



They regard the natives of Qudra and the Free Cities as spiritually impoverished tyrants who are unfit for rulership.

Government, in corsair terms, is simply the rule of the strong over the weak.

In the absence of a greater ruler, anarchy reigns. Strong and self-reliant, each of the small villages dotting these islands is a power unto itself, usually headed by a retired captain who runs the village with the same resolute iron hand that one would expect from a captain of brigands on the high sea.

The corsairs' main sources of income are smuggling, ship-building, and piracy. The third activity primarily affects shipping along the coast of the Free Cities, but many corsairs also range northward into the barbarian seas, in search of adventure as well as plunder. The corsairs are nomads of the ocean, and they practice what they preach: independence, self-reliance, and willingness to fight. They find state-sanctioned slavery abhorrent, due perhaps in part to fact that their main foes at sea are mamluk patrol craft.

While most settlements in the Corsair Domains are too small to qualify as cities, there is one exception: Hawa, the City of Chaos. That city is described in this chapter.

Clothing of the North: Fashion in northern Zakhara differs slightly from that found elsewhere. In Qudra, where mamluks reign, padded armor is a common sight. In the Free Cities, the influence of foreign visitors is clear. Instead of ankle-length pantaloons, men in the Free Cities often wear pants cut at the knee to reveal tall, cream-colored stockings. Turbans and keffiyehs are rare. Instead, men prefer fezzes, worn in a distinctive color for each city. Men may also don sashes in the same color. While these "city colors" are not a uniform worn by all males in the Free Cities, in general a man with a white fez and sash hails from far-flung Utaqa, while a fellow wearing purple hails from regal Muluk.

The men and women of the Corsair Domains typically wear light-weight cotton blouses and pantaloons, with supple black boots. Veiling for either sex is a matter of personal taste and protection from the elements rather than any moral predisposition. Personal weaponry is commonplace. Even the youngest corsair lad wears a dirk, and even the most lithe young dancer may have a knife tucked away.

Hafayah, City of Secrets

This Free City draws its water from the river Al-Kufr, upon whose banks it is built. No tourist's paradise, Hafayah is a dark, somber place whose residents favor black in their dress and their architecture. A recent bloody coup and the ongoing machinations of rival factions have left Hafaya's citizens suspicious and seemingly joyless toward strangers.

The Ruler: Prince Saba is the legitimate ruler of Hafayah, soon to be its sultan. Since he is only 8, the "gnome in power" is the Most Holy Regent Uqban min Najm (gmP/e/9), who is the prince's advisor as well as his guardian and protector. Prince Saba's short life has been marked by tragedies in "three's." Three years ago, the boy became the sole surviving son of the former sultan, who was poisoned. A bloody and futile coup erupted upon his father's death. The prince had three elder brothers and two elder sisters, all of whom perished during the factional bloodshed, which lasted three weeks. Fearing the worst, Father Uqban, a priest of Najm, had wisely spirited little Prince Saba away to safety. When the other heirs were dead, and word began circulating that a fleet from Qudra was approaching to "restore order," the priest returned to Hafayah with his ward. Persuaded by the threat of a lopsided battle and a cry of public support for the prince, the surviving factional leaders recognized Prince Saba as heir to the throne, and recognized the gnomish priest as the boy's regent and vizier.

Uqban has proved a cagey and wise ruler, though he spends most of his time turning one potential group of troublemakers against another. His information-gathering service is first class, aided by the churches, who prefer that their followers refrain from killing each other over temporal power. Uqban is also aided by wealth, for the upper regions of the terrible Al-Haul River have provided a wealth of agates and other semiprecious stones.

Prince Saba is just eight years away from his majority and the throne. At the moment, he does not want to be sultan. He wants to be a desert rider, a hero of the old tales who blazes a legend across the wastelands, freeing people from tyranny and defeating great monsters. His guardian is distressed by this, but none





of the prince's tutors has been able to sway him from this idea. They have eight more years to work on it.

The Court: Favored members of the regent's court are few and far between. The turnover of courtiers, tutors, advisors, and others has almost become routine, for Uqban does not want anyone (aside from himself) to become firmly entrenched in the bureaucracy. Usually, those working closely with the regent do so only until the first mistake, at which point they find themselves demoted, exiled, or in extreme cases, arrested.

The exception to this general rule is the regent's chief scribe, a female gnoll named Jamalia. A descendent of a tribe of desert gnolls, she has been loyal to Uqban since his days as a rector in the faith of Najm. Uqban grants her the run of the palace. Those seeking the ear of the regent or heir often try to cultivate Jamalia. While she appears simple, open, and honest, she is as cunning as her master, and often works with the gnome to set one party against another.

Population: 120,000.

Features of the City: Hafaya's official color is black, both in clothing, tilework, and architecture. The rich mud of the Al-Haul River bakes dark, and the granite stonework gives the city an oppressive, sinister feeling.

That sinister feeling extends to the people as well. Not enough time has passed since the internal combat following the old sultan's death, and all remember "the Time when the Streets Bled." Intense loyalties are hidden beneath subterfuge, and no one is sure if a comrade would come to his or her aid in time of need. Suspicious and somber, the citizens of Hafaya give out information sparingly. The proximity of the rival city Qadib—stuffed with genies, sha'irs, and members of the Brotherhood of the True Flame—makes the people of Hafaya even more suspicious.

Hafaya is known for its wealth of semiprecious stones, which are harvested from the riverbanks. Most are exported for sale elsewhere. Allegedly, precious stones have also been found, and are in the possession of Uqban min Najm.

Major Products: Clothing, rice, agates and other semiprecious stones.

Armed Forces: 5,000 infantry; 1,200 cavalry; three units of mercenary barbarians, totaling 1,800 men; two

units of mamluks of the Youthful, totaling 1,200 men; fleet of ten ships, small but extremely fast.

Major Mosques: Hajama, Najm, Selan.

Rumors and Lore: The facts behind the poisoning of the Old Sultan, at a dinner entertaining a delegation of ajami wizards from parts north, have never been established. The ajamis were among the first to perish in the bloodshed as the elder children gathered their private factions and forces and turned against each other. The person responsible for the sultan's poisoning has never been identified.

Prince Saba is the surviving direct heir, but some of his brothers had children. Any of these cousins would be willing to take the reins should the prince perish as mysteriously as his father. Uqban is aware of this danger, and he has headed off a number of earlier attempts. In such matters, the priest prefers to work with adventurers who are not tied to the city, especially loners who have few loyalties. The priest can easily deny their actions, or, if need be, dispose of them.

Hawa, City of Chaos

Hawa is the only sizeable settlement among the Corsair Domains. Seamen who have never seen Hawa know its reputation for chaos, given the pirating bent of its inhabitants. The people of Hawa have also dubbed it the City of Stilts, for nearly half its buildings are built directly over the water.

The Ruler: Currently, no single man or woman rules Hawa. Occasionally, a self-proclaimed "pirate king" has achieved power, ruling for a handful of years—which is as long as he can bully or bribe the city's council, the city's only stable governing body. Years ago, Hawa was ruled by a pirate queen, whose reign outlasted that of those who have succeeded her. According to rumor, the council arranged her unlikely death: she drowned.

The Court: Hawa is ruled by a council of the most powerful corsair leaders, some of whom have retired from life at sea. Active corsairs with a seat on the council aid in policy decisions only when they are in port, and their concerns are primarily along the lines of protection rackets and treasure splits. Retired corsairs (who have sprouted land legs) run bars and inns on Hawa, or own ship-building and repair

