Each is briefly described below.

Oraishapek's Ring of Flame

This ring has housed the spirit of Oraishapek the Dispossessed since the mid- Second Age. Using it, the Dispossessed was able to seize the Szreldorn throne and control that dark culture for centuries until their downfall. After the death of the body of Lokor Szrel in the War of the Last Alliance, Oraishapek and his ring lay in a tomb in the high passes of the Ash Mountains until recovered by Uvatha the Ringwraith in T.A. 1265. The Ring of Flame is a x3 spell point multiplier, and allows the wielder to cast 50 spell points worth of spells from the Light Law or Fire Law spell lists per day.

Nemol's Ring of Frost

Made of a beautifully smooth piece of unadorned and unmarked Galvorn, the Ring of Frost was one of the last of the Rings of Binding to be made and given out by Sauron. Unlike the other Rings of Binding, the Ring of Frost allows its bound spirit a +10 to possession rolls, which helps explain why Nemol has maintained his identity for so long. All things come with a price however, and since the ring was specifically designed for use in colder regions, it's wielder's body is at a -25 to all heat based attacks. The Ring of Frost is also a x3 Essence PP multiplier and allows its wearer to cast an additional 30 points of spells daily from the Illusions, Ice Law, and Spirit Mastery lists.

Lokuthor's Ring of Illusions

Lokuthor was one of the first Dispossessed to be created. His Ring was a very early essay in the craft, and its powers lay in a more subtle magic than the elemental rings of Oraishapek and Nemol. Lokuthor was a master of illusions, and his Ring allowed him to cast 70 points worth of spells from the Illusions and Sound Control spell lists (any of the Illusionist Base spell lists in RMSS). Like the other Rings of Binding, it was also a x3 spell point multiplier. Lokuthor made the mistake of forcing the Ring of Illusions onto Kasagul the Odhriag lord who was a man of great power and extraordinary will. Sauron destroyed the Dispossessed rather than let a powerful enemy gain control of the ring, and the artifact now lies under a veritable mountain of collapsed earth and stone in the central Kuka Posladni.

9.2 The Hitav Yurna

The Scepter of Spirits is an artifact of power closely tied to the people of Mistrand, and serves as not only the emblem of their worship and affection for Kerkassk, but also as his sanction for their place of dominance among his followers. Given to the osvoda of the city as a symbol of his right to rule in Kerkassk's absence, the scepter is identified across Gathod as one of the most sacred artifacts in all the land. It is 4' long and made of alabaster adorned with a giant black pearl at its head. At a full inch in diameter, it is possibly the largest ever found on the Inland Sea. Beyond the item's religious implications, it is also has powers to augment the magical abilities of its wielder. It is a x2 spell point multiplier, and adds +20 to all Influence Skill rolls (any skill roll in the Influencing Skill Category in RMSS).

In T.A. 1636 the Hitav Yurna was stolen when the reigning osvoda, Evik Polumas, was assassinated by infidels in the streets of Mistrand. It is widely known that the infamous Folyavulda pirate Yanos Kosvar was behind the murder, and that he flaunts the Scepter in public, claiming it as the blood-price of his dead sons, whose deaths he blames on the people of Mistrand. This is an affront to the pride of Mistrand and the worshippers of Kerkassk that cannot be tolerated. Assassins and spies have flooded the cities of the Inland Sea, looking for clues of Kosvar's whereabouts.

9.3 The Bilak-Khald

"What have I done? My recklessness has not only caused my imminent doom, but perhaps I have caused the deaths of many of my people or worse, the end of our proud line? Why was I so foolish in not heeding the annals of our Fathers, why did I think they were just stories..?"

— Last words of Thralin IV, as Excerpted from the Dwarven Annals of Nurunkizdin

In S.A. 3394, while delving deep beneath the Hathur-nabundurok for some of its less than plentiful gold deposits, a find of miraculous proportions was unearthed. In two very small veins a precious green gem was found. Almost imperceptibly, it glowed with its own light and had a very bizarre luster. Excited by their discovery, the Dwarves set

about polishing and fashioning the glassy green gems until jewels of unparalleled caliber were created. Correctly worked and cut, these small treasures gave off enough light to give many a cavern and hall a soft and dull green glow.

In T.A. 57, the last of the Bilak-khald from the two original small veins had long since been refined and crafted for a little longer than one hundred years. Ever hoping to find more of these precious and pleasant light sources, the Dwarves delved deeper and deeper into the dark depths beneath their home. Then, tragedy struck. Near the end of the year, several of the miners who had been far below in the mines suddenly took ill. Strange and hideous splotches covered their skins and open sores broke out that could not be healed, despite the best of attempts. In horror, their families watched helplessly as they passed into unconsciousness and finally into the arms of their maker as death took them. Concerned with his people's well being Thelor XIV ordered the mines deep below the Hathur-na-bundurok fearing some dark legacy of Morgoth.

For many centuries the mines containing this hideous scourge were left alone until Thralin's Folk tired of merely contenting themselves with the crafting of metals and Gems. Gnawingly, their minds turned to the Bilak-khald. If they had been found once, could they not be present somewhere else beneath the deep roots of the Hathur-na-bundurok? Yet no one dared to look, as the "Green" mines had been closed because of the strange curse that had taken the lives of its miners so long ago. But, was it really some strange Morgothic manifestation, or was it merely a freak Phenomenon? It begged to be answered, the prospect of finding more of the magnificent gems tugged so heavily on the hearts of the Dwarves and their energetic King, Thralin IV, that they had to reopen the condemned mines.

Cautiously, small expeditions entered the mines where their predecessors had encountered the Blight. Time after time, they returned without incident. Gradually fears were abated, and some mining began to actually transpire in the ancient mines. Then, a year later, gold was discovered. Thralin's Folk were genuinely excited. Gold was not as common in Nurunkizdin as they would have desired. Slowly the vein was worked and the precious metal was gradually extracted.

In T.A. 1423, two years after reopening the mines, excited and frantic calls came from deep below; more of the Bilak-khald had been found! While attempting to clear a small passage around the Gold vein, an unexpected collapse occurred. Though none of the nearby miners were hurt, all were shocked. Before their eyes, in a variety of sizes and hues, lay a small number of the raw green gems their forefathers had sought. Quick exploration revealed another small vein of the strange green crystals.

Strangely though, these new sources of excitement seemed somewhat different than those already refined and in use by the Dwarves. While the originals gave off a constant amount of light, these seemed to fluctuate in the amount of illumination they were willing to give, and seemed to be of a slightly different hue. Undaunted, master craftsmen quickly began the arduous tasks of shaping and refining the precious gems that would serve as lamps in many of their corridors.

Then, almost instantly, many of those who had been working with the Gems became ill. Symptoms were identical to those experienced when Thelor's Folk were contaminated. With time, it was obvious that only those who had had any contact or exposure to the light of these fearful stones were effected with the same blotches, open sores, and murderous fevers as described by Thelor's Folk in the Annals. Unfortunately though, nearly two thirds of Thralin's Folk had anxiously seen the strange gems before any sickness was noted. Consequently, nearly two-thirds of the Folk of Nurunkizdin were taken with the merciless illness.

Quickly, just before the death of the King, plans were made to remove and return all of the poisonous stones back in the mines far below and out of reach of the Dwarves. Five able bodied and heroic warriors volunteered to return the ghastly materials to their ancient abode and seal the deep mines behind them. Laboriously and unaided, they rapidly gathered all of the gems in a small cart and pushed it into the deepest reaches of the mines, from whence they had originated. Then they proceeded to seal the entrances to the mines. One of their number had already succumbed to the blight and had collapsed en route, and two of them sealed themselves far below with their foul cargo near the original vein while their companions in death closed and destroyed the access to the entire complex just before expiring.

Meanwhile, all efforts were being made to try and overcome the foul power of the light of the stones had on all who beheld them. But for the most part, it was to no avail. A few of those who were afflicted did survive, but with gruesome scars and marks to serve as a testament to their horrible ordeal. When all was said and done, and the majority of the sickness gone, over half of Thralin's folk had died, including the King and both of his sons. Though briefly left leaderless, the effects of this blight were much greater than the momentary lack of a King, as no Dwarf or Dwarven family had gone untouched by the devastating effects of this gruesome blight. Later, one of the chroniclers wrote:

"It came upon us so quickly, we were completely caught at unawares..

"It seemed so unfair. It struck at anyone. Though Death is part of life, this foul sickness seemed to rob us. Taken from its victims was any sense of purpose taken from its victims was any chance at glorious death in battle. Gone was the right of peacefully coming into Mahal's arms after living a venerable and well accomplished life. Yet, strangely, those that died seemed better than those of us who remained"

— Excerpts from the Annals of Nurunkizdin, T.A. 1423.

Powers of the bilak-khald

True bilak-khald. The "true" greenstones were those originally found by Thelor's Folk, and can still be found in pairs within most of the larger caverns and halls of Nurunkizdin. Unlike those found later, the true greenstones have no adverse effects at all. Instead, the bilak-khald operate as if a perpetual (as in never run out) MERP Light Law Light I were in effect upon them casting a soft light with a slight greenish tint 20' around it.

Untrue bilak-khald. These monstrosities can be found in several veins running far below the halls of Nurunkizdin, though the most promising place to find them would be in the collapsed cavern that housed those returned by Thralin's folk in T.A. 1423 (see section 12.6 #xxx for more details). Unlike their fairer "cousins" these gems burn as if the same spell were cast upon them but with a deeper green color and a noticeable flicker. In addition their light causes all that are exposed to it to make an hourly RR vs. a +25 essence spell that starts at level 7 and increases by two levels per hour. If failed, those exposed to the eerie light loose 7 points of Constitution in addition to 5 hit points. As this continues, blotches, open sores, nausea, vomiting, organ pain, hemorrhaging and other cruel symptoms will appear. Only by encasing the foul gems in a tight stone or hard-wood box can the effects be decreased which amounts only to nothing more than having to make a RR every 2-4 hours (depending upon the strength of the box/case/etc.) instead of every hour. Additionally, anyone coming into contact with anything (sacks, boxes, dirt, water, etc.) that has itself been in contact with these cursed stones must make a RR vs a 5th level poison every hour they are in contact, or suffer the same effects as someone carrying the gems in a box or other container.

9.4 Thelor's Ring of Power

In S.A. 2004, emissaries of the Dark Lord met with Thelor VII in his gloomy halls in the Grey Mountains. Though there existed little love between this somber Dwarf and the fell power to the south, he took the gift offered him by his visitors. No one, in his mind, could have refused such an object of beauty. Crafted of elegantly worked black gold overlaid over a core of Galvorn (a magical precious metal), and adorned with a strange and solitary brilliant blue Gem bound to the Ring with intricately fashioned Mithril, Thelor VII felt it to be a treasure suited for his people and their love of well crafted treasures. Little did he know of the troubles it would cost him or his folk. Though it failed in its purpose of binding the Dwarven King and his kin to the Lord of Barad-dur, it didn't take long for it to begin working its own evil and mischief among the Khazad of Thelor's line.

In S.A. 2797 the Ring's strong powers worked their ways of greed into the heart of Thelor IX, causing him to uproot his people from the Grey Mountains and move to what he anticipated would be a better home in the abandoned halls of Falek-dim in the Zinaramahal. Though this was not disastrous, the move and the run-in with the Uruk-marzguram was less than pleasant for him and his people. For many centuries the Ring had only subtle effects upon its wielders until it almost caused the downfall of Thelor's line. In T.A. 57, a bitter dispute over the mysterious Bilak-khald erupted between Thelor XIV and his over-zealous brother Thulin. While Thulin claimed that the dispute was largely about his brother's decisions, it was in fact based on his wicked desire to lay claim to the Ring himself. With time and persistence of thought, his ideas and wishes became actions, and the greedy Dwarf secretly murdered his brother and then seized the Ring for his own prize. Shortly thereafter the treacherous Dwarf was pushed into a deep crevice by his brother's eldest daughter where-upon Thulin's body and the Ring were devoured by a great, blind cave drake that inhabits

sections of the Underdeeps below Nurunkizdin. Though this proved to be the end of the ring's influence on Thelor's folk, they still faced bitter challenges, and three years later the majority of these stout children of Mahal left for the Heb Aran, while many of their cousins remained behind under the Naugrim lord Threlin to continue their search for Thelor's Ring.

The Ring's Powers: As with all of the Dwarven Rings created by Sauron, the bearers of the rings determine the extent and focus of the ring's true power. A predisposition towards the discovery, appropriation, and admiring preservation of treasures and artifacts was demonstrated by all of the bearers of Thelor's Ring, but these qualities, while innate in most Naugrim, were exacerbated far beyond normal limits by all of the Kings of Thelor's Line. Though each wearer enjoyed slightly different benefits, all enjoyed those that follow below.

- if wearer is "stunned and unable to parry," treat wearer as merely "stunned." x7 PP multiplier (any profession)
- +77 DB, RR, and maneuver bonus
- Continuous RMSS/MERP Protections Prayer 70'R affecting all allies within the radius of the spell or within sight of the wearer.
- Continuous RMSS Mind Mastery Unpresence and Hiding Nondetect or MERP Nature's Guises Blank thoughts and Illusions Unseen. All lodes of precious metal ores and all volcanic pipes of minerals and gemstones within 7777' of wearer can be detected and can also be analyzed by bearer if he is familiar with the substance.
- Wearer may use at will RMSS Detecting Ways and Delving Ways to 50th level or MERP Detection Mastery and Essence's Ways to 10th level. Wearer may use at will RMSS/MERP Lore and Item Lore to 50th/10th level. Wearer may cast spells from all six RMSS alchemist base lists to his own level using his own PPs.
- Wearer and all within 7 miles of him are inspired with extreme loyalty to members of their own respective race.
- Wearer subject to increasing wanderlust over time for as long as he owns his ring; each year he must make a RR vs. A Channeling spell that starts at 5th level and increases by 1 level each year; if he fails the RR by 50 or more, he will uproot the people under his sovereignty in search of a grander and more commodious living quarters with access to richer minerals and resources.
- Wearer subject to increasing desire to create and possess artifacts; he will create at least one Item of Power every seven years and will become more possessive of these treasures over time.

Read LotRI 82, 330, 351; LotRIII 445-47; Sil 357-58, 375.

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FOLA SALENIN (S. "Fola Salenin")

See entry for FOLA SALENIN.

DOR RHÛNEN (S. "East Land")

Dor Rhûnen is a royal territory of Gondor encompassing a vast area including the Dagorlad, the Anduin valley north of Ithilien, and much of the Talath Harroch and southern Rhovanion. After Sauron's fall at the end of the Second Age, these lands were virtually empty; the Easterlings being unwilling to venture too close to the borders of Gondor, and the Dunedain in that day having no use for lands so far removed from the kingdom proper. The settlement of Dor Rhûnen took off after King Turambar's victory over the Easterlings in T.A. 541. It was Turambar who commissioned the first forts to be built on the Dagorlad and beyond to keep a vigil on the plains of southern Rhovanion and give warning of any new Easterling threats. The forts established in those days grew into towns, and the frontier was pushed further east so that new forts had to be built farther afield. By the 580's of the Third Age, a military governor had been appointed to organize the developing territory and a new capital was made at Thorondir (S. "Eagle's Watch").

In the mid-Third Age, Dor Rhûnen's development was spurred by the rise of trade across Rhovanion between Folyavuld, the Northmen of Burh Armenrik, the emerging Northmen of northern Rhovanion, and the cities of Gondor's southern provinces. The garrisons of the border forts grew as Gondor realized new interest in the markets of Rhûn, and trade routes connecting these widely separated markets became established. The Ehwathrumi Northman tribes hired on to guard trade caravans from predatory bands of Easterlings who again made their presence felt in Rhovanion. Dor Rhûnen's power and influence crested in T.A. 1248, when Minalcar the Regent of Gondor and his Northman ally Vidugavia campaigned across Rhovanion and deep into Rhûn

to rid the land of Easterlings.

Trade flourished as never before, and towns such as Thorondir, Rhûnost, and Gobel Gwindor on the Dagorlad became important hubs on the most popular routes of trade. A contingent of Dunedain even garrisoned a fort in the town of Burh Armenrik for a time, marking the farthest east Dor Rhûnen's authority was ever extended.

Since that day, Dor Rhûnen has been on a steady decline because of a number of factors. Gondor's Kin-strife turned the Dunedain upon one another, and the many of the frontier soldiers whose presence made Dor Rhûnen safe returned home to take part in the struggle. Eldacar's return to the throne in T.A. 1447 employed a great portion of the strength of Vidugavia's realm, leaving no one to keep watch over the plains of Rhovanion. Sensing the lowering of Gondor's guard, Easterlings again found there way into Rhovanion. Then in T.A. 1636, Dor Rhûnen was dealt a felling blow by the Great Plague.

Gondor, more than any other realm in Middle-earth felt the full ravages of the Plague. Garrisons have been reduced by half, and the towns of the frontier are left mostly vacant. Those few townsfolk who escaped the black death have returned to their families in Gondor. Without the support of the towns around the forts of Dor Rhûnen, the garrisons again have become dependent on tenuous lines of supply. The Northmen too have been decimated by the Plague, and have withdrawn within their homesteads and settlements. In their place, Easterling tribes such as the Asdriags have again returned to the lands of southern Rhovanion to raid the caravans of those few merchants who still dare to chance a crossing of the wild plains.

Vagaig, present day governor of Dor Rhûnen has lashed out against the Asdriags, committing what little strength remains to him in a campaign to sweep the Asdriag camps from the Talath Harroch, and clear the way for goods to flow again between Burh Armenrik and Thorondir. The garrison of Thorondir is in danger of having its lines of supply cut by the immigrating Asdriag tribes. At a time when Gondor is in no position to send a relief column to the aid of Vagaig, the sustainability of Dor Rhûnen's capital, and thus of the territory itself is in question.

DRADORNY-ARNAS (Ar. "High Citadel")

The Dradorny-Arnas is a mythic citadel in the Uldona Spine that was said to be the center of evil sorcery in the days of the Szreldorn kingdom. No one actually claims to have seen the Dradorny-Arnas, but sailors along the Parta Rokantha will occasionally report strange lights shining from high atop the sea-side cliffs. Legends attribute these lights to the ghosts of the sorcerers who once dwelt within the High Citadel, still igniting their incendiary magics on the darkest of nights. Such stories are told to scare young children by the fireside, and most of the people of Folyavuld put no faith in them. A choice few, however, know the truth behind the tales.

The Dradorny-Arnas does indeed exist. The fortress-temple was constructed on the northern fringe of the central massif of the Uldona Spine in the mid-Second Age. Thousands of slaves spent their adult lives moving great marble blocks

from highland quarries to the construction site, and thousands more were sacrificed in the consecrating of the structure. The citadel sits perched above a great sink-hole carved by runoff water, with caves below that wind beneath the highland plateau, through great limestone chambers and over dark subterranean lakes. Long ago, these caverns were transformed by the hands of slaves into a road; a series of bridges, winding cavern paths, and narrow staircases leading from the Gweléth riverbed to the great staircase that winds up the outer edge of the sink, and leads to the front gate of the citadel.

Ancient Rhidon myths name the caves of the Gweleth gorge the Narsza Trador (Fo. "The Shaded Road"), and even the tribal shamans shun the cave that is the entrance to the vast underground complex. In the days of the Szreldorn Kingdom, after Oraishapek the Dispossessed began possessing the kings and effectively united that house with the priesthood of Rakana-Kiral, the Dradorny-Arnas served as a monastery for the training of the priesthood in the ways of sorcery and dark sacrifice. The citadel itself was constructed as a temple rather than a military fortress. The defense of the structure rests in its inaccessibility, more than it does a set of walls or garrison of warriors. Oraishapek designed the citadel, and being an Easterling himself, the architecture is distinctly eastern. The main portion of the citadel is roofed by a great dome surmounted by a spire which stabs into the highland sky. Within the high spire is a single windowed chamber where Oraishapek has worked some of his most potent spells. It was here that, in the guise of Lokor Szrel, he raised the great beast Kraszapol from the depths of the Inland Sea.

The walls of the temple are adorned with many friezes that depict various scenes from the history of the Baradhrim people, and the myths surrounding the worship of Rakana-Kiral. An historian with some knowledge of eastern history might reconstruct much of the First and Second Age history of the Szreldorn people just by spending time studying the doors, walls and ceilings. A more formal account of Szreldorn history, as well as the practices of Oraishapek's priesthood once existed in the library hall of the temple, but much of this collection has disintegrated over the years.

After the fall of the Szrel-King in Mordor, the remaining priests shut themselves within the citadel, damning themselves to starvation rather than submit to the new authority in Szrel-Kain. The spirits of many of these sorcerers still haunt the fortress, providing a macabre troop of companions for the citadel's newest inhabitants. For after Oraishapek's Ring was recovered and the bound spirit made active again, he immediately returned to his ancient stronghold, intent on reclaiming the kingdom that was once his. His Orc servants at Gaurblog Lug guard the temple and infest the caves of the Narsza-trador, effectively sealing the only approach to the structure. The adherents of Vizaterdyzo (Fo. "Cult of the Glorious Return") send messengers from the cities into the Rhidon countryside, their passage into the Narsza-trador being masked by Orc raids into the highlands, or fierce storms called by the Dispossessed to smash the Rhidon coast. In this way, Oraishapek remains in control of his spies in the cities. The Orcs return occasionally from their raids with an unfortunate victim, stolen from his village and brought to the citadel to provide the Dispossessed

with a new host. The Dispossessed's spies normally hand-pick those that will be kidnapped, careful that the new host fits the profile of a desirable vessel for their spirit-lord.

ELGAER (S. "Sea-jewel")

See entry for KELEPAR.

AGASHA DAG (S. "Eastern Forest")

The great forest of Agasha Dag (S. "great forest of tall-standing silver spires") is ancient by any standard. Covering over 11,000 square miles of land northeast of the Inland Sea, this expanse of wilderness is one of the few remnants of the great forests that blanketed

Middle-earth during the Age of Stars. Like many of the truly ancient forests in Endor, the Agasha Dag is home to a reclusive population of the Firstborn who guard the secrets of the forest's interior from the encroachment of Rhûn's more exploitative cultures. Only along the coasts has Man made permanent settlements on the forest's edge, and only then by the leave of the Elves, who watch them constantly and contain their foraging parties from venturing too far into the sacred heart of the forest.

Still, the Men of Kugavod brave the threat of the Elves, whom they believe to be demons, and venture out under the canopy of Agasha Dag. For the resources of the forest are abundant, and though Kugath culture is centered on fishing, the practice of foraging and hunting have grown in importance in Kugavod. Herbs found throughout the vast wilderness are prized in Folyavuld for their medicinal qualities, and merchants who anchor their galleys in Kug Bay will pay a handsome price for a pouch of dried herbs. The pelt trade is another source of income for the Kugath, and the hunting parties that sometimes roam the forest hunt more for fur than for meat.

The coastal regions of the forest, particularly those east of the mouth of the Vol Kug, are predominantly swamp, and Kugath hunting parties will often hunt from their canoes rather than venture by foot. The swamps of Agasha Dag are home to all manner of water-fowl and fish. Among those species prized for their coats are flying foxes, black minks, fishing cats, and blue otters. Besides the ever-vigilant Elves, the swamps hold all kinds of dangers for prospective hunters. Many breeds of poisonous snakes swim the waters and live in the trees of the swamp, and the occasional fen boar or Giant hellbender (a large carnivorous aquatic lizard) add to the danger of leaving the canoe. Worst of all are the Festiqan (Ga. "Death claws"), which the Elves name Mabelmaikli), which are 6 ft. long crab-like creatures that lurk in the warm swamp waters. Though they generally prey on fish and smaller mammals, larger specimens have been known to attack Men.

The interior regions of the forest are truly the domain of the Elves. Few Men have ever tread the paths that wind through the heart of the forest above the cataracts of the Vol Kug, and fewer still have returned to speak of it. Here the cypress and scrub trees of the swamp give way to great moss-bearded oaks, and tall white cedars. All manner of woodland creature roams the forest, from the common black bear to packs of the

exotic Merisc Tyka. The domain of the Elves is criss-crossed by paths that most would not recognize as anything more than game trails. Yet these trails are the roads which connect Elven campsites, and great bands of the Firstborn use them in their cycle of migration through the wilderness. Still, the Elves are a cunning lot, and many of these trails lead to nothing more than concealed pit and net traps to snare would be trespassers and assailants of their woodland realm.

On the west side of the river, the ground becomes broken and gradually rises into a line of forested hills. These hills, which the Elves of Agasha Dag call ----- (S. "Hills of Green Moss"), have a jagged relief to them, and many have faces of sheer rock. Caves abound throughout the range, which has attracted a large population of hill trolls to the forest. These misshapen hulks are the only representatives of Morgoth's creatures to call the Agasha Dag home. Were the Uialrim to resolve themselves to do it, they could undoubtedly drive the beasts from the forest, but they have never had problems with the trolls, for they are careful to avoid the hills at night, when the creatures are active. If the trolls recognize the presence of the Elves in the forest, they have never raided a single Elven camp, and thus an uneasy peace exists between the two races. On nights when the moon is bright over the forest, the trolls have been known to climb to the summit of their hills and bellow challenges back and forth at one another, a sound which is sure to chill the bones of even the stoutest explorer or traveler.

The Kugath name the forested highlands Boldolon (Ul. "Haunted Hills"), for it is here that much of the contact between Man and Elf has taken place, and also where the majority of disappearances among Kugath foraging parties have occurred. Nevertheless, Kugath bands still frequent the area in search of the valuable Renor tree, a tall black-barked tree sought for the resilience of its wood. The Elves seek to protect the Renor from further exploitation, and several violent confrontations have already occurred over Kugath intrusions into the deep forest. Matters were recently complicated by the building of the new Kugath village of Fokerdo, whose residents are interested only in penetrating deeper into the forest in search of their elusive prize. The Elves have placed a constant watch on the new village, and there are those among their ranks who advocate destroying the village entirely. This would be an unprecedented deed in the long-standing rivalry between the Kugath and the Elves; and one that might well plunge the forest into open warfare.

FOKERDO (Ul. "Black Stand")

The Kugath village of Fokerdo lies along the forested coast of the Inland Sea between the Folyavulda outpost of Tunderdu Var and Kugavod. Fishing is the traditional pastime of the Kugath, and the Men of Fokerdo are accomplished fishermen. The waters around Fokerdo, however, are easily reachable by the canoes of Kugavod, and were that the only resource in the area, Fokerdo would not have lasted as long as it has. The Kugath of Fokerdo instead make their living by foraging along paths that run through southwestern Agasha Dag, hunting deer and boar, and searching for stands of the valuable Renor tree. The Renor is prized for its use in ship-building, and teams of loggers from Tunderdu Var will pay handsomely to know the location of a

Renor stand.

Life for the Men of Fokerdo is dangerous, for the Elven population of Agasha Dag frowns on any trespass into the interior of the forest. Foragers must venture out in armed bands, taking care to include a tribal shaman in their party to ward off the tall white "specters" who lurk in the shadows of the woodland. The shamans emphasize that members of the band must take care not to stray from the rest of the party, lest they be captured and devoured by the silent forest demons. Though somewhat sensational, this warning is not far from the truth, for the Elves take seriously the implicit ban on passing too deep into the forest, and have been known to slay those who wandered too far out of ignorance, or blatant disregard for local custom. For more information on the Kugath and their customs, see the entry for KUGAVOD.

FOLA Salenin (Fo. "River of Silt")

The Great River, which western maps label as the Celduin, or River Running, is the principle avenue of trade and communication linking northern Rhûn to the lands of Rhovanion. Fed by the Long Lake, the river's waters begin their great journey in the heartland of Urban Northman culture. As it winds east across the plains of northern Rhovanion, the river runs beside many of the most important settlements in the land, linking them to the far distant city of Szrel-Kain and the Inland Sea beyond. Adding their strengths to the river's volume are several important tributaries: the Redwater, the Aizadraka, the Uldona, and the Ulumur to name but a few. Historically, the Fola Salenin's role has been somewhat of a paradox, for while it connects distant lands to the boat-faring Folyavuldok and Northmen, it has acted as a barrier to the many nomads of the region, effectively barring easy passage from south to north.

Passage over the Fola Salenin has been complicated by the river's lack of fords. Only during the cold winter months is the river's level low enough for fording, and only then at the wide shallows opposite Ilanin. During warmer times of the year, travelers wishing to cross the river must either make use of the permanent ferries at Ilanin and Szrel-Kain, or find a local with a barge or boat for hire. Given the clustering of settlements and homesteads along the banks of the river, and the popularity of fishing the Fola Salenin, this is rarely difficult for a moderately sized party of travelers willing to pay.

Between the Long Lake and Ilanin, the river has made a great cut in the land, and banks are relatively steep and lightly wooded. Below Ilanin, the forest cover increases steadily and the river grows wide and brown with silt. By the time the waters reach Szrel-Kain, the current has slowed to an almost imperceptible pace. Where the Fola Salenin empties into the Inland Sea, the water becomes brackish and supports a thriving marine ecology of fish, shellfish, and waterfowl. Locals exploit these resources, supplying both Szrel-Kain and Riavod with the bulk of their daily fare.

FOLA ULDONA (Fo. "River of She-who-plants")

The Uldona is most sacred to the people of Folyavuld. At its

highland sources, the waters of the Uldona emerge from three large springs. Legends say that the Earth-maidens, servants of the earth-goddess Aldena, planted a sacred garden around each spring, enabling the waters of the river to imbibe a magical fertility to all the lands of the realm. In the mid-Third Age, each spring is the site of a Gyogarasag citadel (Fo. "Society of Healers"), where devoted healers tend the ill, and care for the gardens that are said to control the health and agricultural bounty of Folyavuld.

Below the citadels, the three tributaries make wild and turbulent descents through the forested highlands and down to the valley floor. At the site where the last of the three tributaries joins, the river has calmed and is navigable by small watercraft. Overlooking this confluence is the Broendon refuge of Killindrow, provincial capital of the highland patriarchs. Running north from Killindrow, the Uldona winds its way through the farmlands of the valley floor and is joined by several smaller rivers. The northernmost (and most well-known) of the river's three fords is located at Uldonavan; which also marks the highest point on the river that can be reached by the larger trade barges and Havorsaga galleys of the Fola Salenin (Celduin River).

LOGATHAVULD (Fo. "Land of the Logath")

From the Redwater in the west, to the wide plains in the east, and from the barren wastes in the north to the Inland Sea in the south, the nomadic Logath tribes reign supreme. Throughout this region, young Logath males follow the tribal herds through their annual grazing patterns; spending the warm months roaming the rocky hillsides, then descending to the shelter of lowland valleys when the fierce winter winds arrive. Only a few times a year do their wanderings bring them home, to sheltered wain-camp sites where the tribal matriarchs rule. This traditional social organization has been practiced by the northern nomads since they settled these lands in the mid-Second Age. It's a rare tribal elder that can recall the old stories that demonstrate that times have not always been this peaceful. The wide lands of Logathavuld are divided into a multitude of different tribal ranges, and only someone familiar with a particular region of Logathavuld will be able to point out the subtle tribal markers to the untrained eye of the occasional traveler. Among the most influential of the tribes are the Narkad, Barak, Utal, Gord, and the most powerful Ibar. Individual clans have their own traditional campsites within the tribal range, most of which are seasonally occupied. Each year, clan matriarchs evaluate the state of their herds and select a surplus group that will be driven to the market at Sadvar, on the Ulumur. With the wealth gained through the sale of their cattle, the tribes purchase all those items that the market can provide, but the tribes themselves cannot produce.

The Seeds of Division. Recently, discord has grown between the tribe matriarchs and the religious leaders of the tribes. This tension is a result of new religious revelations that have spread across the land from Gazu Darshan-zar (Lo. "The Place of Holy Visions") in the east. These insights were given to a priestess on the mountain by a horned figure that most believe to have been Vadan, Logath god of the hunt. Vadan revealed to the gathered witnesses how the tribes might achieve their great destiny by sending

their sons to make war for the King of the North, who would reward them with great gifts of wealth. The prophecy has rung a note of truth with most of the tribes that have heard it, since serving the Witch-king of Angmar has long been a source of extra wealth for the tribes that could spare the labor of their able-bodied males.

The Ibar matriarch of Sadvar, however, has for years denounced serving the Witch-king under the advice of her Folyavulda councilors. The tribes are now torn between obeying the highest traditional authority in the land, and heeding the urgings of their priestesses and of their own greed. Already, many of the northern and easternmost tribes have disregarded Ibar's mandate and have sent their sons to serve Angmar. In the Gazar Utal (Lo. "Ranges of the Utal"), the tension may soon turn to war.

The Utal matriarch has recently arranged the marriage of her most eligible son to an Ibar daughter who has just come of age. Nisa Ibar, accompanied by her older brother, has spent the last month visiting with the Utal, getting to know the clan of which she will soon be an important member. The Utal priestess and four young warriors of the tribe have a different plan for the Ibar heiress, however. Shortly after her departure from the Utal wain-camp, Nisa and her brother were ambushed by the Utal warriors, and Nisa's brother was killed. The four hid the brother's body in an abandoned troll hole and set the their two horses free in the surrounding woods. They then stashed Nisa in the tribe's sacred cave. The cave is sealed by a giant stone, requiring at least two strong men to move, and is protected by a taboo forbidding entry into the cave on all but one day a year. Because the four believe that their actions are religiously vindicated, they believe that the taboos have been suspended for their special purpose.

Their plan is to ride for Angmar in five days, recovering Nisa from the cave on their way north. The toll that the Huz Sagath tribe charges for using the road to Angmar is not cheap, and the Sagath are always looking to buy female slaves. The Utal warriors are hoping to buy their way to Angmar with the young heiress!

NARSA-TRADOR (Ar. "Dark Road")

See entry for DRADORNY-ARNAS.

PARTA ROKANTHA (Fo. "Skeleton Coast")

This stretch of severe cliffs and jagged shoals is the most feared coastline on the Inland Sea. Beginning at the Gweléth gorge, where the plateau of the Uldona Spine's central massif rises from the surrounding highlands, the Parta Rokantha stretches over one hundred miles south. The cliffs along the coast here sometimes rise to heights of several hundred feet, forming a dramatic and dangerous wall of solid rock. The cliffs are pitted along their entire length, providing homes for an extensive colony of sea gulls, the only animals that have been able to live along the coast. The relative absence of game, along with the complete lack of shelter from pounding waves leaves little hope to one unlucky enough to be

shipwrecked here. Though the sea-floor drops off quickly, providing ample depth for ships sailing close to the cliffs, jagged crags rise up unpredictably from the bottom, sometimes ending just below the surface of the water, where they can do the most damage to an unwary ship. The steep cliffs redirect strong winds at wild angles, causing random gusts that are just as prone to push a ship to the base of the cliffs as they are to force them out to sea. Any captain who sails the Inland Sea knows to stay away from the dangerous and rocky Parta Rokantha unless his destination is Scari.

The obvious physical danger of the coast is not the only reason that Men fear the Parta Rokantha, for as the name suggests, many people believe the coast to be haunted. Myths regarding the citadel of Dradorny-Arnas, a place of dark sorcery have swirled around the region since the founding of Folyavuld. Some say that wicked magical fires reach out and engulf ships that are foolish enough to stray too close to the coast. Others tell of haunted ships with crews of ghosts that sail the Parta Rokantha at night. Whether or not these tales are true is a matter of widely varying opinion, but no one disputes that the region is as inhospitable an area as exists on the Inland Sea.

RIAVOD (Fo. "Town of Rhin")

To the sailors who make their living on the Inland Sea, the great mouth of the Fola Salenin River stands as a gateway from the domain of wind and wave, to the pleasant, fertile shelter of the Land of Rivers. Standing like a sentinel overlooking that broad passage are the watchtowers of Riavod, home port of the mighty Folyavulda navy. Though eclipsed by the maritime traditions of the Elves and the Dunedain who sail upon the great outer seas, the Folyavulda navy is the premier ship-borne fighting force on the Inland Sea, and as such, is a power to be feared and respected. For merchants, Riavod is a place to run to, offering sure protection from the pirates who prowl the sea. To the pirate, however, the watchtowers of Riavod are an ominous sight, for the penalty of piracy is death, and the Rhidon judges ruling that fair town are known for nothing, if not for their love of swift justice.

History. Only slightly younger than Killindrow, Riavod is a truly ancient settlement. In fact, the earliest stories in the town's history recall the first meeting between the Gargath and the Donath, which occurred just off shore, within site of the village that then stood on the site. Since that day, the fishing village has endured many trials, including the harsh rule of the Szreldor, and yet has survived them all. For even in those dark days, people had need of boats to fish and move about on the realm's many rivers, and the Rhidon people were unequaled in their mastery of watercraft. Though the Rhidon argued at the founding of the new realm that the capital should be at Riavod, a fierce and untimely sea-squall flooded much of the town, quelling that debate. The new town of Szrel-Kain was built within the shelter of the river valley, scarcely twenty miles north of the ancient Rhidon town, but just far enough to stand on land ruled by the Edru matriarch. Riavod's brief bid to become the premier city of the realm passed, and the people consoled themselves by rebuilding their deluged city, just as they have so

many times since.

The Inhabitants. Riavod is the very cradle of Folyavulda boat-craft, and the Rhidon people are widely believed to have the salt of the sea in their blood. The livelihood of every person in the town depends somehow on the Inland Sea and its resources. The town is filled with merchants, sailors, fishermen, marines and captains. The masts of the many fishing, trading, and military vessels make the harbor appear as a forest without leaves. The waters of the harbor are a dangerous knot of ships moving in every direction, and accidents are not uncommon. The locals are expert boat-pilots, however, and strangers are invariably to blame for mishaps. Despite the similarities between Riavod and Szrel-Kain, the two towns are actually quite different in character. Szrel-Kain enjoys the reputation as a worldly city, and foreigners are drawn to that town like moths to a candle.

Riavod, with its brooding watchtowers and tall masted vessels of war is a much more business-like place, and many of the more pragmatic merchants of the sea prefer its security to the night-life of Szrel-Kain. In many ways, the two towns reflect two sides of the Folyavulda character: the bright and assuring countenance of Szrel-Kain concealing the business acumen and depth of strength in Riavod.

Politics and Power. The ruler of Riavod, the patriarch of the Rhidon clan, is the head of a trade empire which administers the haven at Scarakikot as well as countless family-owned vessels. He is a man of immense power, who enjoys the ear of the Realm-master, and whose son commands the Folyavulda navy as the Gazda-ard Hajo (Fo. "High-lord of Ships"). When pressed, he can muster the influence to move the realm, as he showed in T.A. 1634, when he brought the Folyavulda navy into the War of Clay Jars on behalf of his cousin, Yanos Kosvar. His control of Riavod is almost complete, and only matters that span clan lines are outside his jurisdiction. He has the power to try, convict, and sentence suspected pirates, a task he enjoys immensely.

The naval garrison of Riavod is the largest and most well-trained fighting force on the Inland Sea, and the port has never come under attack. Scout ships range miles out to sea each day, scouring for pirates and scouting for vessels that might be considered dangerous to the realm. The force of marines in Riavod is one of the few standing units in Folyavuld. They are considered the most elite warriors in the realm, and many have true combat experience, having served against the Gathmarig in T.A. 1634. All manner of ships are based permanently in Riavod, including the Arka-Vadasz and Tenchar class great-ships.

SADVAR (Lo. "River-fork")

As the permanent camp of the Ibar Logath matriarch, Sadvar is the effective capital of Logathavuld. The town sits on the Ulumur, at the site where a gravel bottomed tributary adds its strength to the river. The entire western half of the town is dominated by docks and warehouses where Folyavulda

merchants store the goods they hope to sell to the constant flow of Logath customers that come to the town. The river itself is relatively shallow here, so most goods are carried by barge or skiff.

The northern and eastern ends of the settlement are given almost entirely to pens and corrals where the tribesmen store the cattle that they drive to the local market. In addition, there are slaughter-houses, leatherworking shops, blacksmiths, and wain-wrights. The lands surrounding the north end of the town are intentionally left open, so that migrant tribesmen have places to pitch wain-camps while they do business in town. The southern end of town, which sits on the tributary stream, consists of the residences and gathering halls of the head clan of the Ibar tribe. The matriarch lives in relative splendor in this quarter of the town, in a Folyavulda style state-house. The rest of the clan live in a motley collection of structures that vary widely in design, from the Folyavulda state-house, to permanent versions of the traditional Logath nomad's home. The entire Ibar quarter is dominated by a long, low earthen mound called the Gazu Yad-shatan (Lo. "Place of Fallen Spears"), a mass burial site that holds the bones of those who died at the beginning of the Third Age during the war that evicted the Szreldor from this land.

SCARAKIKOT (Fo. "Freeport")

Hidden along the rocky and dangerous Parta Rokantha (Fo. "Skeleton Coast") is a sheltered bay, widened by the outflow of a swift stream that drains the peaks of the Uldona Spine. Nestled within the protective embrace of the surrounding mountains, the port popularly known as "Scari" provides the only safe-haven to ships along the western coast between Lest and Riavod. To sailors who frequent the west coast of the sea, the cliff-top beacons at the harbor entrance seen from afar holds the promise of a night's solace from the howling wind, and a full tankard to quench the thirst. For though small, Scari's sole reason of existence is the support and re-supply of ships transiting between Folyavuld and the southern ports. As the first "colony" of the realm, Scari enjoys a freedom from trade-duties (thus the town's name), so goods consumed within the town itself are completely free of taxation. Of course, trading those goods at the larger markets of Riavod and Szrel-Kain subjects the buyer and seller to the Realm-master's taxes.

History. The harbor and the gravel-filled alcove in which the town is built was discovered in T.A. 652 by Berul Rhidon, a Donath explorer and prominent member of the Rhidon ruling family. Since the return to the realm of members of Montal Edru's ill-fated expedition, news of the distant sea-side towns of Dilgul and Mistrand had pushed the merchants of Folyavuld to find a reliable route of trade to those exotic markets. When Berul first set foot on the rock-strewn shore at Scarakikot, he knew he had discovered the key to opening those markets. After spending the better part of a month taking careful soundings of the harbor floor and mapping the alcove, he departed for Szrel-Kain to make a claim on the haven before the Realm-master and the Council of Clans. His claim was honored by the council and Scarakikot was annexed by the Rhidon family.

Over the following decades, the Rhidon family invested a great deal of wealth in constructing and supplying the town to act as a base of support for expeditions along the southern coast of the sea. Scarcely fifty years after the discovery of Scari, explorers and merchants located Dilgul and Mistrand, and opened those markets. As the trade route that connected Folyavuld with the southern ports became more established and popular, Scari was transformed into an overnight success, and the coffers of the Rhidon clan swelled to capacity. Of course, conditions in those distant markets changed through the Third Age, and the prosperity of Scari waxed and waned. The fall of Mistrand to the armies of Khand temporarily closed that city to the realm's merchants, and Scari suffered. Though the Variag occupation of Mistrand passed, the city was never again truly friendly to merchants from the Land of Rivers. Just prior to the great plague, competition between Scari and the nearby port of Lest for goods out of the east was at an all time high, and both ports became havens for privateers and pirates. With a brief interruption during the Wainrider occupation of T.A. 1856-99, the rivalry between Lest and Scari was constant throughout the remainder of the Third Age.

The Inhabitants. In the mid-Third Age, Scari is a town of men who hunt other men. For beginning in T.A. 1602, the Rhidon Ugyin (Fo. "Administrator") of the settlement has offered licenses to hunt the pirates of Lest and other southern ports. Most Kaloz-vadasz (Fo. "Pirate-hunters") are retired from the Folyavulda navy, and are well-known in the town of Scari. Many not only refit their ships here periodically, but also bring captives and booty to the town for resale. At any given time, as many as five pirate-hunter ships might be in port, filling the taverns daily with the rowdiest of patrons. Their constant presence has made the tavern and the brothel the most popular businesses on the east side of the town.

The permanent residents of Scarakikot are a diverse lot of merchants, tradesmen, and fishermen. Between the frequently violent weather, and the preferred trade of many of the town's most common visitors, there are always ships that need repair. Sail-makers, carpenters, and ship-wrights lead profitable lives piecing back together ships that are beaten daily by wind, wave and warfare. Cargo, regardless of how it is obtained, must be purchased and shipped to Szrel-Kain or Riavod for resale. The sick and the wounded must be treated, and the sailors entertained. And, of course, everyone must eat and drink. The fishing grounds around Scari are rich, and a population of fishermen living in a separate settlement called Meszepar (Fo. "Far-shore") provide Scari's daily fare. Of course fruit, vegetables, dried meats and (particularly) spirits are imported from Folyavuld itself.

Politics and Power. The responsibility of governing Scarakikot is shared between the Ugyin, representative of Rhidon clan authority, and a Kikotezo (Fo. "Master of the Harbor") who answers only to the Realm-master of Folyavuld. As a clan holding, the Ugyin has authority to rule on all matters except those transcending clan lines. All claims of clan bias are heard by the Kikotezo and evaluated for validity. Only in the extremely rare instance

has the Kikotezo found fault with an Ugyin ruling, in which case a trial before the Realm-master may be granted. It is then the responsibility of the Ugyin to pay passage for both sides to Szrel-Kain where their case may be heard.

The only other duty of the Kikotezo in Scari is to maintain a supply of goods for the refitting of ships of the realm's navy that might seek shelter at the haven. The Ugyin sees to all other administrative duties in the town. This includes maintaining a policing unit to guard prisoners and keep the peace, keeping the beacon towers in good repair, and rationing goods in times of crisis. Because Scari is so isolated from the rest of Folyavuld, rationing has been necessary several times in the town's history to suppress hoarding and price-hiking.

Despite the long standing rivalry between Scari and Lest, defense of the haven has never been an issue. The harbor mouth is too narrow, and the local piers too full of seasoned warriors for the town to be seriously threatened by an outside power. What might pose a more serious threat to the town would be a well organized blockade of the harbor, but even this strategy is unmanageable, for few captains can be convinced to linger for any significant amount of time along the shores of the Parta Rokantha. The Skeleton coast has earned its name over the years. (For a detailed layout of Scarakikot, see section 11.4).

SZREL-KAIN (Fo. "Szrel-Conquered")

Built beside the ruins of Szrel-Arkasa (Ar. "Szrel-Glorified"), former seat of the Szrel-King, the riverine city of Szrel-Kain is the cultural and commercial center of the Land of Rivers. From its location, some twenty miles north of the mouth of the Fola Salenin, the Folyavulda capital dominates the two most important trade routes in northern Rhûn: the river passage that links Rhûn to the markets of Rhovanion, and the road that connects the fields of Folyavuld with the Logath town of Sadvar. Indeed, Szrel-Kain represents both a literal and historical cross-roads to its citizenry, for one need only travel a mile down-river to see what remains of the old Szreldorn capital, the site of so much oppression in the darker days of the Second Age. With its graceful arched bridges and cosmopolitan air, Szrel-Kain stands as a reply to that older city, and a testament to the resilience of the Folyavulda character.

History. Szrel-Kain was founded in S.A. 3435, shortly after the burning of Szrel-Arkasa which ended the reign of the Szreldor in Folyavuld. When the traditional Gargath and Donath tribal authorities asserted their rights over the newly liberated lands, the local Edru matriarch realized that the destruction of Szrel-Arkasa left the Rhidon town of Riavod as the most important settlement in eastern Folyavuld. Rather than concede dominion of the area to the Rhidon tribal lord, she founded Szrel-Kain and invested a great deal of the tribe's resources in its construction. Boosted by the early boom in trade between the Folyavuldok and the Logath, early Szrel-Kain was a town of wooden buildings clustered around the Ferry District. As Sadvar to the north increased in its

importance to the Logath, so too did the fortunes of Szrel-Kain increase.

In the first decade of the Third Age, the realm came under attack by the warriors of Yorga Hos, a Szreldorn lord seeking to repossess his lands. The walled town of Ilanin was lost to Hos very early in the campaign, and the western border was open to attacks by bands of raiding Sagath. Faced with the unpleasant reality of having Uldonavan, the current capital of the realm, pillaged by bandits, the first Realm-master decided that the seat of Folyavulda authority should be moved further east. The Second Council of Clans debated for weeks on the site of the new capital, and eventually it was decided that Szrel-Kain was a more defensible site than the sea-port of Riavod. New construction projects funded by the Realm-master's coin began in the Nolk-siget District almost immediately, and Szrel-Kain stepped forward as the new center of the realm.

In the mid and late Third Age Szrel-Kain continued to grow both in size and in beauty. The dome and spires of the Realm-master's hall and the twenty-one graceful bridges that connect the city's islands are among the most splendid architecture to be found anywhere in the realm. The success that the realm's merchants achieved in foreign markets translated to the enrichment of the city. All of this development was punctuated, however, by two events of great magnitude in the mid Third Age: the Great Plague of T.A. 1635, and the Wainrider occupation. Being a great trade center, Szrel-Kain was exposed to the Plague long before much of the surrounding area. Indeed, Szrel-Kain and Riavod were the centers of the Plague's devastation in Folyavuld and much of both cities was deserted. Calamity struck again when the city fell prey to a Sagath and Logath army of occupation in T.A. 1899. Though much of the wealth of the capital was stripped during the Wainrider conflict, Szrel-Kain continued to thrive as a center of trade and culture after the expulsion of the Wainriders and well into the Fourth Age.

The Inhabitants. Szrel-Kain is as cosmopolitan a city as one might find in Middle-earth, and merchants and travelers from a myriad distant lands might be met in any one of its many taverns or markets. The permanent residents of Szrel-Kain number around 20,000, making it the largest city in Rhovanion. Though the surrounding countryside is part of the Edru matriarch's fold, the population is as ethnically diverse as the realm itself. Each of the realm's clans and every trade guild from every corner of the country is represented among the population of the city; there to lobby the Council of Clans and the Realm-master for the political and (invariably) commercial gain of their cause. The powers of the city view this as a mixed blessing, for though the game of politics never ends in Szrel-Kain, the citizenry also form a microcosm of the wider realm, and serve a litmus by which the reactions of the realm's populace to political decisions may be tested.

Besides serving as the center stage of Folyavulda politics, Szrel-Kain is also home to many of the realm's finest artisans. If something cannot be found in the marketplace, it can probably be made by the expert craftsmen of the

Market District. In addition, a thriving population of masons, sculptors and architects keep the city in constant repair, a fact that has greatly contributed to Szrel-Kain's reputation as a city of elegance. The inhabitants are very aware of the city's persona, and go to great lengths to show that Szrel-Kain is indeed the center of Folyavulda culture.

But above all, Szrel-Kain is a commercial town and the many marketplaces within the city are a source of constant activity. Merchants operating out of Sadvar bring cattle, horses and wagons to the livestock market in the northwest corner of the city. Merchants from across the sea bring to market exotic goods from the distant lands of Harad, Khand, and the Talathrant vale. Local fishermen sell the day's catch of sturgeon and shellfish harvested from the shallows of the river mouth. And, of course, vintners and farmers from across the realm bring agricultural goods to sell to merchants who can make a profit by moving them to distant markets. Some come to the city merely to make contracts for the movement of goods in another part of the realm, a practice that ensures that their will always be ships and sailors looking for work in the taverns and along the piers of Szrel-Kain.

Politics and Power. As the capital of Folyavuld, political power plays are everyday events in the Szrel-Kain. Though each Donath and Gargath clan leader has his or her own lands and people to administer, each maintains a constant presence in the capital city. Indeed, almost every family of note in the entire realm maintains a home either within the city, or in the immediate vicinity. Though the Council of Clans officially convenes only once a year, the chambers of the council are filled each day with clan factors, guild lobbyists, and agents of the Realm-master forming and dissolving political alliances to further their own goals and help shape the policies of the groups they represent. These professionals and their purses work tirelessly behind the scenes, so that the vast majority of the policies and agreements that come out of the mid-winter council meetings are actually predetermined, and many of the debates are over points already resolved, and are more for the benefit of the record than for any hope of changing the outcome of a negotiation. Corruption is a major part of the game that is Folyavulda politics, and yet the realm not only survives, but thrives.

The actual administration and defense of the city rests with various agents of the Realm-master. A Kikotezo (Fo. "Master of the Harbor") manages the administration of the merchant piers and the collection of duties. Seeing to the security and outfitting of the local ships of war is the Gazda Menedek (Fo. "Port-master"), second in command only to the Gazda-ard Hajo (Fo. "High-lord of Ships") who oversees the fleet at Riavod. The naval garrison at Szrel-Kain is as potent a force as can be found on the Inland Sea, and taken together with the fleet at Riavod is capable of projecting the will of the Realm-master onto distant shores.

Because the people of Folyavuld have so rarely needed to wage war to accomplish their goals, defense in this part of the realm is an afterthought. Szrel-Kain has no walls nor

physical obstructions to guard it save the wide river to its north and east, and the many leagues of friendly land that an enemy army must cross to approach the city. A small garrison of the Realm-master's men occupy the Torony Borton (Fo. "Prison Tower"), which looms over the city and holds convicted enemies of the state until their execution. In addition, the Council of Clans and the Realm-master's Hall have elite guardsmen that provide security to figures of importance. Because of this lack of policing power, wealthy locals typically hire personal guards to ensure their security when traveling through the wilder sections of the city. The presence of so many trained guards has been a terrific deterrent to violent crime in the city. (For a detailed layout of Szrel-Kain see section 11.5.)

TAJ-URES (Fo. "The Empty Lands")

The Taj-Ures is a huge region encompassing all the lands between the borders of Folyavuld, Mirkwood forest, and the territory of Dor Rhûnen. To those of Rhûn's inhabitants who know the Taj-Ures, it is generally considered an obstacle between the Inland Sea and the vibrant markets of the west. Its vast rolling plains, solitary stands of trees, and widely separated settlements make it a land that most Folyavulda merchants consider barren and largely without value. Likewise, the citizens of Burh Armenrik regard the wind-swept lands to their northwest with an eye of caution. History has taught both these peoples that the inhabitants of the wide plains, whether of Sagath, Asdriag, or even Northman descent, might just as easily be friend or enemy, depending on a delicate balance of power that few outsiders understand. The horrible effects of the Plague have lent an air of desperation to an already unsteady region, making travel across any part of the Taj Ures a dangerous business.

In the north, most of the travel across the Taj-Ures has traditionally been in the form of trade caravans and groups of river-craft carrying goods between the trade centers of Folyavuld and the Northman settlements around the Long Lake and the East Bight. In T.A. 1640, however, Londaroth is a deserted ruin and Esgaroth is only just recovering from nearly sharing the same fate. What few Northmen remain in what once constituted the commercial heart of Vidugavia's realm must now focus on rebuilding their homes. Even if there was a demand for Folyavulda trade goods, the merchants of Dorwinion no longer possess the means to deliver their wares to market. The few river vessels still capable of making the voyage are more commonly loaded with the bodies of Plague victims to be taken to mass burial sites outside Szrel-Kain and Riavod, as people work to reclaim what were once elegant cities from the stinking nightmare of the past several years.

Communication in the northern Taj-Ures has also been severed by the Sagath occupation of Ilanin, a major trade center in western Folyavuld that commands the confluence of the Donu and Fola Salenin rivers. The Tros Sagath warlord who now rules the town commands a hefty toll from anyone attempting to pass the outpost, stifling all early attempts at reopening the once profitable trade channels between Dorwinion and the Northmen. Just forty miles northwest of Ilanin is the largest settlement of the powerful Algifriyonds

tribe of the Ehwathrumi Northmen, Burh Mahrlinge. The Algifriyonds are sworn enemies of the Sagath, and though both peoples have been decimated by the Plague, the feud between them has recently rekindled and much of the land between the Donu and Aizadraka rivers is very dangerous for travelers.

The open lands southwest of the Dobok Bron (the highlands defining Folyavuld's western border) have been the domain of wandering bands of men since the War of the Last Alliance. Though the development of Dor Rhûnen and the construction of the trade roads connecting Rhûn with Gondor forced the nomads of the region to the corners of this land, the Plague has once again made it the domain of wandering folk. For though Vidugavia and his successors were able to hold the diverse Northman cultures of Rhovanion together for many years, the death of commerce along the trade roads meant the end of caravan guarding as a profitable enterprise. Left to exist off the land, the tribes of the southern Taj-Ures have returned to the pastoral ways of old. The memory of Vidugavia's domain is no longer enough to hold the loyalties of the tattered remains of the Ehwathrumi tribes. The Northmen again feud amongst themselves over territorial rights. Some have even made alliances with nomad Easterlings to oppose their kin. In fact, politics on the plains of southern Rhovanion in T.A. 1640 more resembles the chaos prior to T.A. 1248 than it does anytime since.

Of old, the strength of Dor Rhûnen acted as a counterweight to the forces that threatened to plunge the Taj-Ures back into the turmoil of the pre-Vidugavia period. Since the Kin-strife, however, the power of Gondor has been on the wane. The most recent devastation that the Plague wreaked on the South Kingdom has left the governor of Dor Rhûnen impotent to hold together the alliances that made the trade roads secure (see also the entry for Dor Rhûnen). As the strength of Dor Rhûnen retreats behind the walls of its far flung citadels, the Taj-Ures has again become a barrier between the peoples of Rhûn and the civilizing influence of Gondor that has for so many years kept the shadow at bay. Now the kingdoms of the Inland Sea will be forced to stand alone against the shadow, or else fall under the influence of the Black Land.

TUNDERA VAR (Fo. "Fairy-wood Keep")

This Folyavulda outpost overlooks the mouth of the Agach and the western eaves of the Tunderdu (Fo. "Fairy-wood"), which western maps label as Agasha Dag. Tundera Var is unique among Folyavulda forts in that it is fully 60 miles beyond the borders of the Realm proper, on land otherwise claimed by the Ibar Logath tribe. The choice location between forest, river, and sea prompted the Realm-Master in T.A. 552 to purchase the rights to build on the site from the Ibar matriarch of Sadvar. Since then, the outpost has paid for itself many times over; for Tundera Var is the center of the Folyavulda logging and ship-building industries that support the maritime centers of Riavod and Szrel-Kain.

From the keep, bands of loggers venture up-river by canoe or along the westernmost forest trails by foot, searching for stands of the Renor tree, whose black wood is prized for its durability. Logs are then floated down river or dragged by teams of oxen to the outpost where they are purchased by

local ship-wrights. Ships of war and trade are then constructed on the sandy banks of the river, in the shadow of the fort. On larger construction projects, a temporary wall of timber is sometimes raised to encompass the site, affording additional protection to the Realm-Master's investment.

The settlement itself consists of an earthen moat surrounded by a tall wooden palisade and surmounted by a two-story square stone keep. Within the keep, a Ugyin (Fo. "Administrator") rules the settlement and enforces the law of Szrel-Kain. At the foot of the moat and within the palisade are more than thirty wooden buildings, which house the civilian and military population of the settlement. Among the town's denizens can be found a wide variety of craftsmen, outfitters for the logging troupes that sometimes come through, and merchants who deal with the canoe-borne traders of Fokerdo, a nearby Kugath village. At any given time, the garrison of the outpost consists of twenty-five professional soldiers, but can swell to above fifty if circumstances warrant the conscription of the locals.

ULDONAVAN (Fo. "Uldona's Town")

Taking its name from both the Uldona, which runs beside the town, and also the modern pronunciation of the goddess Aldena, Uldonavan is in many ways the center of the realm. Though it is located on the western edge of Folyavuld, Uldonavan was the first capital of Folyavuld, and remains the second largest town. It stands astride the last ford of the Uldona before its confluence with the Fola Salenin (the Celduin River), and marks the farthest upriver that a large river barge or Havorsaga galley can reach without seriously risking becoming grounded. Running south from Uldonavan are roads which connect it with Killindrow, and also continue through the highlands and into Dor Rhûnen. Uldonavan is a major trade hub, with goods constantly moving from river-galley to wagon and vice-versa. Nearly every trade-item moving between Folyavuld and the markets of central and southern Rhovanion passes through this town.

Uldona's Town was also the center of the rebellion that liberated Folyavuld from the Szreldor, and thus occupies a special place in the history of the realm. Droza Kadar, leader of the rebellion and first Realm-master, came from this region. In fact, the Kadar matriarch has ruled the Kadar-Gargath clan from Uldonavan since the mid-Second Age. Unlike Killindrow, however, geography offers little protection from invasion, and it was for this reason that Droza had the capital removed to Szrel-Kain. Indeed, Uldonavan has come under direct attack by Sagath and Szreldorn war-parties often in its history, and entire sections of the town have burned. Since the recent loss of Ilanin, Uldonavan is once again perched on the western border of the realm, and the Horsemen of Uldonavan come into frequent conflict with the scouts of Tros Hesnef.

Despite the danger, Uldonavan remains a thriving town and marketplace. People travel many miles to visit its market, to purchase goods from Gondor before they move onto the sea-side markets of Szrel-Kain and Riavod. Like Killindrow, caravan guards crowd the taverns, providing a Northman minority. Oarsmen, sailors, merchants and minstrels are also common, lending Uldonavan a cosmopolitan air exceeded in

the realm only by that of Szrel-Kain.

VOL KUG (Ul. "River of Mists")

The Kug (S. "The great-sparkling-river-of-many-voices.") begins its journey to the Inland Sea among the arid plateaus on the northeastern fringe of Rhûn. After its tumultuous descent out of these highlands, the river snakes across the basin floor some 40 miles through Logath lands before entering the Agasha Dag at its north-easternmost tip. Within the forest, the Kug makes a deep cutting and is strengthened by many tributaries. Here the river's steep banks are overgrown with brambles and thickets of thorny bushes, making crossing the river a major hardship for all potential travelers save the Elves of the forest. The Elves use the wide river as a great avenue through the forest, and have dug out many cleverly concealed tunnels that cut right through the steep river banks and avoid the thickets by going under them.

As the river nears the end of its journey across the floor of the high forest and enters the swampy coastal zone it passes over an ancient shelf of slate. Here the way is narrowed into a series of cataracts, swift flowing gorges, deep-carved pools and tumbling cascades. This region is almost impossible to traverse by boat as at times the river plunges below ground or is thrust almost vertical through narrow up-swells. It is at the base of the most treacherous and westerly gorge that the Kug swells deep and dark through a narrow defile, gurgling as it is forced past jutting outcrops before plunging over a precipice and through a window of rock, spewing forth in a white torrent.

This strange yet natural feature has the resemblance of a stone mouth held wide open with the river pouring out into a wider basin below, a feature that has earned it the name Thunderjaw by the Kugath. Little do they know that deep within the dark waters behind the mouth lies hidden an elemental spirit of water, present from the earliest days of the earth; a formidable opponent should the mortals wish to travel further. The Elves know of this spirit, and name the great waterfall ----- (S. "Old-spirit-with-the-beard-of-thunder"). The Kugath will not venture beyond the Thunderjaw, even in numbers, for fear of the tall "demons" (the Elves) who haunt the wilds of the high forest.

Below the cataracts, the river runs a mile through the swampy coastal forest before emerging into the clearing made by the Kugath in which is built the walled town of Kugavod. Both the swamp, the river's mouth, and the shallow Kug Bay are often enshrouded by heavy banks of fog giving the river, the bay, and the people their names.

? (S. "The glade-of-death's-sorrow.")

The Elves have a number of favored glades, well known for their peaceful or emotive atmosphere. Many Elves journey to these sites, whether for quiet contemplation or to mourn the passing of dear friends or relatives. One such glade of mourning, called ----- (S. "The glade-of-death's-sorrow"), is the site of a sad tale, known by only one but guessed at by many. The trees separate here, and a forest stream gurgles across this open lawn of grass. Small yellow flowers bloom all year round and dragonflies come to dance upon the water.

This place might seem bright if it were not for an ancient willow tree bent far over the riverbank casting a forlorn and mournful shadow, and sighing when a breeze blows through its yellowing leaves. The tree casts an emotional discord that lends the glade its sorrowful air, and only a few ancient score marks upon the trunk of the tree serve as clues to the ancient tragedy that is the source of so much grief.

The tree is in fact the once graceful Willowshanks, an Entwife who fled the vales of the Anduin early in the Second Age in search of new lands to render into beautiful gardens. After dwelling for a time in the Land of Rivers, she passed east along the north coast of Inland Sea. She was resting by the Fola Salenin when a group of Szreldorn warriors appeared dragging behind them an unfortunate Gargath man, whom they had captured and were abusing for sport.

These warriors proceeded to torture the man by crucifying him to the willow tree with hard iron nails. The Entwife could do nothing to intervene, fearing the fire that they carried and so could only stand mute as they tormented the prisoner until his spirit fled from the torn remains of his body. Willowshanks was horrified by the cruelty she had witnessed and vowed to have nothing more to do with any race of man. She buried the body by the river, where a mound of flowers still lies, but was unable to remove the iron nails from her side.

Thus she moved on, until reaching the Agasha Dag, passed beneath its eaves and no more was seen in animation by any race of Men or Elves. The scars left by the rusting nails are still present on her sinuous trunk, and the memory of that day is still burnt into her dreams.

? (S. "The great-realm-of-tall-standing silver-spires")

The presence of the Silvan Avari beneath the ancient canopy of the Agasha Dag has leant the high forest with a secret and fairy nature. Many are the magical glades and enchanted pools and streams that wend their bubbling way towards the distant sea. A secretive folk, the Silvan elves prefer contemplation in the quietudes of the deep forest over mingling with the mannish inhabitants of the coastal fringe and surrounding plains. With no fixed abodes apart from ----- (S. "City-of-slender-spires-reaching-to-the-light-of-the-bright-stars"), an ancient city at the foot of the hills in the Northeast corner of the forest, the Elves live a semi-nomadic lifestyle, free to wander their cool forest realm.

History. The Elves of Agasha Dag have a semi-ordered culture that dates far back into their early history. Folwe was the first leader of the Uialrim. He ruled the kindred in the days when they followed the Vala Orome out of the east reaches of the continent. Enamored by the reflecting light of the stars, in the calm waters of the unmarred sea and the fresh wonders of the primeval forest, Folwe's people faltered by the way and lost contact with their brethren on the march. They chose to dwell by the shores of the expanse of water naming it Uial, the Twilit sea and took the name Uialrim for themselves to proclaim their great love for the land.

Folwe's people formed four sub-kindreds or families that

quickly grew apart from one another as they wandered in ever increasing circles into the deepest reaches of the great forest. Folwe reigned loosely as King of the Uilarim for many centuries before being overborne by a strong wish to be joined with his brother-kindred once again. The Elves reckon on a date approximately 70 years after the first sunrise when Folwe took a few belongings and, passing down through the valley of the Vol Kug, reached the Uial Sea. There he took boat with his close companion Melanfin and sailed out of the history of the Silvan Elves. It was many years before Melanfin was seen again beneath the eaves of the forest, and although questioned, he never spoke again of the lost King.

For many hundreds of years after the first passage of the Second-born into Rhûn, the great brooding forest of Rhûn was given a wide berth by mortal travelers. The forest's dark impenetrable barrier stood as a menace, promising a terrible and unnatural death to anyone foolish enough to venture into that eerie twilight world of strange echoing cries and nightmare beasts. The superstitious minds of Man populated the woodland realm with all manner of ghosts and fey creatures such that even the stoutest warriors would balk at the thought of venturing under its eaves for firewood or herbs. Stories of tall pallid specters regarding Man from the forest's edge were abundant. Over a thousand years would pass before the direst of emergencies would force Man to settle in close proximity to the forest realm, along the narrow strip of swampy land between the high forest and the coast of the Inland Sea. The necessities of a frontier life dictated the development of foresting skills which ultimately placed the Kugath settlers in direct confrontation with the Silvan Elves of the high forest, who have long regarded all of the forest as being part of the wild realm they protect.

The Inhabitants. Due to their rural and ancient nature, the Elves of Agasha Dag appear clad much like the forest around them. They live in sparsely furnished dwellings inhabited on a seasonal basis in the lower branches of the older trees. All dwellings are commonly owned but families tend to return season after season to roughly the same area to renew the roofs and interiors of an abode they know well. With only two or three rooms at most, these dwellings are little more than a sturdy wood platform with partitions and perhaps a side wall to block the strong draughts of the winter months. The Silvan elves have little in the way of personal belongings and believe strongly in sharing with their brethren, so it is no surprise that they leave very few belongings when moving on. Family and community are held dear, and Elves will often share their dwelling with extended relatives or those who have lost their own to the changing environment.

The idea of a free and simple lifestyle is echoed in the Silvan elves choice of clothing. More resistant than mortals to extremes of weather, the Silvan elves employ simple and light clothing; tunics, soft leggings and boots or sandals in forest hues made from plant-wool, deerskin or plant fibers. They also employ woven hooded cloaks of dark hue when traveling. Favored colors of the Silvan Elves include browns, yellows and ochre-reds, dark or

pale greens, like freshly opened leaves. Beiges and greys are also employed, as are stronger colors which are worn during the flowering season to celebrate the varied splendors of the Olvar that surround them. For many centuries the Elves of Agasha Dag have copied the visual forms they observe in the natural forest and have taken those designs to develop themselves. Some of this artistic skill has been employed to enhance their clothes with abstract designs of leaf and petal, both embroidered, dyed and applied. These designs when viewed closely lose their overall aspect and meaning, appearing striped or mottled with confusing lines and patterns. When viewed from further away, however, the true skill of mimicking the light and dark of sunlit dappled leaves becomes apparent. It is no wonder therefore that these items prove invaluable aids in camouflaging and blending the wearer into the surrounding foliage and proving the Silvan Elves to be true masters of their realm.

Both the men and the women have long hair, groomed and shining with natural oils with both brown and blond coloration, tied back from their faces with braids, knots or circlets of wood-fiber or leather. The Silvan women often decorate their hair by tying or braiding brightly colored feathers or unusual or perfumed leaves and flowers. Men average 6'1" in height and women 5'8," with both genders slender of build, men around 140 pounds and women, 120 pounds. Eyes are usually blue or bluish green and generally pale; complexions are always fair.

Politics and Power. Since the time of King Folwe's departure, the Agasha Dag has been loosely ruled by the leaders of the four families, each relatively free to make its own laws and wander where it would. It was in the year S.A. 140 that the only attempt at unification was made between the families; the Elven lords coming together to discuss the harmonizing of the many sundered groups. The result was the construction of a sprawling palace from the pure white quartz of the northeastern hills of the high forest. This magnificent structure was built to the recommended specifications of their Maia guardian, Quelberas, and has acted as the social focus for the Uialrim ever since. Each Lord received a section or 'quarter' of the central palace. In addition, each constructed a separate summer abode located farther out into the forest. The edges of the new city rapidly expanded as other minor lords took up the idea and built their own homes in the same style. The result is a truly beautiful harmony between the inanimate stone of the buildings, and the animate Olvar that are scattered throughout.

Indeed, the architecture is designed to mimic the living shapes found in abundance in the forest; the greatest achievement being the spear-like milk-white towers that were built in the image of the great cedars that surround the city. The Lords spend part of the year in celebrations and consultation with the Elders, who dwell permanently in -----, but still journey at a leisurely pace for most of the year through their forest territories, hearing the pleas and desires of their people and protecting the Agasha Dag from the encroaching cultures of the plains.

Warcraft. The folk of the Agasha Dag are strong fighters but share a mutual fear of outsiders. Quick to ambush and stealthily attack, they do not have the gear nor training to accomplish much beyond the defense of their forest realm. The Silvan folk would have to retreat from a direct and sustained conflict with an organized military. It is lucky, therefore, that no concerted effort has ever been launched to conquer the forest in all the millennia of Middle-earth history.

In combat, the Silvan Elves use the weapons of the hunt to good effect. They wear leather or woven bark hides as basic armor, though the elite might also wear leg and arm greaves in personal melee. The preferred weapons are shortbows, spears and fine daggers, which are sometimes made from stone when metal is unavailable. Almost all adult Elves have fighting skills and can be called upon to defend their homes. Companies are ordered into loosely formed ----- (S. "glades") of up to 30 warriors, although the usual number for any normal skirmish is approximately 15-20. An elite body of 200 'march-wardens' organizes itself into smaller teams of four hunters and trackers who constantly patrol the perimeter of the forest.

If their forest home did come under a concerted attack from without, a summons could quickly be spread to all the sundered family groups using the many intermingled waterways of the river's upper reaches, as well as the many branched walkways built high in the forest canopy. The Elves possess extraordinary skill at boating and boat-wrighting, which makes possible their rapid movement along the forest's watercourses. The Silvan Elves employ carved wood canoes, waterproofed by the natural resin of the tree fused by long immersion in the hot ash of special fires. New canoes are made seasonally, but some well crafted examples have lasted for many years. The Elves use them for transport as well as for hunting and fishing in the many parallel channels of the river. They do not usually fish in the faster flowing main channel of the Vol Kug. The Elves also employ wooden rafts when immediate transport across the great river is necessary and no canoes are to be had. Navigating the river is achieved by using strong woven ropes of wood fiber that are suspended from the largest trees on either side of the channel.

ILANIN (Lo. "War Trophy")

The town of Ilanin rests upon perhaps the most fought over area of land in all of Rhûn and Rhovanion. Throughout the history of the region, Ilanin has been destroyed and rebuilt many times. In the Second Age, the lands around the confluence of the Donu and Fola Salenin constituted a great Szreldorn estate ruled by the Hos house. When Folyavuld rebelled against the Szreldor, the town was taken and briefly became the seat of power of the Londu matriarch. Shortly after the War of the Last Alliance, the Hos warlord returned with a host of disaffected Sagath warriors and retook his lands. Since then, Folyavuld and the descendants of the Hos house have fought bitterly over the land, prompting the Easterlings who took part in many of these battles to name the site Il-anina, "War Trophy." Whichever side controlled

the town has invariably retained that name, as a way of mocking the defeat of its rival.

Ilanin, as the name has now become, is presently controlled by a new lord, the Sagath warlord Tros Hesnef. The Tros house is a long-time rival of the Hos house (which is now called Huz), who has taken advantage of the latter's deal to guard Angmar's trade route in the north, and has moved into lands formerly controlled by Hos. The Huz warlord has bitterly protested this move to the lord of Carn Dum, but has had no success in having his rival evicted. Angmar has actually made a deal with the Tros house, granting them the right to occupy Ilanin and charge a toll for passage over the river from Easterling warriors migrating to Angmar. Between the contiguous lands of the Tros and Huz houses, a safe route now exists from Rhûn to Angmar, and migration into the west has reached new heights. Ilanin is a crucial link in this route.

The town itself has taken many forms over the years. Presently, it is not walled, but consists of a small collection of stone houses surrounded by an ever-shifting sea of nomad tents and corrals. The permanent structures of the town stand in the shadows of the Crim (Lo. "The Rock"), an ancient stone fortress that has served many of the lords of Ilanin, and has been taken by force many times. Each time the walls are repaired, turrets are rebuilt, a new gate is made, and the fortress again becomes the center of the town. The warriors of Tros Hesnef man the walls and scout the countryside, levying their toll on all who would pass through the lands of their lord.

Angmar's migration route is presently threatened from all sides. The Huz house is powerful, and has many warriors to spare. The Huz warlord now plots to evict Tros, returning that house to its former place as a tribute tribe under the Huz banner. The Algifryond Ehwathrumi tribe of Burh Mahrlinge would also like to see the Tros warlord destroyed, thereby reopening the great river to trade with Folyavuld. And of course, the Realm-master would jump at the opportunity to retake the town. These factors conspire against the present lord of Ilanin, threatening to once again turn the town and its fortress into the trophy of another war.

KELEPAR (Fo. "East Shore")

Kelepar, which has also been known as Elgaer, is a deserted and haunted ruin, an artifact from an age when Folyavuld enjoyed considerably more influence on the Inland Sea. Before Minalcar and Vidugavia's great campaign into the east, the lands surrounding Kelepar belonged to the Urgath tribes. In T.A. 1248, the armies of the west drove the Urgath far into the trackless Empty Plains before stopping their advance on the eaves of the Agasha Dag. There the supply depot of Elgaer (S. "Sea-jewel") was constructed, so that Folyavulda ships could bring badly-needed supplies to the men of the west. The deeds of Minalcar's armies sowed the seeds of discord among the Easterlings, predisposing them to the influence of Sauron in later years.

Elgaer survived as a trade outpost until T.A. 1331, when a host of nomads under the direction of Nemol the Dispossessed destroyed it. Elgaer lay in ruins for two hundred years, before merchants from Folyavuld returned to

the area. The second outpost was built on the ruins of the first, and was renamed Kelepar. The merchants of Kelepar accepted the great risks of re-establishing the Folyavulda presence on the eastern shore for one purpose, to find their own trade routes into the east and cut Mistrand out of the exchange. It took many years of paying large tributes to the local Urgath matriarchs, before any goodwill between the merchants and the locals was engendered. Eventually, however, many local tribes made alliances with the merchants of Kelepar, against the religious authority of Mistrand. A new route was developed, connecting Kelepar with the far-distant land of Relermindu.

Bypassing Mistrand caused the War of Clay Jars in T.A. 1633, which was fought both on land and sea by Folyavuld and the Gathmarig of Mistrand. The naval battles were won decisively by Folyavuld, and the navy of Mistrand was forced to protect its own harbor from attack. The war on land, however, quickly turned to favor Mistrand and its allied nomad tribes. In T.A. 1635, the outpost was deserted when the Great Plague descended on the land, putting an end to the fighting. The next year, a band of Brygath warriors put the mostly wooden outpost to the torch, again reducing the Folyavulda outpost to rubble.

Few structures now stand in Kelepar. The Urgath locals consider the place cursed, for every tribe associated with the outpost's defense has since been enslaved by the religious leaders in Mistrand, their lands given away to tribes who fought for the glory of Kerkassk. Though there is undoubtedly some material wealth to be found amid the ruins of the once-wealthy outpost, very few are brave enough to venture into the heart of the ruin, for it is believed that the spirits of those killed by the Great Plague still haunt the site. Only the spies of Kerkassk have spent any significant time searching through the rubble, seeking the missing Scepter of Mistrand.

KILLINDROW (Fo. "High hold")

The highland settlement at Killindrow dates to the earliest habitation of Man in the Land of Rivers. The Donath tribes who first entered the land adopted the complex of caves in the hills surrounding the town as a holy place, and interred their dead in its deepest chambers. The Broendon patriarchs have ruled the collective Donath tribes for thousands of years, and throughout that time, Killindrow has remained the center of their authority. During the long Szreldorn occupation of the lowlands, the town functioned as the capital of the highland resistance, and was raided by Szreldorn war-parties several times. The people always returned, however, and eventually the Szreldor were overthrown. Killindrow now serves as the provincial capital of the highlands, and the seat of the Broendon representatives to the Council of Clans in Szrel-Kain.

Excepting the great antiquity of many of the town's structures, Killindrow is much like any other town in Folyavuld. Artisans and merchants crowd the marketplace, laborers work at the river-docks, and every tavern is filled in the evening. The town has no protective wall, nor are their towers or forts to safeguard it from attackers. The fact is, every would-be assailant that has ever made an attempt to

penetrate the borders of Folyavuld has either avoided the highland region because of its inaccessibility, or has seen their offensive die attempting to cross through the western highlands (known as the Dobok Broen). The Highland Rangers maintain a constant vigil on the realm's western borders, and town levies are well-trained in the hit-and-run tactics that have turned away so many enemies.

Another factor which serves to safeguard Killindrow from assault is the presence of so many sell-swords in town. The main road through Killindrow is one of the only roads connecting Folyavuld with Dor Rhûnen, and caravans stop in the town constantly. Swords for hire are always present in the local taverns, looking for a caravan in need of guards. Many of these are Northmen, and that culture makes up the only significant minority in town. Nearly every other person within the town is of Donath descent, with familial ties to one of the many estates that dot the Uldona river valley.

The main industry of Killindrow is wine production, and it is from this town that most of the coveted Broendon Red comes. Wagons and barges come into town laden with grapes from the surrounding estates. Though some of the estates have their own facilities for making and storing wine, much of it is made in the vintners up and down-river from Killindrow. The wine is then aged in specially sealed and guarded vaults within the sacred caves above town. The sanctity of these caves speaks to the role of wine, and wine-making in the highland town. Entering the highland caves without license is punishable by death.

KUGAVOD (Ul. "Place of Mists")

Since the year 562 of the Third Age, when the first Folyavulda ship of exploration parted the mists of Kug Bay and spied the mouth of the river that bears the same name, the town of Kugavod has been a major partner in the trade network that spans the Inland Sea. Merchantmen bearing casks of wine and beer, sealed barrels of grain, olives, and other fruits and caches of iron tools and weapons drop their anchors offshore and await the inevitable approach of the Kugath trade canoes. The canoes are laden with expensive pelts, fine items of carved wood and bone, and pouches of dried and fresh forest herbs that healers back in Folyavuld will make into powerful medicines. Ropes are lowered and the Kugath traders are invited aboard. Drink is shared and the negotiations last until dusk. By nightfall, the trade canoes are headed back for the protection of Kugavod's tall palisade, heavy with goods from the barter. At dawn the captain of the merchantman will hoist his sails and make for home at Dilgul or Szrel-Kain, hopeful that his passage is not marked by pirates. Thus does Kugavod participate in the endless exchange of goods between lands separated by the many leagues of the Inland Sea.

History. Despite the semi-permanent appearance of the predominantly wooden town, Kugavod is a truly ancient habitation site. Men first cut back the forest and raised homes at the river's mouth after the War of the North in S.A. 1695. The founding peoples represented a mix of Rhovanian Northman and Gargath cultures, who became allies many years before the war, and raised fishing villages from the mouth of the Fola Salenin to the western

edge of Agasha Dag. The Baradhrim persecuted the peoples of the region mercilessly, and the inhabitants of the northern shore were forced to flee by canoe into the eastern waters of the sea. The mouth of the Kug was a natural choice for establishing a town, straddling as it does the boundary between estuarine and marine ecologies.

Between the resources of the bay, the river, and the surrounding forest, the refugees of Kugavod were able to survive into the Third Age, when they were reunited with the other peoples of the Inland Sea. The wooden lodges of Kugavod are of varying age. Each must be torn down and rebuilt every generation or so, for the coastal forest is periodically lashed by rainstorms, and the structures have a tendency to grow dilapidated. The town has been partially or wholly destroyed several times throughout its history by fire and violent sea storms. The Kugath, however, are a resilient people, and have rebuilt their village each time such devastation occurs. Despite the fact that the town has never been attacked, each new town has been surrounded by the wall of stout timber for which the settlement is best known. The elders of the town say that it is because the wall stands, that the demons of the forest have never attacked the village.

The Inhabitants. The Kugath represent an odd blend of non-traditional Easterling and old Northman culture. They are a matriarchal people, the original leader of the refugees having been a Gargath matriarch, rather than the Northman patriarchs who chose to stay and face the Baradhrim (and who were slaughtered). The vast majority of the townsfolk make their living by fishing, and in this craft at least, both women and men participate. The outrigger canoes used to fish the bay are pulled onto sandy beaches south of the town and left in the shelter of the treeline overnight. Fishermen clean their quarry on the beach, then carry the meat into town on poles. What is not eaten immediately is salted and dried in a great communal smokehouse on the outskirts of town.

In addition to the fishermen, master wood-workers and boatwrights practice their trades in Kugavod. Foraging and hunting in the forest is perhaps the most dangerous occupation in Kugavod, for the forest "demons" (actually the Uialrim Elven population) have been known to seize villagers without provocation. Men have disappeared without a trace, after having just strayed out of view from the rest of their foraging groups. The shamans of the tribes often accompany the parties, for they are believed to have special powers that protect them from the demons. The shamans have filled the forest around Kugavod with taboo markers, and villagers are expressly forbidden to pass the markers without the sanction of the shamans. A protected individual is given a feather amulet that is supposed to ward off the demons. This situation works well for the Elves, who are content to let the Kugath roam the forest within their taboo markers unmolested. When individuals who are supposed to be protected wander too far into the forest, the Elves will remove the talisman after capturing its bearer, and place it on the border of the taboo area. This inevitably leads the shamans to the assumption that the person dropped the

talisman, and ventured beyond the taboo markers without its protection.

Politics and Power. Authority within the Kugath tribe rests with the elder female of the ruling family. The matriarch's word is law, and her judgment is the final word in Kugath justice. Punishment for those who are judged guilty of breaking Kugath law is generally lenient, though members of the tribe have been put to death for serious crimes such as murder. A death sentence usually involves ostracism, and the individual is released in the forest, outside the village taboo markers. The Elves are not happy about being made the unwitting executioners of Kugath law, but the punishment is rare enough that they have never been so angered as to take action.

LEST (Do. "River-mouth")

On the Inland Sea, legitimacy is a matter of perspective, and nowhere is this more evident than in the port town of Lest. To the merchant families of Folyavuld, Lest is a haven for pirates, criminals, and cut-throats who deserve the gibbet. To the citizens of Lest, however, the captains of the ships that harbor there are heroes, brave renegades who defy the imperial policies of Folyavuld, reclaiming trade that rightfully belongs to the people of the southern coast. At the same time, the privateers who operate from nearby Scarakikot and call themselves "pirate-hunters" are regarded locally as the worst kind of vermin: bounty-hunters with no sense of honor. To the sailors of Lest - merchants, privateers, and pirates alike - this is the great dichotomy that dominates their life, for to reach one's port promises a wealthy return and a hero's welcome, but to be caught by the ships of Folyavuld is to meet one's fate at the end of a noose.

History. The mouth of the Warwater has sheltered a Donath fishing village for as long as Man has settled in Rhûn. The spring spawning run of the great sturgeon has long been recognized by Man as a valuable resource, justifying by itself the placement of a village at the river's mouth. In T.A. 572 a merchant from Burh Armenrik named Freolof made contact with the Donath at the mouth of the river and an alliance of trade and mutual protection was made. Through long years of partnership, the Northman presence in the emerging town of Lest grew until in T.A. 865 a new town charter was written. In it, the traditional Donath authority retained three seats on a newly created council of five. The remaining two were powerful local merchants appointed by the Master at Burh Armenrik. Though the town would remain ostensibly independent of the Ibotithiuda capital, economic and cultural ties bound them very closely together. As animosity between the Ibotithiuda and Folyavuld grew, so too did the people of Lest learn to view the sailors of Folyavuld as enemies rather than rivals.

In the early T.A. 1600s, the first privateers were given licenses by the council at Lest. These were issued in response to the Folyavulda development of Kelepar, which was biting into the trade between Dilgul and Lest of smuggled goods out of Mistrand. Suddenly, the merchants of Burh Armenrik were being undercut in the Dor Rhûnen ceramic and spice markets. The profits from

these commodities drove the markets of Lest and Burh Armenrik, and privateering was seen as the last best chance for the Ibotithiuda merchants to save their businesses. Since then, the most powerful pirates have taken an increasingly active role in Lest.

The Inhabitants. The majority of Lest's inhabitants are of Donath descent. They make their living in the traditional way: fishing, making and selling boats, and transporting goods from place to place on the sea. The town is supported by a countryside along the opposite bank of the Warwater that is covered by farms. The Donath region of Dacranamel (Do. "Greenlands") is one of the only truly fertile areas of Gathod, and the local farmers bring wagon-loads of grain and produce to the city each morning. Other frequent visitors to the town include Bergothiuda hunters, who roam the pleasantly wooded southern ranges of the Uldona Spine. The furs, leather and meat that they bring to the town markets help to feed and clothe the town's people. In exchange, the Bergothiuda buy tools and weapons of superior Ibotithiuda iron.

Politics and Power. The greatest tie between the markets of Burh Armenrik and Lest is the absence of a duty between the two towns. This encourages wealthy merchants to run operations in both places, so that shipments off-loaded in Lest can be taken by barge or wagon to Burh Armenrik, then caravaned to Thorondir without ever actually changing hands. This allows the merchants to maximize profits, and thus compete with Folyavulda merchants who enjoy so many other advantages. This has also tended to blur the line between privateer/pirate and fully legitimate merchant, as men who have made their fortunes preying on Folyavulda shipping are now buying into the caravaning business in Burh Armenrik, rather than selling their goods on the piers of Lest. Guild policy is increasingly being decided at informal pirate meetings on the waterfront. It is only a matter of time before some influential pirate makes the transition from pirate-society leader to representative on the town council.

11 SITES OF INTEREST

11.1 NURUNKIZDIN

Under the high central peaks of the Pinnon Rhun is the Dwarven kingdom of Nurunkizdin. The Dwarven kingdom was founded at the beginning of the Second Age upon the ruins of an older Dwarven mansion which was ruined during the cataclysm resulting from the War of Wrath. Nurunkizdin is small as Dwarven mansions go, but makes up in aesthetic beauty what it lacks in size. One arm of the much-diminished folk of Thelor now dwell under the mount they name Hathur na-bunderok (Kh. "Cloudy Head") and the mountains that surround it. The Dwarves share their kingdom with a strong band of goblins who call themselves the Uruk Marzguram (Or. "Orcs of the Crushed Skull"). The goblins hold the northern third of the kingdom and war constantly with Thralin's folk for domination of the highlands.

The entrances to the kingdom take the form of graceful towers which the Dwarves call Bundusulzinbar (Kh. "Cloudy horns"). The two southernmost towers are controlled by the Dwarves and lead by ramp and spiral staircase to the magnificent halls of Thralin's folk below. The most impressive of these is the Kabrisulzinbar (Kh. "Lake horn"), which sits on a rocky island in the highland lake south of the Hathur na-bunderok. A graceful bridge spans the icy lake waters connecting the Kabrisulzinbur with the single road which connects Nurunkizdin with the outside world. Keeping the road open and free of goblin intrusion is a constant chore for the Dwarves.

The kingdom itself is a marvel of Dwarven craftsmanship. Every hall and avenue is sculpted in scenes that take advantage of the natural striations in the surrounding earth to lend color and texture to the work. Chambers are often multi-storied with balconies at various heights that are accessed by hidden stairways behind doorways crafted to fit in with the theme of the chamber. These balconies can also serve as perches for archers to help defend the halls of the kingdom in case of attack.

Gaurblog Lug

The northernmost of the Bundusulzinbar is controlled by the goblins and bears the name Gaurblog Lug (Or. "Blood-red Tower"). The goblins have marred the beauty of the northern portion of the kingdom by carving their own crude caverns to fit their large population. The goblin realm is a horrible perversion of the Dwarven appreciation for art and natural beauty. The works of Dwarven artisans have been obscenely altered to reflect the violent and evil tendencies of the goblin character. Statues are beheaded and stained with blood, and carvings of bird and beast grotesquely altered. The orcs have their own talents at stone-working, and many of these visages are truly frightening to one not of their kind.

Like other orc warrens in Middle earth, the halls under Gaurblog Lug are the realm of chaos. Violence is brutal and random among the goblins, and power rests in the hands of those capable of the worst brutality and most sinister plots. The only thing that keeps the goblins from periodically destroying themselves is the influence of Oraishapek the Dispossessed, who often times stays in Gaurblog Lug and guides the actions of the orcs directly.

THE SURFACE

1. Kabrisulzinbur. This tower serves as the main entrance in Nurunkizdin. The tower stands on a rocky island in the midst of a lake of icy blue water. The lake is fed by mountain streams running down off the central massif of the Pinnon Rhun and its waters are freezing cold. A single bridge spans the distance between the island and the lake shore, making the tower itself very defensible. The goblins have not had the audacity to try an assault on the tower, for it is well guarded by the Dwarves. The tower rises just over a hundred feet high, and gives a good view of the road as it comes over the shoulder of the Hathur na-bunderok. The road leads to a magnificent gate which is carved to resemble a great horned Dwarven helm.

2. The Southern Bundusulzinbur. This tower gives access to the southernmost of the Dwarven population centers. It stands high on the shoulder of a mountain the Dwarves call Shazril (Kh. "The Anvil") for it has a flattened profile. Like the others of its kind, this tower leads via spiral staircases and ramps to the Dwarven kingdom. There is no road leading to the tower, and its sally ports are very well concealed so that it appears that there is no entrance into the tower.

3. Gaurblog Lug. This is the northernmost of the three Bundusulzinbar which gives entrance to the halls of the Uruk Marzguram. The once-concealed port into the tower has been replaced by the orcs with a proper gatehouse which is well-fortified if crudely built. The tower has a dilapidated appearance from the outside, and the main floor is soiled as one might expect of an Orc warren. The upper levels, however, are staffed by mannish servants of Oraishapek, and are kept very clean. The Dispossessed maintains rooms in the top level of the tower for his stays among the goblins. The rooms of the Dispossessed are opulent, being filled with all manner of artifacts from Oraishapek's history. He is resident in the tower roughly one-third of the time.

4. Kablik-Madur. This is the ruined entrance to the ancient Dwarven halls of Kablik-Madur which Runin's folk carved in the First Age. The ancient Dwarven kingdom was destroyed by earthquakes at the end of the First Age and have laid unoccupied since those days. The entrance is concealed under many tons of mudslide and has not been discovered by Orcs or Dwarves. What treasures may lie amidst the ruin of so ancient a Dwarven mansion the world may never know.

5. Trade-Road Overlook. A cleverly concealed balcony overlooks the trade road as it climbs the slopes of Hathur na-bunderok. Two Dwarven scouts typically stand guard here to give the kingdom warning of those who approach by the road. See #7 below.

6. Hathur na-bunderok. The Dwarves do not name this great peak the "Cloudy Head" simply because its peak is often obscured by clouds. The mountain is actually a dormant volcano and has been known to vent gasses from time to time. Smoke from the Dwarven forges below is routed to the crater of the volcano, so that it sometimes appears from the outside to be active.

NURUNKIZDIN

1. The Sun Chambers. These chambers have great staircases and ramps that lead up to the Bundusulzinbar. They are massive, multi-storied chambers with great windows in their roof that allow long streaks of sunlight into the chambers. The Sun Chambers have many balconies along their walls which again could serve as perches for archers to rain down projectiles on an enemy attempting to descend the stair and enter the kingdom by this route. The Sun Chambers often serve as meeting places or places of recreation for the Dwarves of Nurunkizdin.

2. Population Centers. These three complexes contain the residences of the Dwarves. The Northernmost houses the clans of folk most closely related to the King, while the other two are for the main population of the kingdom. Many of

these halls have lain unoccupied since the tragedy of T.A. 1423 and are only just being reoccupied as the Dwarven population recovers.

3. Forge Halls. Each of these halls serves as a collection point for a complex of mining passages. Each also has halls branching from the chamber which lead to the forges of the kingdom. These halls were once the great focus of existence for the Dwarves of Nurunkizdin, but have diminished in importance since the last outbreak of the Bilak-Khald disease. Mining and forging are still important activities in the kingdom, however, and these halls are normally busy.

4. The Flowing Stair. Water from the lake above has carved these chambers on its way down through the strata of the central highlands. The Dwarves have carved stairs, bridges and patios around the channel of water as it flows through the chambers making this a place of great beauty and relaxation. The colored light of fluorescent gems shimmers across the water, and the play of light and sound in these chambers can be mesmerizing. The Dwarves have gone to great lengths to shape each waterfall, stair, and statue. The last chamber is a great underground lake that is fed by a waterfall of many hundreds of feet. A long staircase leads to a rock shelf at the bottom of the fall. At the far west side of the chamber the water flows out of the chamber via an underwater passage and continues its way down. Though many have tried to find out, none know where the last passage leads. Careless youths have sometimes been lost in this chamber, for the water is cold and flows swiftly.

5. The Hall of the King. The King of Nurunkizdin presides over formal meetings and celebrations in this great chamber. The Hall is many stories high and supported by great columns carved in the likeness of past kings in the line of Thelor. The chamber is separated from the rest of the kingdom by a chasm which is crossed by several narrow bridges.

6. The Great Cone. This hall is the most magnificent site in the Dwarven Kingdom. It is the now extinct volcanic cone of Hathur na-bunderok. Long stairways wind through the rock along the outside of this chamber which lead to the entrances of the family palaces of the folk of Nurunkizdin. Each family complex has balconies which look out into the cone itself. The lights of the houses mingle in the center with the pale green light of a huge Bilak-Khald stone (the non-lethal variety) which is suspended in the center of the cone by three great chains attached high on the walls. The entire central cone is bathed in the pale green light of the stone. It is from the few visitors to the kingdom who have seen the Great Cone that Nurunkizdin has received the name Dol Calemir (Sn. "Hill of the Green Stone") by which it is sometimes known.

The families of Nurunkizdin use the chambers along the Great Cone for several purposes. Each contains the family shrine to Aule, as well as the burial crypts of the clan. In addition, many have great rooms that are used for celebrations and sometimes as residences.

7. The Trade Road Overlook. A long, winding passage leads to the overlook which allows the Dwarves to

know ahead of time of visitors approaching by the road. Two sentries stand watch over the road here. See #5 above.

8. The Mines of the Bilak-Khald. These are the mines that have caused so much sorrow in the history of Nurunkizdin. The mines are tainted by the foul Bilak-Khald (see section 9.0 for a discussion of the Bilak-Khald). They have been closed since the tragedy of T.A. 1423, and are forbidden by the King to be reopened.

9. Guard Chambers. Each of these chambers serves the dual functions of providing a place to rest for those travelling the sloped avenues which connect the corners of the kingdom, and also providing a watch over these remote passages. These chambers are designed to be used to stop an enemy from passing from one set of avenues to another. They are constructed much like the gatehouse to a castle, with chambers above the passageways from which defenders can pour boiling oil upon an attacker. There are several porticuli in each room which can be lowered to trap attackers in an area so that they can be killed with oil or projectiles. The guards that man these chambers are well trained and kept on constant alert for mischief from the Orcs.

10. Assault passages. These are tunnels that the Orcs have dug in previous attempts to seize portions of the kingdom from the Dwarves. In each case, the Dwarves stopped the attack and sealed off the passages that had been breached.

11. Oraishapek's assault passage. This assault passage has been prepared for the assault on the Dwarven Kingdom which Oraishapek has recently ordered. His plan is to reopen the passages of the Bilak-Khald and steal some of the foul stones. See section 12.0 for details.

12. Gaurblog Lug. This chamber was once one of the magnificent Sun Chambers, but has been defiled by the goblins of Gaurblog Lug. The chamber is now used by Oraishapek to minister to his goblin underlings. The Dispossessed presides over his foul brood from one of the majestic balconies once used for more pleasant purposes. Stairways along the walls lead up to the tower.

13. Orc Warrens. The Orcs have taken these former residences of the Dwarves and turned them into places only Goblins would live. The residences are now dank, overcrowded holes of filth.

14. Hall of Gabmog. This large, crudely shaped hall is the throne room of Gabmog the Dimwitted, master of the Orcs of Gaurblog Lug. From here, Gabmog administers poorly over the Orcs, preferring to increase his own wealth at the expense of those who might usurp his throne. Gabmog cowers to Oraishapek when the Dispossessed is present. Still, Oraishapek only rarely descends lower than the Sun Chamber. The lower halls are entirely under the thumb of Gabmog.

15. Orc Exits. These tunnels have been excavated by the Orcs to allow exits from their area other than the main gate at Gaurblog Lug.

16. Orc Warrens. These tunnels were excavated by the Orcs to provide more room for their blooming population,

and to move the population closer to a vein of iron that was discovered. The warrens are organized around a large common room. Tunnels to individual warrens branch off the central cavern. The two southernmost large caverns are used for string iron ore and smithing weapons. The weapons smithed here provide weaponry for the entire population of Gaurblog Lug.

17. Kablik Madur. These ancient caverns are part of the old kingdom of Runin's folk. See #4 above.

18. Exploratory Caverns. This cavern has been excavated by the Orcs to explore the northern reaches of the central highlands. Though they have no way of knowing it, they are close to opening an entry onto the caverns of Kablik Madur.

11.2 SCARAKIKOT

Hidden among the rocky islands of the Parta Rokantha, in the shadows of the mountains of the Uldona Spine which rise directly out of the Sea, is the haven of Scarakikot. The town is built within a natural alcove carved into the shoulders of the coastal mountains by the swift flowing Fehiz-kimos (Fo. "White-water wash"), a crystal clear and shockingly cold stream which empties into the Sea. The majority of Scari's structures lie either adjacent to the stream, or along the harbor edge where the slope of the ground is least steep. The rest of the alcove rises sharply to meet the surrounding cliff walls, so that the Rhidon manor, which lies almost at the foot of the cliffs, looks down on the rest of the haven. Only the beacon towers, which are built high upon the cliff-tops overhead have a better view of the enclosure.

Entering the Harbor

Berul Rhidon, founder of the settlement at Scari often wondered at his luck in striking the channel on his first approach to the alcove. It is very easy to wander out of the safety of the channel and feel the loving caresses of the jagged shoals that line the shallows. The channel itself is actually very deep, but also very narrow, and all but the most experienced locals will hire one of the harbor guides who linger at the mouth of the haven to pilot their ship to the town's piers. For those who no how to use them, the haven's four beacon towers mark the channel plainly. One simply stays directly between the tower at Gull Island and the westernmost of the two clifftop towers on the east side of the haven. A single turn is required when the ship comes directly between the easternmost clifftop tower, and the single tower on the west side of the haven. The most skilled of boat pilots can accomplish this task even in poor lighting, provided the beacons have been lit.

LAYOUT

1. Rhidon House. This is the largest and most impressive structure in town. The Rhidon lord administers the harbor from his residence, hearing disputes and granting audiences in the large first floor hall. Fully half of the guards in town are permanently housed here.

2. Hangman's Square. This small plaza takes its name from

the most common punishment dealt to pirates unlucky enough to be brought before the master of Scari. Though occasionally a pirate can be bought out of this fate, the vast majority lose their lives at the gallows which stand in the center of the square.

3. The Jail. Staffed permanently by five men-at-arms, suspected pirates are held here until an audience is granted before the Rhidon master. Once sentenced, punishment is handed down swiftly.

4. Harbor Master's Hall. Second largest structure in town, the Harbor-master oversees the interest of the Realm-master and his navy from this building. The adjacent warehouses hold supplies for the realm's ships, which regularly frequent the port.

5. The Sated Serpent. By far the rowdiest tavern in town, the Serpent is perpetually filled with sailors, soldiers, captains, and performers. All manner of business takes place in the private rooms that are offered, including the meetings of an informal council of pirate-hunters.

6. The Gull's Nook. Many of the people that come to Scari would sooner skip the dangerous water-front scene for which the town is best known. For them, a restful night may be found at the Gull's Nook, a quiet yet expensive inn.

7. The Residence of Djerul the Seer. Yanos Kosvar's eyes and ears in the haven. See section 13.1.1 for more details.

8. Fehiz-kimos.

9. The Beacon Towers. Tower **a** (the Gull Island Tower) and **c** form one sight line; **b** and **d** another. The cliff-top towers are accessed by stairs which ascend the cliffs at two spots.

10. Meszepar. This community located on the far side of the harbor houses the fishing community of Scari. The beach here is sandy, and the shallow draft fishing boats are pulled right onto shore. Meszepar is nearly a town unto itself, and its residents cross the harbor only to sell the day's catch and purchase goods at the market of Scari.

11.3 SZREL-KAIN

A morning's sail north of the fog enshrouded mouth of the Fola Salenin will bring one to Szrel-Kain, capital of Folyavuld. For many visitors, that first glimpse of the city leaves the most lasting impression; morning sunlight reflected off the dome of the Realm-master's Hall, and the many boats of the city filling canals spanned by arched bridges. The islands themselves appear as works of sculpture, with street cobbles, building walls, lantern posts and bridges all carved from the same stone. This is, of course, an illusion; but it speaks to the pride that residents take in the appearance of their capital.

When the sun sets, the streets of the Nolk-siget (Fo. "Eight Islands") District are lit by a hundred lanterns, and the wine flows in every inn and tavern. Most travelers in northern Rhûn and Rhovanion will agree that few places can match the atmosphere of Szrel-Kain, and most will look hard for a reason to return.

Travel in the City

Because most structures on the riverside or in the Nolk-siget District have direct access to the town's many waterways, horses and other livestock are forbidden in this part of the city. Venders arrange to have their goods delivered by boat from warehouses in Market Town to the cargo docks nearest the buyer's home or place of business. In the few cases where these docks aren't actually on the buyer's premises, hand-drawn carts are used to transport the goods to their final destination. This custom has greatly contributed to Szrel-Kain's reputation for being a clean city by limiting the amount of waste in the streets.

Wealthy residents and visitors who do not know their way will typically pay a Evezamber (Fo. "Boat-Man") to ferry them around town by Csonak (Fo. "Long Boat"), a small narrow boat that can either be rowed or poled along the city's canals. This is more convenient for all concerned, since the canals of the city are wide, while the streets are very narrow. Travelers who arrive by land but who are staying in the riverside districts will find many stablehouses with ample room for storing their animals.

The Ferry District

Established at the beginning of the Third Age, the Ferry District is the oldest section of Szrel-Kain. The Edru road is the only cobbled road in the area, and when a large herd is brought across the river, the footing on some few choice streets is tenuous at best. On the western outskirts of the Ferry District is the livestock market, which brings travelers from the surrounding countryside into the city twice a month. Much of the land surrounding the west side of the city is given to corrals and pastures for holding animals until they are sold.

The Nolk-siget District

The Eight Islands District is the area of Szrel-Kain for which the city is best known. These islands are home to all the city's wealthiest residents, and some of the homes found on them are truly palatial. Most buildings in this district are at least two stories and are made almost entirely of stone. The streets are cobbled, with stone gutters to route runoff water to the canals and stone lantern posts to support oil lanterns that the Realm-master's men keep lit each evening. Like all Folyavuldok, the people of the Nolk-siget District are fond of good food and wine, and many evenings are spent searching for the perfect goblet. It is often said in other parts of the city, that in the morning, the people of Nolk-siget have more than river fog obscuring their vision.

The Fishing District

Fishing is one of the oldest trades among the people of Folyavuld and the residents of Szrel-Kain's Fishing District are some of the best in the land. Every morning a veritable fleet of fishing vessels leaves the docks in this southernmost of quarters, each headed for its own special spot. The Folyavuldok have been fishing the river mouth for hundreds of years, and are experts at the harvesting of its resources. By early afternoon many of the fishermen have already returned,

and are displaying their quarry along the Fisher's Docks. Indeed, most meals in Szrel-Kain come from the river, either in the form of fish, or the mussel and clam soups for which the Folyavuldok are renowned.

Market Town

Market Town is by far the largest of the city's districts. It is a diverse section of town, containing the bulk of the city's tradesmen and the largest open-air market in the realm. One could pass an entire afternoon wandering from stall to stall in the Great Market, and still not see all there is for sale. In fact much of what is sold in the Great Market is actually kept in the many warehouses along the waterfront, and can be delivered to the buyer's residence or place of business for a small fee. Frequent patrols of the Prison Tower's garrison oversee the market and keep peace.

Another business that thrives in Market Town is ship hiring. Ship captains and sailors alike pass their time in taverns near the waterfront, hoping to score a contract to move cargo in another part of the realm. Taverns and inns such as the Smiling Carp and the Aft-deck are well known for their sea-going patrons, and people from all corners of the realm come seeking anything from passage across the sea to the transportation of wine up the Fola Salenin.

LAYOUT

1. Ream-Master's Hall & the Chambers of the Council. These halls are the focus of the political activity of the realm. The council chambers are open to anyone with enough money or influence to buy their way in. Though the semi-circular chamber seats nearly fifty, crowds often swell to standing room only. Seven permanent seats on a raised platform along the back chamber wall are reserved for the tribal authorities when they choose to attend. The Realm-master's Hall is the personal residence of the Realm-master when he resides in Szrel-Kain. The hall includes an audience chamber where he may preside over the trials of those accused of crimes against the realm. The hall has wide lawns on all sides and sculpted gardens on its west. The large pier east of the hall is restricted to the use of the Realm-master's men.

2. The Fola Salenin Ferry. The ferry is actually a collection of river barges that are kept at the large docks here for the purpose of transporting travelers and livestock from Szrel-Kain to the landing on the opposite bank. The road leading from the opposite landing runs beside the Ulumur all the way to the Logath capital of Sadvar. The fare is 1 copper piece for a traveler and his steed, though he may be forced to wait until a barge is at least half filled before it will leave.

3. Livestock Market. Here some of the region's finest cattle, oxen, and horses may be had for the right price. All livestock comes from the Logath ranges to the north.

4. Prison Tower. The garrison here is the sole policing force in the city. Fifty of the Realm-master's finest patrol the city and watch over any enemies of the realm who might be held in the prison.

5. Harbor-master's Tower. From the top floor of this

three story stone tower, the Harbor-master surveys the riverside. All matters concerning the piers and trade tariff collection are directed here.

6. The Great Market. The marketplace here is one of the largest and most diverse east of Gondor. If it is not at the Great Market, there is someone there who knows where to get it.

7. Naval Haven. The haven includes the largest piers in town, barracks for sailors and marines whose ships are in port, and a two story tower that holds the administrative offices of the Gazda Menedek.

8. The Edru Estate. This stately manor was built in the thirteenth century of the Third Age by Gondorian architects. Its size and splendor is unrivaled outside Gondor itself as a personal residence.

9. The Plaza of Kadar. This twenty-five foot statue depicts Droza Kadar, first Realm-master of Folyavuld leading an attack on the city of Szrel-Arkasa. His attire and weaponry are symbolic; for he wears the field garb of a Gargath slave, carries the traditional oval war shield of the Donath, and wields a spear which is actually the broken shaft of a Szreldorn lance.

10. Hall of Words. An open air theater.

11. The Silver Sturgeon. A wine house known for its ridiculous prices and the back-room deals that drive the politics of the Council chambers.

12. The Fisher's Docks. All manner of fish and shellfish from the river and estuary may be purchased fresh.

13. Wine-merchant's Guild.

14. Hall of Mertol Kosov. Though not the only gyogul (Fo. "Healer") in the city, Mertol is the most experienced. He is universally preferred by the

wealthier locals, and thus his asking price is high.

15. The Aft-deck. A tavern and inn frequented by local ship captains looking for work.

16. The Smiling Carp. Possibly the rowdiest tavern in the city, this place is always full of sailors for hire.

17. The Weary Wanderer. An inn catering to travelers along the Great Way. Prices are modest and quality is surprisingly high.

18. River-View Inn. This inn is most popular among merchants staying in the city temporarily. Being in the Eight Islands District, the tap-room stays open extraordinarily late, and many visitors frequently miss morning business.

19. Residence of Grigor Dolon. A prominent noble and member of the Wine-merchant's guild, Grigor is also the leader of the Vizater-dyzo (Fo. "The cult of Glorious Return") in Szrel-Kain. Like most noble houses in Eight Islands, the Dolon estate is magnificent.

20. The Great Way. The most important road in Folyavuld, the Great Way connects Szrel-Kain with Riavod, then continues south through the Donath highlands and into the wide plains of eastern Rhovanion. To the north, the Great

Way runs parallel to the river through Sagath-controlled Ilanin and to the very gate of Burh Mahrlinge.

21. The Edru Road. This road leads into the Edru countryside, and is the route by which most Edru families bring their surplus to market. The road intersects the Great Way at the Plaza of Kadar, then continues north through forested parks before rejoining the city in the Ferry District.

12 THE PERFECT SEED

For several hundred years now, Oraishapek the Dispossessed has worked to diminish the power and influence that Folyavuld enjoys over the peoples of Rhûn. In recent years he began the subversion of Folyavuld's Logath allies, and worked with his southern cohort Nemol to bring down Folyavuld's bustling trade empire. Encouraged by his successes on these fronts, the Dispossessed is now planning a direct strike at the welfare of the Land of Rivers.

Hidden in the rugged highlands of Folyavuld's back country, three sacred citadels stand watch over the health and bounty of the Land of Rivers. These are the sanctuaries of the Gyogarasag (Fo. "Society of Healing"), worshippers of Aldena-Earth mother, and caretakers of the legacy of the Entwives (for more information, see the Gazetteer entry for FOLA ULDONA). For hundreds of years, children's tales have credited these sanctuaries with providing fertility to the fields of the realm, but few recognize the truth of these ancient stories. The walls of each sanctuary enclose an ancient garden sowed by the Entwives. The magical fertility of the soil they worked infuses the pure waters of the sanctuary springs, disseminating the power through all the lands bordering the Uldona.

Only in the last century, Oraishapek began recruiting disaffected people in the urban centers of the realm to his dark cause. These unfortunate souls invariably feel betrayed or forgotten by the wider realm, something that is all too frequent in the lowland cities. Rather than relegate themselves to the menial tasks available to them, they have turned to the shadow for salvation. Calling themselves the Viszater-dyzo (Fo. "Cult of the Glorious Return"), they work in the shadows of the cities, collecting information for their master and plotting their ascension to power. It is through these ears that Oraishapek has learned of the legendary power of the healing citadels. He has schemed for years to develop a devious plot aimed at defiling the waters of the sacred springs, and now moves to enact his evil plan.

The Dispossessed's plan hinges on a myth he has heard regarding the Dwarven Kingdom of Uldona Spine, Nurunkizdin. The tale says that once the Dwarves were a greater people, who delved deep into the heart of the mountains to unlock the secrets of the earth. What they found there, was a source of great power that poisoned the very air of the kingdom and forced the Dwarves to shut their mines. Even now, this power is still said to dwell below the Dwarven kingdom, the perfect foul seed for a Dispossessed to plant among the gardens of Folyavuld.

12.1 Episode 1: The South Road

The Highlands of Folyavuld is a region of vineyards and palatial estates, where a single manor may administer the land for several miles surrounding. One such estate is Toltalvos Manor, located in the western foothills of the Uldona Spine. The Lord of Toltalvos Manor presides over a huge estate stretching for miles to the north of the house over vineyards, orchards, and wide fields of grain and cotton. Like many of the highland families, the Toltalvos house suffered under the caresses of the Plague, and both the family patriarch and his eldest son succumbed to the vile disease. The only remaining heir, Evin Toltalvos, is a capable but young aristocrat.

Between administering the large estate, caring for his ill mother, and representing the family name at the social functions of Killindrow, Evin has had very little time for a personal life. Recently, however, a young woman of the neighboring Alila estate has caught his eye. Eager to impress, and wealthy beyond his years, Evin has decided to travel to the distant kingdom of Nurunkizdin to have that kingdom's master craftsmen fashion for him a necklace of unsurpassed beauty. Unfortunately, he could not have picked a worse time to associate himself with the Dwarven kingdom.

With the recent changes in Rhovanion wrought by the Plague, security on the south road is not what it once was, and not even the young Lord Toltalvos is naive enough to ride to Nurunkizdin unaccompanied. Notices have been posted in the taverns and inns of Killindrow that the Lord of Toltalvos Manor is in need of armed escorts. The dearth of caravans headed south, accompanied by the hefty sum of 70 silver coins per head for escorts should be enough to entice even the proudest party of adventurers into the service of the young noble.

12.1.1 The NPCs

The Stonebrow Brothers

These five Dwarves from the Iron Hills Kingdom of Azanulinbar-dum have fallen prey to the greed that has sometimes led their kin to evil. Bitter that his family name should remain among the ranks of noble, but not royal names in Azan, the eldest brother has been tempted by the whispered lies of Oraishapek and has led his four brothers to a shameful end. For their part in the Dispossessed's foul plan, the brothers have been promised Thelor's Ring of Power, which is said to lie somewhere in the sunken Underdeep passages below the Uldona Spine. In exchange, the brothers have agreed to spy for the Dispossessed, seeking the exact nature and location of the ancient curse of Nurunkizdin, the foul Bilak-khald (see section 10.1 for more details). They believe that the Dispossessed intends to delve under the Dwarven kingdom with his Orc horde to unearth the stones, and also recover the Ring of Power which is to be their reward. They have traveled to Nurunkizdin as a trading expedition from Azan, and are held as honored guests by the Dwarves of Uldona Spine.

Evin Toltalvos

The young lord is amiable and outgoing for an aristocrat, and will engage the adventurers as a compatriot. As is the tradition in the highlands, young lord Toltalvos is no weak-wristed sycophant to the Broendon patriarch, but a capable swordsman with a strong personality and some experience leading men. He will at once provide an extra sword in combat, and also compete with the adventurer's normal ways of dealing with threats by assuming the role of commander when conflict arises. In any event, Evin Toltalvos is in high spirits, for he believes that he will surely seal the affections of the young Alila woman with the fine necklace he brings home. He carries with him a small chest containing 350 gold coins, and has every intention of dividing the remainder among his escorts upon returning to Folyavuld.

Oraishapek's Mannish Spies

These Men are thoroughly evil and devoted to the service of the Dispossessed. They have learned to work with their lord's Orcs, and know how to effectively command these foul henchmen. They have arranged to meet with the Stonebrow brothers outside a supposedly secret exit from Nurunkizdin to receive the information gathered by the Dwarven spies. Here they are to reveal to the Dwarves the actual plan of Oraishapek, which is to reopen the passages between the Orc and Dwarven kingdoms and launch a diversionary attack against the Dwarves so that the Dispossessed may recover the stones. They are prepared to kill the Dwarves if they react poorly to this change of plan, but are hopeful that they will conform.

12.1.2 The Setting

The road between Killindrow and Nurunkizdin is little more than a winding cart track through the barren foothills of the Uldona Spine. Little if any traffic will be encountered as the party wanders through the guarded passes of the Dobok Broen. Once in Rhovanion, the party's passage may be marked by Sagath or Asdriag raiders, in which case trouble is sure to follow. This is the very reason that Toltalvos has hired the party, and they should be prepared to deal with such an encounter. As they come nearer the Dwarven Kingdom, the chance of a meeting with the Bergothiuda, Northman tribes who frequent the hilly regions of the Uldona Spine will increase. Such an encounter is likely to be uneventful, though help from the Bergothiuda may serve to rescue the party from an overwhelming bandit attack.

12.1.3 Encounters

Meeting Lord Toltalvos

The journey from Killindrow to the Toltalvos estate should be an easy one, as the Folyavulda countryside is a relatively guarded area. The party should be awed by the size and splendor of the highland manor. Though Toltalvos is eager to begin his journey, the party will still have to demonstrate that they are a group worthy of the lord's trust. He is, after all, carrying a great sum with him to the Dwarven Kingdom, and

will be at their mercy once beyond the borders of Folyavuld. Still, it should be made clear to the party that anyone betraying this young noble will live their lives as hunted men.

Interrupting the Rendezvous

The meeting between the Dwarves and the servants of Oraishapek is to take place just off the track, as dusk settles into early evening. The youngest Stonebrow brother, Orin, has drugged the Dwarven sentries that normally overlook the exit and the road beyond with fangorth mist, a liquid that if inhaled induces a deep sleep followed by mild amnesia. The scout will overlook the meeting from the sentry perch above the door, and may well be the one who spots the approach of the party. Glavin, his eldest brother will meet with Oraishapek's messengers outside the exit, revealing to them the location of the stones, and hearing the actual plan of the Dispossessed. Though displeased that he will now be party to a Orc attack against his Dwarven brethren, he will realize that he is now too far entangled in the plan to back out, and will agree to meet with the Dispossessed during the attack, and lead the way to the appropriate sealed mine passages.

A party approaching along the road with stealth should be allowed to get close enough to observe the end of the meeting, though probably not close enough to hear what is being said. Once the party is aware of the strange meeting, either Orc scouts, or possibly Orin Stonebrow should spot the party and raise the alarm which ends the meeting. A well placed and unobtrusive scout moving ahead of the rest of the party might observe the retreat of Oraishapek's messengers, and even Glavin's entry into the Dwarven passage and the closing of the secret door. In any event, a short and fierce Orc attack should serve to cover the retreat of the conspirators, and hinder any pursuit. The Dwarven door cannot be opened from the outside, and is virtually undetectable when closed.

12.1.4 Outcomes

The GM has significant freedom in this adventure to scale the combats to fit the level of the adventurers. The escorting Orc group might range anywhere from five to twenty-five, and may also be more or less willing to engage in a prolonged fight. Depending on the success of the adventurers in moving with stealth, the party may approach Nurunkizdin with varying amounts of knowledge. If they were clumsy, they might only have been exposed to the Orc attack, and know nothing of the meeting. In the other extreme, the party may have witnessed both the meeting and the flight of the Dwarves, making their outrageous claims more credible when they reach the Dwarven stronghold.

12.2 Episode 2: A Violent Diversion

Upon reaching the gates of Nurunkizdin, the party will undoubtedly have a story to share with their Dwarven hosts. The Dwarves of the Uldona Spine are a friendly lot, and will be more than happy to begin immediate work on the noble's bauble. They are dubious, however, at the notion that any Dwarf would associate themselves with Orcs, particularly the reviled uruk-marzguram. They consider their guests from the

Iron Hills to be beyond reproach, and it will not even occur to them that they might be involved in such an unholy union. They will prefer to believe that the party made a mistaken identification in poor light.

Two days pass with the party treated as honored guests in the halls of the Dwarves. Guests are few and far between in Nurunkizdin, and the Dwarves there are particularly hospitable to guests. Perhaps the closing of their mines so long ago, and the forced renouncing of much of the wealth and potential of their mansion in the Uldona Spine evoked this altered attitude toward outsiders. In any event, while the adventurers are not given complete freedom to go where they choose, they will after a few days, begin to question the old tales that describe Dwarves as secretive, introverted folk. The attitude of the Dwarves will change dramatically after Oraishapek sets his servants in motion.

12.2.1 The NPCs

The King of Nurunkizdin

The Dwarven King is a young, and somewhat outrageous character as Dwarves go. Unlike his sometimes-grim kin, Thulor II is extraordinarily fond of laughter and joking. Nevertheless, he will take the party's story seriously, and will remain open to their desires to further investigate, should they pursue that avenue. Though some of the elder Dwarves in the mansion shake their heads at the King's love of antics, they are all unquestionably loyal, and will without reservation die to save their King when the Dispossessed's attack commences. Should serious evidence be found to implicate the Dwarves of Azan before the attack is unleashed, the King will act decisively. Regardless, the attack will proceed two days after the arrival of the adventurers.

The Stonebrow Brothers

After their meeting with Oraishapek's messengers, the Stonebrows will keep a low profile in the mansion. If they hear of the party's story, they may well act against the adventurers, particularly if the party decides to investigate and seem to be getting close to exposing the Dwarves. In the unlikely event that they are exposed as traitors, they will attempt to reach the mines and holdout until the attack begins.

Once Oraishapek's attack is launched, the Stonebrows will seek to avoid contact. They are not proud of the role they have played in the shedding of Dwarven blood, and will certainly not raise arms against their brethren. Instead they will identify themselves to the attacking Orcs and seek out Oraishapek. They will then accompany the Dispossessed into the under-passages in search of Thelor's Ring. They will not find the Ring, and will die of exposure to the Bilak-khald, their bodies sealed up when the passages are again closed.

Oraishapek the Dispossessed

The Dispossessed is a powerful sorcerer, and will begin the attack on Nurunkizdin by igniting magical charges to open

the passages between the Dwarven and Orc kingdoms. Once inside Nurunkizdin, he will seek out the Stonebrows and follow them into the mines, which he will also open with charges. He, of course, has no intention of honoring his agreement with the Dwarves of Azan, and once three of the Bilak-khald are in his possession, he will exit the Underdeeps, sealing the passage behind him. Once safely among his Orcs, Oraishapek will order a retreat from Nurunkizdin, content to let the Dwarves reseal the connecting passageways.

Oraishapek understands the danger behind the stones, and has crafted a special case that restricts the heinous effects of the Bilak-khald to a ten-foot radius. So although his servants will not suffer from the blight that once smote the Dwarves of the Uldona Spine, his host bodies will be exposed to the danger, and he will be forced to jump bodies almost daily. For this reason, after the stones have been removed, Oraishapek will be slowed in his ability to transport them, as he will have to continually acclimate himself to new hosts as the adventures progress (see section 9.7 and 10.1 for more information on Oraishapek and his Ring of Binding).

12.2.2 The Setting

This entire adventure will take place in the Halls of Nurunkizdin and potentially in the Underdeep passages below. Please refer to the gazetteer entries for NURUNKIZDIN and THE UNDERDEEPS, as well as section 12.7 for more details.

12.2.3 Encounters

Investigating the Dwarves

For a group of adventurers who didn't see much in Episode 1, any investigation of the Stonebrow brothers will be necessarily short and inconclusive. A party with a moderate amount of knowledge may drop enough hints to merit a search of the secret exit. The guards who were drugged will remember nothing, and will be less than forthcoming about the fact that they fell asleep at their post. Fangorth leaves no evidence either on its victims, or in the area it was used. A casual search outside will reveal no obvious signs of battle, because the Orcs have since returned to the area to remove bodies and conceal evidence. A careful search will reveal blood-stained rocks that have been purposely turned over and removed from the immediate area of the fight. This, in itself, should be enough to alert the Dwarves that something other than a routine Orc raid occurred.

Aside from a visual identification of Orin or Glavin, the party has virtually no way of identifying the Dwarves. If a visual identification is possible, proof of the Stonebrows' guilt may be found in traces of Fangorth among Orin's belongings. Shadowing the Dwarves will lead the adventurers to a position from which they might witness Oraishapek's subsequent burglary of the stones. This will be a serious aid to the adventurers at the end of the campaign, when they must attempt to piece things together to find out what was really going on. The party has virtually no chance of stopping Oraishapek from leaving Nurunkizdin with the Bilak-khald.

The Attack

The detonation of the charges that open the passages of Nurunkizdin to the Orcs will shake the underground kingdom. After the initial penetration of Oraishapek's servants, the situation in the Dwarven Kingdom will be utter chaos, and it is unlikely that the characters will be able to make any further discoveries in whatever investigation they might be making. The Orcs will pour into the kingdom, being very precise about which passages must be seized in order to allow Oraishapek to proceed to the sealed Underdeep passages that contain the Bilak-khald. Characters will undoubtedly play a role in the combat, and could possibly find their way into the mines to witness the Dispossessed's actions (though they will certainly not recognize him as anything more than an ordinary, if important, Man). The GM might lure the adventurers to this route by timing an assassination attempt by the Stonebrows on the characters to the precise moment when the chaos begins. The characters might then be drawn to the mines in their pursuit of their would-be assassins.

12.2.4 Outcomes

After the attack on the Dwarves has subsided and the passages have been resealed, the Dwarves will be grateful for whatever help the adventurers have lent in the battle. Rewards should be scaled to the taste of the GM (and, of course, the participation of the characters), but might range from a small amount of coin, to fine Dwarf-made weapons and armor. In any event, the Dwarves will hurry to complete the noble's commissioned piece, as the travelers will undoubtedly be ready to leave the Dwarf Kingdom. During a parting dinner held in the presence of the Dwarf King, it should be revealed to the party (if they were not there to witness it themselves) that the passages holding the Bilak-khald were opened during their brief loss to the Orcs, and that a great danger may have been released. This vague and disturbing revelation is all the information that the party will receive from the Dwarves. In any case, the adventurers will leave Nurunkizdin with a story to tell, which is all that is required to link them to the next adventure.

12.3 Episode 3: Loose Lips

Word of the strange events at Nurunkizdin will spread quickly through the highland town of Killindrow and from there out into the estates. The adventurers will undoubtedly find willing listeners at every inn and tavern in town, and many calls will be made for retellings. Many a prospective listener will gladly buy drinks and even meals for the storytellers. The Folyavuldok are as fond of good stories as they are of good wine. What the party will not recognize, of course, is that their story will spread all across the highland countryside, drawing the attention of Oraishapek, whose plans are even then coming together.

The Dispossessed plans to infiltrate the Gyogarasag citadels with spies posing as the ill. The spies arrive as pilgrims to the citadels, seeking a remedy for various afflictions of the mind and spirit (these being easier to fake than afflictions of the body). Once his servants are in place, they will take control

of the citadel and open the gates for Oraishapek to enter bearing his foul burden. While he waits, the Dispossessed has a need for a steady stream of hosts, for despite his own power, he is unable to protect himself from the power of the stones. When he hears that witnesses are spreading warnings about the dangers that may have been released from Nurunkizdin, he suddenly fears that some wise person might guess his plans, and act to prevent him from carrying through the deed. He therefore sends assassins to seek out and kill the adventurers, who have no idea they have been marked.

The characters, however, are not the only known witnesses, and Oraishapek turns his attention to the young Lord Toltalvos. Rather than simply having the noble killed, however, the Dispossessed recognizes the value of having a base so close to the healing citadels, and decides to take the Toltalvos Manor by force. The manor is isolated from the other homesteads of the countryside, so no one notices the small invasion that takes place just days after Lord Toltalvos' return from the Dwarven Kingdom. Several house servants are spared in the attack, to provide host bodies for the Dispossessed while he waits for his servants to infiltrate the citadels. He is saving the young lord for last, and plans to make his assault on the citadel in that form.

12.3.1 The NPCs

The Master of Larisa-toron

Oraishapek is not the only one interested in the adventurers' story. The Gyogul-Arn (Fo. "Master Healer") of Larisa-toron (Fo. "Sanctuary of the Root"), the closest healing citadel to Killindrow has also heard rumor of the adventurers and desires to hear their tale. The Gyogul-Arn bears a birthmark (a green circle in the center of his palm) which identifies him as the fulfiller of a prophecy foretold many centuries earlier to the priests of Aldena. The prophecy states that one bearing this mark will be the only one capable of saving the realm from a deadly blight that would strike during his day. The Gyogul-Arn believed that it was his responsibility to save the realm from the Plague, but his best efforts only served to mute the symptoms for a choice few, and alleviate the worst pain for others.

Since the Plague faded of its own accord last year, he has wondered if he missed his chance to fulfill the prophecy. Now an old man, he seeks out rumors such as those concerning the adventurers, searching for the role that is his destiny. Though he does not yet know it, he is the only person ever born who is immune to the power of the stones, and it is his fate to bear the stones back to their proper resting place under Nurunkizdin. He is sending two of the citadel's adepts to find the characters and request them to tell their story at the highland citadel. He is willing to pay them 20 silver coins each if necessary for them to come.

The Assassins

The Dispossessed has sent two teams of four assassins to locate and kill the party. Each employs powerful doses of the poison known as jitsu, a toxin extracted from a breed of clam which causes the blood to burn, causing excruciating pain

and delivering a stunning blow to the nervous system. While this poison is intended to disable and render unconscious their victims, each assassin is prepared to ingest the poison if necessary to avoid capture, an action that will result in a swift and painful death. The assassins work well together as a silent team of killers by using hand signals which convey information in a tactical melee or stalking situation.

The Adepts of the Gyogarasag

The two robed healers from the citadel will arrive in town the night after the first attempt on the party's lives. They are somewhat wary of charlatans spreading false rumors (many have already visited the Gyogul-Arn, bringing all manner of strange stories), and have their doubts about the truth of the party's tales. Nevertheless, they will bear their message faithfully to the adventurers. They are both capable healers and herbalists, and carry with them small doses of general purpose herbs.

12.3.2 The Setting: The Region around Killindrow

The setting of this adventure is the Highland region of Folyavuld between Killindrow and the Gyogarasag citadel.

1. **Killindrow.** The capital from which the Broendon patriarch rules the highland province. For more information, see the Gazetteer entry for KILLINDROW.
2. **Borkep Var** (Fo. "Wine-guard Keep"). Aside from its own garrison, this is also the permanent base of one company of the Highland Rangers.
3. **Toltalvos Manor.**
4. **Larisa-toron.** See section 13.4.2 for a detailed description.

12.3.3 Encounters

The First Attempt

The first team of assassins goes into Killindrow and makes their attack on the party one night after hours of drinking and story-telling at a local tavern. The attack should be well coordinated in some area of light, perhaps directly outside the tavern in which the adventurers have been drinking. The attempt will begin with a cross-fire of arrows poisoned with Jitsu. If given the chance, the assassins will close to finish off the party with scimitars. If the attack needs to be scaled up or down to suit the power of the adventurers, the number of assassins in the attack could be changed. Alternatively, the GM might include other NPCs who are acquaintances of the party, possibly even sell-sword types like themselves to help the party ward off the attack.

Meeting the Servants of Aldena

The Gyogarasag adepts will seek out the party the night after the first attack, and try to persuade them to journey to Larisa-toron. The party will undoubtedly suspect the intentions of the adepts given the events of the previous evening, and it

will require a substantial amount of trust (and coaxing on the part of the NPCs) to get them to follow. Nevertheless, the rest of the campaign requires the party to journey to the Gyogarasag citadel, so they must eventually be persuaded. Should the party fail to accompany the adepts, they should be attacked again by the assassins, this time increasing the strength of the attack and the position of the attackers. As long as they remain in Killindrow, they are marked men, and the hunters know where they are!

The Healer's Road

The journey into the foothills of the Uldona Spine will be a dangerous one, thanks to the second team of assassins stalking the party. The assassins are skilled at shadowing a target, but a skilled ranger may well discover the party's pursuers and raise the alarm. If the ride to the citadel turns into a chase, the party should easily be able to reach the citadel without facing an attack. The citadel is a scant afternoon's ride east of Killindrow.

If the characters are not aware that they are being stalked, the assassins will loop ahead of the party and lay in wait for their approach. Again, the attack will begin in a rain of poison tipped arrows, then proceed to melee with scimitars as the situation merits. The adepts are inexperienced warriors and will contribute little to the effort, preferring to ride through the ambush and attempt to reach the citadel. The party may well choose to fight the assassins in order to discover who is trying to have them killed. If the combat turns against the assassins, they will turn their blades on themselves rather than be captured, or return to the Dispossessed to report failure.

12.3.4 Outcomes

If the party chose not to follow the adepts to the citadel, the campaign is over, and they will continue to be hunted by assassins until after the Dispossessed has carried out his evil plan. The party will know they have failed when the blight strikes Folyavuld's crops, poisoning the health and wealth of the realm. If the party does travel to Larisa-toron, they will be in position to participate in the culminating adventure in the campaign.

12.4 Episode 4: End Game

On the same day that the adventurers ride to Larisa-toron, the pilgrim spies come to the citadel, concealed among a troupe of the ill and infirm. By the evening the four members of Oraishapek's cult are located in the first and second floor infirmaries along with six other patients. The adepts tend to the business of the citadel; watching over the sick, preparing the night's meal, and tending the garden. The adventurers are given comfortable if somewhat austere quarantine rooms for their overnight stay at the citadel, and preparations are made for a feast in their honor.

12.4.1 The NPCs

The Gyogul-Arn

The master of Larisa-toron is glad that the party has come to tell their story. He has instructed that the feast be held in honor of the telling of their tale, and insists that the party stay at the citadel overnight. After hearing the tale of the war in Nurunkizdin, and of the hinted-at threat that may have been released when the Underdeeps were opened, the master-healer will be convinced that this is the threat of which the prophecy spoke (partly because of the assassination attempts, which clearly add weight to the characters' tale). He will question the party at length about various parts of their story. The following morning, he will send the youngest of the adepts as a messenger to Borkep Var to request an armed escort for the party back to Killindrow. Additionally, he will request the presence of the Captain of the Highland Ranger company to confer with him on how best to proceed against a new and unknown threat that looms over the Folyavulda Highlands. The Gyogul-Arn is a powerful and influential man, and his words and requests carry much weight across the realm. The Highland Rangers will come.

Oraishapek the Dispossessed

The Dispossessed's moment has come, and he is ready to act. The second day of the adventurer's stay at the citadel, he will bear the stones to Larisa-toron. Despite his best laid plans, however, the Lord of Toltalvos has resisted the Dispossessed's possession for an extra day, and he has not yet mastered his new host's body (he is still in the Infested stage of possession, and suffers a -50 to all actions). In addition, he suffers already from bearing the stones such a great distance, and is at an additional -25 to all maneuvers because of the foul sickness. So while Oraishapek is a deadly foe, he operates at a great disadvantage as he bears the stones to the citadel gates. He is depending on the superiority of his warriors and spies to gain him access to the sanctuary garden, and the spring within. He has no idea that the adventurers are present within the citadel, or that the Highland Rangers are riding for Larisa-toron.

The Captain of the Rangers

Larsa Broen is a young noble of the ruling family of the Broendon tribe, and serves as the Captain of the Highland Ranger company that patrols the hills around Borkep Var. In the service of the Realm-master, Larsa has performed his duties to perfection and has learned valuable lessons in leadership and administration which should serve him in later years. Above all, Larsa knows the region and people surrounding the upper Uldona watershed, and he knows that the master of Larisa-toron is not one to be ignored. Though the Gyogul-Arn has no official power to summon him to the citadel, his political and social influence is such that he could ruin the career of even a noble of the ruling family. The Captain and his company of fifteen Rangers will arrive at the citadel shortly after the Dispossessed's attack begins, effectively canceling at least part of the Orc assault and giving the adventurers a chance to stop Oraishapek from carrying out his plan.

12.4.2 The Setting

This adventure will take place at the Gyogarasag citadel of Larisa-toron.

1. Main Ceremonial Chamber. This two-storied chamber is supported by four columns carved to resemble great tree trunks. The floor is a mosaic of inlaid stone and shell depicting the Earth-mother Aldena bearing a sheaf of grain and a bunch of grapes. Lapis-lazuli, jade, mother-of-pearl, onyx, bloodstone and yellow chalcedony are all used in the image. A dais in the center of the room is surmounted by a stone basin for holding water drawn the spring during special ceremonies. Steps to either side lead to a first floor kitchen and infirmary in the wings of the structure. Two staircases, one along either wall ascend to second floor balconies that overlook the main chamber, and give access to the citadels upper stories. The front doors of the citadel are of stout oak, reinforced by iron. Opposite them are ornate doors inset with colored glass that lead out into the sacred garden.

2. Quarantine Rooms. These four chambers, located on both the first and second floors of the infirmary wing are spartanly furnished. Each has windows looking out onto the garden and the lawn in front of the sanctuary.

3. General Infirmary Rooms. Each of these large halls are warmed by fireplaces, and contain six beds for the guests of the citadel.

4. Storeroom. This room contains all robes and articles used in the ceremonies performed in the main chamber of the citadel. Common medicines are also kept here. The door is locked and Very Hard (-20) to pick. The key is kept by the senior adept of the citadel.

5. Pantry. All manner of cooking supplies, grains and vegetables are kept here.

6. Kitchen. Large tables and a great wood-burning stove dominate this room. The three least senior adepts prepare meals for the citadel's permanent staff, as well as its transient population of sick.

7. The Garden Sanctuary. One of the three holiest sites in Folyavuld (the other two citadel gardens being the others). The waters of the spring exit the sanctuary by a shallow stream that runs through a low grate of steel bars in the sanctuary wall. The wall itself is 8 ft. high and has two iron-bar gates on either side providing access to exterior sheds which house garden tools. The Garden paths wind through the sanctuary in a vaguely spiral pattern, each branch ending in a small statue of Aldena supporting a basket over her head that forms a bird-bath. Every herb known to the healers that can be grown in the highland climate is grown within the sanctuary walls.

8. Second-floor Balconies. These balconies are reached by spiral staircases winding about the interior walls of the main chamber. They afford an excellent view of ceremonies taking place in the chamber below. The south balcony has ornate double doors of carved oak that lead to the Meeting Hall and the stairs that access the higher levels of the citadel (8a). The doors are locked and Hard (-10) to pick. Every adept has a key to these doors.

9. Meeting Hall. The Gyogarasag of Larisa-toron meet in this hall to speak and dine with one another. Feasts for honored guests are served here.

10. Adepts' Quarters. The sanctuary's seven adepts live in these chambers. Each is comfortably furnished, and their doors are locked and Hard (-10) to pick. Each adept has his own key, and the Gyogul-Arn has a master key.

11. Guest Quarters. This rather ornate room is reserved for visiting members of the Gyogarasag. It is larger than the Adepts' Quarters.

12. Adept Study. This chamber is filled with desks chairs and benches for simple compounding. Much of the instruction that goes into an adept's training takes place here.

13. Staircase to top floor.

14. Library. This is one-third of the Library known as The Gyogarasag Learnings. Subject matter includes linguistics, history, the teachings of Aldena, and (of course) one of the most complete collections of books on herbalism and medicines in all of Endor. This part of the library contains over 5,000 volumes, most of which are irreplaceable. The door is locked and Very Hard (-20) to pick.

15. Gyogul-Arn's Alchemy and Apothecary. The most complicated instruction and compounding is done here. All doors are locked and Very Hard (-20) to pick. Double glass-paned doors with heavy green curtains open onto a balcony overlooking the sanctuary. Most of the medicines in the sanctuary are kept here. The master healer and the senior adept each have a key to this room.

16. Gyogul-Arn's Chambers. Posh by most standards, this chamber is roomy and furnished with a large bed, closets, dressers, a desk, several chairs, and many shelves. The Gyogul-Arn does all his administrative work in this chamber. The door leading in is locked and Very Hard (-20) to pick.

17. Vault. The lock mechanism on this door is of Dwarf-make, and is Extremely Hard (-30) to pick. Only the Gyogul-Arn has a key to this room, and it is carried on his person at all times. Within the vault is a collection of the most potent medicines and herbs in the realm. The Gyogarasag is a wealthy organization, and the vault also contains five small chests of silver and gold coins (1400 gp worth).

12.4.3 Encounters

Assassins on the Inside

The assault will begin just after dusk. One of the assassins will get out of their bed and walk over to the fireplace. He will then throw a small handful of incendiary powder onto the fire which will send a gout of flame up the chimney to signal the Orcs outside to begin their assault, and also serve to blind anyone in the room unprepared for the flash. The assassins will then launch into action. Though they are armed with nothing but small poisoned daggers, three will attempt to seize and hold the main door to the citadel while the fourth will dash to the garden to open its gates. If the assassins are able to hold the door for ten rounds, the Orcs will begin streaming in the door attempting to trap as many as possible

on the upstairs floors while the Dispossessed moves into the garden.

It will be up to any adventurers or NPCs on the ground floor to halt Oraishapek's advance. Nearly every room in the citadel has windows looking out, and the approach of the Dispossessed bearing his glowing green box of stones should be obvious to anyone watching. Should the adventurers need help figuring out what is happening, clues should be supplied to them through the master healer. The Gyogul-Arn will undoubtedly notice the Dispossessed's approach, and will suddenly understand his intentions. If no adventurers are on the ground floor, the balcony on the fourth floor might serve as the party's best way down. The Dispossessed now suffers from exposure to the stones, and his approach to the citadel gate will be slow and unsteady. The party should have at least two minutes to act before Oraishapek is within the garden.

The Rangers Arrive

The GM should use the arrival of the Highland Rangers to balance out the fight. If the party is of relatively low level, allow the Rangers to arrive just as the attack commences. If the adventurers are High level, or very numerous, save the arrival of the Rangers until after the bulk of the fighting has taken place.

If Oraishapek is confronted in numbers, he will drop the stones and attempt to hold his ground against his attackers, buying time for his troops to come to his aid. Even in his weakened state, Oraishapek is still a formidable sorcerer. If it becomes obvious that he cannot prevail, he will not sacrifice himself to save this mission. The Dispossessed will abandon the stones and flee into the wilderness, quickly losing his pursuers despite his weakness. Once the Dispossessed flees, his henchmen will take their best chance to flee. The Rangers, perhaps accompanied by the adventurers, will pursue the enemy into the forest, but the Dispossessed will not be found.

12.4.4 Outcomes

There are three potential outcomes. If the Dispossessed is successful in his cause, Folyavuld will be poisoned and much of the fertility of the land will fade. This end would be a disaster for the Land of Rivers, and might well change the course of history.

If the Dispossessed is stopped, but the Gyogul-Arn is somehow slain in the fighting, there will be no one left with the ability to return the stones to their rightful place. Larisa-toron will be forever tainted, though the spring waters themselves will remain pure. The loss of that holy site would be a profound spiritual blow to the realm, and Oraishapek can claim some small victory.

If the Gyogul-Arn survives to claim the stones, the citadel is saved and the party will be hailed as heroes of the realm. This will certainly earn them some notoriety in Folyavuld, which again will mark them as recipients of the Dispossessed's scorn. Though this end is certainly the most favorable to all concerned, the party will be forever stalked by assassins

working for the Dispossessed, a constant reminder that they have made powerful enemies as well as friends.

12.5 Epilogue: The Depth of the Conspiracy

The morning after the attack, the Rangers will begin the task of collecting the dead for burning. Sometime in the mid-morning, after the search for bodies is concluded, the corpse of Evin Toltalvos will be dragged out of the forest, his pupils and throat the distinctive pale green of one who has died of exposure to the Bilak-khald. The party will no doubt wonder at the young man's involvement in a plot to spoil his own fields. Indeed, it is most likely that the party will be left to wonder at the apparent pervasiveness of the cult that has attempted this attack, never realizing the nature of their real antagonist, Oraishapek the Dispossessed.

After the pyre has been lit, the Rangers will discover that one of their own is missing. In fact, the individual who found the body of Evin Toltalvos is nowhere to be found. Though no one may recognize the meaning of the strange disappearance, the Dispossessed has again jumped bodies, and made good his escape. After spending the rest of the day searching in vain for the lost Ranger, the company will prepare to escort the Gyogul-Arn on his journey to deliver the stones to Nurunkizdin.

13 SCAVENGERS OF THE SEA

At the onset of the Great Plague, Yanos Kosvar's trade outpost at Kelepar was abandoned and the region of southeastern Rhûn again came under the complete domination of Kerkassk and his servants in Mistrand (see section 3.10 for more information on the origin and events of the War of Clay Jars). Despite their victory, the religiously driven host of Kerkassk was devastated by the Plague. The elder Kosvar was nearly ruined by the fall of Kelepar and the cruel deaths of his two sons, one at the hands of Brygath torturers, and the other under the tender caresses of the Plague. Kosvar himself, however, lived through the Plague, carrying with him an undying hatred for the leaders of Mistrand who had caused so much of his misery. He swore revenge on his antagonists.

Despite the fall of his outpost, Yanos was still an influential man in Gathod, with connections to others who shared his hatred of the plains-god. One such connection was with the group calling itself Rachorod (Dn. "West-wind"), a sometimes radical band of dissenters against the religion of Mistrand. Yanos fled Kelepar for the Donath town of Dilgul, where he made contact with several brash members of Rachorod. To these hard young men, Kosvar promised the bulk of his remaining fortune as a price on the head of the osvoda of Mistrand, leader of the religious hierarchy that ruled the city. Though many of them paid for the deed with their lives, the assassins were able to carry through with the killing, for in those days the leaders of Mistrand were bold and unafraid of outsiders, often walking unaccompanied through the crowded streets and plazas of the city. The

assassins cut down the osvoda in a side street and one managed to escape with the Hitav Yurna, the osvoda symbol of office (see section 10.3 for more details on the Hitav Yurna).

When the assassins returned to Kosvar, they brought with them the Scepter as proof of the deed. Yanos paid them a small fortune for the killing, and kept the Scepter as a reminder of his sons, whose deaths he blamed on the leaders of Mistrand. Though he had struck back against his foes, however, he still found himself consumed by his hatred of them, and resolved to spend the rest of his days making the city of Kerkassk pay for the pain it had caused him. Though he now neared the age of 60, Kosvar was still a hard and vigorous man, and he took up the ways of the pirate in the pursuit of his revenge.

Yanos was something of an adventurer, and he soon found that the life of the pirate appealed to him. Experienced as he was in tactics and administration, Kosvar's pirates quickly grew into one of the most popular informal organization of bandits on the entire Sea. Rivals usually steered clear of Kosvar's ships for fear of earning the hatred of the pirate-lord, which at this point was legendary for its long life and burning intensity. Though Mistrand had largely closed its doors to trade with the west many years prior, in recent years the city had gradually reopened its market to a choice few merchants, who were allowed to export a carefully regulated amount of goods. This practice had enriched Mistrand, and helped them achieve a dominant position in the trade balance on the Inland Sea. Now, however, many of the products leaving Mistrand ended up in the cargo holds of Kosvar's hunter-ships.

The leaders of Mistrand launched several expeditions to punish Kosvar's pirates, but were never able to pin down the location from which he operated. They long suspected that the Folyavulda haven at Scari was Kosvar's home port, but spies from Mistrand penetrated that settlement in T.A. 1639, and though some of the goods stolen by Kosvar's men have been sold in that town, they also have appeared on the markets of Lest and even Dilgul. Kosvar's men and ships were not to be found in any of these places. The search for Kosvar's base began to focus on the confusing and dangerous Mayzri Archipelago as the last possible location.

Indeed, Kosvar's fortress was located among that chain of islands. Early in T.A. 1637, Kosvar began the construction of Karna-tapar (Fo. "The Hornet's Nest"), a wooden stockade located next to a fine natural harbor on one of the islands of the Mayzri. Sailors on the Inland Sea have learned to avoid the island chain because of the razor sharp reefs that clutter many of the inter-island channels, and also because of the popularity of the chain's warm waters among the Inland Sea's sea-serpent population. Despite these dangers, or possibly because of them, Kosvar thought it a natural setting for a hidden stronghold. Only two of his rivals ever discovered his secret, and both of those ships were driven onto the shoals near the mouth of his harbor by accurate catapult fire. Karna-tapar served Kosvar for nearly three years as a perfect base of operations, until the spring of T.A. 1640, when tragedy struck the old man in a different form.

From the smallest sea-side village to the sprawling ports of

Mistrand and Lest, old sailors of the sea swap tales of the legendary serpents that are said to hunt its waters. So many widely varying stories have circulated over the years, that most people completely dismiss the beasts as nothing more than creatures of legend. Yanos Kosvar and his pirates, however, will not make that mistake again. Though prone to long periods of slumber in their sea-side caves, the drakes of the sea will occasionally wake to fulfill the needs shared by all living creatures. One of these needs is, of course, to mate and reproduce. Among the many species of dragon, the rituals surrounding a coupling can be violent and utterly unpredictable. Recently, Kraszapol (Fo. "Red Fin"), greatest of the female drakes of the sea began her search for a mate. Her choice of a mate was a natural one, for Sakarod (Fo. "Death-Spout") is the greatest of the male drakes. Though the two went through the obligatory bouts of violence, they are actually both satisfied with the pairing and quickly moved on to finding a suitable nest. Unfortunately for Kosvar and his Men, the nest they chose was Karna-tapar, the stronghold of the pirates.

The assault of the drakes was short and violent. Kosvar and the great majority of his Men perished inside their stronghold, and were consumed by the pair. One small crew of men were able to escape to a ship and flee toward open waters. The drakes caught them just as they were passing the southernmost island in the chain and laid their ship to waste. Only three of Kosvar's pirates live to warn people of the drakes and share the tale of their ferocious onslaught. They now live as castaways on that same island, keeping their eyes on the horizon. They have begun to regret the secrecy of their base, for no one passes into the Mayzri by chance.

13.1 Episode 1: Running Scared

Kosvar's operation extends to all of the major ports around the Sea. Each receive shipments of smuggled and stolen goods to be sold on the local market, and each has among its permanent population a mole for the pirate ring to make contacts with prospective buyers and grease the wheels of local commerce. These contacts have for years acted as the eyes and ears of Kosvar, keeping tabs on the politics of the pirate world and passing along information about local markets. It has now been some months since any contact has been made with Karna-tapar, and Kosvar's henchmen begin to grow worried. The conspicuous absence of Kosvar's ships has been noticed by rival pirates, and they have begun to grow bold. Many now speak in open opposition to Kosvar in the shanties where informal but ever-powerful pirate councils are held.

Complicating matters even further is Kosvar's dogged determination to retain the Hitav Yurna as payment for the deaths of his sons. It is common knowledge that the pirate-lord was behind the killing of the Osveda of Mistrand, and that he has openly declared that he will never return the artifact to the servants of Kerkassk. The loss of the Scepter is a blemish on the proud face of the plains-god, and the Dispossessed lord of Gathod has redoubled his efforts to reclaim it. His spies and assassins have permeated the sea-side towns in search of clues to the Scepter's whereabouts. Kosvar's contacts now worry that the emboldened rival

pirates will finger them to the spies of the plains-god, dooming them to a cruel death on the torture-racks of Ily-amana. It is time for them to make good their escape from the towns in which they live. All they need is a ship to carry them to the Mayzri.

13.1.1 The NPCs

The Contacts

Each town has its own member of Kosvar's band. In Scarakikot, Djerul the Seer, a Kugath mystic woman provides information on the disposition of Folyavuld and the atmosphere of the pirate-hunter meetings at the Sated Serpent tavern. In Lest, a Northman food merchant named Guntherof monitors the market and the local pirates who universally envy and resent the success of the Kosvar band. In Dilgul, Deoric the boat-wright arranges secret meetings between Donath smugglers and the captains of Kosvar's ships, and maintains a tenuous contact with the Rachorod faction in Mistrand.

Each of these representatives are feeling the pressure of their present circumstances. Every shadow holds a spy. None of their former liaisons can be trusted. They spend most of their time inside their homes, and rarely even attempt to maintain the facade of their daily businesses. They grow desperate to flee their respective towns by any means. A group of aspiring young sailors with a small ship, be they merchants or pirates, would provide the perfect escorts to the band's island stronghold.

Gregor the Butcher

The Butcher is a brawny young peer of Kosvar who seeks to supplant him as the premier bandit on the Inland Sea. He lacks the savvy of the elder pirate, however, and must frequently resort to violence to hold his motley band together. The other pirates of the sea regard him as an unpredictable and dangerous man who will commit any brutality to reach his aspirations. Though he is widely thought of as the second most powerful pirate on the sea, his collection of three Aravihar (Fo. "Swift Tempest") raiding ships is vastly inferior to Kosvar's once-proud fleet of seven warships. He is currently pursuing a campaign that he considers subtle (others would certainly say rash), to win over some of the minor players of the sea-side ports to his cause.

In the meantime, he has collected his three ships at whichever of the three ports is serving as the starting point of the campaign, in preparation for scouting the exterior islands of the Mayzri. His plan is to draw out Kosvar's pirates and discover the reason behind his rival's conspicuous absence. If Kosvar seems weak, he plans to strike at the hidden outpost. The party will certainly be one of the groups that he will attempt to intimidate. If and when he finds that they are transporting a known spy of Kosvar to the Mayzri, he will attempt to stop them.

The Servants of Kerkassk

The spies of the plains-god have indeed identified Kosvar's servants and are keeping them under careful surveillance. Posing as out of work sailors and foreign merchants, they are only hesitating to close the vice on their prey because they believe contact will soon be made between Kosvar and his people. When the contact approaches the party, the spies will undoubtedly believe that the adventurers are members of the pirate band. After identifying this new lead, they will attempt to abduct the contact for deep interrogation and begin shadowing the party.

13.1.2 The Setting

This adventure is designed so that the GM can launch it from any of the three ports mentioned above. Each of these towns is detailed in sections 10 and/or 11 of the text.

13.1.3 Encounters

Tavern Talk

The taverns of Scari, Dilgul, and Lest are where business contacts and hirings are made. The pirate councils will often monopolize an establishment for an evening to conduct their meetings, moving the tables of the room together to form one great conference table. Discussions are loud and very often escalate to violent confrontations. The subject matter is usually centered around the arbitration of disputes between two or more aggrieved parties. Anyone is allowed to speak, they must merely command enough respect in the room to silence enough of the crowd so that they may be heard. Very often, a powerful individual will silence the room on behalf of a minor member, who might not otherwise be heard. In this way, petty pirates often form patron-client relationships with the more powerful members. This often leads to alliances between the bandits that may eventually grow to inclusion of the smaller within the ranks of the larger. Kosvar virtually pioneered this tactic in the early years of his operation, and many have tried to emulate his success.

Talk in the particular tavern in which this campaign begins (the exact location being dependent on the port city chosen) will be centered on disputes between rivals who are fighting to move in on Kosvar's territory. Without a senior captain of the Kosvar band to represent them, clients of the pirate-lord have no voice in the meeting, and will get up as a group and leave the meeting in a silent protest of the subject-matter. Few are willing to acknowledge that the Kosvar band has fallen from power, and that serious repercussions will not be forthcoming when the band's rivals begin trespassing on its waters. There will be some minor defections, but most will not dare until there is hard evidence that Kosvar is no longer a factor in pirate-politics.

The party will undoubtedly be a witness to the power struggle occurring in the tavern. If the party wishes to add something to the discussion, they will have to place themselves in the debt of one of the more powerful pirates in the room. Gregor the Butcher will loudly make claims on Kosvar's waters, and announce his intention to sail in the next

two days. He will threaten everyone in the room with war if he catches them within his new territory. He will also make obvious attempts to indebt minor pirates within the room. He will insist that in the absence of Kosvar's representative, everyone be given a chance to speak if they so desire. Even the party members should realize that this is an open invitation to tie themselves to Gregor, who obviously believes he will be the next lord of pirates.

Meeting Kosvar's Servant

Sitting outside the tavern, below an open window where the conversation inside can be clearly heard will be Kosvar's representative in town. As the party leaves the meeting (which will continue well into the night), they will be approached by the frightened contact, and a proposal will be made. The contact will tell the party as much as he or she knows about Kosvar's operation (which is not much), and offer the impressive sum of 100 pieces of gold for immediate passage to the Mayzri Archipelago. The contact will offer half of the sum up front, and promise that an identical amount will be paid by the pirates when the contact is safely among them. The contact will insist that his or her presence among the party will protect them from any penalty the pirate-band might normally impose on trespassers to their refuge. Additionally, the party could gain the gratitude of Kosvar himself for saving his representative; a reward that would be of immeasurable worth, were the Kosvar band actually still alive.

Stopping an Abduction

Spies from Mistrand will witness the meeting between the contact and the party, though they will not be close enough to hear what is said over the din of the tavern. If the party is cautious and observant, they may realize that they are being watched, and be on their guard. After the brief discussion, the contact will want to return to his or her home to collect a few valuable items and also to retrieve the gold promised to the party. The contact believes he/she is being followed, and will not turn down any offer of an escort through town. If the party is able to pick up on any of these hints, they should be in position to stop the abduction attempt that will occur at the contact's residence.

The servants of Kerkassk are posing as sailors on a Gathmarig merchant ship, and will be armed as such. The captain of the ship is actually a member of the officer cadre in the Mistrand navy, and his entire crew is made up of assassins and spies. If they are successful in their attempt to seize the contact, the party will not be able to continue with the campaign, unless it occurs to them to travel to one of the other ports and seek a similar deal with that representative of the pirate-band, or they are able to intercept the spy-ship on its way to Mistrand.

13.1.4 Outcomes

The only outcome possible for a smooth continuation of the campaign is that the party leaves for the Mayzri Archipelago with one of Kosvar's contacts on board their ship. If the contact was lost to the spies of Mistrand, the party will have

to sail into the Archipelago blind, something that they probably would not do if they believed that Kosvar was still active. Though he is respected as a man of sound principles, the penalty for trespassing on Kosvar territory is a swift death.

13.2 Episode 2: Nest Robbers

Transporting Kosvar's contact to Mayzri may entail an adventure in itself. At the same time that the party's ship enters the Archipelago, Gregor's troika of ships is testing the waters around the island group, trying to provoke a response from Kosvar's ships. By mid-day, he is tired of the cat-and-mouse game, and decides to make a direct line through the Mayzri.

These four are not the only ships afloat in the waters around the Archipelago today. A scout ship from Mistrand (the same one that attempted to abduct Kosvar's contact, if that is still possible after the events of the first episode) plies the waters around Mayzri, gathering information on the layout of the dangerous Archipelago and looking for evidence of the hidden pirate refuge. The party's ship, however, should be first to reach the island chain, since they believe they have nothing to fear, while the other ships are wary of Kosvar's powerful fleet.

13.2.1 The NPCs

The Castaways

These three are all that is left of Kosvar's once powerful band of pirates. On sighting the party's sail, they will light a signal fire they have prepared. Dangerous shoals completely surround the island, and the adventurer's will be forced to use a ship's boat to reach the far strand. Should the party stop to rescue the castaways, they will relate in lurid detail the tale of the demise of Karna-tapar. The castaways are prepared to offer anything to the party in exchange for passage to any of the towns along the coast of the Sea. The coffers of Karna-tapar contained a fabulous wealth of treasure, and they will offer to lead the party to a secret trove, buried on the outpost island, or even to the ruins of the outpost itself in exchange for their freedom. They have not seen the drakes since the fateful day of the attack, and have no idea that the ruined outpost now serves as a nest for the happy couple.

The Spy

Unbeknownst to all, one of the castaways is a trained assassin working for Kerkassk. Mistrand flooded the ports of the sea with spies in their search for the Scepter, many of whom were never heard from again. Faruq Akara was one such spy who actually managed to penetrate Kosvar's organization when he hired on with a pirate captain who subsequently tied himself to the band. Faruq has worked with Kosvar's pirates for several months now, and neither of his castaway compatriots suspects that he has any outside allegiances. In all the time that he has been associated with the pirates, he only glimpsed the Scepter once, shortly after he joined the band. He is now convinced that the Scepter lies amid the secret treasure, but has never had a good

opportunity to recover it and attempt an escape.

Faruq's superiors in Mistrand have no idea that they have a servant among Kosvar's band, much less that he was lucky enough to survive the drake attack and is now stranded on the small southernmost island. If the party rescues him, he will be content to leave the Archipelago, bearing the location of the secret treasure to his master. If the party insists on traveling to the outpost island to recover the treasure, he will argue that the dragons are probably gone, and that the greater treasure is to be had in the ruined outpost. He will, if possible dissuade the party from attempting to recover the secret treasure, even though the other castaways will agree that it is the safest course.

Gregor the Butcher

Gregor will soon grow annoyed at the lack of response from Kosvar's scouts and will sail directly into the Archipelago. Early in the afternoon, he will come across the hidden alcove of the outpost island that supports Kosvar's shattered harbor and behold the sight of the destroyed outpost and wrecked ships of Kosvar's fleet. Amazed at the sight, the Butcher will sail into the harbor for a closer inspection of the ruin, intent on learning whose navy wrought such destruction on the powerful Kosvar pirate-band, and where they might have gone. He will not realize until too late, that Kosvar's enemies were not Men, and that they haven't gone anywhere.

Kraszapol and Sakarod

The drake couple have turned Kosvar's main hall into a grizzly nest fit for a young hatchling. The hall is littered with the half eaten corpses of pirates, a testimony to the terrible killing power of the beasts when they are enraged. Kraszapol is fiercely protective of the nest, even though it does not yet contain an egg. Sakarod is less powerful than his mate, and once her ire is stirred he will obediently join in the carnage rather than risk a confrontation. When Gregor's ships disturb their slumber, the two drakes will hurl themselves toward the harbor. Their fin-like legs are better designed to propel their massive lengths through the water than they are to support their weight on land, and once the two reach the harbor-edge, the fates of Gregor and his pirates are sealed. The drakes will entertain themselves destroying the pirate ships for the better part of the afternoon, making a gruesome game out of watching the pitiful Men try to survive. This should allow an excellent opportunity for a party approaching from the opposite shore of the island to conduct their business without having to face the terrible creatures.

13.2.2 The Setting

This adventure will take place among the islands of the Mayzri Archipelago. See the Gazetteer entry for MAYZRI ARCHIPELAGO for a detailed description and map of the island chain.

The Outpost Island

Like the other islands of the chain, the outpost island has a narrow strip of beach fronted by the steep slope of the

island's natural sea-wall. Only one stairway has been made ascending this slope, at that is located directly in front of the outpost. Attempts to scale the steep incline should receive a -10 due to sandy and unsure footing. Once atop the sea-wall, the island is densely forested almost to the summit of the island peaks. The peaks themselves are bare and weathered stone, the heart of an elder mountain chain now drowned and stripped of its cover by violent sea-storms.

1. The Ruin of Karna-tapar. See section 13.2.2.2 for details.

2. Lookouts. These are platforms built into the tops of trees that give a long view across the water. Sentries camped near each of these lookouts, and old campfires may be found throughout the surrounding forest.

3. The Secret Treasure Cave. The castaways will be able to lead the party directly to this cave. They have never been inside, but know that the cave was once guarded by the sentries of the nearest lookout. The forest around the cave entrance will show signs of recent campfires, and also great gouges in the land where massive creatures have passed. For specific details of the cave's interior, see section 13.2.2.3.

4. The Ruined Harbor. The broken masts of ruined ships stick out of the harbor here, some still clinging to wisps of their sails. Four ships lie shattered on the reefs, all the evidence remaining of Kosvar's once powerful fleet.

5. Gregor's Battleground. This is the area where the battle between Gregor's three ships and the two rain drakes will begin. None of the ships will make it far beyond the boundaries of this area.

6. Waterline Cave. The waters of the sea rush into this cave, which leads by a long drowned tunnel to the basement chamber of the Secret Treasure Cave.

The Ruins of Karna-Tapar

1. The Beach. Two ship's boats are still here, inverted with oars beneath them. Their crews never had a chance to reach them when the dragons struck, and no one was left to use them afterward. A winding buried-log staircase ascends the sea-wall to the shattered gate of Karna-tapar.

2. Catapult Moats. These ten foot high earthen moats each have a catapult atop them. The catapults are both loaded and wound, but neither was ever fired, so quick was the dragon assault. Both are on wheels so that they may be turned and aimed at approaching ships. Piles of heavy stones lie to either side of the catapults.

3. The Gate. A twenty foot gap in the earth outer wall was once blocked by a great gate of reinforced timber. The gate was shattered by the drakes, who both came through this way. The mauled corpses of three guards are buried in the rubble.

4. Bailey. The wide lawn that was once the center of Kosvar's outpost is now littered with the remains of men who died trying to defend their lair. Storerooms, a forge, and a kitchen once stood along the earth walls of the bailey, but each has been ruined. Stairs in various places are cut into the earth wall, allowing men to ascend to the top, where a fence

of spiked timbers would provide them cover in case of an attack. Against the dragons, however, these fortifications were useless.

5. Karna-tapar. This is the last structure to remain intact in the entire outpost. It is a timber building with double doors torn off the hinges and the entranceway dug out so that the massive monsters can squeeze in. The entire first floor was once a great hall. It is now filled with the half-eaten corpses and dug out earth. The center of the floor is a hollowed out basin where Kraszapol intends to lay her egg. The hall is filled with a ruined treasure of broken statuary, shattered ceramics, and blood-stained tapestries. A single stairway ascends the back wall, leading to the upper chambers. The upper story is accessed by a locked door at the top of the stair, which may be unlocked using a key around Kosvar's neck. His corpse is one of many that is hidden among the rubble on the ground floor, and should be Very Hard (-20) to locate if the characters know his face, Extremely Hard (-30) otherwise. The lock is trapped with a poisoned needle coated with Jitsu. The chamber beyond remains as it was before the dragons attacked. It is filled with Kosvar's private possessions: a great bed, a table for dining and meeting with his captains, closets, shelves and a desk. Three small chests contain thousands of coins and many precious stones totaling around five hundred gold pieces. High quality weapons adorn the walls, and expertly crafted sea charts lie on the desk. Also packed in the lowest drawer of the desk, in a specially crafted case, is a Gondorian telescope. Fine Talathrant vases, fur rugs, and expensive clothing may also be found in the room.

6. Lookout Path. Trails wind away from the outpost, to the various lookout positions around the island.

The Site of the Secret Treasure

1. Entrance Chamber. The cave mouth is cluttered by overhanging brush, and is extremely dark within. If a careful approach is made, the party may hear the sounds of the cave's guardians retreating within the cave as they approach. The entrance cave is rough walled and has a floor of sand. The gap that leads to the passages beyond should not be immediately apparent.

2. Trapped Hall. This hall makes a steady descent down into the heart of the island. The door on the left is of reinforced oak, and will be barred from within. The only way through the door is by destroying it. Just past the door, the passage floor is artificial. The top of a natural chimney of lime is covered by a trap door (2a) that is concealed under a layer of sand. The trap is Hard (-10) to detect, and cannot be disarmed. More than 20 lbs. of pressure will trigger the doors, dropping anyone standing on them ten feet to the slick lime chimney below. There is room to either side, however, and characters that have detected the trap can pass along the cavern walls.

3. Fake Treasure Chamber. Six chests line the side and back walls of this wide, sand-floored chamber. The first two chests contain raised bottoms so that they are artificially shallow, and contain 5,000 cp worth of copper ingots that will look like gold by firelight. The remaining chests are empty, and approaching them will take the characters over a

second set of trap doors (3a) similar to 2a, which also lead to the lime chimney at 5.

4. Guardian's Chamber. Three of the five lookouts that are supposed to guard the cave are still alive. Since the fall of Karna-tapar, the dragons have come up the hill and hunted them each night. Already, two of the guardians have been killed, and the others have gone completely mad. They have now been locked within the darkness of their chamber for two days, and are eaten with hunger and fear. They will attempt to defend their cave against any intrusion, attacking the characters as if they themselves were the dragons. Should the party pass the door and spring the traps beyond, they will charge out their door and attempt to force the remaining characters into the trap also. If successful, they will then take short bows to the basement chamber and finish off the characters. The presence of the castaways will have no effect on their madness. The guardian chamber was never intended to house men so long, and it is filled with refuse, grass mats, and the remains of several rodents that were caught and eaten.

5. Lime Chimney. Characters falling into this chute will slide down the incline, lubricated by the caustic lime paste that coats the chimney's sides and floor. Each character will take 3-30 concussion points due to burns, scrapes and cuts, in addition to whatever damage is taken due to falls. Stopping is a Sheer Folly (-50) maneuver, which can be complicated by other falling party members. Stopping within the chute results in an additional d10 concussion points every five rounds due to exposure to the lime. Failing to stop will lead a character to a ten foot drop into the shallow pool in the basement Chamber (6).

6. Basement Chamber. This wide chamber is filled by a pool of water ranging in depth from 1-4 feet. Ten feet up the west wall is the end of the Lime Chimney (5). Twenty feet up the east wall is a walkway that leads from the Guardian's Chamber. Should the characters fall down the Lime Chimney, they will probably face arrow attacks from the east walkway, as the cavern guardians will rush into the chamber bearing torches and bows. Complicating the missile battle that will ensue is the presence of four large Festiqan (Ga. "Death Claws") which the pirates feed. The animals haven't been fed now for several days, and will voraciously attack characters falling into the pit.

7. Waterline Passage. This wide and low passage leads almost a mile to the waterline cave in 13.2.2.1. It is nearly drowned in parts, and characters will be forced to swim with less than a foot of headspace through some of the tighter sections of the passage. Though the passage offers shelter from the arrows of the guardians, flight in this direction will be closely pursued by the Festiqan, which enjoy a significant advantage over the party members in deeper water.

8. Treasure Chamber. The only key to the locked door of this chamber is around the neck of Yanos Kosvar's corpse, which is among the rubble of Karna-tapar. The lock is Very Hard (-20) to pick, and is trapped with a needle poisoned with Jitsu. The chamber beyond contains the treasure of Kosvar's pirate band. In six chests there is 2,000 gp worth of coin, gems and jewelry. Fine and potentially magical weapons, bolts of silk, Talathrant ceramics, and the prized

Hitav Yurna.

13.2.3 Encounters

Approaching the Pirate's Outpost

The sounds of the furious assault on Gregor's pirates should be enough to alert the adventurers that the dragons are indeed still active and in the immediate vicinity. If the castaways have been rescued, they will suggest a landing site on the side of the island opposite the wrecked outpost. Faruq will no longer attempt to argue that the dragons have departed, though once the group reaches a point on the island where they can witness Gregor's fate, he will be quick to point out that the monsters are a considerable distance from the ruins of Karna-tapar, and that the greater treasure lies there. Should the adventurers decide to heed his advice, the castaways will refuse to accompany them, having already witnessed the lethal fury of the serpents. They will give the adventurers explicit instructions on how to arrive at the treasure hold, but will remain on the high ground until the party returns. As long as the party keeps their ship out of site, and raises no obvious alarms, the drakes will be too engrossed in the slaughter to realize that their nest is being raided.

Looting the Nest

Once inside the outpost, the horror of the scene inside and the over-powering dragon-stench might well drive the adventurers to flee. Each character should make a resistance roll versus a 10th level fear attack or be unable to venture past the main hall. If they manage to pass the carnage, locating and looting the treasure hold should be a relatively straightforward exercise, provided the characters can get past the trapped lock on the door. Much of the wealth in the chamber, however, consists of bulky and fragile ceramics, finely crafted personal items, and huge amounts of coin. The adventurers will have time for one trip back to the beach before all sounds of Gregor's demise will fade into an ominous silence. Should the party return to the outpost, they will be confronted by a most unhappy pair of Rain-drakes.

Recovering the Secret Treasure

The castaways know only of the location of the cave that contains the secret treasure. Exploring the cave and locating the room containing the treasure will be up to the adventurers, though the castaways will accompany them inside. The party will have approximately three hours once the attack begins to move around the island and explore the caves. Once the combat between the pirate ships and the dragons has concluded, the party will have to be very quiet and stay well away from the ruin of Karna-tapar, or the dragons will detect them, turning the situation unpleasant quickly.

When Faruq sees that the party has recovered the Scepter of Mistrand, he will become agitated, as if straining to control himself. He will claim only to have been seized by fear of the dragons, and will soon master his emotions. This will be the party's only warning of the events that are to follow.

13.2.4 Outcomes

The possible endings to this adventure are many and varied, and only one will lead directly to the last adventure in the campaign. If the party draws the attention of the dragons they will be hard-pressed to survive the adventure. Even if this is done after the group reaches their ship, the dragons are quite capable of destroying it. If the adventurers did not stop to rescue the castaways, they may well have been the ones sailing blindly into danger, in which case Gregor the Butcher will be the one doing the treasure hunting after rescuing the castaways himself.

Even if everything goes well for the party, if they did not choose to loot the secret treasure they will still miss the third adventure. In this case, the party will return to their port of call fabulously rich, enabling them to fund themselves as real players in pirate politics. In fact, they could decide to return for the rest of the treasure, possibly encountering Faruq and his cohorts from Mistrand attempting to recover the Scepter of Mistrand.

In the event that the party was able to recover the Scepter of Mistrand, and make good their escape from the islands without drawing the attention of the dragons to themselves, play should move directly to the next adventure.

13.3 Episode 3: The Saboteur

As the party's ship clears the last of the shoals around the Mayzri Archipelago, one of the ship's seamen spots a sail on the horizon. The bright red and yellow stripes of the sail declare it as a ship of Mistrand. The telltale sparkle of white-water churning at her sides tells the party that she is under full oar and her course is to intercept the party. The danger of the jagged island reefs has passed and the crew leaps into action, laying on full sails to outrun the pursuer. By the time the party's ship reaches top speed, the sweaty heads of the ship's slave-oarsmen can be clearly made out over her sides and the cracking whip of the overseer can be heard over the sounds of wind and crashing wave. She is a Gathmarig Korburaq, with no ram or spur at the prow, though she appears to carry a capacity compliment of archers and marines. The distance between the ships begins to increase just before arrow range is reached, thanks to a shift in the wind that places the advantage with the party's ship.

The captain of the Gathmarig ship is determined to catch the party's vessel, which he believes to be a scout or merchant of Kosvar's band. Little does he know, the very prize for which all his efforts have been spent is just out of his reach, for the Scepter of Mistrand is on board.

13.3.1 The NPCs

Faruq the Spy

Since the party's recovery of the Scepter, Faruq has been brooding in the bowels of the party's vessel. He must choose the proper moment to make his move on the artifact. The cries of warning from above rouse him from his daze. Scrambling feet on the deck tell him that something is amiss.

He ascends to the deck of the ship to find that the moment is upon him; a ship from his home country is closing on the party's vessel. He prepares himself to die, and whispers a prayer to Kerkassk. He will give his life to sabotage this ship!

The Captain of Mistrand's Merchantman

Anticipation for the fight suddenly turns to bitter cursing as Mistrand's naval captain feels the subtle shifting of the wind that will allow his quarry to escape. An audible groan goes up from the archers massed at the bow of the ship. The captain angrily orders the rowing to stop; better to conserve the energy of his slaves in case the wind shifts again. The ship's seamen put down their weapons and tend the sail. The captain moves to the bow of the ship, watching his prey pull very slowly away from his vessel. He will continue to watch, waiting for the first change in the situation that will give him the advantage. His crew is ready for a fight.

The Castaway Pirates

Much like their former patron, Yanos Kosvar, the castaways now on board the party's ship hold a deep seated hatred for the men of Mistrand. They have spent the past three years shedding the blood of that city's sailors, and they will not hesitate to do it again. If a boarding action seems imminent, they will call for any weapon available, and will fight to the death against the enemy. Though weakened by prolonged hunger, they are professional warriors and should prove a valuable addition to the party's crew.

13.3.2 The Setting

This adventure will consist basically of a long pursuit, possibly followed by a fierce fight aboard the party's ship. A plan of the ship should be prepared before the adventure begins.

13.3.3 Encounters

The Sabotage Attempt

Shortly before the ships begin to separate, as the Gathmarig ship is almost within arrow range, Faruq will suggest that the castaways be given arms in case a defense of the ship becomes necessary. If the party arms the Gathmarig spy, he will take his best opportunity to begin hacking at the stays of the ship's mast. Depending on how long he has to work at the lines, he may cripple or at least slow the ship to the point that Mistrand's ship begins closing the gap. Faruq has no illusions about his chances of defending himself from the crew of the adventurer's ship, so he will not even turn to face his attackers when people try to stop what he's doing. He will simply do as much damage to the rigging of the character's ship as he can before he dies. The chart below can be used to determine the amount of damage done to the ship, depending on the duration of his efforts, and the weapon type given to him. If the party does not arm the castaways, he will look for his best chance to seize a weapon from one of the characters or crew members, and make the same attempt.

Mistrand's Ship Attacks

As soon as the party's ship begins to slow, the captain of the Gathmarig ship will call for the slaves to row at full battle pace. Depending on the amount of damage done to the party's ship, the separation between the ships will decrease at varying rates. Regardless of the ground being gained, once in range of their prey, the Gathmarig archers will concentrate on those crewmen attempting to repair the damaged rigging, thus prolonging the party's trouble and increasing the chance that a boarding will take place.

As the two ships near one another, a fierce projectile battle will ensue with arrows and javelins raining onto the decks of both ships. The Gathmarig captain will attempt to bring his ship alongside that of the party, and grappling attempts will be made. If the battle reaches this point, the Gathmarig captain will begin an earnest attempt to board the party's ship. If the men of Mistrand succeed in taking the ship, the party will most likely be put to death, ending the campaign on a low note.

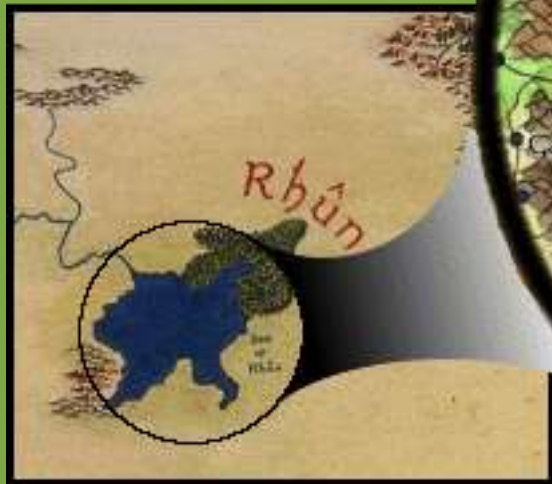
The rival captain has no reason to believe that the Scepter is actually aboard the party's ship, so he will not intentionally sacrifice his ship to capture what he believes to be a simple scout. When casualties reach a critical level (he only has ten seamen remaining), the Gathmarig captain will call off the assault, and allow the party to escape. Should the captain be given any reason to believe that the Scepter of Mistrand is on board the party's ship, the combat will continue until the last Gathmarig sailor and marine is slain.

13.3.4 Outcomes

There are two potential outcomes to this adventure, and to the campaign in general. If the party is captured by the Men of Mistrand, they will be put to death. If they manage to outrun the Gathmarig ship to the southern coast, or if they force the Gathmarig ship to withdraw, they will return safely to port, but will almost immediately find themselves pursued by the servants of Kerkassk. Unless the party is indiscreet with the artifact when they return to port, the Men of Mistrand will in all probability have no way of knowing that the party has the Scepter in their possession until after the Gathmarig can send scouts into the Mayzri Archipelago to learn the real fate of Karna-tapar. In any case, they will eventually find themselves hunted by the servants of Kerkassk until they can find a way to rid themselves of the Scepter. The easiest way for this to occur is for them to try to persuade the new osvoda of Mistrand to pay a ransom for the Scepter. In this case, the Gathmarig leader will agree, but will also certainly try to double-cross the party and recollect the ransom price after the exchange is made.

14 TABLES

The Inland Sea



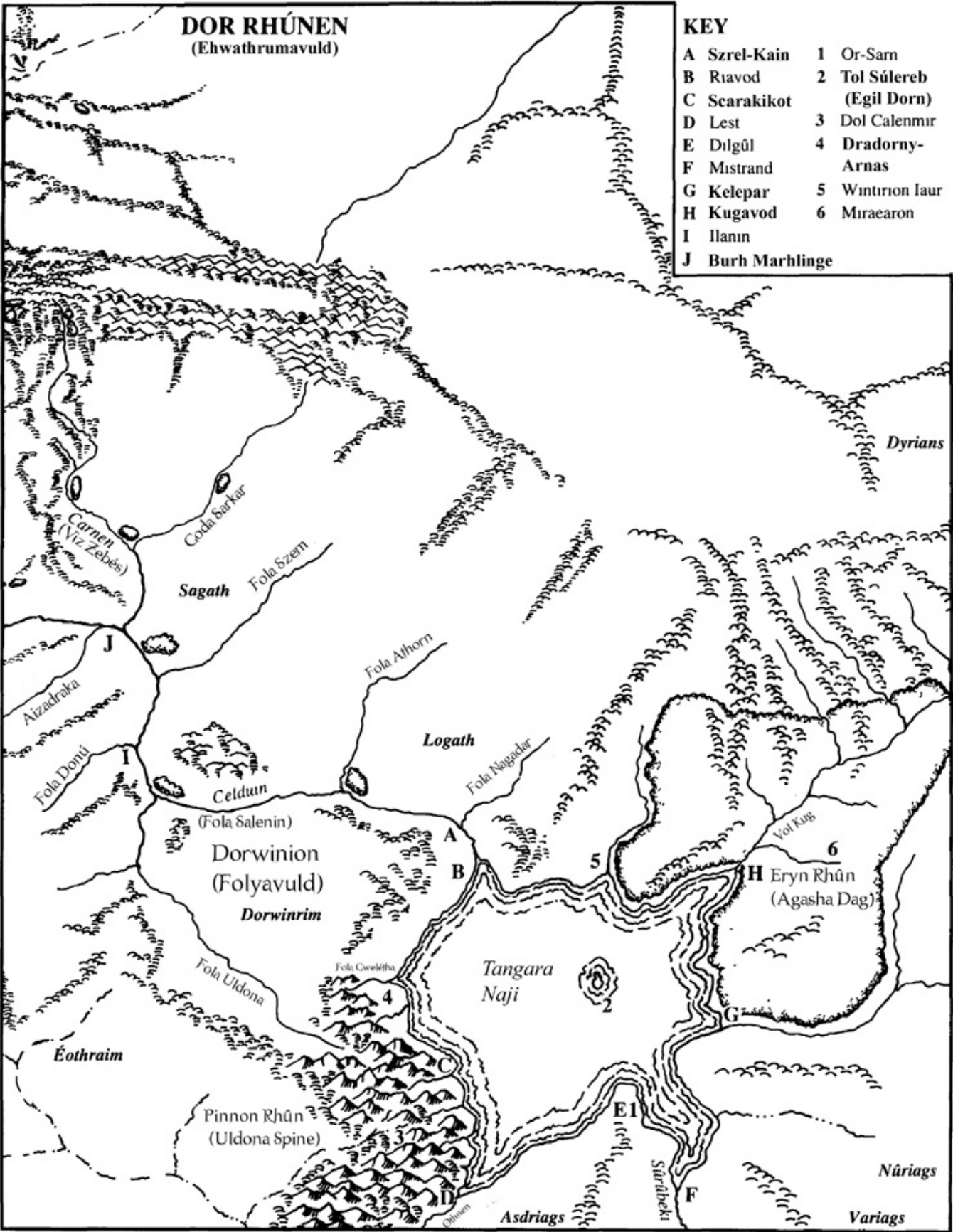
The Inland Sea includes:

- An **A3 FULL-COLOR MAP** depicting the areas around the inland sea of Rhûn
- **2 FULL-COLOR CITY MAPS** showing XXX and YYY
- **3 Exiting adventures** in and around the sea.
- **DETAILED INFORMATION** on the peoples, places, creaturs, politica, and warcraft found around the sea.

The Inland Sea is a Campaign Module which appeared in the "other Hands" magazine by Chris Seeman. Originally entitled "The Shrines of Rhûn", it was expanded to include the people, places and events that shaped the history of the region.

A Campaign Module for







Dor Rhin

Area map

Dollantir

Weld

Althrich

Kardavan

Pardfan

Eldrast

Uldonayan

General

Maltir

Killindrow

Endelmir

Galgorin

Asanori

Mildvan

Losc

Maet

Saelin

Kalperia

Pelenwod

Kaerwold

Kaerst

Pargeltir

Mells End

Askal
(Gyogarasag)

Meldin
(Gyogarasag)



0 16 32 mi



Dor Rhûnen

Area map

