

## The Seven Principalities

The Seven Principalities span the island nations of Aesik, Brun, Hile, Huq, Laon, Mael and Noen. The archipelago sits in a tropical zone and each island originally possessed thick jungles. Much of this growth was cleared away for farmland and grazing pasture but large swaths of dense flora still cover portions of the islands. The current inhabitants (almost exclusively human) descend from a common stock that arrived about 1,000 years ago. They colonized the islands under a royal charter from Durning, hence the name Principalities. With the fall of that kingdom 400 years ago, the Seven Principalities are now independent, but consider themselves part of a loose confederation.

After the minotaur's death, the Principalities resumed the trade of spices and exotic woods with the mainland, and wealthy individuals now once again travel to the islands to enjoy their warmer climate and rejuvenating ocean waters. Increased commerce has also increased competition. The islands aggressively jockey for the largest share of markets. However, a shared heritage of oppression and the threat of pirates prevents this rivalry from turning violent.

## Ecology

With the trade of spices on the rise again, many of the farmers who raised cattle for Asterion have released their stocks into the wild. The aurochs did not fare well against the island's natural predators, but boar and deer have flourished. The deep forests shelter large land lizards and strange, creeping vines the locals know to avoid. Dormant volcanoes dot the islands and play home to wyverns, manticores and rocs. Natives do not climb the peaks.

## Sites of Interest

Ruins across the islands prove an earlier civilization occupied the archipelago before the current inhabitants arrived. These people or creatures were long gone by the time of the colonization. No images of the builders survive, though the design and size of the ruins suggest a humanoid race.

The largest of the Seven Principalities is Huq. As Asterion's home it suffered the worst of his depredations. He ruled the island from an ancient labyrinth fortress built near the summit of a volcano. Huq's people are the most wary of foreigners, and can't understand why their island attracts so much attention.

Adventurers and treasure seekers flock to Huq to explore Asterion's former lair. The edifice is a remnant of the earlier civilization that lived on the island chain. Legends claim the labyrinth hides ancient magic. Others suspect it opens to secret undersea volcano tubes Asterion used to travel between islands without detection.

All the increased comings and goings of merchants, explorers and visitors has attracted pirates. Ships traveling between the mainland and the Principalities present rich targets. A large pirate gang called the Grey Blades plagues the surrounding waters. If anything, there is plenty of work for those willing to sign on as marines.



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