

Crimson Empire

Campaign Guide



A fantasy campaign world set on a scorched earth

CRIMSON EMPIRE

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CHAPTER 1 - A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE EMPIRE

"Once, the Emperor's advisors forecast that it would take 1001 errors for the empire to ever fall. Unfortunately, history proved it only took one – arrogance" Am'Al-a-Quna, scholar of the Crimson Empire

The blazing sun beat down on Assad's back as his sand-streaked gauze shirt fluttered in the torrid wind. Battle-scarred hard leather braces protected his extremities from the scorching heat and the many enemies he had faced. The grit that blinded the thin line of soldiers atop the wall of the city of Urthios did not affect him, for he wore a teakwood mask fitted with tinted, polished glass to protect his eyes. In each hand, he held a bronze tulwar, forsaking the blade and shield style practiced by his compatriots. Unlike the defenders of Urthios, Assad fought for the sake of money and the thrill of the fight. Even so, the savagery and butchery of the innocent by the Norcast worshippers of the Kraken sickened him.

Forty feet below him, at the base of the wall, the filthy Norcast raiders had assembled at the gate where they had perceived the defenders stretched thinnest - as Assad had planned. He nodded to his distant compatriots, and then bent low in preparation. The other soldiers unleashed a hail of well-aimed crossbow bolts into the distant swarm below. Assad leapt, aiming for the bare spot opened by the falling throng below him. His landing amid the surprised collection of raiders threw a cloud of dust into the air, obscuring his arrival. In that moment of confusion, Assad smiled behind his mask as he brought his blades about in wide arcs. Screams of pain and confusion filled the air as he enlarged the hole in the Norcast ranks. He could hear the war cry of the other warriors of Urthios as they rappelled down after him. Perhaps they too, would taste blood on their weapons before he was finished with them.

Assad's blades still spun and drank from his enemies as the obscuring cloud of sand suddenly dispersed. Assad turned in his crouch to find himself facing a behemoth of a man. White, waxy skin like the dead covered the giant of a man. In two hands, the towering colossus held the uprooted trunk of a tree and from a third, outstretched hand blew a supernatural breeze that had dispersed Assad's concealing sandy plume.

Assad knew this was no man, but was instead sure it was a mighty Titanborn from Caltheus. This mercenary had joined the Norcast to share in the raiding and plunder.

The giant glowered at the crouched Assad as the setting sun shone on the titanborn's red, glistening hair and crimson steel armor. The titanborn's bore long, blood-slicked hair pulled straight like sharp needles. Likely, the blood came from the villagers the raiders had fell upon only a few hours ago before they had come to assault Urthios.

The war between the veterans of Urthios and the Norcast raiders now seemed distant as the two mercenaries eyed each other. Assad knew this was a worthy foe and the smile slid from his masked lips as he knew the real fight was about to begin.

Eth'Aurthuram – the Eternal Empire. It is also known as the Crimson empire, so named for the blood willingly sacrificed by its own people – and the blood spilled of its enemies - to keep it standing.

Once a fertile, growing kingdom ruled by a god-emperor known as Hameru and his descendants, it has been reduced to a handful of walled cities amid a vast desert filled with dangerous creatures born of the sand, and reptiles known and feared as behemoths. Only the bravest or foolish of caravans dare tarry outside the city walls.

Within the walled fortress-cities of the empire, the descendants of the great children of Hameru have formed powerful lineages that control their citizens with an iron rule. Ancient laws erected to serve and save the people have become at times a yoke about their neck. In such places, the law enslaves the populace into duties and castes inherited to them from their ancestors. In any case, all of humanity knows their place in the great castes erected long ago by Hameru himself.

Yet, these great families cannot dole out rulership to all of their descendants, and it is from the legendary bloodlines that dilettantes, heroes and villains arise – and you. Prepare to tread the desert sands of the empire and beyond in your quest for treasure, power, trade and allies. What blood will you spill for the continuation of the empire – or for yourself?

THE TALE OF AM'AL-A-QUNA

I am Am'Al-a-Quna; the thirty-third scribe of the Empire and personal advisor to his Imperial Majesty, Emperor August Melin Hameru the twenty-third. As instructed by his lordship, I today set pen to parchment to record the state of the lands within and

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without the empire as they exist in this age, as of the year 2548 of the Imperial calendar, on the 13th day of the month of Lenis.

I, like my predecessors, shall begin my survey with the history of the Empire to the current age. Unfortunately, our gap-ridden knowledge of the world before the formation of the Crimson Empire leaves us with many holes, which the enemies of our Lord all too gladly attempt to fill with lies and other falsehoods for their own agendas.

We do know that the Empire once spanned an area far beyond the collection of huddled cities our empire has become. Where there was once a lush land carpeted in forests and well-plough croplands, now there is only scrubland and desert. Though great are our cities raptor-riding defenders, only the most cunning caravans can safely traverse the behemoth and sandling infested deserts between cities. The open lands of Axatheus across the sea are now a haven of pirates and corsairs, where once they were exotic ports of trade in the northern realm of Eth'Authuram. Likewise, the revitalized lands of the Kraken-worshipping blood casters of Norcast are no longer in our grasp. We still weep for the loss of far Savathuram, once a botanical wonder and now the blasted home to the hungry dead that seek to slake their thirst on our citizens. Our greatest woe is perhaps the loss of the great palace at Thyventhos, where assassins cut down the imperial lineage in their prime. Thyventhos still stands amid a land teeming with dragons and passionate elementals, but it no longer answers to the empire at large.

Inhuman races stand ready, greedily casting their otherworldly eyes at the wealth of our cities. The anhiyawen - mere animals given a mockery of the human frame - rule our ancient enemy of Durathast. The spirits of nature we call the jinn have turned the natural world against us in the wooden race of the kazin shazira that stand vigilant against us in the Zapathos Forest at the opposite bounds of the empire. How can we forget our folly with the stony race of kazin ad'hudjar that we created and who then turned against us - taking the Grimjaw Mountains for their own and renaming themselves dwarves? In addition, many would believe that the distant lands of the Tyres Haul - those foul dragons cast in Hameru's blest form he gave to us - are too occupied and distant to be trouble for us, but can we forget that the conquering Norcast came to us from afar either - or that their ranks swelled from mere peasants and fishers?

However, I get ahead of myself. For at the dawn of the Empire, when such a thing was a new wonder to behold, these lands were wild and untamed. The empire sat in a fertile basin, a realm now known as

the Blasted Wastes. The capital of that young empire was the golden city of Asul - great has been it fall!

AN AGE UNDREAMED OF

We know not where the inhuman jinn came from, but we know that Hameru was the first sentient to stride upon the lands of Aurtheum in corporeal form, and in short order he established a simple hut in what would be called the city of Asul. We do not know from where Hek'Tesa came to Hameru, but shortly after his appearance, she came to him out of the wilderness and became his wife.

Before establishing the city, Hameru one day travelled deep into the Hallow mountain range to the highest peak in the chain. There, Hameru meditated and fasted for twelve days, examined his role in existence. On the thirteenth day, Hameru arose from his meditation and with new purpose, carved the laws of Eth'Authuram in stone from the mountain's face. He returned with the great slabs to his humble abode and erected them around his wooden cabin as the first wall, marking the boundary of civilization from the wilderness. Within those walls, the first of Hameru and Hek'Tesa's children were born. Shortly, the simple, solitary hut grew into a community, and as Hameru's children had children - a city arose.

In those early days of the empire, the lands beyond the civilized walls of Asul were the playgrounds of the capricious jinn. The jinn were as feral as the beasts they kept and hunted. Only when these vicious spirits began to take notice of us did they develop sentience. In so doing, they began to understand our civilized ways.

These untamed lands writhed with the wildness of the jinn races and mingled with mortal human servants Hameru fashioned himself or those children borne of his wife, Hek'Tesa. Humanity was adventurous and blindly brave, and brought civilization to the wilds. In their curiosity, spirit jinn brought sentience to the animals of the wild, attempting to duplicate the intelligence and mannerisms they saw in Hameru and his children. We knew these first races as the Savage Tribes, for though they walked and could talk like men, they were still savage animals on the inside. At every turn, the savage tribes of the jinn opposed our expansion into the wilderness. They were a fell match for our cunning warriors until we learned to tame the wild, untransformed beasts of the fields to quell the ranks of the savages. Under our whip and yoke, we domesticated the wild animals, employing in the establishment of our great empire.

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THE FIRST EMPIRE

For over a thousand years, Eth'Authuram grew across the land with Hameru at its head, pushing back the wilderness as it settled the lands to house and feed the ever-growing race of humanity. At every turn, we tamed or pushed back into the dwindling wilderness along with the jinn and their races. As humanity grew more abundant, Hameru gave leave to each of his twelve children to establish a city of their own for their own children. With enemies still on every side, each city still answered to Hameru alone.

However, Hameru was a stern and demanding father, and as the centuries passed, his children grew resentful of his rule. Hameru's wife, Hek'Tesa saw her children kept under Hameru's iron thumb, and in secret, she plotted with her children to allow them to break free of their father's grip. She laid out before them a plan to place their father into a deep sleep, during which her children could rule themselves and come into their own. Unknown to Hek'Tesa, however, the traitorous and youngest son, Urea goaded his siblings to go even farther - to dare to put their father to sleep forever.

THE EMPEROR WAR

At a celebration of the one thousandth year of rule under Hameru, his family gathered in Asul to celebrate the occasion. Each of the twelve children brought a suitable entourage with them and a parade of gifts for their father.

The celebration however, was nothing more than a ruse. At the feast, the children poisoned their father's food, and the caravans the children had brought with them each held an army to overpower those loyal to Hameru.

However, god-like that he was, the poison meant to cast him into dreamless slumber failed to affect Hameru. Quickly realizing the treachery of his children, he castigated them only to receive the violent reply of A'Ragos mighty club across his head. Hameru was able to escape the clutches of his children and fortify himself and most loyal servitors in the bowels of his palace.

Now committed to their treachery, his children laid siege to this fortifications, against the urgings of their mother. In secret, she left her husband's side to beg her children to abandon the siege and rule themselves in their own lands. However, each of her children would not abide neither their father nor another sibling to rule over them and refused to back down, lest one of the others continue and succeed at the siege and take the title of Emperor for themselves.

Hameru, seeing what he believed to be the full treachery of his wife, denounced and cursed Hek'Tesa, banishing her to the city that holds her name to this day.

The siege of Hameru's palace lasted ten bitter years before Hameru finally relented and sued for peace. At the end, he handed over power collectively to his children, but told them that only one of them could be strong enough to rule in his place. He then stepped down and disappeared among the people, unseen again for at least a hundred years.

This offering sparked a bitter struggle between several of the siblings, who fell upon each other and against even those who did not seek to be emperor. For a hundred years, the battle over the throne raged until the children, tired of the struggle, again came before their returning father to seek his blessing in choosing one as the emperor.

Instead, Hameru cursed them for their follies, saying none of them would ever become emperor. Hameru then departed - this time for distant lands, leaving his children in disorder and without clear unity or rulership over their brethren.

THE EMPIRE REFORMED

Hek'Tesa, Hameru's wife, learned of the ebbing war and summoned her children to her city. There, she presented a way around their father's curse to her children. Though her own children could not take the throne directly, her children's children had no such curse upon them. With the second generation's mortal lifespans, the emperorship could pass from one child to another, so that no one emperor would rule over all forever. Hek'Tesa's children praised their mother for her insight. At her request, each brought their firstborn before her so that she could choose the new emperor. Moreover, as Hek'Tesa brought their firstborn forward for her blessing, the assembly chose Hakeem, son of Oidos by unanimous vote to be the first emperor of the new empire.

For the next three hundred years, the empire rebuilt itself and struggled to heal the wounds caused by the Emperor Wars.

THE NINJA WARS

The Empire grew and stabilized for three hundred years before our father Hameru returned from his self-imposed exile. Unfortunately, he did not return peacefully.

Hameru returned with an armada of Misrador ships, brimming with crews that had come fresh from fighting and defeating the hordes of Haadarast.

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Not only was the empire unprepared for Hameru's return, but also as his fleet made landfall in Sunset bay north of the capital of Asul, a full third of the ships underwent a frightening transformation into wooden humanoid giants and continued their march inland to the capital. The remainder of the fleet moved westward and likewise drew upon the land in ships that transformed into wooden giants of war. Their task was to draw off any forces that might attempt to reach the capital to aid in its defense. As the massive war machines waited for all armed forces to attempt to pass by them, the accompanying ninja clan members broke off to sabotage and raze nearby settlements to cause further panic and disruption.

The ensuing fight for the capital was brutal, but swift. Coran, with the aid of A'Raga's legions and Athaxa's teleportation magic managed to bypass their father's westward blockade and relieve Asul. When the Empire finally tore down Hameru's strange war engines that besieged the capital, the father surrendered to his children.

The relentless forces in the west scattered without their leader, but did not surrender. For the next 80 years, the remnants of Hameru's Mistrador fleet raided in the Sea of Athos and the ninja clans established secret assassin and rebel cults that terrorized the lands. Eventually, the ninja clans attempted to free Hameru, but by that time, Hameru reconciled with his children and thwarted the planned escape. Father and children quashed the bloody rebellion in the dungeons beneath Asul. The Twelve freed their father for his aid in ending the clan's terror on the mainland.

A SAVAGE TIME

For many centuries, the jinn races of Aurtheum had simply went about their carefree ways, curious of man's culture but never able to endure it for long. The jinn mocked our form and empire with their own creations and the creation of the savage tribes, and we ever struggled against these inhuman races, sometimes folding them into our civilization and at other times warring incessantly with them.

As the empire civilized and domesticated the lands, the jinn ambled on and away from the empire, back into wilder areas. Only a few jinn spirits could tolerate taking mortal form and surviving in civilized lands. Because of their capricious nature, our initial encounters with them were always guarded and fearful.

As Eth'Authuram pushed farther and farther, the jinn – and their children, the savage tribes, began to push back. As the empire devoured the entire continent of Aurtheum, the land itself began to strike back.

THE KAZIN WAR

The first to strike a blow against Eth'Authuram were the jinn of Far Zabas. Within the deep woods of the Zapathos Forest, the spirit-formed jinn used their magic to bring to life a race of mortal warriors to do battle with the Eth'Authuram. From the very trees of the woods, the jinn created the first kazin shazira. The kazin shazira fell upon Eth'Authuram with a vengeance, but the warriors of the empire managed to fight them to a standstill – but only just.

THE CREATION OF THE DWARVES

The wizards of our empire studied the magic of the jinn and used their magic to fashion the stony kazin ad'hudjar to aid their plight. With the strength of stone and the deep earth behind them, men and kazin ad'hudjar battered back the wooden army of kazin shazira until both men and jinn tired of the destruction. The men of the empire and the kazin shazira established a peace accord, ending the first of the great wars in a stalemate.

The kazin ad'hudjar – too well made for war – revolted against his majesty and betrayed us by founding their own empire and retreated to the stone of the Grimjaw and Hellstorm mountains to fashion their own lands. There, they later took up the Norcast name of dwarves and cast away the culture of Eth'Authuram, fully embracing their warrior culture. With no legitimate opponent to face in warfare, the dwarves became mercenary warriors, selling themselves to whoever had need of their services.

THE RISE OF DURATHAST

Even as the Empire engaged in war against the jinn and kazin shazira, a new threat to the Empire began to grow in the north. The savage tribes, long nothing more than feral tribes of near-human animals began to organize themselves into a growing kingdom of their own.

It was only later that we learned that the youngest son of Hameru, Urea, had aligned himself with the savage tribes in a plot to overthrow his siblings and seize the empire for himself. Urea, denied the throne for himself and with his lineage last in the line of succession to the throne came to believe he would rather see the empire fall if he could not rule over its lands.

In secret Urea aided the five kings to consolidate their power over the new realm of Durathast. He filled them with bile against the great Empire's current emperor; making it seem only, he

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could stem its corruption and domestication of the surrounding lands.

As the wars with the kazin shazira began to wane, in our sickness of war we looked away as Durathast ate at our borders. So weary were we from the war with the kazin shazira that we did not consider to beat back Durathast as she expanded into lands we formerly claimed as our own.

It was not until Emperor Husayen Thyventhos Hameru the Decadent passed from the throne and Dul'Fiqar Ceranthium Hameru the Crusader took his place that we finally turned our spears at Durathast's throat.

THE ALAGOS INCURSION

A few years after the end of the Kazin War, the empires thirst to expand and explore once again caused trouble. When an expedition reached the strange lands of Caltheus, we found ourselves beset by the draconic warriors of Alagos.

These dragon men, at the behest of their dragon overlords, marched through the hundred hills into the heart of Eth'Authuram. We dare not forget that the enemy's advance went unhindered by the nearby dwarven realms. They burned towns and made slaves of those who survived their attacks. For twenty days, the army strode across Eth'Authuram, only feebly opposed by an imperial army gutted to a bare bones force following the Kazin Wars. Though our brothers fought as best they could, there was no hope to stop the dragon men of Alagos until we met them under flag of truce at the city of Urthios.

When the war-weary Empress of Eth'Authuram discovered the reason for their angered march, she recalled the expeditionary fleets and the fierce warriors of Alagos returned home, but by then they left behind a swath of destruction that further drove Eth'Authuram from seeking conflict with other nations.

THE LAST WAR

The Five Demon Kings of Durathast, bolstered with legions of mercenary dwarves and feral anhiyawen struck at the eastern borders of the great Empire, seeking to devour its lands and consume its people.

The war with the jinn exhausted the Empire economically and mentally. This fatigue cost us much land at the start of the Durathast's surprise attack. Even when the capital of Asul was threatened, we only responded by moving the capital to far Thyventhos, away from what we thought was the reach of Durathast's armies.

However, everything changed when Emperor Husayen Thyventhos Hameru passed in his sleep. Poison secreted into a peace offering made from the Five Demon Kings slew the protector of humanity. With the passing of Husayen, Dul'Fiqar Ceran Hameru – a great general in the war against the jinn, ascended the throne and organized not only the defense of Asul, but also rallied the forces to begin pushing the savages back into the wilderness they had come through.

Only after revealing his treachery would we learn Urea had fostered the war in an effort to seize the throne. When Emperor Dul'Fiqar instead seized the throne, it pushed Urea to openly leave the side of the forces of Eth'Authuram and oversee the colonies of Axatheum in an effort to conceal his hand.

The fight to come would quickly devolve into a back-and-forth battle for the next forty years as lands in the east traded hands many times over. The forces of the two empires could not hold the vast swathes of land for too long before one or the other could march forces into undefended areas and seize the populace there for their own means.


THE GREAT DEVASTATION

At the peak of the war against Durathast, Emperor Dul'Fiqar Ceran Hameru turned to the wizards of the realm to find a final solution to destroy Durathast forever. Nevertheless, Urea knew of Ceran's call, and the blighted son plotted a great betrayal to thwart his cousin.

Urea had secretly traveled to the far north, where he had learned of the strange magic of the elementals and dragons. Such magic was powerful but difficult to control. When Urea returned, he taught the precepts to the wizards of Ceran, but not the proper methods to control the magic.

As the war with Durathast rose to a peak, the wizards drew upon their magic to invoke a great blow to the enemy's invading army. With Urea at the helm, the traitor easily unhinged the wizard's control and turned the magic upon them. The uncontrolled font of magic consumed loyal forces as Urea laughed at the terror he had unleashed.

In an instant, the magic turned to a terrible storm that devastated most of the empire of Eth'Authuram. As the storm descended across the empire, the children of Hameru realized the danger they were in. With their own sheer force of will, the children of Hameru expended their own life force to protect the cities of their namesake and their occupants. The great city of Asul, with no child nor Hameru himself to protect it, did not survive the coming storm. Likewise, the great spell-storm consumed the far city of Savathor. The cities of



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Axatheum and Thyventhos were unharmed, as they were under the protection of the traitor, Urea – who knew how to quell the dark storm over the lands that were already bound to him.

Outside the great cities, the unleashed spell-turned-storm swept violently across the land. Verdant plains turned to sand and ash. The magic scoured villages and smaller towns to their foundations. The Great Devastation stripped the life away from the citizens of the empire outside of the protective magic of the great cities. Those inside the walls feared to venture out, and the corpses of the dead rotted undisturbed in the unrelenting rays of the sun. Waters from rivers, lakes and ponds evaporated, never again seen across the parched land. In an instant, the vast empire turned to a realm of sand-blasted desert dotted by twelve cities struggling to survive.

THE SUNDERING OF THE EMPIRE

With the fertile lands of the empire turned to dust, and the entire imperial lineage slain with a single spell, chaos erupted across the empire as Urea struggled against the remaining sons and daughters of Hameru's children to bring the remnants of the Empire under his control.

Overnight, the empire shattered into a dozen kingdoms vying for control of what remained. None of the cities would willingly bow to Urea, and the new deserts made any siege or protracted war impossible. Some, such as our own illustrious emperor's ancestors, claimed legitimate lineage back to a child of Hameru, while others like the peasant-born corsairs of Axatheum simply sought to enforce their will on what land they could. In the wars to control the city-states of the Empire, Urea himself faltered and vanished – his fate unknown.

For the next hundred years, the children of Hameru struggled to rebuild their world, even as the new races moved in to fill the voids left behind.

THE STRIDER WAR

A hundred years after the Great Devastation, a new threat to humanity appeared. From the blasted wastes, great giants began to appear – first in small communities, and then after devouring the inhabitants in rural areas, these giants began to move against the great cities.

Were it not for the elite faris knights and their behemoth mounts, the great cities would have fallen to their ravenous appetites. Though it was a long and hard-fought war, the great heroes of the empires slowly battered the so-called Striders back and discovered their source – the Jinn lord Goethe,

who had seized the iron throne of ancient Asul and made the ruined city his own.

It was only by the hand of the twelve united cities that we eventually drove Goethe's hungering legions back and crushed his dream of driving humanity from the deserts of Eth'Authuram. Goethe's dream not only failed – it backfired – for it united the kingdom once again as its people crowned a new Emperor to rule the rejoined kingdom. Slowly, and with much effort, Eth'Authuram rose once again.

THE COMING OF NORCAST

Exactly four hundred and one years after the Strider Wars, a new breed of man invaded the shores of Aurtheum. Pale-skinned, with red-rimmed eyes and worshipping a god unto which they made bloody sacrifices, the raiders of Nuass fell upon the continent and seized a section of forgotten wasteland on the far side of the Grimjaw Mountains.

To the amazement of all but the Norcast themselves, their bloody sacrifices brought new life – and many converts – to the once barren lands. Raiders who might have been quickly repelled by the fleet of Eth'Authuram became entrenched as saviors of their small realm. Within a scant fifty years, Norcast had established three vast cities and the worship of the Kraken was growing at a nigh-unstoppable rate.

Norcast may have grown without bounds had it not been for its ill-planned war against Coranthius. Though Norcast's initial raids devastated two of Coranthius's cities, its navy escaped to take the fight to Norcast itself. Aided by our own forces of the rebuilt empire, we put an end to Norcast's dreams of expansive conquest. Now the realm of the Kraken holds fast to its own lands and can no longer threaten to expand, and it is slowly devouring itself with its butchery of its own bloody religion.

THE REDISCOVERY OF SAVATHURAM

During the rise of the worship of the Kraken, it came to our attention that far Savathuram, thought lost in the Great Devastation, had seemingly survived. Delegates from that far realm came to the Empire to seek to reopen trade and return to the Empire – or so we thought.

Who knows how many far Savathuram tricked our people into traveling to that blasted realm before the awful truth came to light – that it was an unholy wasteland filled with the undead who hungered for the lives of the living.

The Caliph of Hek'Tesa revealed their deception and taught many the tricks to destroy these abominable undead. Yet there are still many either

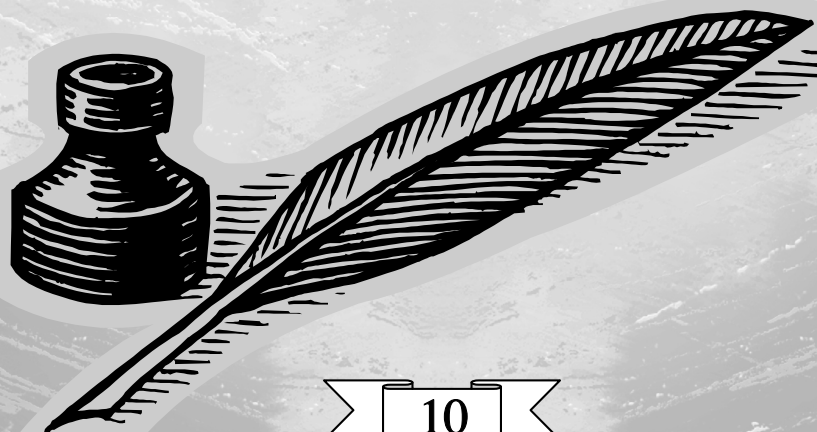
CRIMSON EMPIRE

who are unaware of this threat or who rally to the awakened dead hoping for bestowment of some form of immortality.

THE RETURN TO GLORY

Eth'Authuram stands on the precipice of returning to the Empire that once spanned Aurtheum and beyond. Though confronted on all sides by the enemies of our unity, unlike only a few centuries past, we know much about our scattered brethren and already have engaged them in returning under the glory of the empire. When the enlightened sons and daughters of Hameru see the wisdom of unity, we shall unite to crush our inhuman enemies. Humanity will once again bring about an empire far larger and stronger than any past endeavor.

All hail to the glory of our Emperor, this 13th day of Lenis, in the 2548th year of the Imperial calendar.



CHAPTER 2 - RACES OF THE EMPIRE

Ghalib's form twisted and distorted, ivory horns protruding from his raven black hair even as his sandaled feet transformed into cloven hooves. As Ghalib advanced, the winsome Budur retreated in revulsion at his manifested hellchilde form. "There will be no bargaining," Ghalib hissed, his clawed left hand still upon the saber in his belt. "You will deny me no longer," he announced licking his lips.

"For the longest time, I had attempted to deny my father's heritage," he spat. "I labored for years as your father's lowly servant - for but a niggling coin dispensed here or there." Ghalib advanced another step, and Budur retreated, "He thought to rid himself of me by sending me to Axatheum on a boat laden with spices and other expensive goods." He paused to remember, "I thought I was being honored, to accompany such a prestigious treasure," he stated, his reminiscence turning to a scowl, "Only to find the ship beset by corsairs. Had it not been for my unusual talent," he stated, flexing his yellow-nailed clawed hand, "They would have slain me with the rest of the crew. I survived," he paused, "No - thrived - by embracing the heritage of my father. I eventually returned, to find myself scorned and held in contempt for what I had been forced to become."

"You died that day at sea," Budur countered, "what returned was not human. My father turned you away not because of your demonic features, but for the demons inside."

Ghalib's sharpened teeth ground together at her words. He had struggled long and hard, at first to return home to Eth-Authurum and then to surround himself in opulence and become an equal to the family of Artur. When he had returned home, he accumulated enough that he dared hope to buy her hand in marriage. His hatred of his own situation had grown when her father had continued to refuse him his right. In response, his corsair fleet had absconded with the last of the Artur's trade goods on their last sea voyage, netting her father in debtor's prison by crushing the last of the family's funds after the loss of the ship and goods to Ghalib's predations. Surely, divested of the life she had long enjoyed, Budur would have no choice but to marry him.

The hellchilde had come to gloat and seize the spoils of his efforts. "Now I will be the master of

the Artur estate and soon all of Melin'jla will bow before the new Prince of Epsea'on."

Ghalib reached his free three-fingered hand to grasp Budur by the wrist, but instead found himself pummeled across the room by an unseen force. As he righted himself and wiped the trickle of blood from his mouth, red flame ignited the tip of each hair upon his head, as if each strand were a lit match.

The coins that adorned Budur's veil jingled slightly as she retorted, "You are not the only one who is not what she appears." She raised her hands and a flickering blue flame that did her no harm immediately engulfed her. "I am Budur Aurtur Melin Hameru; mageborn of firstborn son Valise Artur Melin Hameru and secondborn daughter Kasil Epsea Oid Hameru - and I will not be cowed by a half-breed upstart such as you."

Ghalib roared inhumanly. A wicked, barbed bronze trident shrouded in hellish flames appeared in his hand. He pointed the crass weapon at Budur and muttered words of the blackest magic. The spell aimed at Budur seemed to catch in the flickering blue flames, materializing as red arcane symbols before melting away into nothing in protective fire. Before he could speak again, Budur responded, her lithe form dancing and her supple fingers forming the arcane symbols of her response. No word accompanied her swaying movements that she directed at the hellchilde. The outward thrust of her hand plunged Ghalib across the room, knocking the bronze trident from his hand.

"You never understood the importance of a good defense," she finally responded as Ghalib clasped his sides in pain, "But you were correct that there will be no bargaining."

INTRODUCTIONS

It is a sobering thought that the entire world decided to copy our form. We should not debase ourselves by seeking to hold lesser forms in higher regards than our own.

- Am'Al-a-Quna, scholar of the Crimson Empire

My lord, though clearly humanity is the greatest of all races in the empire, it is easiest to catalogue the various races in alphabetical order. I mean no disrespect to our honorable Father's efforts by not listing our esteemed race first.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

ANHIYAWEN

Savages!?! It is not we who have placed yokes upon our brothers or beaten them with whips. Neither have we turned our grasslands to sandy wastelands with magic beyond our control. Look to your own kind before you would insult us.

- Tatanka Torr, Demon Lord of Durathast.

OVERVIEW

Anhiyawen is a generic term for a variety of anthropomorphic races created by the ancient jinn. Usually referred to as “savages” or awakened beasts, anhiyawen are humanoids with animalistic features. They jinn gifted them with intelligence and human form, and they are still children compared to the grandeur we have achieved in our own empire.

PHYSICAL QUALITIES

Anhiyawen have varying appearance based on their “stock”. They tend to take after the animal they resemble in build, if not coloration. Anhiyawen have the head, tail and covering of the animal they resemble – the latter being fur, scales or the like.

Depending on the stock the anhiyawen derives from, an anhiyawen can range in height from 5’ 5” up to 7’ 1”, with females generally an inch or two shorter. Weight varies by subspecies, but can range from a slim 120 lbs. to over 300 lbs. Females tend to be about 20% lighter than most males.

Most anhiyawen have skin the same color as the animal they resemble, though this is not always true; many subspecies among a single stock can have wildly different colors all along the rainbow.

Anhiyawen eye color and shape vary, but they usually are yellow, brown or blue and are generally larger and/or more rounded than usual. A small percentage of anhiyawen have different colored eyes – about 2% of the population.

Most anhiyawen males can grow beards. Females tend to have unusually long hair – considering the stock they resemble - on their head.

CULTURE

Anhiyawen culture is quite varied, but tends to consist of primitive nomadic tribes who have great reverence for the natural world around them and a general disdain of urban civilization. Most anhiyawen tribes revolve around a single species, though some of the different tribes

trade, war and even intermarry with one another. Offspring from two different subspecies do not gain the traits of both parents, but instead take after one parent or the other (usually that of the mother).

“Civilized” anhiyawen sometimes dwell in populous areas, often within the larger cities. Civilized anhiyawen often form ghettos catering to their own kind in these civilized areas. Raised in a cultured society, such anhiyawen usually adopt the habits and mores of those surrounding them. However, their savage tempers and habits are well known. Many live in general poverty, with many taking up unsavory skills or professions.

SUBTYPES

Below is a list of a few of the major breeds of the anhiyawen.

Anuri: These rustic frog folk dwell in the Green Mountains of the Watered Wastes.

Baeron: These cunning and deceitful baboon folk stalk the Red Woods of the Fingerling.

Equinal: These nomadic horse folk sorcerers roam the plains of the Watered Wastes.

Garuda: These secretive eagle-like folk dwell in the Shadow Mountains of the Wild Wastes.

Gecko: These ascetic hunter-gatherers dwell in the massive trees of the Fingerling.

Grepthan: Carnivorous ape stock who are slaves to the Rakshasa jinn

Hyaenid: These scavenging hyena folk haunt the Wild Wastes and Plains of War.

Kanuak: Sociable dog stock of the Settled Lands

Leonin: Sagely lion stock of the Lost Plain

Paerahim: Peaceful warrior-mystics elephant stock of the Paerahim lands.

Tatanka: Bison stock gurus of the Verdant Plains and Wild Wastes.

Taurii: These noble warrior bovine folk protect the lower plains of Durathast.

Tygaar: Brutal, war-like tiger stock of the Wild Wastes

Usagi: Peaceful, peasant rabbit stock of Misrador

Wolven: Battle-lusty wolf stock of the Plains of War

Zecora: These nomadic, shamanistic zebra folk roam the Wilde Wastes.



CRIMSON EMPIRE

DRAEMANI

There is not a 'we', for the Draemani are not a race. Instead, I, and those like me are like a mirror men and kazin shazira hold up and see their own bright reflection - but fail to notice the silver and the glass before them.

- Evald Iltz, draemani minstrel after a performance at the Drunken Camel

OVERVIEW

Also known as half-breeds, draemani are the offspring of star-crossed human and "kazin" parents – kazin shazira, dwarf, anhiyawen, or sa'heer-jinn. Draemani gain some of the grace of their non-human parent and the robustness and adaptabilities of humans. Pity them if you will, but do not underestimate them.

PHYSICAL QUALITIES

Draemani have human-like frames, though they tend to be slightly slimmer. Height averages 5' 10" to 6' 2" with females being about an inch shorter. Weight averages 160-190 lbs., with females about 60 lbs. lighter. Draemani skin color tends to favor the human parent, though generally a shade lighter. However, draemani are never albino. Eye color is the human norm, with purple or silver eyes showing up on occasion. Likewise, draemani hair color tends to favor the human parent and color norm, though white hair pops up on occasion. They sometimes sport other features of their non-human parentage, usually manifesting in unusual ears, nose or mouth attributes. Those with anhiyawen blood may sport claws and/or fangs.

Draemani males only grow beards if they willfully choose to do so. It takes the normal amount of time for a beard to grow, but if a draemani desires, they may cause their beard to wither away to a clean-shaven face after a night's rest.

CULTURE

Draemani are truly individuals, born singly to the union of human and non-human. As such, most draemani tend to live within human or kazin communities, where they are often outsiders among their own kind.

However, a draemani's upbringing in a dual heritage household opens their eyes to many possibilities and gives them an outsider's eye to their own culture. Often, Draemani make excellent diplomats or troubleshooters. This insight into other, differing cultures often allows them to overcome barriers of prejudice and standoffishness among others.



CRIMSON EMPIRE

DWARF (KAZIN AD'HUJAR)

Greetings, valued lords of Urthios. I, Drac Norvarid, son of Gulday, speak on behalf of trade Guild Norvarid of Jormangdar. Recently you requested us to deliver unto you thirty axes of tempered steel with silver-edged blades to fight off the berserkers of Norcast. After two fortnights, we have yet to receive payment for our goods. If we do not receive our just payment before the night of the full moon, we shall deliver unto you fifty spears held in Norvarid hands, and you will need never fear the Norcast berserkers ever again.

-A missive from Drac Norvarid the Unconquered, to the merchant house Akandos of Urthios

OVERVIEW

Crafted for war against the kazin shazira, dwarves are dour spirits of the earth encased in bodies of living stone made flesh.

PHYSICAL TRAITS

Dwarves tend to be stocky, averaging 4' 2" to 4' 6" in height and about 200-250 lbs. They have stone-colored skin, ranging from an earthy sandstone color through various shades of granite gray and into coal black colors. Noble or royal dwarves have glossy, marbled skin in colors ranging from white, black or green and in extremely rare cases, with gold flecking. Some extremely rare dwarf lineages have translucent skin, as if they were made of crystals or other gemstones. Dwarven eyes tend to steel gray, brown or black with gray or golden flecks. Some dwarves are naturally bald or may sport hair in earthy tones, gray or stark black colors. A dwarf with hair tends to wear it long and/or braided.

Male dwarf are usually bearded. Most dwarven males revere their beards and will trim and decorate them in intricate patterns.

CLANS

The various dwarves organize themselves into clans. These clans consist of "blood" relatives with similar appearance. Clans dedicate themselves to single aspect of artisanship. However, influential or large clans occasionally absorb other families of various crafts. Most clans swear their fealty to a single ruling lineage, though those among the lowest clans prefer to perform mercenary work – usually as warriors or guards for more wealthy and prestigious clans.

CULTURE

Dwarves tend to live in defensive holds built into the sides of mountains or under hills. There, they toil to mine the earth of precious metals and craft it into a fusion of art and practical use, some of which they are willing to part with in trade for other things they need from the other races.

While holdings can vary greatly, most tend towards rigid, lawful hierarchal societies where one's skill as an artisan determines social rank. Guilds are

the most common organization in the hold, each dedicated to a particular craft. These crafts are usually dedicated to a particular form of metalworking, but can also include other crafts such as brewing, carpentry, stonemason and even soldiering.

SUBTYPES

Dwarves abhor disfiguration and mutation among their own race, and go out of their way to ensure the purity of their kind. However, at least two dwarven subtypes have arisen from their kind.

Duergar: These dwarves have succumbed to their bloodlust for battle, seeking it every moment of their waking lives.

Pech: These unfortunate dwarves suffer from a curse that slowly transforms them back to solid stone.



CRIMSON EMPIRE

HELLCHILDE

I do not believe you understand the proper chain of command. I lead, you die at my command.

- Executor Demarus, hellchilde noble of Axath'os

OVERVIEW

Hellchilde are the offspring of humans and powerful beings, whether that spirit is demonic, jinn, genie or even celestial (despite the name). Though they contain the spark of Hameru, they are not truly human, and therefore we must remember they are abominations.

PHYSICAL TRAITS

Hellchilde closely match humans, though they tend to be almost albino. The average height of a hellchilde is 5' 10" to 6' 2", with females about a half-inch to an inch shorter. Weight averages 160-200 lbs., with females about 50 lbs. lighter.

The most noticeable feature of hellchilde is the fact that they universally have near bone-white skin and white hair. Most have the pink eyes of an albino - though some display gray, green and yellow eyes.

Hellchilde males are incapable of growing beards.

All hellchilde have a "revealed" form, a form that manifests itself during time of emotional stress or when they channel magical power.

When "revealed", a hellchilde can grow in stature as much as five inches, increasing in weight by about 20%. The hellchilde's skin color becomes fiery red (demonic decent), sky blue (genie decent), golden (celestial decent) or another color, depending on the otherworldly parentage they are descended from. A hellchilde's hair color also takes on a dramatic change - black for demonic offspring, a whitish-blue for genie descent, silver for celestial descent or other colors based on their otherworldly parent. In revealed form, a male hellchilde might sport a beard or other facial hair.

Besides the change in height and skin tone, the hellchilde also gains some physical qualities of their otherworldly parent - a demonic hellchilde might sport prominent horns, a barbed tail and/or cloven hooves. A genie hellchilde's body might emit steam as their legs fade into mist, and a celestial hellchilde's body might take on a holy radiance as they become beautiful beyond words.

CULTURE

Many societies fear hellchilde; others may hunt and seek to destroy out of fear of what hellchilde may grow to become. In isolated areas, hellchilde are often outcasts from society. In areas where hellchilde are somewhat common, they are usually members of high society and receive special protection - and perhaps advantages - due to their special nature.

Those hellchilde who do survive to adulthood tend to be careful to whom they reveal their otherworldly nature, and in places where hellchilde are common, they tend to organize into secret societies for mutual companionship as well as protection.

SUBTYPES

Sages classify Hellchilde by their non-human parentage. Hellchilde regularly seek others of their kind out, gather in groups, and breed among these subdivisions.

Cambion: These are the "true" hellchilde have demonic parentage and often spend the majority of their life in their more powerful "revealed" forms.

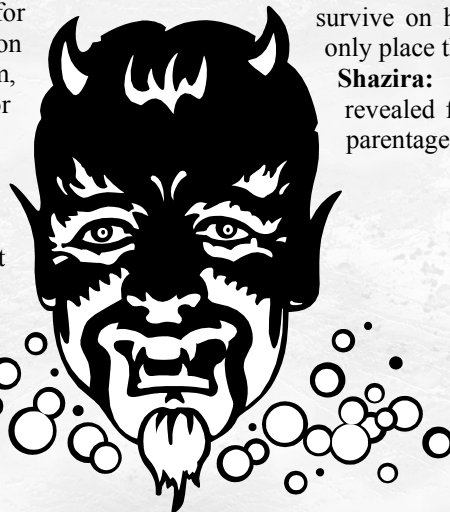
Chthonian: These offspring bear the ropy tentacles of their Kraken father in their revealed form, and are disturbingly common in Norcast.

Drakken: By means unknown, these hellchilde of Alagos possess a draconic parentage, with a revealed draconic form that could barely pass as humanoid.

Nephilim: These rare hellchilde are the result of ancestors who have returned from Nirvana. They sport perfect bodies and, in some cases, the wings of angels.

Rakshasa: These hellchilde not only sport jinn blood, but also bear a curse that they may only survive on human flesh. Haadarast is the only place they dwell.

Shazira: These "half-jinni" sports a revealed form that varies based on their parentage's affinity to the elements.



CRIMSON EMPIRE

HUMAN

I am a child of Hameru; treat me with the respect I deserve. Those followers of the Kraken are dogs, and it was mercy to put them down.

- The last words of Ysellef the Butcher, just prior to his beheading.

OVERVIEW

The children of Hameru are heirs to the world of Aurtheum and beyond. No other race can match humanity in intelligence, craft or civilization for they lack the spark of the one who made us.

PHYSICAL TRAITS

Humans have a wide range of body frames, with no particular body frame dominating. Height ranges from an average of 5' 10" upwards to 6' 5", with females being a few inches shorter. Average weight is around 175-220 lbs, again with females about 65 lbs. lighter.

Most humans tend to have earthy toned skin color, ranging from pale, near-white skin through increasingly deeper browns to a near-black skin tone. Albinism is possible, but rare, making up less than 5% of the population. Hair ranges from a platinum blonde through browns, reds and blacks and can be straight, kinked or curly. Eyes range in color including gray, light blue, green and brown. In some areas – especially Misrador, epicanthic folds found among the inhabitants.

Male humans may have beards, with the style and presence of a beard highly subject to the local culture.

CULTURE

Human culture varies dramatically, ranging from primitive hunter-gatherers to vast nations wielding awesome power. While most human cultures are male-dominated, this is not always the case.

In general, humans seek to “improve” themselves wherever possible, always looking for newer, better and more efficient ways to get things done. Human societies who do not strive to advance often succumb to those societies that are on the move.

SUBTYPES

While there is great diversity among all of Hameru's children, some bloodlines have developed distinctive features strongly tied to their parentage.

Uese: Dark of skin, the Uese are the surviving children of Urea and dwell in the Watered Wastes as mostly nomad or in the most primitive of mud-thatched villages.

Miza: Born of Hameru's second wife, Misrador, the Miza are slightly shorter, have a slightly yellowish tint their skin and have epicanthic folds.

Thyven: Purported to be the children of Thyventhos, they make up the majority of the pale-skinned, red-haired raiders of Norcast.



CRIMSON EMPIRE

KAZIN SHAZIRA

The woods do not call to us. We are the woods, and they are us. When you injure one, you injure us both.

- Pren'dail Arcanis, kazin shazira woodsman of Far Zabas

OVERVIEW

Born from the ancient woods of the land, the jinn designed kazin shazira as powerful warriors and spellcasters. They are a long-lived race, which seem in little hurry to involve themselves in the affairs of the world around them. We must never forget they were borne to battle against us.

PHYSICAL TRAITS

Kazin shazira tend to either be unusually tall or fairly short, but lithe regardless of height. Height ranges from 5' 7" to 6' 7", with females of generally equal height. Weight tends to range from 90-120 lbs.

Kazin shazira have skin tones that resemble the bark of trees. Nobility and royalty imbibe alchemical mixtures of herbs that blanch their skin to a bone white color. Kazin shazira have eye colors that run the range of the color spectrum. Further, the color of their eyes often tints to match their mood. A kazin shazira's hair appears is made either of leaves or of grass-like tendrils that changes color with the season.

Male kazin shazira are unable to grow beards or moustaches.

SEASONS

Kazin shazira attune to the natural seasons around them. They go through phases resembling those of deciduous trees; in their spring phase, their skin takes a bright hue and smooth appearance and flowers found mixed in their hair. In the summer phase, they retain the bright skin colors, though darker colored "cracks", like the wrinkling of bark, begins to appear across their skin. In the fall phase, these cracks become more prominent as the skin seems to become weathered and aged. Likewise, the kazin shazira's hair naturally takes on the hue of autumn leaves. In their winter state, the kazin shazira's skin becomes dull and gnarled looking, like that of a dead tree. The kazin shazira's hair become near white and in some individuals, may fall out completely.

CULTURE

Kazin shazira are free-loving creatures, and tend to organize themselves into conclaves. These

conclaves consist of members of the same family, along with non-kazin shazira befriended and accepted into the community. To differentiate between kazin shazira and non-kazin shazira in conclaves, they are further broken down into a household – which refers to all the kazin shazira of a single parentage. A household's companions refer to the group's non-kazin shazira.



SUBTYPES

Sometimes, the wild passions of the kazin shazira get the better of them, and they become stuck in a "season" sort of existence that is tied to their emotional state. Though it is possible for a kazin shazira to move on and return to normal, there are records of an unfortunate few that are eternally entrenched in their current state.

Autumn: Clever and secretive, these kazin are prone to theft and kidnapping for their own dark desires.

Solstice: Rarest of all kazin shazira, these depraved, albino individuals hate all other living things and seek to destroy them – sometimes falling in with or commanding undead.

Spring: Full of capriciousness, these kazin make a life of celebrating, teasing and tormenting others.

Summer: Drunk on magical power, these kazin cast spells with wild abandon.

Winter: In perpetual mourning, these kazin are often driven by loss.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

MAGEBORN

I am a child of storm; my father is lord of Zordin Keep and my mother a firstborn noble of A'lak Ahera. Do not tempt my fury – or that of my family.

- Ezzar Holast Coran Hameru, to a foolish Norcast raider who attempted to ransom him

OVERVIEW

Mageborn are humans who can trace their lineage back to the Twelve as a long lineage of firstborn children. Their ability to wield sorcery matches that of those who founded the Empire itself, and is inherited directly from their parents, who are themselves powerful sorcerers as well.

PHYSICAL TRAITS

Mageborn are identical to humans in outward appearance. They average a height of 5' 10" to 6' 2", with females one to two inches shorter. Weight averages 170-210 lbs., with females about 60 lbs. lighter.

Mageborn tend to have slightly lighter colored skin compared to their parents, ranging from near white through various earthen tan colors to a charcoal gray color. Albinism among mageborn is more common than in humanity, up to about 30%. In addition, most mageborn sport some sort of strangely shaped birthmark that denotes their inherent magical abilities. Mageborn have human-ranged hair and eye color, though red hair and green eyes seems to be more common among mageborn. For some unknown reason, mageborn do not go bald.

Male mageborn can grow beards, but rarely grow full beards. If they sport facial hair, it is usually as a goatee.

CULTURE

Mageborn normally co-exist in human cultures, though there are some rare communities that exist of long lines of mageborn-only lineages.

Mageborn typically develop an air of superiority over humanity, and in some cases, they may even come to believe they have the right to rule over common humans. This can range from slight bigotry and favoritism towards mageborn, or can develop into full-scale slavery and subjugation of humanity under the heel of mageborn elite.



CRIMSON EMPIRE

Nomi

I am sorry for the three-hour delay, it could not be helped. The governor will see you now. Be quick, you only have five minutes to address him. No, I don't believe he was snoring that loudly.

- Hederic, nomi assistant to governor Tomolocas, after the latter's nap

OVERVIEW

Nomi are small, prankish humanoids who are the offspring of unions between kazin shazira and dwarf. They possess the carefree nature of kazin shazira and the dwarven fondness of treasure and skills at crafting. They are abominations we must always be on guard against for they are borne of two inhuman races that share enmity against us.

PHYSICAL TRAITS

Nomi are generally thin and wiry like short kazin shazira, though some clans tend toward a portly frame like their dwarven ancestors. Average height is 2' 6" to 3' 2", with females being a mere half-inch shorter than males. Average weight is about 25-30 lbs.

Nomi generally have ruddy skin, with their most prominent feature being their oversized nose. Nomi generally have either white or earth-colored hair and eye color tends to be slate blue, gray or brown.

Male nomi can grow beards and are often as proud of them as dwarf.

CULTURE

Nomi are industrious and their skill at artisanship rivals that of the dwarf. Nevertheless, they are equally capable of frolicking and enjoying themselves as much as any kazin shazira. Nomi fill workshops with the whimsical as well as the functional. These shops amaze with contraptions and experimental clockwork gadgets found nowhere else.

Nomi generally live in clans isolated from other races; their small size tends to make their homes unsuitable for larger individuals to maneuver through comfortably. They are also prone to pranks and practical jokes that few outside of their own kind tend to appreciate after long.



CRIMSON EMPIRE

ORKAN (GEN'MA)

I owe no one for what I am today. What I have I have taken by my own hand. Can you say the same of yourself?

- Teg the orkan, to a Eth'Authuram noble

OVERVIEW

Orkans are the offspring of human and dark jinn unions or, more commonly, the creation of the blood magic of the Norcast. Gen'ma (foul blood) is common term used to derogatorily refer to them. They are dangerous beasts masquerading as humans and it is right to destroy them on sight.

PHYSICAL TRAITS

Orkans tend toward bulky, towering frames. Height ranges from an average of 6' to 6' 7", with females being an inch or two shorter. Average weight is around 200-250 lbs. Further, gross obesity among orkans is common, but not rampant, pushing some orkans into a weight category of up to 500 lbs.

Orkans tend to have grayish to olive skin and skull-like noses. Their hair tends to be long, black and greasy, though greenish or gray hair can occur in rare instances. Orkans tend to have dark brown, red, yellow or black eyes. About 20% of orkans have different eye colors, with somewhere near 1% having one steel-blue eye from their human descent.

Male orkans cannot grow full beards but can sport a line of hair that grows along the length of the cheek from ear to chin, or cropped as a goatee.

CULTURE

Orkans tend to be rough and cruel, firmly believing in only the fit should survive, and the pleasures of life belong to those willful enough to seize them.

Orkans rarely develop their own communities, instead found in small groups among other communities that will tolerate their presence. There, they often hire themselves out as mercenaries, warriors or laborers. It is uncommon for them to take "thinking" jobs, and they rarely think twice about morally questionable employment.





CRIMSON EMPIRE

CRIMSON EMPIRE

SA'HEER-JINN

A thousand pardons, O great one. I had no idea it meant so much to you. It's still not worth more than five copper to everyone else.

- Izore the fence, to a pickpocket attempting to sell his latest acquisition

OVERVIEW

Sa'heer-jinn, sometimes colloquially called halflings, are lesser jinn spirits that have elected to take humanoid form. They are hardy and generally courageous fellows, but prone towards mischief to outsiders. Though they are generally harmless, we must remember they are jinn, and their mortal form is but a temporary state of being for them.

PHYSICAL TRAITS

Sa'heer-jinn tend toward being slightly portly, with the general height and frame of an 8-year-old human child. Height averages 3' 6" to 3' 9" for both males and females. Weight averages 30-45 lbs for males, with females about 5 lbs. lighter.

Sa'heer-jinn tend to have dark brown skins, ranging from a walnut to a deep umber color, though there have been some clans with lighter or even darker skin tones encountered. Sa'heer-jinn hair tends to be curly and deep brown to reddish in color. Extremely light-skinned sa'heer-jinn may have sandy blonde hair. The eyes of sa'heer-jinn tend to be brown or green, though sa'heer-jinn with light complexions exist with slate blue eyes.

Sa'heer-jinn males can grow beards, though they grow only along the chin line and tend to curl upwards. For this reason, few sa'heer-jinn wear beards that are longer than an inch or so.

CULTURE

Sa'heer-jinn live in small communities that are part of the surrounding wilderness. Some communities build in tree houses; others exist as floating villages upon lakes or protruding into rivers. There are even communities consisting of cozy warren mazes built underground. While there are many sa'heer-jinn-only communities, sa'heer-jinn are generally gregarious enough that they build their homes on the outskirts of other communities and willingly trade with almost any society.

Due to their mischievous nature, sa'heer-jinn have a reputation among humans as pickpockets, swindlers and sneak thieves. While sa'heer-jinn have peculiar rules about possessions and a deep-seated curiosity and adventurous streak, this reputation is generally undeserved; most sa'heer-jinn are law-abiding and respectful of other's property. They

generally self-regulate their own communities and have little love for bureaucrats or bullies (which they tend to see as the same).



CRIMSON EMPIRE

TITANBORN

Ha! This is but a gentle breeze. In Caltheus, we have storms that rend mountains in twain.

- Olaph Titanborn, to a comrade during a storm at sea

OVERVIEW

The offspring of elementals and the rude forces of nature, the titanborn have taken mortal form to mimic humankind and live among us. Their crude forms and imperfect emotions should not deceive us; their inhumanity in the end, will be their downfall.

PHYSICAL TRAITS

Titanborn have an athletic build and tower over the other races. Height averages about 7' 1" to 7' 10", with females about two inches shorter. Weight is usually about 275-350 lbs., with females about 100 lbs. lighter.

Titanborn sport an unusual number of limbs – they can have multiple heads, arms and even legs. Most titanborn have a single head, but may sport up to three. On average, they have at least three arms, with six being common and up to twelve in rare instances. Having more than two legs is extremely rare, but there have been some cases with titanborn sporting three legs and records of them having up to ten or twelve.

Titanborn tend to have distinct skin colors influenced by their elemental composition. They may have wildly colorful skin of fiery red, sea green or blue, airy white or even metallic colors such as copper, silver or even gold. A titanborn tends to have metallic, red or green colored eyes. Hair tends to be brown or black for earth-skin toned titanborn or match the colors associated with the element the titanborn most seems to resemble. Titanborn with metallic skin colors have hair colors that run the range of the rainbow.

Titanborn males can grow beards, but often prefer to remain clean-shaven.

CULTURE

Titanborns dwell in clans who can trace their ancestry back to their elemental ancestors. The titanborn of a given clan tend to have a similar appearance – except in rare cases where the lineage may have mixed with other titanborn clans.

Most titanborn clans are tribal in nature, migrating across the world and trading with those other races they encounter. While some of the clan's raid for goods and gear, most titanborn have learned to peacefully trade with those they encounter,

offering their powerful services in return for the food and goods they need to survive.



CRIMSON EMPIRE

TYRES HAUL

Hsss. What do we want? We want what all beings desire – power, wealth and comfort. That is all.

- Thaddion Soulpurge, Al Galue raider.

OVERVIEW

Tyres haul (“king men”) are a self-perpetuating race of dragon-like humanoids. They are dragons made men, and we should be wary of why dragons would seek to emulate our form.

PHYSICAL TRAITS

Tyres haul tend to be thin and their bodies covered with small lizard-like scales. Height averages about 5’ 9” to 6’ 3”, with females about two inches shorter. Weight is usually about 155-220 lbs., with females about 1/3 lighter. A Tyres Haul usually has a wingspan of 9’ – 12’, though there appear to be some castes that have only vestigial wings that are incapable of bearing them aloft.

Tyres haul have an amazing range of scale color that spans the entire rainbow. Most Tyres haul sport a single scale color, though stripes, bands and multicolored hues are possible. Tyres haul from the same family lineage tend to display the same sort of color and pattern to their scales. Tyres haul do not sport hair but instead grow a single set of horns or a ridge of small horns. They groom and adorn these horns in a manner similar to human hair fashions. Tyres haul generally have yellow, slit-like eyes, though they occasionally sport red, blue and green eye colors.

Tyres haul males can grow thick, whisker-like appendages or quill-like spines along their lower jaw that resemble beards. Trimming these whiskers is not possible, and not all Tyres haul males sport these whiskers.

CULTURE

Over the ages, the Tyres haul have built their own societies in reclusive areas away from most other races. They prefer areas that cannot be reached by foot, and have great skill in architecture that rivals that of the kazin shazira and the dwarves. Their sorcerous demeanor spills into many of their works, using minor magical wards and other enchantments protecting or enhancing their buildings.

Tyres haul tend to be rather stoic and stuffy in their own lands, with little love or tolerance for outsiders. They have great respect – some say envy – of dragonkind that spills into their architecture and worship.

SUBTYPES

Those Tyres haul born away from Alagos bear the shame filled name, Al Galue (“born away”). For unknown reasons, they tend towards savagery and are less likely to be able to wield magic.



CRIMSON EMPIRE

CHAPTER 3 - PROFESSIONS OF THE EMPIRE

"Get behind me!" Kharik ordered, his voice calm but firm. The silk-robed Uretheon merchant only paused a second before obeying the command, his red face puffing as his ponderous bulk slipped behind the warrior. As the merchant fumbled for shelter, Kharik snapped up one of the long spears the other fleeing caravan guards had cast down in his haste to escape the incoming gryphon. The creature was twice the size of the horses it had dived down to attack, and the mix of hawk-like squawks and horse whinnies drowned out nearly all the other men shouting around him.

One wheel of the fat, greasy merchant's cart lay nearby, smashed to splinters. Likewise, one of the cart's two horses was lame from the gryphon's initial assault. Kharik cursed that the pompous merchant had hired his own relatives - untested cousins and nephews - and expected him to rally them into a competent troupe. Had this been his home country of Thyventhos, he would have had them strapped to a pole and lashed to a man for how they cowered now. The twenty men were scattered and only his stubborn resolve and calm voice of command kept the remaining three from running like the rest. Had the troupe not panicked and run, they could have easily skewered the gryphon, but attacking the gryphon alone was a recipe for folly.

"Do something," the merchant, Ab'him protested, fumbling with his jeweled fingers to push Kharik forward towards the massive creature. Kharik obliged to follow his employer's direction, using the long spear to snap the leather straps that held the second horse to the cart. Freed of its confinement the horse quickly leapt out of the gryphon's reach and towards the small group of men.

"Grab the horse," Kharik commanded as it darted past him. Despite Ab'him's fear for his own life, the thought of losing such a costly beast outweighed his own cowardice, and with the aid of one of his less frazzled cousins, the two managed to corral and calm the horse in the safety behind Kharik's outstretched spear.

"Why aren't you attacking it?" Ab'him demanded in a cracked, squeaky voice. Kharik knew better than to engage the massive creature as it pranced over its newly acquired prey. His bronze breastplate and armored greaves would provide adequate protection against the beak and talon of the creature. Yet the creature's sheer bulk could crush him or it could easily decide to carry him aloft and

dash him in the nearby rocky hills it had come from. Though he kept the spear upraised, he both kept his distance from the beast and did not challenge it as it picked at the dying horse beside the cart. Only when it began to step towards the other horse behind him now or hungrily eye the other men did Kharik bring the spear up in a menacing posture. Though the great bird-lion squawked and jeered at him, he saw it understood. He had let it take the horse it already killed without a fight, but no more. After a moment or two, the great beast scooped the dead horse up in one massive talon and took to the air, flying away with its meal.

Ab'him's crushed voice rang out as Kharik relaxed at the departing gryphon. "What do we do now?" The Merchant demanded.

Kharik whirled to face the overweight merchant and his words were calm and measured. "I will ride the horse that is left, master Ab'him," he added as the merchant scowled, "should the gryphon decide to return, I can deal with his taste for horseflesh," he remarked, and Ab'him glanced around him, suddenly reconsidering riding the horse himself. "These three will repair the wheel. When the others return - they can pull the cart the rest of the way to the city of Urthios. You," he snarled, "Can walk with the rest. It will do you some good to reflect on your decisions of late."

The civilized races of the Empire and beyond have long practiced skills with which to heal and harm those about them. Listed below are some of the most esteemed - and obscure - professions of the Empire and its neighbors.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

ARCANIST

"Magic is the ability to manipulate the very fabric of reality. Moreover, it is the duty of a ruler to conform the world to his desires. That is why it is our right to rule."

-Evoker Pja'mal Des-Corde Hameru, mageborn

There are many variants of the arcanist profession, each studying one of the many lores of arcane magic.

As we know, Hameru's ability to manipulate magic set him above the wild animals of the world. As humans, that ability to manipulate magic is in all of us, but it is strongest in those closest to Hameru's power-ridden blood. The further the generations are from Hameru himself, the more distant one is from being able to manifest magic, and the closer one becomes to being a mere animal.

Even the anhiyawen understand this, for as their generations dilute from the stock the jinn elevated into sentience, the closer to the original wild animals they become.

ALCHEMIST (KAL 'MUSHA IBN KADIMA)

Often mistaken for wizards, these arcanists rarely deal with spells and instead tend to work with or fashion a variety of supernatural materials – including a variety of potions and magical metals or goods. Some alchemists also work with aether, imbuing a bit of life into their otherwise inert constructions.



ELEMENTALIST (SAYYID AL'SAHIER)

Elementalists can be innate sorcerers or book-nosed wizards but they are vastly different from their brethren in that they wield the weird energies of the elemental world – earth, fire, water, wind and aether.

Because of the Great Devastation, many in Eth'Authuram despise and distrust elementalists. Most other countries – especially Axatheum and Norcast embrace elemental magic and welcome its practitioners.

RUNECASTER (KAL 'MUSHA KAL-KILMA)

Hameru learned his first magic from the seven ancient words that created the universe and gave it shape amid the void. Runecasting is a variant of this ancient power, inscribing combinations or parts of the ancient words of power into sturdy items to bind the spell into perpetual activation. Forging the seven words into longer patterns shapes their effect, generating spells that are more powerful. This requires the material to be more resilient to withstand the forces of the bound magic.

SORCERER (SAHURU)

These arcanists are blessed with magical power infused in their very blood and can make it manifest. Hellchilde and mageborn are among the strongest of sorcerers. As created races, the Anhiyawen and Kazin lack sorcerers, and must rely on wizards instead.

WARLOCK/WITCH (MU'SHAWITH)

Warlocks and witches are those entities that derive their magical powers from pacts and bargains with entities with vast power to spare. Drawing upon personal bargains or ancient agreements forged long ago, they tap into or steal supernatural power to appease their own needs and desires.

WIZARD (SAYYID)

These arcanists lack the noble blood of Hameru running through their veins. Most wizards are therefore of non-human origin or human peasants, though the Norcast also display a large number of wizards as well. It is believed that the Norcast may have sacrificed their innate magic as humans as part of their devotion to the Kraken.

Many wizards only learn to master one of the eight great schools of magic, addressed by the title associated with their school – Abjurer, Conjurer, Diviner, Enchanter, Evoker, Illusionist, Necromancer or Transmuter.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

EXPERT

"Do you see that wall there – the one that surrounds the city? It took a hundred men ten years to erect it. But had my grandfather not designed it, your father would have been a snack on some behemoth's teeth."

- Stonemason Al'Midja Joranne, on Hek'Tesa's city wall.

It would not be possible for the empire to exist without the hands and minds of experts to keep it alive. Here are but a few of the varied professions that keep the civilized world from descending into barbarism.

Experts practice the magic of creativity, forging wondrous and sometimes directly magic items with their craft. Though they do not manifest magic as openly as arcanists do, we must not forget that their own form of magic can be as potent as any evoker's spell.

CLOCKSMITH (SA'ATI)

The mystic art of clocksmithing came to the empire from Axatheum shortly before the Strider War. Clocksmiths are part arcanist, part tradesman, assembling mechanisms of such complexity that they can ensnare a bit of aether and mold it into a crude form of life. Rumors speak of master artisans of this art who transfer the consciousness of a sentient being into these advanced machines, granting them a sort of immortality.

MERCHANT (DA'JUL)

Much of the empire exists due to the give and take of its citizens – giving excess of one item in return for deficiencies in another. Into this trade are the merchants, who actively seek out this imbalance from which to make a profit. A good merchant provides a great service to the empire and allows it to grow, whereas a poor merchant can bring progress to its knees and even bring harm to its subjects as they hold back needed goods because of the greed of coin.



MINSTREL (HAKAWATI)

It is not enough that the empire survives by working. It is the jobs of minstrels, showmen and other entertainers to bring meaning and value to the works of the empire in song, dance and stories. Minstrels do not only bring welcome rest and entertainment after a hard days work but they also teach, train and inspire us to work harder and smarter when we return to our labors.

TRADESMAN (SA'HID AMATAASHIR)

While there are many common laborers throughout the empire, we would be lost without the tradesmen who direct and refine the work that occurs across the empire. A common laborer can produce items of adequate quality for the empire to run, but tradesmen can hone the process of creation and even construct new methods to improve that which we build.

Like any expert of quality skill, tradesmen generally gather into guilds of like minds to collaborate and support one another. Such brotherhood is to be fostered – so long as the tradesmen remember their duty is to improve the works of the empire and not to hide its secrets of progress in ritual and secret processes that cannot be handed down to others.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

Mystic

"Many are fooled and confounded by what they perceive to be an unordered world that surrounds them. The true wise man knows that an order exists, but only through patience and concentration can that order be revealed and laid out plainly before him."

- Guru Ul'quid-rha, to a frustrated young monk

Where an arcanist employ spells to affect the world around them, these practitioners known as mystics use secret knowledge to fortify their own body or affect others in mysterious way.

Clearly, mystics are founts of magical power, though many manifest it only inwardly. There are certainly those who can outwardly make manifest their magical ability, and it can be as formidable as any other display.

GURU

Gurus are contemplatives and philosophers with a metaphysical understanding of the world. They are capable of amazing supernatural physical and mental feats, which they claim to derive from the seven mystic chakras – Crown, Eye, Throat, Heart, Navel, Pelvis and Feet.

MARTIALIST (AY'HID MAF'TUHA)

There are many esoteric orders across the empire and in the lands beyond dedicated to the secret martial techniques taught to humanity during the Kazin wars. Though many of the martial secrets extend back to even the Emperor Wars, it has only been since the Kazin wars that the Twelve taught their martial arts to anyone outside of their immediate household. During the Ninja Wars, martial practices became quite common, as it was employed by the bulk of forces on both sides of the battle.

Some of these martial arts have even found their way among the kazin and even the anhiyawen, though they are clearly inferior to the true arts practiced by humanity – which again is inferior to the arts practiced by the imperial lineage.



MONK (FAKIR)

Generally, ascetics who eschew the material world, monks are a mix of guru philosophy and martial arts training. Some take their ascetic training to the point of eschewing causing any sort of harm to another being with their mystical powers.

Unlike gurus, who are usually agnostic, monks tend to worship the Twelve and the Twenty-Three Emperors. As such, monks are exceedingly rare among non-humans – and in those few orders that exist worship the Jinn lords or even the Demon Lords of Durathast instead of the Twelve and Twenty-Three Emperors.

WEAPON MASTER (SAY'YID ASYLAH)

These mercenaries have adapted martial arts to the use of weapons. Some even use their devotion with the weapon as a metaphor for veneration of one of the Twelve. While some weapon masters have the knowledge to use several weapons, they generally lean toward specializing with one weapon in particular.

In addition, unlike most martial artists, weapon masters practice their art not for enlightenment or protection, but for war.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

PRIEST

"I am not this frail form you see before you. I am your father and your grandfather; I am your mother and your grandmother. Even as they pass beyond the veil, I, in the name of Hameru the great, grant unto you the knowledge and power of their blood so that you may wisely continue their rule. Upon their return as your children's children may that wisdom and strength pass again into them."

- Oracle Yhe'sad Amalara, at the coronation of August Melin Hameru XXIII

Those societies who forget their ancestors and the blood of the magic that came before them are doomed to revert to the mindless and soulless beings before Hameru, our father, brought us civilization. Priests are a conduit to our ancestors and instrumental in passing along the magic of generations past into new generations. We have seen first-hand the fate of those who fail to revere their ancestors; soulless and magicless, little more than animals without purpose or thought.

DRUID

Commonly only found among the Norcast, druids have an uncanny link to the natural world and are able to draw upon primordial magic to perform astounding feats. Besides drawing upon the natural forces of the world around them, they often have the ability to assume animal shapes and are well-known for the multitudes of natural (or in the Norcast case, mutated) animals that they breed and surround themselves with.

ORACLE

Rare and gifted, oracles are conduits of our ancestors (but generally not Hameru or the Twelve), charged with responsibility of directly passing magic and hidden knowledge on to future generations. Many of the noble houses of Eth'Authuram and the kazin wisely keep oracles on hand so that as older generations pass on, their magic and knowledge directly passed to descendants to keep them wise and powerful. On the other hand, anhiyawen rarely have oracles for their ancestors dissolve to rejoin the anima, and instead rely on shamans to perform the same duties.



PRIEST (KHOURI)

Schooled in deep knowledge of Hameru and the Twelve, a khouri is capable of drawing upon divine powers to guide and protect the faithful. Some even take up the sword to crusade against the inhuman infidels that pollute our lands and threaten our own. In times of peril, khouris produce astounding effects that decimate their enemies.

Unlike humanity, the non-human races do not have the same sort of connection by which they can hope to have khouris, instead producing druids or shamans who can produce similar, but lesser effects to protect their own kind.

PROPHET (IM'MAN)

Unlike the oracle, whose place is to comfort, the prophet is a tool of vengeance and justice. It is the role of a prophet to ensure those beneath him keeps to the tenets of his lord – whether Hameru and the twelve for humanity or the Jinn lords and the Anhiyawen or the dragon lords for the Tyres haul.

Prophets on occasion call down holy wars or stir revolt against those they feel have fallen short of their lord's tenets. Where the prophet does not desire or cannot act directly, they will often "deputize" inquisitors to deal with the unfaithful, granting them a portion of the power they have themselves received from their lord to perform his works.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

SHAMAN

Anhiyawen strongly attuned with the spirit world adopt the role of shaman. They are similar to druids in that their power seems to mimic natural forces and events, but unlike druids, they derive their power from the spirits of the living, the dead and the yet unborn. They can bind these spirits to themselves to gain the abilities and qualities of the attached soul. In other cases, they can entreat the spirits to perform tasks for them, either as manifesting in a corporeal form or as bringing them information from the past, elsewhere in the present or even from the future.

SHUGENJA

Known only to the strange lands of Misrador, shugenja combine the supernatural talents of elementalists and shamans. The first shugenjas were taught their mystical arts by E'Lendon to battle the evil rakshasa, and they have ever been the patron of humanity in those isles ever since.

Drawing upon the elemental powers of aether (which they term void), earth, fire, water, wind and the ancestral spirits of the isle, shugenja seek to keep their homeland free of the taint of the perverted evil spirits and their corporeal minions.



THAUMATURGE

Thaumaturges are rare individuals who can perform powerful miracles. They are more popular among the atheistic Axatheum, who refuse to call on Hameru or the Twelve for their miracles. Their strange miracles follow upon the phrase “In the name

of humanity” and seem to draw upon the power of human zeitgeist – or perhaps the original magic Hameru himself tapped.

There have been claims of thaumaturge among the non-human races, but so far all accounts have turned out to be cases of misidentified shamans or charlatans hoping to draw away righteous worship from our father Hameru.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

ROGUE

"Honest day's work? If you're lucky all that will do is keep you another day away from the taxman's dungeons."

- Jha'min Rulascap, thief

For each bright beacon in the Empire, there exists an area enveloped in shadow – all too many times a dark, corrupt reflection of what is bright and pure. As with the professions that keep our civilized society well oiled and running, there are those professions whose job, it seems, is to bring it down. Yet even among these dark professions there are those that have their uses – the wisdom comes in holding a candle to these dark embers and shining their light in the glory of our empire.

Rogues are often debased beings, far from the source of magic that elevates civilized beings from animals. We witnessed, however, some individuals possessing the talent to wield magical power, and we can only sadly shake our heads in how such a noble being could have fallen to such antisocial depths.

ASSASSIN

Across the many countries of our world, there exists the need for one individual to remove another being who has presented himself as an obstacle. Where an army or diplomacy cannot remove such an obstacle, it is often best to employ an assassin for such deeds. However, one must be careful that they do not become the target of an assassin in the employ of one who sees you as an obstacle in their path.

While many unscrupulous assassins will hire out to any individual for a small amount of coin, several societies have turned this dark trade into an honorable profession. Others perform their duty out a misguided sense of loyalty to an individual or cause. While it makes these individuals more reliable in carrying out their

duty, it also tends to make them intractable to attempts to dissuade them.

CORSAIR

Do not be fooled into believing that all pirates and raiders hail from Axatheum. Though that nation long and proudly displayed a history of corsairs, there is such rabble even among our own kin. Wherever there is trade at sea, we can depend that there will be individuals who seek to abscond with those treasures for themselves.

Most corsairs operate in groups of one or two ships and attack any vessel they feel they can overpower. However, the most successful corsairs command entire fleets unto themselves and are often more tractable than their smaller brethren – turning a blind eye to trade in return for substantial percentage of the profit or even allying themselves with other nations to act as sort of war fleet – with a bit of larceny against non-allies as the opportunity presents.

The most unusual corsairs are the privateers – corsairs bound by contract to raid enemy ships during times of war.

CHARLATAN (EL BEL'JA)

The charlatan mocks the great figures of power, pretending at praising or elevating our gods while all the while using our faith to garner power, wealth and prestige. Their miracles are fake and dishonest, and they do far more harm than good in leaving their victims penniless and bereft of the faith they once held.

FENCE (EL MOR'HAREB)

Whereas the honest merchant facilitates the trade of one person's goods for another for reasonable compensation, the fence preys upon the theft and greed of its clientele. Rather than acquire items by trade, the fence encourages the theft of one person's property for another's sole gain.



CRIMSON EMPIRE

DILETTANTE (AL'HALWE)

Among nobles, a caste has arisen who have turned against convention towards adventurous and dangerous activities. With no sense of true purpose, these deluded individuals often turn to unlawful activities and can quickly undermine figures of authority and the rules of law.

The actions of a dilettante can mimic that of a charlatan, thief or even assassin, but they generally lack the desperation or malice of their brethren - though they make up for it with their audacity. A rare few bend their unconventional talents towards inadvertently assisting society - such as those who take the "profession" of detective, troubleshooter or behemoth hunter.

NIJJA

A unique profession in Misrador, ninja arose in that nation initially as spies and assassins during the wars against the rakshasa. Trained and raised in secret guilds in Misrador, ninjas still practice their arts of spying and assassinations against others, though many have likewise become entrenched in other illegal activities to amass fortunes and power.

Hameru's violent return brought the ninja traditions back to Eth'Authuram where they became the basis of the Haqqid assassin guilds menacing our empire. Heroes slew the original ninja lords within a century of their arrival to Eth'Authuram, but there are still a handful of ninja cults that practice their black arts of spying and assassination in the cities of the Empire. We believe the remaining ninja still have some mystical means of contacting their clan masters back in Misrador, receiving direction and aid in their secret plots.

THIEF (LOS'LA)

The destitute among the civilized nations are rife with those who have taken to pilfering the goods of others. For their own petty reasons thieves have come to believe it far easier to steal from another those items of value they envy rather than put in the hard work to acquire such items though honest work and salaries.

THUG (KALIMA)

For a thug, violence is power. Where soldiers use force to protect their homeland or neutralize a common enemy, the thug uses force simply to acquire personal wealth and power.



CRIMSON EMPIRE

WARRIOR

"Make no mistake, brigand. I will trade my life – dearly – for the defense of the crops of Athos and her people."

- Ka'Lathe al Mathiuq, defender of Athos

A host of beings willing to fight for their city or nation fills Eth'Authuram and the lands beyond. Most warriors serve as soldiers or guards for the city or nation in which they live. However, there are many additional professions and causes for those who take up arms in defense of their homes.

Magic is not usually associated with warriors, for it is difficult to master both weapons and magic with equal skill. However, these individuals usually manifest their magic with their weapons or maneuvers to perform extraordinary or even supernatural feats. Such feats rarely display with the showy effects one might associate with a wizard's fireball, but the results are clearly what might be deemed such as superhuman – such as cleaving the head from a titanic foe with a single swipe of a blade, or leaping from great heights to land atop a foe unharmed.



BARBARIAN

Many describe Norcast as barbaric, unrefined and savage. They are true barbarians who subsist on raiding and reaving. Norcast raiders eschew society for a near-bestial existence, partaking of whatever activity befits their cruel mind.

Sometimes referred to as berserkers, they easily forget themselves in the heat of battle and may betray or fall upon their own brethren to slake their blood thirst.

CHAMPION (LOKTA EL AMENIA)

Dedicated to one of the Twelve or among the non-humans to one of the Jinn lords or dragon lords, champions are warriors who fight to uphold the standards of the lord they serve. Many are not only skilled in weapons and armor but can employ magical abilities associated with those they serve.

FARIS

Nobles specially raised and trained in the art of war lead the various armies of Eth'Authuram. They are equipped with the best weapons and armor available to them and prefer swift mounts to bring them into combat. Since the Ninja Wars of old, faris have favored riding astride captured behemoths of the desert. Though the faris are few in number, their loyalty to the lands they defend is irrefutable. However, beware - the faris can be corrupt and may change allegiance if their homeland is sufficiently threatened.

FREEBLADE (MORTA'ZA-ELK)

Among the twelve cities and beyond, freeblades are a common sight. Mercenary soldiers with no particular allegiance, freeblades sell their skills in battle for coin. While some have morals and codes of conduct under which they accept jobs for their services, many have no qualm where their coin comes from.

MAMLUKE

Slaves by birth and raised as warriors all their lives, mamlukes are popular in Coranthius. The realm needs every able body to fight against the myriad foes that surround them. Mamlukes are less common in Eth'Authuram where the practice spread during the early years after the Emperor wars. Until the Great Devastation, mamlukes were popular bodyguards for noble families, but the practice has since fallen into disfavor.

Durathast and the other lands dominated by the savage tribes abhor mamlukes, and although willing to take slaves, refuse to allow slaves to become warriors – perhaps fearing revolt.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

RANGER (JA'QEL)

Among the kazin shazira and some anhiyawen, there are many special orders of warriors known as rangers. These rangers are a combination of scouts, groundskeepers and hunters. They employ their special talents to keep other races out of their forests without revealing their own presence. Skilled with bows and twin scimitars, they are a deadly force at range or in hand-to-hand combat.

SAMURAI

A sort of noble warrior, samurai are peculiar to Misrador. First introduced to us was their fearless leadership and battle mastery when they commanded the forces of Hameru in his ancient, bloody return from self-exile. Bound by a strict honor code known as bushido, the samurai are consummate educated warriors and leaders of the common soldiers of that strange land.


Some samurai laid claim to lands in the Axxor hills of Axatheus, but only the occasional wayward and "ronin" outcast from Misrador find their way to Eth'Authuram.

SOLDIER (JAWUN'DE)

Every nation has at its disposal the trained arm of a soldier. Whether for the defense of home or called to strike at the heart of an enemy in a distant land these professional trained warriors fight in groups as one for whatever mission they undertake.

Though a good many depend upon their salary, the soldier differs from the freeblade in their oath of loyalty to the nation that recruited them. Though the quality of soldiers varies even within the nation they are raised they are expected to hold an unwavering allegiance and obedience to the lord that arms, clothes and feeds them. Most soldiers toil at their masters hands for a service period of three years. The soldier may renew this period as desired (and in some countries, required) for as long as they possess the ability to fight.





CRIMSON EMPIRE

CHAPTER 4 - CREATURES OF THE EMPIRE

L'har squatted behind the massive boulder in the sand-floored cave. The protective moon runes the anhiyawen had painted onto his own lupine fur luminesced with a slight blue as they suppressed his scent and sound. On the other side of the rock, he could hear the massive reptilian dragon snort as it swept through the cave in a vain attempt to find him. L'har was safe for now, but the only way out lay on the other side of the rock, beyond the quill-backed dragon.

As L'har's mind raced, he clutched the enchanted samite rucksack he had swindled from a Paerahim guru in the market back in Paerhoon. The dragon's entire hoard now lay within the ensorcererelld bag, yet it was as light as a feather and no larger than a sailor's stowage bag. The golden coins within barely tinkled from inside as he drew open the drawstring to remind himself of why he was doing this.

"Thief!" the mouth-like opening of the bag suddenly roared, almost causing L'har to drop the sack entirely. He tried to pull the string shut to silence the madly yelling and writhing aperture, but the shouting had already done its damage. On the other side of the boulder, he could hear the dragon spin and begin moving in his direction. Finally pulling the drawstring shut, L'har laid his hand against the cool stone and murmured a plea from help to the very rock itself.

As a great clawed reptilian hand clutched the rock above L'har's wolfish head, the very stone itself shrugged. The great dragon retracted, hissing and fanning its wings in a primal display as the massive boulder seemed to uncurl and rise to titanic heights. L'har found himself staring past the column-like legs of his sandstone protector at the great wyrm, who held a pensive snarl on its toothy maw. Smoke puffed from the great beast's nostrils and its chest glowed with a cherry red from the heat within its core.

"So sorry for the intrusion," L'har stated with a mock bow as he patted the stout leg of the towering, unflinching guardian. "But I must be leaving." He had already hefted the sack upon his shoulder and did his best to hide its bulk from the dragon's sight. Though the stone golem had clearly caught the beast by surprise, L'har could see it dig in its heels, unprepared to let the small, white-furred anhiyawen wolf leave with its treasure.

"Friend," L'har spoke to the golem, which cocked its head to acknowledge its master even as the burglar prepared to move, "Make me a path."

Beyond the sentient races known to us exist a myriad of fantastical creatures that wander the border of civilization. Many volumes have been dedicated to the conclave of creatures that exist for the scholar who wishes to know more; this is but a brief list of the more well-known and common beasts to be found.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

ABERRATION

Touched by the capricious magic of the jinn, aberrations were once wild beasts transformed by magic into a supernatural creature. Many have bred into a true species since their inception, but the curious and capricious jinn are not above making new and terrifying new specimens to antagonize us.



Ahuitzotl: This otter-like creature has a long tail that ends in a dexterous hand. They are vicious and cunning, delighting in dressing themselves in the fingernails, eyes and teeth of their victims.

Baku: These odd creatures have the head and trunk of an elephant, the body of a bear and the paws of a tiger. They consume the dreams of sleepers – and enjoy gorging themselves on nightmares, leaving the sleeper with pleasant dreams and restful sleep.

Griff: With the body of a bear, the beak and claws of an eagle, and filled with a mindless rage, these bizarre creatures hunt the wilderness of the Watered Wastes and the Fingerling. There are tales that Urea may have created these beasts after visiting Caltheus and learning elemental magic.

Griffin: These lion-bodied creatures sport the wings, head and forelegs of an eagle. They are unusually intelligent and occasionally sought out as sages and mystics.

Hebira: These enormous, unusually long reptiles have a mass of legs on which they scurry about. They exhale a deadly breath composed of elemental matter or pure death.

Strix: Created by the Rakshasa of Haadarast, these strange winged insects have human faces and a craving for blood. They are peculiarly intelligent, and many purport dark, sorcerous abilities.

Xhapan: These weird, sentient creatures defy classification. They are massive creatures endowed with powerful tentacles, and thought to be malignant, psychic offspring of the Kraken.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

ANGEL

Angels are spirits of all that remains of Hameru, his children and those who managed to reach enlightenment to pass above the karmic cycle of rebirth. Sometimes these beings return to the material world to aid others, so that they too may travel further along the path to enlightenment, or to remove forces that would hinder others from reaching enlightenment.



Akhanim (Angel of Death): These exceptionally rare and powerful angels seek out evil and wickedness and put an end to them.

Ghobrim: Assigned to individuals of great promise, these angels silently and invisibly watch over their charge, intervening only when those they are protecting face undue harm or evil.

Kheribim: These diminutive guardians are fierce protectors of children and virgins.

Sepharim: These mighty angels, wielding stately staves of power, ensure that Hameru's laws are observed, and seek out those who blatantly violate them.

Zhaterim: Armed with a sword of fire and the primal words of power, these angels protect holy sites or secrets from those that would corrupt their purity.

BEHEMOTH

These great monsters existed in few numbers in ancient times, but the cataclysm that razed the empire forever changed them and made them much more common in our lands. Feeding upon the sands of the waste or other creatures one might mistake the massive creatures as some sort of dragon. However, they lack the magical capabilities and devilish cunning of such creatures. They are brutes to be sure, and though some of our brethren have had success in training them for duties and tasks, they are never truly domesticated.

Armadon: These armored slugs meander along the wastes, moving from meal to meal. Their armored bodies and club tails are ample protection against attackers.

Masadon: These massive, long-necked creatures are among the largest behemoths. So great is their mass that they wade through deep sand dunes, often with only their sinuous necks and whip-like tails protruding from the sands that surround them.

Tyrnadon: These massive carnivorous behemoths haunt the wastelands, devouring any and all that cross their path.

Trifectadon: These three-horned behemoths are territorial, and though they are sand-eaters, they will charge and maul those who enter their territories.

Sailfin: These majestic fin-backed sand-eaters are peaceful nomads – unless disturbed. When threatened their spiked tails can wreak havoc on anyone foolish enough to come in reach.



Wingadon: These horn-billed opportunist creatures glide along desert thermals, making meals of any creature they can pick up in their eagle-like talons.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

CHANGELING

This classification includes a host of creatures bound with wild spirits that allows them fluid and effortless shapeshifting ability.

Doppelganger: These strange humanoids are mindless and featureless until they encounter another sentient being. At such a time, they become a copy of another being, and seek to destroy and replace the original.

Lycanthrope: These poor creatures are humans that have found themselves possessed by a jinn spirit. This spirit transforms the hapless human into a wild creature under a specific set of circumstances, and is a condition spread along bloodlines.



Shan: These blood-drinking creatures have an upper humanoid frame and the tail of snake from the waist down. They are native to the Axxor Hills and believed they have a vast underground kingdom with hidden entrances to the surface.

Yugi: At first glance, these thin beings resemble skinned humanoids with wicked claws. In truth, they use these claws to skin victims and don their skin, masquerading as their victim to hunt more prey.

DEMON

Demons are the remains of the most evil of humans who have perished and fallen out of the karmic cycle of rebirth. Their bestial spirits forever trapped and held in the deep earth, where they cannot reincarnate. It is rare to encounter a demon in the material world, for little lack the power to fashion or inhabit material forms via their own will. Powerful sorcerers who seek their evil secrets or desire them as conscious-free minions to perform dark deeds most often draw them to the world.



Demon: demons come in many twisted forms, often sporting bestial features to fit with their savage natures. Even when slaying their mortal form, a demon is not defeated, but simply cast back to the spirit world to fester until it can return to the material world once again.

Demon Lord: Fashioned from only the most charismatic and powerful former sorcerers, demon lords are all but uncontrollable and filled with a dread appetite for slaughter.

Nuppeppo: These bizarre lumps of pungent, rotting flesh are “failed” demons created from apathetic souls that have fallen out of the karmic cycle. While normally inoffensive, memories of their former lives stir them into a destructive rage.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

DRAGON

Dragons are great scale-armored beasts of magic power. Most purport the ability to fly and sport great cunning. However, feeding on their avarice can lead to their downfall; as creatures of the wild, they are unfamiliar with wealth and creature comforts and often fall afoul in their indulgence of such niceties when discovered. Luckily for us, most dragons dwell in the far north in Caltheus, though wayward specimens sometimes migrate to lands that are more southerly.

Fire Dragon: With iron-hard scales and the ability to breath great gouts of roiling fire, these beasts are inclined to take what they want, when they want.

Dragonne: Created by alchemically mixing dragon blood with lions, these creatures were once royal pets first developed in Thyventhos. Some brought back into Eth'Authuram were unleashed into the wilds after the Great Devastation— and now occasionally found in the Darkway.

Drakken: Once, these creatures were lesser dragons of Eth-Authuram. However, the Great Devastation transformed these reptilian beasts into mindless, flying predators with deadly breath weapons.

Poison Dragon: Generally black of scale and reeking of rot and ruin, these dragons shroud themselves in a haze of fetid fumes and can spew streams of corrosive poison. They are blight to all whom they encounter.

Silver Dragon: These corrosive breathing behemoths gain their name for their sparkling scales that glitters like their namesake precious metal. Most silver dragons are kind and beneficial creatures and one of the few dragons that will politely mingle with humanity.

Wyvern: These debased flying reptiles come from the deep depths of the Jakurim Desert. They use their poisonous tails to foul wells and feed on the carcasses of those who drink from the poisoned water. There are tales that these creatures were once poison dragon stock, but generations of enslavement by genies have rendered them mindless, vile animals.



CRIMSON EMPIRE

ELEMENTAL

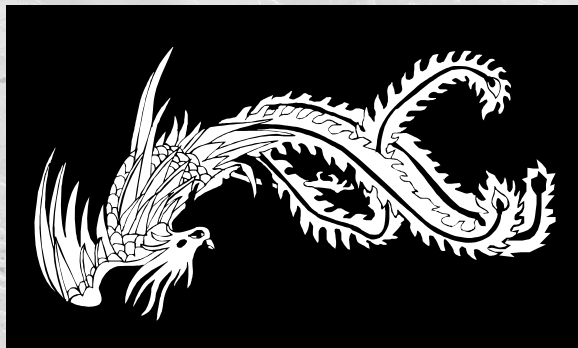
Similar to jinn, elementals are raw natural forces such as fire, earth, water or wind that congeal into a living creature. Rough of shape and crude of body, elementals are generally wild beings. Spellcasters or other strong-willed beings sometimes enslave weaker elementals. The greatest among elementals - and their leaders - are powerful calamities and forces of nature known as genies.

Elementals: Generally, others only encounter elementals when summoned by a powerful sorcerer. They assume the shape of any wild creature, generally taking whatever form the spellcaster deems appropriate for the task it wishes the elemental to perform. There are accounts, however, of humanoid free-willed elementals dwelling in Caltheus and even in Thyventhos.

Genie: Many believe that genies are rampant, magical and uncontrollable forces of nature infused with the power of aether. When they manifest physical forms, they are capable of overwhelming supernatural feats.

Naga: Intelligent elemental spirits in snake form, nagas are fonts of wisdom and magical lore - or at least protectors of such treasures.

Phoenix: Great birds of pure fire, they once were the allies of the empire, but generally now can only be found in hidden palm tree nests in the Grand Oasis.



GIANT

These peculiar jinn are the creation of the great genie, Hrothra. Unlike most jinn, they cannot dismiss their corporeal form and lack the vulnerability to fire that other jinn share.

Cyclops: These one-eyed giants are master smiths and warriors of the deep earth. They only venture above ground at night, for the rays of the sun turn their flesh to stone.

Blood Hulk: The terrible fires of Goethe infuse these bloodthirsty, former earth giants. They have an unquenchable appetite for human flesh. Once numerous, after the fall of the empire they are small in number, but remain a dangerous threat to cities and communities.

Earth Giant: These giant humanoids are strong but dull-witted. They perform Hrothra's will in the deep earth, but sometimes come to the surface to wreck havoc on the lesser races they encounter.

Storm Giant: Massive humanoids of the clouds and skies, these creatures live among the thunderheads of the skies, where they gleefully rain thunderbolts upon those below them.



CRIMSON EMPIRE

GOLEM

This classification covers any inanimate object given a mockery of life by infusing raw aether into the object to give it life.



Caryatid Column: Often fashioned as protectors in ancient Eth'Authuram, these marble statues of sword-wielding maidens can be found in many cities and ruins across the desert lands.

Gargoyle: These beastly winged stone creatures have hideous features and a taste for flesh. Often fashioned by evil wizards to protect their secrets, gargoyles prowl the ruined towers and cities of their former masters.

Golem: True golems are fashioned by powerful spellcasters and infused either with a portion of the caster's own spirit or entrapped jinn. They can be made of a variety of materials from wood, clay, stone, iron or other sundry materials and many display unique abilities based on the essence that inhabits it. Generally, the more resilient the material, the harder the golem is to destroy and the more essence or powerful jinn it takes to animate the shell.

Gyromanne: The design of these steam-powered contraptions first occurred during the Strider Wars. Made to battle blood hulks, their creators fashioned them in the crude shape

of an immense armored warrior. Most now sit idle and unused in great garages in the major cities of the empire. Those that are active usually act as a mercenary warrior under the direction of a manager known as a keywinder.

Hess: These rune-inscribed statues were once common in the city-states before the Great Devastation. They ranged in size from that of half a human's height to towering things the height of city wall. Only a handful remain, and even fewer individuals know the command words or bear the control amulets to properly activate them.

Shaom: First encountered during the Ninja Wars and used by the Misradorians, these wooden creations are fashioned by infusing the figurehead of a ship with false life. A shaom can absorb the material of the ship from which they are made, become titantic walking fortresses of destruction.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

JINN

The jinn are a race of sentient nature spirits that haunt the wilderness and untamed wilds. They are capable of assuming corporeal form, though prone to mischievousness.

Efreet: Rare among the fire-fearing jinn, efreet are the only spirits of their kind whom do not burn at a flame's touch – instead iron is their downfall. They are mercenary and war-like, but thankfully few in number. They are occasionally used to war against elementals and their genie lords.

Gen: Some wizards are capable of manifesting a portion of their own spirit into a mystical semblance of a tiny creature that outwardly is reminiscent of minor jinn. Through this deception, the wizard confers with true jinn for magical favors and spells.

Jinn: Made of fireless smoke, jinn are normally invisible and intangible magical spirits that inhabit the natural world. They can take corporeal form to interact with the material world and open flames are the only thing that can truly harm them.

Rakshasa: Evil, carnivorous magic-using jinn that have a malleable shape that is part beast, part humanoid. Their unusual hands, which seem to appear attached backwards, betray their true nature.

Satyr: With the legs of a horse and the horns of a ram, these wild spirits enjoy luring others to their decadent parties and feasts – willing or otherwise.

Shedu: Created by the jinn in ancient times using the blood of the Twelve, these noble beasts resemble great winged bulls with humans heads. Jinn, with the aid of the Twelve, created them to keep and enforce the peace between ancient men and the jinn. Humans slaughtered them during the kazin wars and those that survived remain aloof from civilization, but approachable by those in need of advice or justice.

Sphinx: These jinn spirit haunts the deserts of the blasted wastes where the fire-fearing jinn fear to tread. They hunt and torture human prey they find in the wastes, and ever seek a way to return life to the parched lands they wander.

Unicorn: With the body of a horse, the hooves of a goat and a spiraling silver horn protruding from their forehead, these wild beasts frolic with and protect the creatures of the forests and plains.

SANDLING

This classification includes a variety of supernatural creatures born from the uncontrolled elemental magic that destroyed the lands of Eth'Authuram, as well as appearing in some of the devastated deserts of Caltheus. Such vile creatures seek to cause harm and destruction wherever they emerge.

Basilisk: This six-legged reptilian creature turns its victims to stone with its gaze and its venom-laced claws can poison oases and wells.



Chimera: These destructive beasts sport three heads – often one a great predator (such as a lion or wolf), a vicious reptile (such as an asp or crocodile) and the third head of some voracious herd animal (such as a goat or bull).

Cockatrice: This foul creature shares the appearance of a rooster, but a peck from its beak transforms living beings to stone, and changes gold to lead.

Manticore: These intelligent and cunning creatures sport the body of a lion and the wings of a great bird. Their claws and shark-like teeth are razor sharp and poisonous barbs cover their sinuous tail. Further, they can launch the barbs at their prey.

Skorprios: These giant scorpion houses swarms of locusts and its powerful claws can tear through any material.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

TREANT

These classes of jinn derive from spirits of living plants. The greatest of these are the living trees from which this classification gains its name. However, they range in size and power from the fluttering sprites born from flower petals and twigs up to the massive living trees.

Dryad: Blossoming spirits of young trees (and cacti), these capricious jinn carry within them a wonder of the world around them, often luring the foolish or unwary into their curious grasp.

Goblin: This diminutive and dastardly creature skulks in dark areas of lush, swampy vegetation to bring woe to all with their mischievous pranks. Toadstools and mushrooms seem to comprise most of their body. They are a thankfully rare sight in Eth'Authuram, and are far more common in the eastern and southern lands beyond Durathast.

Sprite: These creatures are made of the flowers, leaves and branches of the wilderness. Flying upon dragonfly wings, their presence causes overgrowth to bloom wherever they tread.

Treant: Massive, tree-like defenders of the woods, these great bark-covered beings abhor lumberjacks and other threats to the woods they protect.

UNDEAD

Whether created by evil deeds or necromantic magics, undead are the remains of those individuals torn from the karmic cycle of reincarnation but still clinging to the mortal realm. Generally driven mad by the corruption of their body, beastly thirsts or their own dark deeds that spawned them, they seek to wreck vengeance against where they find the living.

Ghost: These rare undead have survived the destruction of their body by placing their soul into a material object precious to them in life. By sheer will, they affect the world around them and in some cases manifest an apparition that resembles their form when they lived.

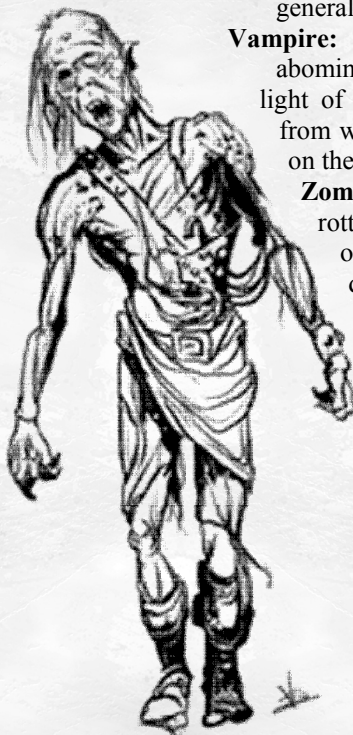
Ghul: Held to their rotting form by their own dark magic, these cunning sorcerers survive on a ghoulish appetite for the flesh of others.

Mummy: Sacred protectors of ancient tombs, mummies animate to destroy robbers and defilers with their wasting touch. While most are mindless, there are tales of those nobles knowledgeable in necromancy who made plans to preserve themselves after their life ended and haunt their opulent tomb to this day.

Skeleton: An outside force gives these mindless animated bones a will and purpose. Unlike other undead, no soul is bound to the body; the remaining animus tied to the corpse remnants animates the remains. They are generally easier to destroy than flesh-wrapped zombies are, but generally swifter in the attack.

Vampire: These creatures are blood-drinking abominations that wither away in the brilliant light of the sun. Unfortunately, other creatures from which they have consumed blood can pass on their dark curse.

Zombie: The basest of all undead, these rotting corpses are far more often the result of dark magic than an individual's dark deeds. Stolen and corrupted aether animates these unthinking hulks into perform the bidding of some sorcerer or other dark power.



CHAPTER 5 - THE CALENDAR OF THE EMPIRE

"I have read the stars for your son, Hameru. The blood of all his siblings will one day drench his hands," – Hek'Tesa, on reading Urea's future.

Firh Ghalib glowered as he held forward the mercurial scimitar in his right hand. He still held the limp razor whip in his marbled left hand; its former ape-like wielder lay decapitated not far to his one side. "You will sacrifice no more today or any other day," he growled to the scarlet hooded figure before him.

The four other dun robed ape-like Grepthan behind the hooded figure started to advance, but an upraised hand from the crimson-cloaked personage stopped them in their tracks. As the crimson-clad hand thrust upward, the sleeve slipped down from the pale-skinned arm to reveal purplish, circular splotches that ran from wrist to elbow, curving from the back of the palm to the inside joint. Firh immediately recognized it as the mark of a Kraken-touched, and knew this slightly framed figure was not to be trifled with, despite its frail appearance.

The Kraken-touched pulled back its silken blood red hood to reveal a womanly face, bedecked with locks of fiery orange hair. It gave Firh the impression of flame-licked sea waves, and her piercing green eyes seemed as though they had been seawater dredged up from the very heart of the ocean itself. Firh mused to himself that it was no wonder that the Kraken had placed its affection mark upon her – anyone who had gazed upon her would have desired her.

"Little man," she addressed the dwarf coldly, "Why do you interfere with the execution of a convicted felon?"

"This man's blood is his own," Firh stated dryly, knowing this was no execution. He had seen bloody Norcast magic at work before. There would be no more spilling of his kinsmen blood on his shores.

The crouching, bearded man behind him tugged at his torn sackcloth garments, attempting to cover the bloody lashing he had received. Firh had seen in the man's eyes guilt for some crime he had committed, but an even greater fear of the fate that awaited him in Norcast hands.

"If he will feed the sands of Coranthius, it will be by those rightfully endowed to do so," the former scion of Jormangdar stated. Firh did not

glance back at the man in ripped sackcloth behind him. Were it not the Kraken heathens of Norcast seeking to butcher this man, the faqir would have willingly served as judge, jury and even executioner for whatever crimes the man had committed. But this Kraken-touched and its Grepthan raiders were invaders to his realm; as far as he was concerned, they had no right or authority to condemn another to death without first taking their own lives for the atrocities they had committed in their raiding and slaving along the countryside.

"Very well," the Kraken-touched agreed, folding her arms across her chest. "Let me enumerate these man's crimes, and we shall see if he does not deserve the death that has been decreed for him," she chided.

Somewhat taken aback by the lady's calm demeanor, Firh listened, but did not lower his blade. It did not slip his notice that as she talked, her robed Grepthan companions had their beefy hands upon the knives in their belt as they slowly circled around him.

MONTH

The Imperial Calendar divides the year into thirteen twenty-eight day months and four additional festival days. The length of the month is determined by the amount of time it takes the dark moon, Kolthis, to complete a cycle (actually being 28-1/3 days).

The first month of the year is associated with Hameru, and each of the additional months below is associated with one of Hameru's children, while the festival names tie to the Elemental Lord coming into prominence.

Due to the will of Hameru, the first month of the year Kolthis remains full and unblinking for 28 days and the weather remains mild and cool. The day after Kolthis turns dark on the 29th day, the year "begins" and the Elemental Lords take control of the seasons

Hameru has dictated that his child's star will rise in ascendance into the night sky so that all will know which favored child he shines upon – with the exception of Urea, whose star has long gone dark.

Further, each month is broken into four weeks of seven days. The days of the week have no formal names, but people refer to them by their numerological name (Onus, Duce, Tres, Quattro, Quintus, Sextus, and Septum).

Every three months marks a season for the year, and the passing of climatic control from one of the great Elemental Lords to another.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

- Meris [Hameru]
 - o Feast of Emperors
- Coris [Coran]
- Belathis [Yagda]
- Raagis [A'ragos]
 - o Midsummer Festival (Dance of Gothe)
- Urtis [Urta]
- Xathis [Axatha]
- Numeris [Ath]
 - o Harvest Festival (Song of Paneos)
- Lenis [Eilene]
- Salis [Aelsin]
- Melis [Melin]
 - o Deepwinter Festival (Arrival of Reaper)
- Venis [Thyvena]
- Dis [Oid]
- Zapados [Urea]
 - o The First Festival (Hand of Obereth)

YEARS

Cycles group years into short ages – each year known by the name of a tool used by Hameru or one of the twelve in the fashioning of the Empire. One Cycle is thirteen years, beginning with Spade and ending with Cup.

Spade – As the year of the shovel, Hameru used this tool to dig the trench in which he laid the walls of Asul.

Till – The year of the hoe, Ath used this tool to plant the first gardens so that her siblings did not need to brave the wilderness to forage.

Saw – The year of the saw, Melin used this tool to cut the woods of the forest to build houses for herself and her siblings. This is the tool most hated by the kazin shazira.

Hammer – The year of the hammer remembers Coran, who used this tool to reinforce Melin's wooden structures.

Chisel – The year of the chisel remembers Oid, who used it to carve beautiful facades into the structures of the Empire.

Axe – The year of the axe remembers Yagda, who used the weapon to hew down the enemies of the empire – starting with the bear that mauled her.

Scythe – This tool reminds us of Aelsinine, who fashioned it for quickly reaping the harvests Ath grew

Staff – This was the tool Urta used to bend the knees and beat the back of those who broke Hameru's

laws, and which he leaned upon and supported himself in Hameru's court.

Sword – This remembers the violent tool of A'Raga, who used it to make war against our enemies

Yoke – This is the tool Eilene used to domesticate wild animals and inspired her to place the yoke upon the unworthy laborers of the Empire

Pen – This was the tool of Urea, who used it to record our knowledge for all time

Coin – This was the tool of Axatha, who minted the first coins and standardized trade among the people.

Cup – This was the tool of Thyventhos, who quenched the empire's thirst with entertainment and wine.

Since the time of Umaz'zha-de Coran Hameru, Emperors and Empresses do not ascend to the throne until they have ruled for one cycle of years (13 years). The true coronation occurs on the first day of the month associated with the new emperor's family name.

STARS AND THE NIGHT SKY

The Empire uses a lunar calendar to track the passage of time, and the night sky is an important tool useful in understanding the past and the future.

Since the Empire reformed after the Great Devastation, the noble science of astrology uses complex maps and charts to observe the motion of stars, camps and other heavenly bodies to project and predict possible threats to our well-being.

Camps, also known as constellations, divide the heavenly stars of the night sky into well-defined sectors. The camps are reflections of the dwellings in Nirvana that belong to the ascended Twelve and their own children.

Throughout the year, these camps slowly rotate in a clockwise fashion across the night sky, completing one rotation in a year's time. The position of the camps also tell what month it is – by the middle of the month, the camp associated with the current month centers on the north compass facing.

Likewise, there is a bright star associated with each child of Hameru. These bright star follow arcing patterns through the night sky, passing each night through the center of its namesake camp. Further, when its namesake month is ascendant, the star flares to outshine all others – with the exception of Urea's star, unseen in the sky since his disappearance after the Great Devastation.

Finally, the moon of Kolthis marks the nighttime hours. While the light of Solarius rolls along an east to west pass through the course of a day, Kolthis follows a similar path through the nighttime sky.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

CHRONOLOGY

Listed below is a brief history of the major events in the lifetime of the empire.

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| ???? | Midnite Isles established |
| ???? | Far Zabas established |
| ???? | Calthus established |
| 0000 | Eth'Authuram established |
| ???? | Alagos established |
| 0000 - 1000 | Reign of Hameru |
| 0101 | Anhiyawen created |
| 0805 | Sa'heer-jinn first encountered |
| 1000 - 1010 | Emperor Wars |
| 1010 - 1310 | First Empire of Eth'Authuram |
| 1010 - 1133 | Reign of Emperor Hakeem Oidos Hameru |
| 1011 | Mageborn first enumerated |
| 1013 | Haadarast established |
| 1015 | E'Lendon established |
| 1017 | Zarastar established |
| 1018 | Misrador established |
| 1133 - 1227 | Reign of Emperor Baghru Yagda Hameru |
| 1225 | Settled Lands established |
| 1227 - 1343 | Reign of Emperor Hakeros A'Raga Hameru |
| 1260 | I'magos established |
| 1284 | Hek'Tesa passes |
| 1310 - 1390 | Ninja Wars |
| 1310 | Hellchilde first encountered |
| 1343 - 1435 | Reign of Emperor Nua'da Urta Hameru |
| 1390 - 1967 | Second Empire of Eth'Authuram |
| 1435 - 1537 | Reign of Emperor Szam'na Axatha Hameru |
| 1500 - 1539 | Kazin Wars |
| 1512 - 1513 | Haadarast Armada Wars |
| 1500 | Zapathos Forest established, Kazin Shazira created |
| 1521 | Dwarves created |
| 1537 - 1645 | Reign of Emperor Jania Ath Hameru |
| 1540 | Sturmberg Founded |
| 1597 | Durathast established |
| 1608 | Jormangdar established |
| 1610 | Thyventhos visited |
| 1610 | Titanborn first encountered |
| 1612 - 1613 | Alagos Incursion |
| 1612 | Tyres haul first encountered |
| 1628 | Nomi fashioned |
| 1645 - 1750 | Reign of Emperor Al'Heru Eilene Hameru |
| 1651 | Dwarven Schism |
| 1750 - 1854 | Reign of Emperor Vidaelga Aelsinine Hameru |

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| 1793 | Thyventhos founded |
| 1854 - 1911 | Reign of Emperor Yemena Melin Hameru |
| 1867 | Durathast Founded |
| 1911 - 1964 | Reign of Emperor Husayen Thyvena Hameru |
| 1930 - 1970 | the Last War |
| 1964 - 1967 | Reign of Emperor Dul'Fiqr Ceran Hameru |
| 1967 | The Great Devastation |
| 1967 - 2016 | Reign of Emperor Urea Hameru |
| 1968 | The Paerahim established |
| 2016 - 2059 | Reign of Emperor Zarestu Oid Hameru |
| 2039 | Axatheum founded |
| 2059 - 2102 | Reign of Emperor Kal'Amara Aelsinine Hameru |
| 2065 | Savathuram awakens |
| 2067 - 2077 | Strider Wars |
| 2102 - 2143 | Reign of Emperor Be'Thalma Ath Hameru |
| 2143 - 2212 | Reign of Emperor Da'Hearu Axatha Hameru |
| 2212 - 2267 | Reign of Emperor Umaz'zha-de Coran Hameru |
| 2267 - 2330 | Reign of Emperor Inan'ji Urta Hameru |
| 2330 - 2392 | Reign of Emperor Gel'daqinn Eilene Hameru |
| 2392 - 2442 | Reign of Emperor Rha'Verg-aman A'Raga Hameru |
| 2400 | A'Ragos established |
| 2442 - 2495 | Reign of Emperor Mi-Zhadora Thyvena Hameru |
| 2478 | Norcast Founded |
| 2483 | Orkan first sighted |
| 2495 - 2548 | Reign of Emperor In'Shen-Zinji Yagda Hameru |
| 2496 | Savathuram encountered |
| 2501 | A'ragos declares independence |
| 2520 - 2525 | Norcast Invasion |
| 2548 - | Reign of Emperor August Melin Hameru |

CRIMSON EMPIRE

CHAPTER 6 - TRAVELOGUE

"I am dead, but the empire lives. That, I cannot abide." – Adham Hamzah, vampire of Savathuram



Apathos the bloodspiller laughed as his sandy form gathered into the gaunt, parched full height of seven feet. The bone-white vampire's thin fingers flicked over the edges of the empty stone coffin from where Hatori backed away. "The white paint does not disguise you from me," the dead nobleman scoffed as he slowly glided toward the purple-robed samurai. Stern-faced, Hatori brought up his katana, which glinted with the light of the torches he had placed earlier around the room. "And you'll find your steel holds little purchase on me, little man," Apathos added as he passed within a hair's breadth of the glittering weapon.

"This is no ordinary blade," Hatori replied with pride. "This is one of the seven blades of Katchori Ameratsu; it is not steel, but forged from a star handed down from the heavens itself."

Apathos smile faded as the blade flashed brighter and brighter in the torchlight, as if it were absorbing the light itself. "And neither are these mere torches, foul creature," Hatori explained. "Each stave is taken from the yew stake used to slay a vampire that was once a member of the Mumosi family," Hatori announced. With each word, the torches seemed to pulse and the blade Hatori held pulsed like a beating heart, "Each torch is wrapped with the burial robe of that same family member and anointed with oil from the temple of the Katchori sun monks of Misrador."

As the blade flared as if it were the noon sun, it forced Apathos to pull away, hiding his frail, parched features from the light. "You are no mere

tomb raider," the vampire surmised, drawing a cloak of sand around itself to protect it from the light.

"I am Hatori Mumosi, and I have come to bring justice to my kinslayer," Hatori stated defiantly.

"Bah!" roared Apathos, defiantly, though his voice shook with fear. He brought a clawed hand towards the skittering, chattering mass above them, and calling to the myriad bats that swarmed the ceiling. In an instant, they took flight, and at Apathos wordless command swirled downward and began to batter at the torches on the wall, even as Hatori leapt across the gap between them with a war cry on his lips. Apathos form scattered and dispersed to avoid the sweeping blade of fire, but he was not entirely fast enough. An arc of burning sand marked where Hatori caught the mummified vampire before the fiend fully dispersed and reformed several paces behind the white-painted samurai.

As Hatori turned and rushed again toward his evasive enemy, Apathos hand shot out towards the swirling mass of bats that now danced amongst them. Even as Hatori's swirling arcs cut the bats in his path to ribbons, their freed blood swirled and spiraled toward Apathos, who drank the freed vitae to heal the swordsman's last blow. Only moments before Hatori reached him, Apathos saw the flashing blade approaching. Preparing for the samurai's assault, Apathos reared back a clawed hand to strike.

Apathos breathed a brief cackle as Hatori reached his opponent and struck the final blow. The bats swirled for only a moment more before they were dispersed, leaving the blood-smeared victor to stand over the fallen form of his enemy.

INTRODUCTIONS

A magistrate's fact sheet can tell us little of the people of Eth'Authuram and beyond. While such a sheet may tell us the daily temperature within the Cauldron, they cannot describe the heat that blisters bare feet nor how the sky dances like a sultry sikhain in the cloudless noonday sun.

Therefore, I present here a scant few essays on the various inhabitants of their homeland, based on my travels and correspondence with travelers from afar.

MAP SCALE

The scale on the enclosed map is 1 hex = 48 miles. We base the scale on the accepted distance that an unladed mounted rider expects to cover in one day (or two, for one on foot).

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COUNTRY NAME

Titles: This denotes the appellations by which to address the realm; listed here are only titles appropriate to use in courtly conversation when addressing the realm.

Capital: This is the name of the official capital of the realm.

Government: This section lists the realms political structure.

Leader: This section lists the current known rulers of the realm and their immediate titles of address.

Population: This section touches only on the mix of the sentient population in each realm. It is only in percentages, as we do not have exact censuses for each realm beyond our own.

Overview: This section contains a brief analysis of the realm, handy for a “gut feeling” evaluation of the realm.

History: This section contains a brief synopsis of the realm's appearance and the role it has played in our history. As this treatise is merely an introduction to familiarize oneself with the world we have become, only the most significant historical notations have been included and many details of even these tidbits have been somewhat glossed over.

Allies/Enemies: Perhaps the most important section for my lord, this section discusses the various realms attitudes towards each other – at least on an official level. I have attempted to make note where the population's opinion may differ from the government's position.

Land: This gives an overview of the major landmarks found in the realm and a brief description of its contents.

Government: The information here discusses the nation's power structure, starting with its leader and working down through the national level.

Cities: Listed here you will find general information about the smaller communities in the realm and short description of each of the realm's great cities, including its capital.

People: This section is a short treatise on the overall social structure of the people of the realm. Not all sentient beings are alike, and individuals may depart from the norm described.

Religion: This section covers the religious views throughout the realm. Chapter 7 contains addition information about the various religions found in this section.

Magic: This section covers the use of magic and attitude towards spellcasters. Chapter 9 contains additional information about the nature of magic.

Adventuring: This section discusses the more dangerous opportunities an individual may find in the realm. Its importance to us is that we may expect trouble from these areas, but likewise we can expect heroes to arise from these same adversities. I am also aware of my lord's fondness for tales, and many such tales tend to arise based on these activities listed herein.

Holidays/Observances: This section lists only nationally celebrated holidays or other observances. Each entry contains a general summary of the origin and activities undertaken upon these days.

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A'RAGOS

The Lone City

Capital: A'Ragos

Government: Tyranny

Leader: Lord Mayor Tybalt Coldara Engle IV

Population: Anhiyawen (<1%), Tyres Haul (<1%), Dwarf (<1%), Kazin shazira (15%), Hellchilde (2%), Sa'heer-jinn (<1%), Human (79%), Mageborn (3%), Orkan (<1%), Titanborn (<1%)



OVERVIEW

Driven by greed and the riches of the watered wastes, A'Ragos has survived the centuries as a trade hub moving its wares between Eth'Authuram and Durathast, unhindered by the corsairs of Axatheum.

HISTORY

A'Ragos was a distant colony established after the Great Devastation by former citizens of Hrantha to harvest the lands now known as the Watered Wastes. It was the first Eth'Authuram city to make contact with Savathuram, and became a hub of travel to that far away realm. When the Caliph of Hek'Tesa revealed Savathuram's true nature, the city hastily made a treaty with Durathast, fearing it an invasion or attempt by undead conquer the city-state. During the years that followed, the diplomats from Durathast slowly spurred A'Ragos into breaking its ties with Eth'Authuram and it became an independent city-state.

However, an attempted military coup by Eth'Authuram loyal forces backfired spectacularly, allowing the vampire-laden Engle merchant family to seize control of the city. A'Ragos declared neutrality towards both Eth'Authuram and Durathast under the Engle family's puppet council. The council consisted

of various merchant families, with the Engle family solidly at the head of the operation.

We believe that secretly, the Engle family is friendly toward Savathuram, once again opening up the transport of victims to the blasted realm – in the guise of a slave trade – and the secret export of undead into the realms beyond.

ALLIES/ENEMIES

A'Ragos has carefully positioned itself so that it is the enemy of no realm. With the Sea of Lower Megidea lacking the corsair-laden raiding parties, it has become a favored port for those transporting goods between Eth'Authuram, Durathast and even those debased individuals who dare trade with Savathuram.

LAND

A'Ragos carved away the wilderness of the great forests that surround it. It sits in an easily defensible bay facing westward into the Sea of Lower Megidea. Local ship construction utilizes lumber from the nearby forest, and there are numerous small shipyards along the northern coast dealing with A'Ragos proper.

Likewise, the population of several small islands just off the coast and along the local sea consist of small, one-family households loyal and/or dependent on trade with A'Ragos.

GOVERNMENT

Wealthy families with tenuous ties to Eth'Authuram nobility rule A'Ragos. Despite their muddled bloodlines, the families rule the city-state surprisingly effectively and fairly. Each of the twelve families rules one of the five wards of the city itself or various tracts of lands or islands in the nearby area, with all the families answering to the Lord Mayor. On the surface, the Lord Mayor merely handles any disputes and doles out the funding collected from the cities taxes. However, these powers alone give the Lord Mayor the power to manipulate and control any of the other families.

Unlike Eth'Authuram, where officials inherit most civil positions, the ruling families assign lesser, non-family bureaucrats to positions in A'Ragos. These officials donate part of their salary to the families to keep their positions, and allow the ruling families the freedom to pursue their own fortunes in their personal businesses or to dalliance on their whims, should they choose to do so.

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CITIES

The numerous small communities near the capital of A'Ragos tend to consist of extended families living upon raft houses or wooden shanties built on the water's edge, with the ability to draw up shoreline walkways to provide meager defense in case of attack.

There are also numerous woodcutter communities on the mainland, usually established near rivers or the shoreline, where they easily transport wood to the capital. These communities tend to be rough-and-tumble frontier towns, with buildings made from stone slabs or leftovers from foresting operations.

A'Ragos: This city is nestled in a protected bay facing westward into the Sea of Lower Megidea. A ridgeline of hills surrounds three sides of the city. These hills also protect the city from overland attack. Most of the prominent buildings built in A'Ragos consist of coral taken out of the harbor and nearby islands, with the remainder built of wood from the nearby forest behind the city. A'Ragos ports are busy year-round and a flotilla of semi-permanent ships lay in its bay and form a sort of floating market for those too busy to make landfall in the city proper.

PEOPLE

Few of the individuals in A'Ragos would desire to live elsewhere. Many feel that they enjoy a level of freedom and security not available elsewhere in Aurtheum or beyond.

Within the city itself, trade and artisanship are very much in demand. A'Ragos is a city that thrives on exports, and there are few businesses not engaged in exporting goods of some sort.

Beyond the bay and sprawling city of A'Ragos, most individuals are fishermen, pearl divers or sailors trading between the great cities of Hrantha, Uretheon, Belios and A'Ragos – calling A'Ragos their home as a way to evade many of the restrictions and taxes applied to citizens of the other cities. Many of these outliers have never set foot upon land in A'Ragos itself, and likely never will – either plying the waters of Megidea or its islands, unmolested.

RELIGION

Officially, the people of A'Ragos worship the Twelve Divine, favoring A'Raga the Red. However, unlike ancient times where his people easily whipped themselves into bloody desire for combat, the people of A'Ragos invoke A'Raga's name to save themselves from battle and conflict.

MAGIC

Each of the ruling families of A'Ragos is well versed in Karma magic and there are many mageborn among the nobility. Wind magic is popular among many of the more successful merchantmen, and associating with such elemental mages does not carry the stigma seen in Eth'Authuram.

Khouris of A'Ragos still call on their ancestor's name, but many of the clergy ceased practicing battle-related spells in favor of providing blessings of wealth and luck in trade negotiations.

ADVENTURING

Despite its outward appearance, A'Ragos is a hotbed of black markets, slave trade and a feeding ground for the undead.

Likewise, many of the uncharted islands of the Sea of Lower Megidea contain ruins back from the ancient empire or crypts and bastions established by the undead of Savathuram.

Occasionally, raiders or corsairs beset the waters of the Sea. Some debt-riddled citizens of A'Ragos become raiders, while privateers from Eth'Authuram or corsairs of Durathast seek easy prey in the warm waters. Such raiders tend to be small and swift-striking bands. The four cities of Hrantha, A'Ragos, Uretheon and Belios created a pact to aid one another against pirates and raiders. They have shown to be quite willing to send armadas against organized piracy on their seas.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

Free Trade: Held the 3rd of Numeris, this festival celebrates the day A'Ragos became independent. On this day, there is no tax on trades under 200 silver. There are parades from the Council Hall at the center of town to the docks. Each family constructs and operates a paper float in the parade, tossing gifts to celebrants along the way. At the end of the parade is a great bonfire made of burning the paper floats in the bay.

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ALAGOS

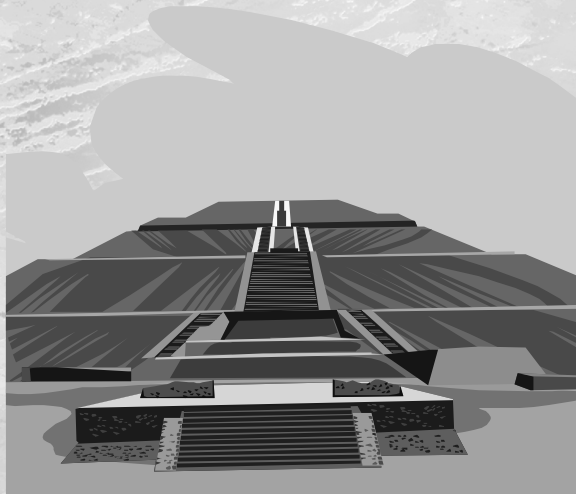
The Forever Plains, the Dragon Lands

Capital: None

Government: Various Tribes

Leader: The Lord of War, the Lord of Peace

Population: Anhiyawen (9%), Tyres Haul (87%), Hellchilde (Dragon) (<1%), Human (3%), Mageborn (<1%)



OVERVIEW

Alagos is the home of the draconic and militaristic forces of the Tyres haul. Steeped in mystery, this rather flat land contains many wonders and mysteriously abandoned cities across its relatively small surface.

HISTORY

We know little of Alagos itself, for the Tyres haul do not politely suffer visitors from other realms, most especially those without draconic blood themselves.

The Empire first encountered Alagos under the reign of Empress Jania Ath Hameru. Under the Empress's command, ships scouting for new lands for the empire to expand into encountered the island and its fearsome inhabitants. Despite their warning not to travel northward, the scout ships did depart from their land and travel further north to discover Thyventhos and the mysterious realm of Caltheus beyond.

The encounter with Alagos was far from peaceful, and the rest of the empire only learned of the encounter when an army dispatched from Alagos arrived in Eth'Authuram.

The army landed at Urthios and marched eastward to Asul itself, where it was confronted by the Empress and her elite guard. Under flag of truce,

the leaders of the Alagos army and the Empress to address the Alagos's army concerns about exploration into the northern lands.

The talks resulted in the recall of the surviving exploration ships back to the homeland, but not before those expeditions established magical portals between Thyventhos and Eth'Authuram.

Since that time, there has been little external contact with Alagos, save for the occasional human slave who escaped their imprisonment as trophies of war from the ancient first and last meeting with the army of Alagos.

ALLIES/ENEMIES

Alagos finds itself constantly at odds with raiders from nearby Norcast. Alagos has also sent warriors against Thyventhos, though so far the superior magic of that realm has repulsed each incursion thus far.

Likewise, Alagos has rebuffed any contact with the kazin shazira of the Zapathos forest, and the Tyres haul have gone so far as to slaughter any non-Tyres haul found on the isle.

Alagos stands in watch against an unnamed enemy to the far west and occasionally marches in great numbers to do battle with this enemy – though the name and strength of this enemy remains unrevealed to us.

LAND

Information gleaned from escaped slaves returned to our homeland reveals grasslands punctuated with rising plateaus cover most of Alagos. Likewise, plunging crevasses dot the island, and house the cities of the Tyres haul. It is unclear if these varied rock formations are normal or the result of the elemental magic available to the Tyres haul. Oddly, there are no stands of forest upon the island, and the dragons are quick to cut down grouping of trees that exceeds five in number. Keeping a mature tree on one's property in Alagos is a crime, though the reasoning behind this law is unknown – sages suspect Alagos aimed the law to prevent kazin shazira or jinn from gaining a foothold on the island.

GOVERNMENT

For many centuries, we believed that a Tyres haul monarchy ruled Alagos, but we come to understand that even the heads of that empire answer to a council of dragons from Caltheus. We do not truly understand how or in what manner the dragons command the Tyres haul, but it has become clear that they are but one of many military arms available to the Dragon Lords. Exactly who or what forces the Tyres haul spar with is unknown, for even those who

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leave Alagos to live among us will not reveal the name, strength or race of the enemy they stand fast against.

CITIES

Most Tyres haul communities built their complexes in adapted caverns or burrows. Each domicile has an aboveground entrance and exit and only occasionally is the residences connected by underground tunnels or open into adjacent dwellings.

Eringuard: The Tyres haul rebuilt the capital of Alagos numerous times over the centuries – in no less than three places across Alagos. Tales place the current glass and marble capital in the face of a great crevasse in the eastern side of the island. Only the military leaders and their great army inhabit the structure, with the army's elite barracked in caverns nearby.

PEOPLE

Alagos is dominated by the draconic Tyres haul and any other being found there either is of mixed draconic blood (such as rare hellchilde enclaves) or slaves taken in the ancient crusade against Eth'Athuram.

The Tyres haul hate, if not outright fear jinn and their related races, slaying them on sight or treating them as contemptibly as possible if they cannot.

When dealing with Tyres haul, they interact in stratified and aristocratic manner. All interactions are extremely formal affairs with much pride and deference oozing between individuals.

RELIGION

The Tyres haul worship living dragons, incorporating draconic motifs into their architecture and art. It appears that a particular dragon patronizes each Tyres haul and when the rare event occurs that the family's patron passes on that its members ritually sacrifice their own lives as well.

MAGIC

The Tyres haul have many powerful elemental sorcerers, and many of the hellchilde of this realm have an understanding of Karma magic as well – though the Tyres haul tend to see our civilized magic as “crude”.

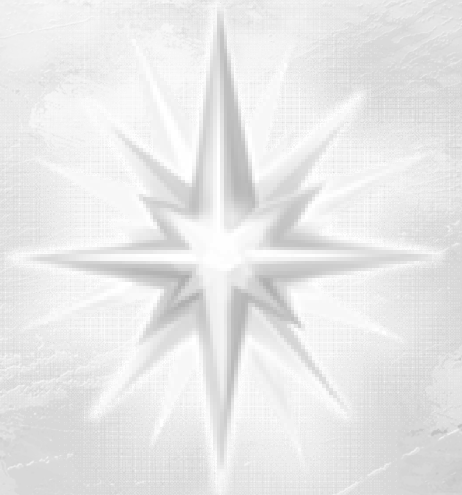
Many dragon priests among the Tyres haul access their patron dragon's magic to use as their lord dictates. The Norcast are exceptionally familiar as being on the receiving ends of many such magics.

ADVENTURING

It appears that Alagos is relatively civilized and free of wild creatures and other such dangers. Though there are legends of many ruins across the island nation, only the boldest and most secretive of foreigners would dare intrude into their depths, for the Tyres haul hand out a sentence of public execution to any they find disturbing such abandoned areas.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

Black Day: Strangely, we know little about this day for the non-Tyres haul herd slaves into areas where they may not witness the rituals and celebrations that occur. It is believed it is a day when the Tyres haul are visited by their draconic overlords and entertain them with feasts, parades and festivities – thought to include humanoid sacrifices to the overlords.



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AXATHEUM

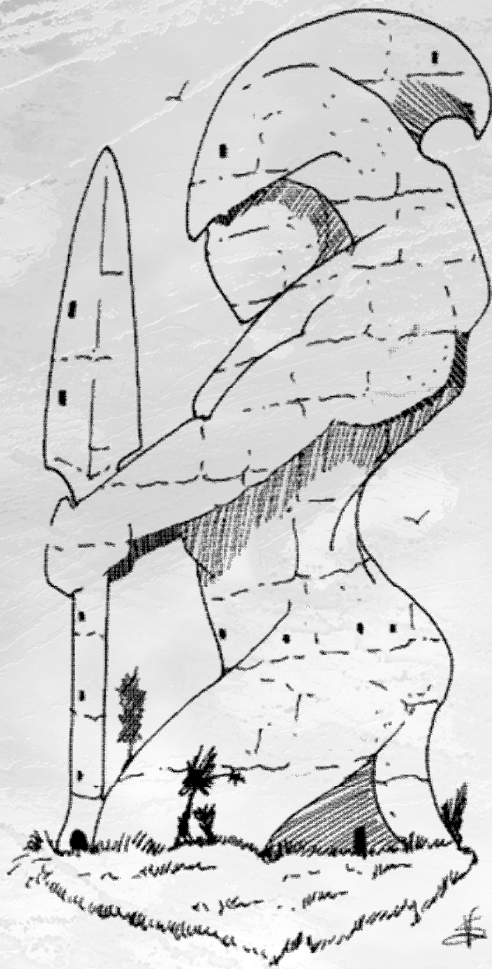
The Corsair Kingdoms

Capital: Axath'os

Government: Confederation

Leader: The Thirteen Princes of Axatheus (see Government), administrated by Seneschal Calbrion Flexx

Population: Anhiyawen (25%), Tyres Haul (5%), Dwarf (<1%), Kazin shazira (<1%), Hellchilde (<1%), Sa'heer-jinn (<1%), Human (50%), Mageborn (<1%), Orkan (15%), Titanborn (2%)



OVERVIEW

The corsairs of Eth'Authuram settled Axatheum, on the continent of Axatheus. Originally, they were exotic ports from which came many strange animals, spices and slaves, often raided upon by the corsairs from secret bases. When Eth'Authuram was devastated, the corsairs moved into the towns and overthrew the Empire's lords,

making the cities their own. The faux prince from Axath'os rules them.

HISTORY

In the later days of the empire of Eth'Authuram, colonies began to stretch across the known world. One such colony was the four port cities on the continent of Axatheus. These port cities became hubs to strip the riches of Axatheus and summarily ship the sold goods to Eth'Authuram.

During the wars against Durathast, pirating became popular as Eth'Authuram heavily taxed goods to support its war effort.

When Eth'Authuram collapsed, the pirates fell en masse upon the port cities, seizing them for their own. After several years of independent control – and as the government of Eth'Authuram began to reorganize, these pirate lords banded together and founded the principdom of Axatheum.

ALLIES/ENEMIES

While the merchants of Axatheum freely wheel and deal with any nation, Axatheum harbors a dislike of Eth'Authuram's government. It also must deal with constant raids from “independent” pirates of Norcast.

Further, the northern lands must deal with Misrador squatters and raiders from Haadarast. While Axatheum regularly drives off the latter, several of the fortified positions established by Misradorian settlements defy the corsair's navy attempts to drive them away.

LAND

Axzor Hills: The Axzor hills are among the richest sources of precious minerals, and the hills are scattered with various mine operations digging silver, gold, gems and other minerals out of the rich hills.

Axor (island): This mountainous island has no natural beachheads to allow easy access to it. However, a score of years back a dwarven expedition was able to carve a port into the rock face on the windward side of the island, from which they launched a mining expedition. Unfortunately, the great wealth they unearthed drew a corsair attack, and the dwarven colony was devastated and the unearthed riches stolen. The location of the hidden fortress has since been lost.

Axath Forest: This forest has remained mostly untouched over the centuries. Fierce jinn make a home in the overgrown woods, and who have foiled our attempts to penetrate and subjugate the wilderness.

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Azathor (island) – Known as the land of green fields, this cliff-surrounded island was first populated by sheep herders and then often used by corsairs to maroon troublesome crew members. Ships generally avoid the isle when possible, and the populace has become seriously inbred over the years.

Borxos (island): This lush island is in easy reach of the mainland, but its mountainous reaches make it easy to defend against pirate raids. It has become home to many a rich mine lord, and even many of the corsair princes have established manor houses and pleasure centers on the isle, further making the likelihood of a raid – despite the wealth – even more remote.

Riguus (island) – This large island claims shared dominion by both Eth'Authuram and Axatheum, though the peasantry pays a hefty fee to Axatheum to keep away any sort of standing military force (and dissuade full-scale pirate raiding). Farmers mostly inhabit it and cattle ranchers make this island home. Occasionally Norcast raids seek to restock their hold with fresh food from this land.

Widow Peaks: Similar in richness to the Axzor hills, the Widow peaks are rich with precious minerals, but the treacherous terrain and monster-infested peaks make mining difficult and dangerous. As such, much of the area is relatively unclaimed, making the small collections of mining operations that do work the mountains capable of charging greater fees for the treasures they unearth.

GOVERNMENT

Each of the thirteen “princes” of Axatheum has established their own order of rule and hierarchy. On the mainland of Axatheus, the five princes share power and control over the great cities and the boomtowns in the Axzor Hills. Each prince carries the family name of the port city their lineage controls – Prince Tythion Epsea of Epsea'on, Prince Alexandros Lae of Lae'on, Princess Elisa Rhaos of Rhaos'on, Prince Pyrandial Aka of Aka'eon and Prince Dhearoon Ghuleos of Ghuleos'on. Each prince is descended from an enriched family of corsairs who rose to power after the decline of the Empire. Axatheum places great emphasis on its naval power, often to the detriment of the populace dwelling away from the ports of the great cities.

The isle of Riguus has two princes – Prince Aerethene Riguus representing Axatheum's interests, and the other, Prince-Envoy Ghalen Urthios XV,

ruling in the name of Eth'Authuram, and is a hotbed of espionage and backstabbing. It is such a dangerous place politically that three violent coupes replaced the Axatheum prince and his court. Our steady prince-envoy has yet to suffer such a fate.

The isle of Azathor has elected a faux prince to rule over the degenerates there, though the individual has little real power and simply handles squabbles and tends to the overall welfare of the island's inhabitants. The current prince is Aman Leos, the half-wit son of corsairs, and has “ruled” Azathor for the last fifteen years.

Axor houses yet another prince, scorned by the others. Yet, Prince Maxos Mannana the corsair king boasts undisputable wealth and power capable of crushing his enemies or bribing them to look elsewhere. We believe that this prince's lair is in the fallen dwarven stronghold on that island, but so far, our armada has been unable to locate and deal with this so-called prince.

The remaining princes – Prince Encandia Boyste, Prince Sy'merialle Iagos, Prince Vesta Yuules and Princess Helena Travails - hold official estates in Axath'os, though they tend to travel and administrate from their fleets that traverse the Sea of Athos. It falls to Prince Vesta Yuules to administrate Axatheum's navy, though it is also believed that Yuules employs many of his otherwise idle assets as corsairs to harass our shipping along the Sea of Athos.

A seneschal appointed by all thirteen princes administrates the capital and handles the day-to-day affairs of the kingdom as well. This individual oversees the diplomatic relations to other realms. The current seneschal is Calbrion Flexx, who has held the position fifteen years running.

CITIES

There are numerous small, rural fishing communities all along Axatheum's southern shoreline. Most of the buildings are comprised of gathered stones and driftwood. These communities usually have defensive screens or walls made of wooden posterns to defend against corsair attackers. As one heads inland and north, the communities become smaller and further spread apart, and many sport defensive walls made of stone and buildings made of stone, sod or logs – depending on surrounding materials.

Aka'eon: This unusual city caters the Inner Sea, dealing in wealth floated from the Axzor hills and into the city itself. Although the river south of the city, known as the Run, drains from the Inner Sea into the Sea of Athos, its swift current

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generally only allows quick transport to the sea. Travel upriver into the Inner Sea is slow and costly.

Axath'os: This is the most splendid city in all of Axatheum. Built on a bluff overlooking the sea, most construction utilizes the very granite of the bluff itself for buildings. Decorated buildings sport colored sails, infusing the city with bright and cheery colors, and lending an air to the city as if the whole thing were ready to leap off the bluff onto the thermals that rush over the city itself.

Epsea'on: This city boasts a large Norcast population. It is a well-known raider and corsair haven. The city has been sacked by outsiders many times, and rebuilt by its residents and equal number of times. The old city, which juts into the sea, has become a corsair haven tentatively attached to the main city by a stone causeway. Powerful stone walls surround the city and arcane golems patrol the city streets and walls. The city itself has no ports, forcing any sea traffic to dock in the old city or along the causeway before bringing goods into the landlocked city itself.

Ghuleos'on: Founded initially as a shipyard, Ghuleos'on long provided most of the ships in use by Axatheum merchants and corsairs. Many of the great buildings in the city are in fact made of timbers pulled from wrecked ships or otherwise unsuitable for use in shipbuilding. However, the city has now lumbered most of the nearby forest into grassland, and has found its attempts to mine the trees of the Axath forest thwarted at every turn by the fierce jinn that dwell in the woods.

Lae'on: Built in a sheltered bay, Lae'on has many natural defenses that have kept it from falling prey to raids over the centuries. The city straddles an important isthmus that links it with far Epsea'on and the cities eastward. The city also rules over the open plains to its north, where many of the rural farming communities have pledged their allegiance to the prince of the city.

Rhaos'on: This city sits on a channel that runs from the Great Bay in the west to the Sea of Athos in the east. It has miles of ports along this channel. Part of the city stands upon stilts that stretch over the waterway. The southern portion of the city, on the far side of the channel sits in a swampy area where the primary means of moving about is by gondola. The northern, and larger, section of the city utilizes high ground and formidable bulwarks to protect the city. The second richest city in Axatheum is Rhaos'on, and it is the least friendly to corsairs.

PEOPLE

There are three castes of people within Axatheum: the landborn, the sailors and the nobilis.

The landborn refer to those individuals who dwell and work the land of Axatheum – farmers, miners, city workers and other individuals who do not ply the sea. Though they are perhaps the most numerous, they also have the least rights – it is even possible that members of the sailor caste can seize their lands, if they so choose.

Next higher up in society are those of the sailors caste. These include fishermen, sailors, corsairs, marines and those that hold positions aboard a sea-going vessel. The state guarantees a salary to these individuals, but they also must swear fealty to one of the princes of Axatheum. Though they can be conscripted for military (or corsair) duty, most are civilians whose immediate loyalty goes to the captain they serve under.

The highest caste in Axatheum is the nobilis – blood relatives of the ruling families of Axatheum. While members of the sailor class are allowed to own and operate a ship, only members of the nobilis may command a flotilla of sailing vessels or possess a ship of war. It is, in fact, a requirement of the nobilis to possess some sort of sea-going vessel to retain their social status – one of the most feared punishments in Axatheum is the seizure of someone's ship.



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RELIGION

While the majority of those in Axatheum pay tribute to Hameru and his wife, Hek'Tesa, the veneration of any of the Twelve carries stiff penalties, as does the veneration of the Twenty-three Emperors. Some regions of Axatheum – especially in Epsea'on tolerate worship of the Kraken. In eastern Ghuleos'on, the populace includes Tytanya in prayers and offerings made for ventures undertaken on the Sea of Athos.



MAGIC

Wind mageborn are common among the bloodlines of the nobilis, and each Prince (perhaps save the prince of Azathor) keeps a handful of wizards or sorcerers to protect their interests. Rumors state Prince Maxos is a Hellchilde Emil, and there are tales that his captains are likewise Hellchilde outcast from Norcast.

There are also land-bound mages found in Axatheum, with a handful of terramages among the miners of the Axzor Hills.

ADVENTURING

Pirating is a common profession among the Axatheum and there are many interests for and against such activities across the Sea of Athos. Guards and monster hunters are in constant need in the monster-infested hills of the Axzor while soldiers and mercenaries are always welcome in defending the ports and coastal homesteads from the deprivations of Norcast raiders.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

Full Sail's Day: Held Xathis 1st, this day commemorates Axatheum unification and

establishment. Port cities celebrate this holiday with myriad festivals, carnivals and ship races, usually held aboard the local ships just off port.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

CALTHEUS

The Dragon Realm, the Land of Scale and Claw

Capital: Caladonia

Government: Believed Oligarchy

Leader: Unknown

Population: Unknown, believed Hellchilde (5%), Titanborn (80%), Tyres haul (15%), Human (<1%)



OVERVIEW

Caltheus is a savage land where the very elements have gone wild. Home to dragons and manifestations of the wild elements, most of Caltheus has long remained unexplored by humanity due to the harsh and deadly nature of the land itself. Jinn creatures have hinted they know much about the land, but say little to outsiders – even to their own children, the kazin shazira.

HISTORY

We only knew Caltheus after exploratory ships landed on its shores during the reign of Empress Jania Ath Hameru. Recalls forced the ships to return before they could explore but a few miles of coastland. However, more expeditions secretly followed – starting from magical portals the original explorers had placed in what is now Thyventhos.

The traitor Urea actually performed the greatest exploration of Caltheus. Though his surviving travelogues are incomplete and contain several falsehoods, they present the most complete picture of Caltheus the Empire has.

When the Empire's capital was moved to Thyventhos, a few scant decades before the Great Devastation, much exploration and exploitation of the nearby lands occurred, including sojourns to Caltheus

by elemental mages seeking to learn more about the strange and powerful magics Urea had first uncovered. Though powerful genies or dragons rebuffed many such expeditions, they did reveal to us more about the mysterious and shifting landscapes of that strange realm.

After the fall of the royal lineage, Caltheus became a remote and forbidden land, and few desired to learn its elemental secrets after the havoc it had unleashed upon the Empire. Now, only the bravest or most foolhardy venture to the dragon lands and fewer of its explorers return without suffering madness from their strange encounters to that mysterious realm.

ALLIES/ENEMIES

The dragons of Caltheus have strongly allied themselves with the Tyres haul of Alagos. However, such alliances seem to be on an individual basis rather than on a level of some greater power.

LAND

Like everything else in Caltheus, the land moves and changes over time at the whims of the greater powers that dwell there. Yet, while specific borders and positions of the major land features shift from time to time, overall it only changes mass and shape – one may expect to travel from the Drakes to Death's Dale by walking eastward, but time to reach it and the landmarks within each area may change from visit to visit.

The Bonebacks: Tall and imposing mountains, the peaks of the northernmost ridges are perpetually covered in snow and surrounded by glaciers. Urea's travelogue of this area recounts finding an abandoned city filled with dragon bones, though no expeditions have been able to verify its existence.

The BusheWaers: This grassy finger of Caltheus is home to the powerful and savage genie lords. The whim of the genie that has marked their territory dominates the ever-shifting landscape.

Death's Dale: This hilly and jungle-like region is home to a powerful lineage of genies that have kept their rivals at bay by the use of powerful necromantic magic to erect a sort of barrier along the western edge of his realm.

Deathloop Isle: The sparsely populated and reputed home of the great jinn Reaper, the southern half of this island is barren, flat sand dunes, while the northern, hilly mountains are

CRIMSON EMPIRE

covered in strange, twinkling evergreen trees.

Dragon's Teeth Mountains: Strange birdcalls fill the tree-lined ranges and they are homes to the cavernous lairs of dragons and other fell beasts.

The Drakes: These barren sand dunes are home to the younger and less powerful dragons. It is a hunting ground of the various genies and their elemental hunters. We believe the same sort of out of control elemental forces that devastated our own Empire created the desert here.

Star Isle (island): Home to a powerful marid genie, Star Isle seems a paradise among the strange and dangerous lands of Caltheus. Star Isle is home to many water elementals that have adapted to living on the spongy grounds of the island.

Scorpions: A ridge of steep mountains splits this island down the middle. Its deceptively beautiful plains are infested with enormous and mutated beasts – including massive scorpions. The singular forest on the western edge of the island is home to a collection of jinn – perhaps the only area of Caltheus inhabited by jinn spirits.

PLACES OF WONDER

The Burning Bush: In the heart of the BusheWaes, upon a tumbled rock plateau stands the strangest plant in the entire world. Its branches are veins of red fire, while its leaves are flickering blue flames. The nearby jinn have a magical means by which they can pick off the flaming leaves and preserve them for a time. The harvested leaves can enhance fire magic and cause weapons to burst into flames in combat.

The City of Dragon Bone: Urea claimed to have visited this mysterious city in the Bonebacks, but no other mortal has been able to locate it – and return. The scavenged bones of dragons form the basis of this city and dragon scales decorated the massive structures. According to Urea's accounts, the city is abandoned, but even he felt the presence of *something* watching him as he examined the city.

GOVERNMENT

Caltheus has no central ruler, instead powerful dragons and their broods segregate the land for their own use. It appears that there are genies in the land who command tribes of elementals underneath them, but there is no sense of alliance or structure between individual genies and their charges.

CITIES

Though rumors of cities within Caltheus are commonplace, they structures seem to move from place to place of their own accord. Previous areas of wilderness sometimes open to decaying cities that appear to have been in place for centuries, if not millennium. At other times, a well-known landmark may completely disappear for lengths at a time, randomly reappearing months or years later as if untouched by the passage of time.

PEOPLE

Elementals, genies, dragons and Tyres haul are the only known sentient races to inhabit Caltheus.

RELIGION

The inhabitants of Caltheus have no professed religion, and generally scorn any being worshipping or calling on the aid of another being.

MAGIC

Raw, uncontrolled elemental magic infuses Caltheus, spilling into strange storms or waves of environmental mutation. Jinn magic seems to waver and fail in Caltheus, though karmic magic seems to work normally.

ADVENTURING

Those seeking out dragons and their hoards are often disappointed to learn that the dragons native to Caltheus lack treasure – and those they become eager to travel to southern lands when they learn of the existence of items of great value. There are tales of vast treasures, spells and powerful artifacts among the genies and their kind. However such tales also speak how the jinn make bloody sacrifices out of those who seek such treasures that they catch.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

None.

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CORANTHIUS

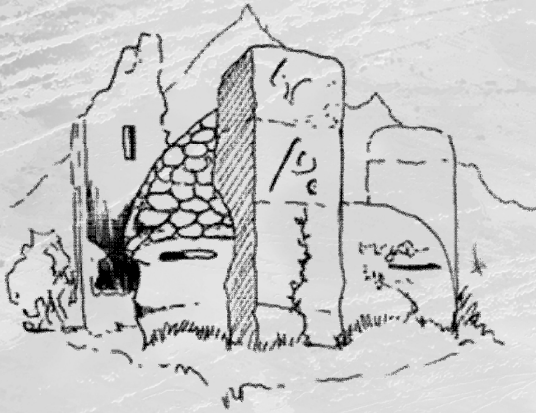
The Wasted Kingdom, the Traitorous Realm

Capital: Coranthium

Government: Monarch

Leader: Caliph Xhanos Coran Hameru XXXI

Population: Anhiyawen (2%), Tyres Haul (2%), Dwarf (1%), Kazin shazira (2%), Hellchilde (<1%), Sa'heer-jinn (<1%), Human (), Mageborn (2%), Orkan (2%), Titanborn (<1%)



OVERVIEW

While Coranthius outward depicts itself as an independent kingdom, in reality it has secretly allied itself with us as a tool against the Norcast and raiders of Axatheum.

HISTORY

The lands of Coranthius were first civilized in the great expansion after the Emperor wars. Of the twelve, Coran desired being emperor only second to Urea. However, the sly one goaded the armies of his siblings against the eldest, forcing Coran to escape to this far realm. There he founded the city of Coranthium with its impenetrable walls. When the Emperor wars ended and the empire founded, Coran slowly shifted his attention to settling the surrounding lands. His aggressive land clearing to build additional settlements and the hunting, enslavement or rabid domestication of the wild animals in this eastern portion of the empire sparked the harsh Jinn retaliation that became the Kazin wars.

At the start of the Kazin wars, the sudden appearance of the Zapathos Forest cut off the cities of Coranthius from the rest of the empire. The kazin shazira had expected the cities to quickly fall without support from the rest of the empire. However, the Empire shipped emergency supplies and troops to Umjin, which became the primary bastion of

resistance throughout the kazin wars. Coranthium itself was able to repulse the kazin shazira of the forest by the sorceries of Coran and the faris warriors under his banner.

After the Kazin wars the cities of Coranthius had to turn to sea trade to keep in touch with the empire, as routes through the Zapathos Forest were impossible at that time. For the duration of its tenure with the Eth'Authuram Empire, the cities of Coranthius were somewhat of a redheaded stepchild, always behind the trends and fashions of the main empire and forced to fend for itself on the scraps it could garner from the rest of the empire.

When the Great Devastation struck, the cities of Coranthius were unfortunately devastated with the same fury as those in the east. Only the city of Coranthium withstood the elemental onslaught – everything else was reduced to ash.

For the next hundred years, Coranthius survived on its own, believing the empire destroyed. Little by little, the citizens of the overcrowded city ventured forth from the city to repopulate the wastelands of Coranthius.

By the time the reformed empire made contact again with Coranthium, the four cities of the west had established themselves. Coranthius had grown independent in its time alone. It was reluctant to rejoin an empire that had spurned them. The two arranged agreements for trade and tithes, but Coranthius did not fully rejoin the empire, though it paid homage to the Emperor.

Coranthius was on the road to reclaiming the wastelands and even opening a dialog with the kazin shazira of the Zapathos Forest when disaster struck. A sudden invasion from Norcast cast the kingdom into turmoil as an armada of unprecedented size assaulted its shores. The invaders torched two of Coranthius's cities, decimated numerous small communities, and enslaved a large number of the populace.

With the aid of the Axatheum fleet, Coranthius was able to stop the advance of the Norcast, though it found itself unable to drive the invaders away completely. Even now, Coranthius is engaged in a bitter struggle to reclaim the foothold the Norcast have established on their shores.

ALLIES/ENEMIES

Coranthius has a blinding hatred of Norcast, duly deserved after the sacking of two of its cities – Zebo and A'lak Ahera by forces of the Kraken. Because Coranthius lacks a force capable of engaging in protracted, open war against Norcast, the lords of Coranthius instead counter-raid into Norcast, often assuming the guise of corsairs from Axatheum.

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Coranthius pays a secret tribute to Eth'Authuram to facilitate trade and secretly gather arms, ships and equipment for its war against Norcast.

Coranthius is neutral towards Axatheum, engaging in some trade and occasionally allying with its navy against Norcast, though it does not trust the corsair nation.

Coranthius fears Alagos as it has endured several raids from that nation since the Great Devastation. Though the attacks have remained coastal raids, Coranthius remains vigilant should the dragon men ever attempt a full-scale assault.

LAND

Most of Coranthius is sparse, rocky land – though more fertile than our own empire. By means unknown to us, Coranthius wizards have managed to transform a portion of the lands in the southernmost region between the capital and the Zaphathos forest back into lush grassland.

Wasted Plains: These scrublands are quickly recovering, thanks both in part to the efforts of the Earth mages of Coranthium and the blood magic performed by the Norcast in the north. However, abandoned, sacked and overgrown villages riddle the area.

GOVERNMENT

Coranthius is a tyranny ruled by a bloodline that can trace its lineage back to Coran Hameru. Nobles who likewise can draw direct kinship back to Coran hold all governmental and military positions.

Due to the war-torn nature of this realm, there are actually few high-ranking military positions available, most held by individuals that jealously protect their survival and position. The army primarily consists of slave legions – known as mamlukes - trained from a young age to fight and die protecting what is left of the realm.

The government of Coranthius is far more ruthless than our own, mostly out of necessity due to the enemies that it faces. Failure or neglect of duty in Coranthius carries a stiff penalty. However, the harsh punishments have adversely affected relations between bureaucrats of this realm. While the government viciously punishes open bribery, usually only the promise of wealth or favors can bend a bureaucrat to a favorable stance.

By means of secret pacts laid down shortly after the Kazin wars, Coranthius was granted its autonomy to fight the enemies of the empire – first the kazin and Tyres haul, and now the Norcast that have invaded its shores. I will not discuss these pacts

here, but without our support, Coranthius would have long ago fallen to her enemies.

CITIES

Residents abandoned smaller communities in favor of larger, well-protected surviving cities. Though that have survived are bastion-like fortresses, usually surrounded by an older ring of destroyed ruins. The surviving buildings tend to be squat, sturdy structures built of a mix of stone and reinforced mud brick and are generally built close together, if not one atop another.

Coranthium: This mighty city sits on the edge of a fertile plain with a manufactured canal to allow it to act as a port city. Magically impervious basalt walls raised by court wizards defend the city from raiders and refugees. Some sections of the original curtain wall, which lies further from the diminished core of the city, act as armed outposts or bastions to deter raiders.

Umjin: This unusual Coranthium city has been grown from living trees and magically raised spires of quartz has thrived from its rapport with the kazin shazira of the Zaphathos forest. It has an unusually high number of draemani residents, and it is cool towards Coranthius rule. Citizens of the city trade, rather than suffer raids from Norcast.

Ruins of A'lak Ahera: The ruins of this city are under Coranthius control, and have become a point of contention against the forces of Coranthium and the raiders from Zebo. A timber and iron palisade surrounds the rebuilt core of this city and protects it from attack. There have been continuing attempts to reclaim the greater ruins outside this core, but the periodic raids from Zebo have neutralized most gains.

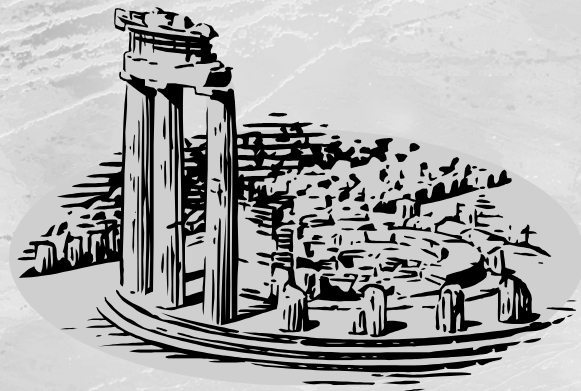
Ruins of Zebo: This partially rebuilt city is a stronghold in Norcast hands. Great bonfires burn in the outmost ruins as the raiding camps within the shell of this city plan their next raids against the other cities or nearby communities in the wastes.

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PEOPLE

The humans of Coranthius are a fearful and downtrodden people. Yet, though the people of this land fear strangers, they are also quick to put up a ferocious fight against invaders. The survivors of this realm are a hardy folk not easily beaten by their enemies, and who will do almost anything to protect house and home from outside invaders.

However, it is its own people's fear of the government that keeps the populace in line and from striking back at their own when crops are seized and young men are taken and inducted into the armies.



RELIGION

The citizens of Coranthius revere Coran Hameru and Hameru himself to the exclusion of the other children of Hameru. Secret cults exist that worship the Kraken and a few secret sects still revere the Twelve, but worshippers of these cults are subject to banishment, imprisonment or even death if discovered by Coranthium authorities.

MAGIC

Like the Empire, Coranthius primarily uses karma magic. However, because of the influx of Norcast raiders and influence of Norcast settlers, the blood magic of the kraken exists in cults among the few communities of the north. Likewise, those who have dealings with the kazin shazira of the Zapathos forest prefer the use of nature magic of the jinn.

ADVENTURING

The government has no use for mercenaries, but if one can evade the eye of the government itself, there is much activity across this barren land. Individual communities seek assistance against raiders the government fails to protect against and there are numerous abandoned and sacked dwellings across the land that may contain forgotten riches and treasures. Those who seek somewhat safer fortunes can find employ in the merchant fleets bound for or from Coranthium and the raider-filled seas they ply.

There is also much treasure and fame to be won among the Norcast raiders for those who wish to aid our enemies.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES:

The Ascendance: Held on Coris 1st, and celebrated only in Coranthium proper, this festival day celebrates the cessation from Eth'Authuram. Much pageantry and celebration fills the occasion.

Tenth Night: Held on Venis 10th, this vigil held on the tenth night of the tenth month after sundown is a ritual of manhood among the Coranthese. Armed and armored young aspirants accompany their elders to guard the community walls. The community recognizes those who by dawn draw blood – either in raider combat or by ritual as adults.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

DURATHAST

The Land of Kings, Land of Civilized Savages

Capital: Migdeus (meeting place)

Government: Multiarchy

Leader: The Legion of Kings (the Demon Kings)

Arathon the Red, Lord of the Taurii

Orvithar the White, Lord of the Tatanka

Ilimtar the Blue, Lord of the Gecki

Ex'Athor the Green, Lord of the Tygaar

Jin'du-akar the Gold, Lord of the Garuda

Population: Anhiyawen (75%), Tyres Haul (>1%), Dwarf (>1%), Kazin shazira (3%), Hellchilde (>1%), Sa'heer-jinn (3%), Human (15%), Mageborn (1%), Orkan (3%), Titanborn (>1%)



OVERVIEW

Durathast, on the continent of Durathius, is a realm ruled by anhiyawen warrior-knights whom draw on powerful primal magics. Introverts who despise those from Eth'Authuram, they patrol their lands viciously and mercilessly.

HISTORY

Durathast sprang from the savage tribes, who united into five strong tribes as over the years Eth'Authuram expanded eastward. Secretly aided by the youngest son of Hameru, the five most powerful tribal leaders used war and magic to solidify their power until they controlled a force that was a match for the war-weary empire troops of Eth'Authuram.

As the kazin shazira wars in Eth'Authuram ended, the Demon Kings of Durathast boldly began their march from the Verdant Plains in the north into the easternmost lands of Eth'Authuram.

At first, the great raiding armies of Durathast tore down and slew all in their way. However, after seizing the coastal city of Hathaster,

the lords of Durathast began to change their tactics - seizing the lands and goods of Eth'Authuram and making its people their servants.

Eth'Authuram was slow to respond, and its emperor even began to shift further and further west and northward as unstoppable armies of Durathast slowly marched towards the capital of Asul.

By the time the Demon Kings reached Asul, the empire's troops were in full retreat. In an attempt to appease the Demon Kings and their armies, the emperor agreed to meet the forces of Durathast in Asul in the hopes of ceasing hostilities and setting a permanent, stable border between the two kingdoms.

But the Demon Kings poisoned the emperor, and would have laid waste to the armies of the empire if they had not been rallied at their time of greatest need by Dul'Fiqar Ceranthium Hameru, the Crusader. Emperor Dul'Fiqar pushed the Demon Horde east back from the capital, dealing the Durathast their first loss. From there, Emperor Dul'Fiqar pushed the Durathast warriors back to the besieged cities of Uretheon and Benatheon.

It was then that Urea revealed himself a traitor, and the Great Devastation was unleashed. Within the next few hours, the entire royal bloodline sacrificed their lives to save their cities and its inhabitants from the destruction the Great Devastation unleashed.

For the next four hundred years, the broken empire floundered and attempted to rebuild as Durathast flourished and grew fat in its seized fertile lands.

However, even Durathast was not immune to treachery. Aghast at the destruction wrought by the Great Devastation, Hati Raja, the Demon King of the Paerahim, seceded his lands from Durathast. Even the savage tribes began to turn against Durathast, seeing it become as corrupt and decadent as the empire it had sought to fell.

As the empire slowly rises from its ashes, the cities on Durathast's borders have slowly opened their doors to their former cousins. There is some hope that one day we may regain the lost cities of this land and drive its decadent lords from our ancient lands and into the waiting arms of their feral brothers.

ALLIES/ENEMIES

The government of Durathast openly despises Eth'Authuram and Norcast and does everything in its power to harass the former and keep the latter at bay. Durathast is aware of the true nature of Savathuram, but fears to actively strike at the wasted kingdom. Durathast openly trades with Axatheum, but distrusts its lords and despises the pirates that raid shipping to and from its ports.

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GOVERNMENT

Despite their title, the Demon Lords of Durathast are not truly creatures of the Fell Realm. Instead, these anhiyawen lords have strong blood ties to primordial jinn, much in the manner of a powerful Hellchilde. Apparently as immortal as Hameru's twelve children, the Demon Lords have shown no signs of aging over the centuries of their rule.

Each Demon Lord controls a court of noble anhiyawen to whom they delegate many duties of the day-to-day running of their section of the larger empire. As part of inducting these anhiyawen Shah to their posts, the Demon Lords infuse the individuals with a bit of their unholy power, transforming the Shahs into sorcerers – all the better to carry out their duties of spying on their lessers and commanding reticent underlings to do their bidding. Should a Shah rebel against a Demon Lord, they can easily be stripped of their magical ability – but as their past has proven, not necessarily of their influence or of the loyalty of those beneath them.

Beneath the Shahs of the Demon Lords are the Istandar, who each govern a community or city. It is the Istandar's duty to raise taxes, see to the welfare of locals and manage the upkeep of the various buildings in the community. Istandar from larger communities or cities delegate their tasks to lesser bureaucrats – but they are ultimately responsible for all that does or does not occur in their area of influence. Unlike the provincial Shahs, blood and magic does not bond the Istandar to their superiors – though many Istandar do display wizardly or shamanistic skills.

Each Demon Lord likewise maintains its own army, trained and led in various ways as befits its lord. Some Demon Lords, like Arathon the Red, place greater emphasis on the power and competence of their army than their Shahs or Istandar – having only one apiece of the latter, while boasting five full armies led by cunning and brutal Marzoban (akin to generals). At the other extreme, Orvithar the White maintains no standing army at all. The rest of the Demon Lords equally mix the power and positions of their bureaucracy and their army.

LAND

The favor of the jinn keeps Durathast green and growing year round. Though the capriciousness of the jinn can visit weather extremes on the land, it is rarely harmful to the populace at large.

Rivers and lakes are common in Durathast, stretching out from the Durath Mountains to the surrounding seas like the crisscrossed veins of an old woman. No Durathium river run into Eth'Authuram – they either take sharp turns to the north or south or mysteriously dry up as they become shallower and shallower towards our border.

Durath Mountains: the last few tribes of savage anhiyawen populate these forested mountains in the kingdom. The rough terrain makes it impossible for the civilized anhiyawen to exert much influence on their brethren.

Verdant Plains: Unlike the tilled and often barren lands of Eth'Authuram, the verdant plains are wild grasslands dotted with corpses of trees and crisscrossed with tributaries stretching from the Durath and Shadow Mountains. Most of the semi-civilized anhiyawen dwell in the northern stretch of the Verdant Plains, while the southern stretch tends to be more cultivated and tame, due to previous inhabitation and development by formerly imperial hands.

PLACES OF WONDER

Circus Maximus: This oblong marble arena complex built in the heart of Verdeep consists of three rings. The outer ring is a hub of trade. The next inner ring is a menagerie of purchasable beasts from across the various lands, while the innermost ring is a blood arena where combatants can settle their differences or pit themselves against the strange beasts of the menagerie they have themselves brought or purchased.

The Iron Tower: The heart of the political scene in Migdeus, this stone tower rises twenty-three stories from the bedrock of the foothills of the Durath Mountains. Its base is a catacomb of rooms and barracks for the elite bureaucrats while a vast meeting room tops the tower – which is clad in iron. The iron tower is reserved for the Demon Lords alone. The tower itself is usually only in use once a year or less, when the five Demon Lords congregate on whatever matters of state they discuss in the secret rooms of the great tower.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

CITIES

Unlike the Savage Tribes, there are many small, permanent communities established throughout Durathast. Most communities tend to be of simple wooden construction, with a singular communal hall at the center. Some communities build their residences directly attached to this central hall, while others have the residences separate. While communities near Eth'Authuram often have a defensive screen or wall for protection, most communities lack such civil demarcations.

Alastair: This city is the home of the Gold King, Jinn du'akar. Alastair is central hub of trade for the empire of Durathast. It is a tent city with few permanent buildings set on a low bluff overlooking a lake.

Benatheon: The Red King, Arathon, claims this city as his capital. Benatheon is the most martial of all the cities. Squatting on the edge of the Blasted Wastes, this cramped city is one of the few with a massive defensive rampart that encircles the city. It has vast sealed and abandoned catacombs honeycombing the under city. Imperial hands built most before the city's fall.

Belios: The Blue King, Ilimtar watches over this ad hoc city. Belios is a ramshackle wooden city with a defensive wall – in this case only on its eastern side and stretching from the coast to the foot of the Way of Wooded Death. Belios is a touchstone for those adventuring into the Watered Wastes and a bastion against undead hordes that occasionally sweep up from Savathuram.

Hathaster: Oryithar, the White King, designed and helped to raise this city. Built atop a river that feeds from the Durath Mountains, this spacious port city is a fishing hub for the empire. It also trades with other small villages along the Durathium Sea.

Migdaus: This vast, sprawling city at the foot of the Durath Mountains is the meeting place for the Demon Kings of Durathast. The city is full of anhiyawen bureaucrats, diplomats and factions allied with the various Demon Lords. It is heavy with intrigue in a mockery of the politics of the ancient imperial capital of Asul.

Uretheon: Formerly the secret home of Urea Hameru prior and during the Last War. The forces of Eth'Authuram, Durathast and Savathuram razed the city shortly after the Great Devastation. The Taurii of Durathast has rebuilt the city and it is currently the

most important Megidea seaport city of Durathast. It is also the prime target of Eth'Authuram raids - from land and sea.

Verdeep: This city is home of the Green King, Ex'Athor. This exotic city is where the civilized anhiyawen intermix and trade with the nomadic wild tribes of the Wild Wastes. The city is composed of a few permanent, highly ornate granite structures surrounded by the colorful tents of nomadic visitors.

PEOPLE

The anhiyawen of Durathast divided into two main groups.

The first group is the Ab'jinn who led a rural or nomadic lifestyle, shunning the more extravagant comforts of civilized lifestyle. The Ab'jinn generally avoids the larger cities of Durathast and believes their city-dwelling cousins to be decadent or corrupted. The Ab'jinn are aloof to outside control and often resent, resist or ignore the edicts of a Demon Lord whenever possible - with the general exception of those under the Green King, Ex'Athor, with whom most Ab'jinn seem to agree with his outlook.

The second group is the Ki'jann, who have generally accepted and even embraces the gifts of civilization. Most Ki'jann live in larger communities or the great cities of Durathium. These anhiyawen mimic humanity in their habits and even dress in fashions derived from the empire.

Some humans make their home in Durathium – generally slaves taken in raids of our eastern border. A handful of humans that dwell in Durathium are descendants of the traitor Urea, and they have ingrained themselves into Durathium society – usually only allowed to live in the larger cities of the kingdom.

RELIGION

Being anhiyawen, most of the beings that inhabit Durathast worship the Lords of Nature. It is also common for the anhiyawen to revere the local Demon Lord as a god – much in the way we venerate the past emperors.

Generally, the Demon Lords have jealously forbidden the worship of Hameru, the Twelve or the fallen Emperors among humans visiting or kept as slaves to their kingdom.

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MAGIC

Anhiyawen lack the innate sorcerous abilities of humanity, but can draw upon the magical knowledge handed down to them from the jinn who created them. However, even wizards tend to be rare among the anhiyawen and those who practice magic are more often shamans drawing upon the aid of jinn spirits to perform their magical arts.

At the same time, the verdant lands of the anhiyawen possess much more raw magic than the blasted wastes of our own Empire. Foreign spellcasters have found a bounty of innate ley magic to draw upon for their spells and find it easier to perform far more powerful magic than in the west. The Demon Lords are aware of this fact and generally look down upon foreign casters entering their land – sometimes enslaving them for their own use and in other cases hunting such spellcasters down before they can cause trouble in their realm.

ADVENTURING

Much of Durathast is uncivilized and filled with strange and wild beasts that can threaten any nearby sentient beings.

Native anhiyawen frown on human adventurers in this land, and humans may find themselves hunted down. Though the larger cities provide some protection and are more tolerant of humans, precocious humans who seek adventure may find themselves in far more danger than they expected and held accountable for any misfortune that befalls their neighbors.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

Demon Days: Held Belathis 6th-9th, this festival celebrates the official founding of Durathast. Open-air fairs and celebrations with athletic contests mark it. In more civilized areas, market stalls sell glass trinkets and cloth likenesses of the Demon Kings.



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E'Lendon

Land of Eternal Spring, the Jinn Home

Capital: Avolior

Government: Eternal Monarchy

Leader: Queen E'Lenda of the Starlight Breeze

Population: Jinn (94%), Anhiyawen (5%), Human (<1%), Titanborn (<1%)



OVERVIEW

E'Lendon is the wellspring of the jinn. Hidden in its heart is the Lifewell, from which all life springs.

E'Lendon has two courts: one a realm lording over the jinn spirits of the land and the other, which oversees those jinn who have taken mortal form.

HISTORY

E'Lendon predates even the empire of Eth'Authuram, though before the Empire it was a realm filled with jinn spirits. After Hameru visited the queen of E'Lendon in his self-induced exile, many of the spirits in this land took an interest in corporeal bodies. Now, the jinn of E'Lendon flit between corporeal and spirit, indulging themselves in the pleasures of the corporeal world and the enlightenment of the spirit world.

After the war with Haadarast, E'Lendon allowed visitors from Misrador and the Settled Land to land upon the isle and trade with the native jinn. Likewise, E'Lendonites ceased turning ships back

from the Wilde Wastes, allowing nomadic traders from that land their first access to make landfall on E'Lendon. Most mortals keep to the city of Avolior, but some come to the land seeking special knowledge

ALLIES/ENEMIES

E'Lendon is friendly towards Misrador and the Settled Lands. It has no love of Haadarast and has aided Misrador and the Settled Lands in the past against the forces of Haadarast. E'Lendon has also made it clear they will not tolerate ships from Alagos approaching the island.

Unfortunately for us, E'Lendon is too remote to maintain relations with Eth'Authuram, though E'Lenda welcomes our merchants for trade and visitations. On the other hand, E'Lenda despises the corsairs of Axatheum and drives away or sinks the ships of those who have pass within her reach.

E'Lenda is on good terms with the inhabitants of the Midnite Isles and Mythos. She is cool toward Queen Calypso of Zarastar, but friendly toward that isle's inhabitants.

LAND

Magic keeps E'Lendon as green and temperate as our empire used to be before the Great Devastation. Temperatures have been described as always being comfortable, and even the snow-frosted peaks of the Crystal Mountains never become cold enough to present a danger to mortal travelers.

Crystal Mountains: Laced with bits of quartz, these majestic mountains cause the bare, sharp peaks to glint as if they were made of solid crystal. Many aeries and magical caves riddle the mountains. Jinn protect and inhabit the caves, decorating and filling them with magical wonders. Mortal trespassers are generally unwelcome and jinn fling those found therein to their doom, or transform trespassers into unintelligent beasts.

The Mistwood: Dominating the east side of E'Lendon, this thick wood gains its name from the carpet of ankle-deep fog that permeates the wood. The fog actually consists of unformed aether and the jinn guardians of the wood savagely patrol the wilderness to keep soulthieves and necromancers away from the free-flowing aether.

The Green Sea: Covered in low, emerald green grass, the green sea is a vast field touched by ethereal breezes and the playground of the many jinn who call this land home. E'Lendon has forbidden mortals to build a permanent structure on the Green Sea beyond the markers for the city of Avolior – with the punishment to have the

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offender's soul torn asunder and cast into the raw aether of the Mistwood.

PLACES OF WONDER

The Well of Souls: This important structure is the center of the city of Avolior. It resembles a simple stone-walled watering well surrounded by three rings of steps leading up to it. Powerful runes decorate the steps, displaying the purest form of the eight words of creation. Their magic contains and shapes the raw aether that fills the well, fashioning new souls and collecting the souls of the slain for their next reincarnation. No corporeal or incorporeal being can approach within a few steps of the well, for in doing so their souls are extracted into the well and prepared for their next incarnation.

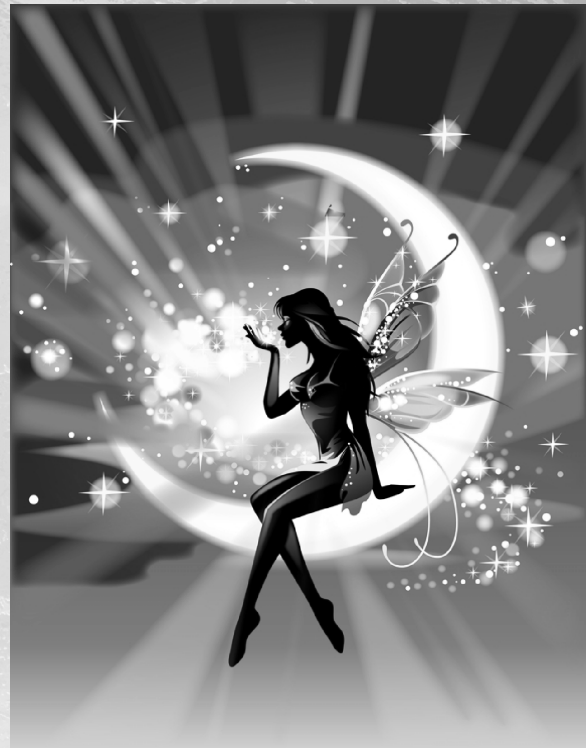
The Cave of Futures: Deep in the Crystal Mountains is a small-mouthed cave at the top of a winding, wind-blown staircase. The various cauldrons of all sizes fill the vast caves. Fox-shaped fire elementals maintain the strange concoctions brewing over fires, while enigmatic cyclopean shaman lord over the operation. Sages and poets write that each cauldron contains the future events that draw along one skein of fate. Those wishing to see their futures – or dare change them come to the caves to interact with their caretaker and bribe him to view the contents of the cauldrons – or imbibe the contents to induce a new future proscribed by the individual partaking of the brew.

GOVERNMENT

The island of E'Lendon is under its mistress's direct control. However, E'Lendon is aloof from the inhabitants and only interferes directly when there is a threat to the island at large or the Lifewell directly.

There are general guidelines for the conduct of individuals, with many more restrictions directed at corporeal and mortal beings – truly, the freedom and happiness of the land's spirits comes before the needs or concerns of the corporeal beings visiting the isle.

There is however, no police force or army to enforce the mores of this land. Instead, the jinn spirits of this land act in their own self-interest to keep others in line. Should a jinn itself get out of line, one can expect that a host of its brethren will intercede to set things right, with the most dire punishment being to cast a troublesome being into the lifewell or in the most dire cases, shredding their soul and casting the remaining aether into the Mistwood.



CITIES

There are several singular domiciles to be found across E'Lendon, each unusual and magical in many ways. The jinn have allowed the construction of several coastal communities to receive ships and house travelers. Most of these structures are actually built over the water from foreign materials and in the style of those who favor the ports. A few jinn have added or erected their own buildings for these purposes. These structures are among the few items built on or over solid ground.

Avolior: The crystal city of Avolior half exists in the material world and half exists in the spirit world. Only those beings able to traverse both realms can enter the city or navigate its maze-like streets.

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PEOPLE

The natives of E'Lendon are jinn spirits, some with ties to distant Caltheus. Occasionally a mortal's recently deceased soul may linger in Avolior before returning to the Lifewell to be reborn.

The jinn spirits of E'Lendon are generally present to protect the lifewell and guide returning spirits to the lifewell or new spirits to their proper new corporeal bodies. Thus, the jinn here tend to be less capricious than in other areas, for they have assigned duties and tasks to perform, unlike the carefree spirits of other areas.

The mortal beings that visit this land are often seeking the knowledge of those who passed on or trade for E'Lendon goods used to prolong mortal lives. Others may seek out the native magical items that randomly form on the isle, for trade or for their own use.

RELIGION

The natives here, being spirits, do not generally revere corporeal powers as gods. They do respect and comply with the wishes of E'Lendon herself, but do so out of respect instead of as any form of worship.

MAGIC

E'Lendon, because of the eight creation stones, is a touchstone of magical and spiritual power. Spells cast in this land tend to have maximum effect, and can easily spiral out of control of unprepared spellcasters.

Likewise, unique and strange magic sometimes solidifies into corporeal form in this land. Often, these items coalesce in the presence of charismatic and powerful individuals, fashioning into items that mirror unspoken needs or wants.

ADVENTURING

E'Lendon is wild and mysterious, and draws many mortals to its shores for this reason along. Besides being a magical touchstone, many feel drawn to the isle either as death approaches them or seek out loved ones for one last commune before they pass on.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

None.



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ETH'AUTHURAM

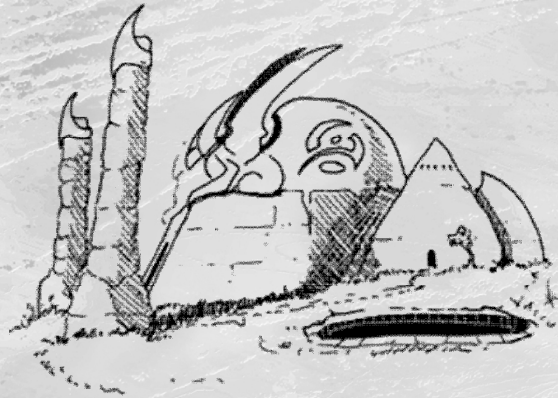
The Empire, the Well-Trod Lands

Capital: Hek'Tesa (formerly Asul)

Government: Heredity Monarch

Leader: Emperor August Macatheriel XXIII

Population: Anhiyawen (<1%), Draemani (<1%), Tyres Haul (<1%), Dwarf (5%), Kazin shazira (5%), Hellchilde (1%), Sa'heer-jinn (<1%), Human (85%), Mageborn (3%), Titanborn (<1%)



OVERVIEW

Eth'Authuram is the greatest empire of humanity, dominating most of the continent of Aurtheum. Once a vast realm that stretched from Savathuram in the east and including what is now Coranthios and Norcast in the west (and stretching into Thyventhos and Axatheum in the north), it was a great jewel of civilization.

Eth'Authuram consists of a handful of fortified cities struggling to thrive in a blasted desert wasteland. Each of its great cities is a protective fortress of civilization founded by one of the twelve children of Hameru.

HISTORY

Most of Eth'Authuram's history has already been touched upon, and I will only expand upon the histories of the great cities here.

Eth'Authuram first existed in the fallen city of Asul, where our father Hameru ruled it. As Hameru fathered children and humanity's numbers grew too crowded in the First City, he gave leave to them to build cities of their own – in the order of Benatheon, Ureathos (now Uretheon), Hrantha, Urthios, Athos, Aelsinine, Eilene, Yagdos (now Yagda), Oidos, Melin'jla, Coranthios and later Axath'os.

After Hameru's children attempted to overthrow their father and the Emperor's wars

started, Hameru banished his wife Hek'Tesa from civilization. Later, after the Emperor Wars had ended, her children built the city named in her honor around her humble abode.

However, during the Emperor Wars, the city of Coranthios fell and was sacked by a coalition of Hameru's children, acting against the overly ambitious eldest son, Coran. Coran fled to the west, where he established a new city in what is now Coranthium.

Shortly following the Kazin wars, Oid's descendants built the city of Hellstorne at the foot of the new dwarven kingdom of Sturmberg.

As Eth'Authuram expanded in the wake of the Kazin wars Emperor Szam'na Axatha Hameru established the cities that now stand in Norcast and Axatheum. Empress Jania Ath Hameru expanded the empire even further with expeditions into what is now Thyventhos and even into Caltheus. At its height, the empire spanned from Savathuros (now ruins in Savathuram) in the east to A'lak Ahera in the west and from Thyventhos in the north to the Lookouts in the south.

Durathast captured Benatheon in a surprise attack, which started a protracted war that would last over a century. During the war with Durathast, no less than three great cities were razed to the ground (just east of Asul) and never recovered. The garden-city A'dergon, the fortress-city A'Ragadar and the pleasure-city of Ael'Torin were lost to the desert wastes. During the war, Emperor Husayen Thyvena Hameru moved the capital of the empire to Thyventhos. Far Savathuros found itself isolated from the empire as the war shuffled on. As the war concluded, the city of Uretheon sided with Durathast, and then declared it independent.

The Great Devastation destroyed numerous small communities across the empire. Only those cities that the Twelve directly protected survived mostly intact, though places like Savathuros were not so lucky. Unaligned forces of Durathast, Eth'Authuram and Savathuram destroyed Ureathos, home to the traitor Urea, shortly after the Great Devastation. Taurii of Durathast later rebuilt it after seizing during the Last War.

It was not until the Strider wars that things changed once again. In the years following the Great Devastation, the mighty cities of Eth'Authuram had become city-states; the strider wars once again brought the cities together and in Hek'Tesa, a new emperor was crowned. However, that part of the empire beyond the Zapathos Forest and across the Sea of Athos would not rejoin our empire. Likewise, a new threat was rising on the island of Nuass, and it would eventually take the westernmost cities from us to form the kingdom of Norcast.

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ALLIES/ENEMIES

Over the ages, Eth'Authuram's has generated many enemies envious of its former glory and successes. Greatest among these enemies is Durathast, the twisted realm of the anhiyawen.

Savathuram, once a great city of the empire, is now a blasted land of undead that sees our people as cattle upon which to feed.

We find ourselves at odds with the corsairs and stubborn rebel princes of Axatheum, who we would dearly love to bring back into the empire's fold. Likewise, rebellious A'Ragos scorns our entreaties to rejoin the empire, content to believe itself free of outside influence.

Far Zabas and the Zaphos Forest are home to the inhuman kazin shazira, who hold a lasting grudge against the wilderness our civilization has brought to an end.

The barbaric Norcast seek to cast down the empire and replace it with the bloody tendrils of the Kraken, enslaving our people or feeding it to its every-hungry jaws.

Coranthius is a secret ally, wrapping itself in a cloak of righteous indignation to bring battle to our enemies.

LAND

The Great Devastation reduced Eth'Authuram to primarily desert wastes, with pockets of arable land between the great cities. Surface water is almost impossible to find except in the Grand Oasis and the Wahid plains. Each of the great cities employs magic to ensure the outer wall is fertile and arid enough to support crops and livestock to feed the city.

Sandstorms are a common occurrence in the summer and fall months – though the Blasted Wastes suffer such storms year-round. In winter, snow alights upon the top peaks of the Hallow and Tesa mountains, but as they melt, most of the water passes

into underground rivers, leaving the surface land parched for another year.

The Blasted Wastes: These lifeless sand dunes extend to the very foot of the sea and end in the east at the foot of the low bluffs that mark the green lands of Durathast. Strange creatures known as sandlings inhabit the wastes, feeding either off the magic sands themselves or the blood and flesh of those they encounter. A handful of earth wizards have discovered the means to return small sections of the waste back to semi-arid oases. These wizards either live in isolation, guarding their recovered land jealously or assist a small community that has arisen around the habitable area. Such walled communities are usually build of mud daub houses with a central well and community garden to feed the inhabitants.

The Cauldron: This depressed area was once a lush plain that was perhaps the main agriculture belt of the empire. Now, sparse scrubland is prone to flooding in the spring, but otherwise insufficient to support large-scale agriculture.

The Darkway: Thick forests cover the green-hilled Darkway. Vicious jinn who have managed to revitalize the land in the wake of the Great Devastation protect it. Though the raptor-riding of fakir have reclaimed the land as part of Hek'Tesa's providence, the jinn continue to deny us the bounty of the lush forests. Elite kazin shazira rangers patrol the Darkway, destroying any human interlopers who they find.

The Grand Oasis: The tendrils of a marshy lake that survived the Great Devastation feed this massive grassland. The great behemoths that roam the desert wastes spawn from this area. Those behemoths found here are larger, but generally more docile than their desert kin. The surrounding grasslands have, surprisingly, only a few isolated, insular communities who are quick to drive off outsiders and protect their precious resources.

Hallow Mountains: these multi-peaked ridged lines of mountains are sacred to the people of Eth'Authuram. Well-trod trails crisscross this area, leading to small shrines dedicated to Hameru, the Twelve children and the Twenty-three Emperors. Each of Eth'Authuram's great cities has a dedicated quarry to mine sacred stone for their city walls and other noble or governmental buildings. The greatest peak of these,

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Hameru's Summit, in the heart of the mountain chains has a single, sacred and guarded path that leads up the great crater at the summit where Hameru hew the first walls of Asul from, and which bore the first laws of civilization.

Hedgerow Mountains: This area is actually a series of canyons between the Hundred and High hills on the west and the Rocklands on the east. They drop nearly a mile into the earth, but provide a vital causeway for the melted snow and ice from the Hellstorm Mountains to travel into the Wahid Plains to the south. The life-giving waters traversing here give rise to numerous small communities dug into the cliff faces. The height of these communities above the canyon floor protects them seasonal floods as well as predators and bandits from the canyon floor below and the bluff tops above.

High Hills: These tight-knit hills provide the northern, steep border to the lowlands of the Wahid plains. The hills are arid and were once home to the noble cemeteries and tomb mounds of the twelve cities. Travelers avoid this area, as it is now a haunted place and may be a staging ground for the undead of Savathuram.

The Hundred Hills: These low, round hills create a winding path between the nations of Jormangdar and Sturmberg. Short, dried grass covers this area in all but a few weeks of spring.

The Lifesprings: Hot water springs lace these sheer, granite mountains. The springs overflow into the waters that form the Great Oasis. Many of the deadly poisonous hot springs are also scalding hot at their source, but as the water flows over the rocky chips or gorgeous waterfalls into the grasslands, it becomes fresh, cool and drinkable. The Lifesprings are devoid of human civilization, but is home to many dangerous and beautiful avian species, as well to vegetation that has adapted to the strange toxins and heat of the upper reaches.

The Wahid Plain: The last remaining grassland in the empire, this green sea survived the Great Devastation unscathed and has become the fertile plain that supplies the crops for the rest of the empire.

The Lookouts: These jagged mountains are home to a maze of minor settlements built into the mountain. Many are religious retreats, but the most massive and important is a military barracks for the empire. The

military base's outlook into the Unknown Woods has given this mountain range its name.

Rauthurium Desert: This rocky, wind-blasted desert creates something of a large valley along its run from the steep backs of the Tesa Mountains and past the hedgerow mountains. It is scorpion and snake infested, with only the ruins of ancient settlements in what was one of the most fertile areas of the empire. Eerie stands of petrified trees dot the wasteland, their edges ground into rocky stubble by the wind.

The Rocklands: Once, this area was a forested plateau that rose a thousand feet into the sky. Now, the Rocklands are a sand-blasted heath nearly devoid of life whose worn edges are steep, climbable grades. There are tales of demons capering among the barren rocks, seeking to pester those foolish enough to travel here.

Jakurim Desert: The southern extreme of the Eth'Authuram Empire, the Jakurim desert is unforgiving. The desert stretches for thousands of miles to the South, and to date no civilization or cultivated lands appear to exist beyond its sandy borders.

Tesa Mountains: These broad-backed mountains shudder with frequent earthquakes. It is impossible to keep dependable trails open across the shattered mountains, and travelers have instead used the extensive cave systems to pass from one area to another through them. One can find numerous friendly underground trading communities scattered through the network of tunnels. These communities subsist off exotic, flavorful glowing mushrooms originally brought found in the mines of the Axzor hills in Axatheum. The communities subsist on an abundance of water that runs from the Darkway mountains and underground into the canyons of the Hedgerow Mountains.

PLACES OF WONDER

The Hanging Gardens of Melin'jla: This terraced garden stretches from the ports of Melin'jla to the southern outer wall of the city. It boasts flowers and exotic plants from the four corners of the world, as well as a few special plants said to hail from beyond the mortal lands.

The Library of Yagda: This library contains books and other documents stretching back to the very founding of Asul. The library has gold-tipped ceramic spires that reach into the heavens and

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storage vaults that plunge into the deep earth. Students from the attached Sorcerer's Academy of Yagda attend to the libraries. It is rumored many magical guardians protect the more esoteric library vaults.

The Lifewell: Greatest of the hot springs in the Lifesprings, protective runestones surround the small caldera, preventing anything from molesting with the pure water that feeds the city of Oidos. It is a common practice for newlyweds to travel to the well and toss blessed coins into the caldera, and the magic that protects the caldera prevents the coin's removal.

The Mausoleum of Hek'Tesa: Built in the center of Hek'Tesa itself, this massive tomb covers several acres of land. Within its great dome is enshrined the simple mud house and yard that Hek'Tesa lived in after her expulsion from Asul. A pictorial history of the Emperor wars covers the outer minarets, with one minaret for each of Hek'Tesa's twelve children. While most of the structure is open to the public, and often used to hold worship within the dome, a single gold filigree staircase in the dome leads from Hek'Tesa's simple cottage to just short of her sequestered final resting place atop the outside of the dome – a many windowed, copper-roofed palace room worthy of the mother of humanity.

The Stone Shrine: Legend says that this odd, overgrown stone temple lies at the heart of the Rocklands. Once a temple to Hameru, it is now home to a court of demons. Within its heart is said to lie a myriad of great and powerful treasures collected as tribute from before the Great Devastation and from foolish adventurers who have attempt to rob the temple.

The Throne of Hameru: Deep in the heart of the ruins of Asul lies the ivory and gold throne. It was from this throne that Hameru first ruled the empire. So great was Hameru that the throne itself gained sentience and now whispers it wisdom and hate of the Twelve to its current lord, Goethe.

GOVERNMENT

Eth'Authuram has the most efficient bureaucracy in all the nations, as it has been in service since the time Hameru forged the laws of civilization. Though individual cities have experienced corruption and other issues when they have strayed from imperial edict, the current structure has remain unchanged since the time of the first emperor, with only a change in scale and the location of the imperial palace over the centuries.

The autonomous rule of city of Eth'Authuram allows it best meet the needs of its subjects. The Emperor decrees a moral standard to which he holds the nobles. Each noble also pays yearly tithes to support nation-wide projects and maintain the imperial army and overseers.

A noble family descended from one of the twelve governs each of the major cities in Eth'Authuram – with the exception of Hellstorme, the ruins of Asul and Hrantha. Governors appointed by the noble family in whose territory the city falls oversee these two cities. The Urea family governs Hellstorme and the ruins of Asul, and Oidos family governs Hrantha. The many small communities across the empire are under the protection of the nearby noble family – often with a noble cousin supervising. Like their larger brethren, each autonomous community's local landlord answers to the local noble family that owns the land.

Although each city is unique in its governance, most noble families divide the city into wards and appoint family members to oversee the administration of justice and maintenance of each section. The noble family patriarchal or matriarchal head is typically responsible for raising and maintaining the city's defense force and dealing with the Emperor's aides – as well as any tithes sent to the Emperor's court.

CITIES

The smaller communities found in the wastes between the larger cities tend to be clusters of adobe or plaster buildings just off the main caravan trails, surrounded by massive defensive walls designed to keep raiders and wayward behemoths from disturbing the inhabitants.

Aelsinine: Founded by the Aelsin family, others admire this matriarchal city for its beautiful structures that even the kazin shazira would weep to harm. It is a popular hub between Umjin, Jormangdar and Athos and promotes itself as a merchant's city with grand bazaars and opulent way stations for travelers and merchants.

Athos: Founded by Ath, this open city lacks a protective wall. Tall monoliths inscribed with Hameru's law mark the city's edge. Most of the city's structures are single story dwelling built to blend in with their environment. All but a few of the building in the core of the city have vast fields of crops attached to them.

Eilene: Much as its sister city of Aelsinine, gorgeous architecture fills the city of Eilene – though its beauty is much more practical in nature.

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Hek'Tesa: The jewel of Eth'Authuram and current home to the imperial palace, this crowded city boasts the largest population on all of Aurtheum and beyond. Set in a valley between the Tesa Mountains and an offshoot of the High hills the city survives thanks to a massive underground river that runs directly underneath it. Outsiders are unaware of the dual nature of the city – they see only the gleaming structures of the well-to-do Bayya and Ghani castes on the surface and are unaware of the second half of the city in the caverns beneath the surface where the Khubz and Fazeera caste make their living.

Hrantha: This patriarchal merchant city has the dubious distinction of being one of the two major cities in Eth'Authuram not founded by one of the twelve. The visionary merchant and soldier who brought the city into being following the Great Devastation gave it his name.

Melin'jla: This city was one of the few spared the destruction of the Great Devastation, this relaxed, matriarchal city is known for its broad streets and towering, terraced buildings. This city is also the home of our largest naval armada and thus has the largest concentration of sailors and marines in all of Eth'Authuram.

Oidos: The patriarchal, clean City of Fountains is a well-tended paradise. The rulers of the city have outlawed the Khubz caste and lack a Fazeera caste. Despite these oddities and its general isolation, the city is flush with riches and unafraid to engage in massive social projects, such as the stone aqueduct that feeds Oidos massive water needs. Unlike other cities in the empire, there is an unusual concentration and acceptance of water mages in the city – as well as notable noble hellchilde of the Oidos bloodline with marid genie blood.

Ruins of Asul: This city was once the grandest city in all of Eth'Authuram or beyond. Now, all that remains of the original city is the broken buildings and spires inside the shattered wall that demarks the city's ancient boundary. Sandlings, blood hulks and other monstrosities litter the heart of the city. Yet outside this ring are semi-permanent encampments of soldiers, adventurers and fortune hunters bent on reclaiming – or sacking – the ancient city.

Urthios: A city wall taller than any other in all of Eth'Authuram protects this massive city stands on a great hill. Built with the aid of dwarves, this city also sports some of the most powerful defenses in all of Eth'Authuram. The city still trade heavily with the dwarves of Jormangdar and Sturmberg, but the Emperor's decree has forbidden dwarven ownership of land in the city.

Yagda: Formerly known as Yagdos, this mystical city is home to many mageborn lineages from across Eth'Authuram. Its many silver spires reach high above the many tiers of squalid adobe houses. Magic is the only means by which may reach most of the great spires. The city is also home to the most prestigious magical academy in the realm. Yagda founded the academies herself, in the hope of spreading magical knowledge to all of Hameru's children.

PEOPLE

The empire has divided its population into four castes. An assigned strict set of responsibilities is in place for each caste – both to the community and to descendants of the Twelve and the emperor.

The khubz are indentured individuals who trade their labor for lodging and food under a landlord. Though imperial decree punishes landlords who mistreat their wards a landlord has the right to transfer a khubz to another landlord if they have no need or desire for the khubz's services. Foreigners who seek citizenship in Eth'Authuram must submit themselves as khubz to a mentor landlord until they can purchase their independence. Only nobles from bloodlines of the Twelve from other nations may avoid submitting themselves a khubz if they wish to rejoin the empire, though even these individuals are required to pay a tithe to prove their loyalty. It is illegal for khubz to advance their learning of any magical abilities they may possess, though few khubz have the ability to hone magical abilities beyond the formation of sentience or a few parlor tricks.

The fazeera caste is composed of former khubz or their descendants who have achieved financial independence. Though most have attended the public schools available for their caste, they do not qualify to attend the advanced academies reserved for the Ghani. Like the khubz, few fazeera possess the ability to manifest magic beyond their expression of sentience, though unlike the khubz there is no restrictions against expanding their abilities – though there is also no formal training for such matters beyond a basic education.

Axatha introduced the bayya class to our empire. The bayya are independent individuals – usually merchants or rich landowners with the financial independence to acquire khubz to work for them. While the bayya caste is relatively small and generally isolated to the larger cities, there are a few isolated bayya landlord administrated communities outside the protection of the great cities. Some bayya possess the ability to manifest actual spells or minor magical effects and those with sorcerous blood can often afford training in the magical arts.

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The highest caste in Eth'Authuram is the ghani, who are nobles who can not only trace direct and undiluted lineage to one of the Twelve but also retain the spiritual essence and magical prowess. Ghani train in the magical arts as part of their social duties, using spells to protect and serve the populace. Some also use magic in their day-to-day duties. Only members of the ghani caste may assume governmental positions, after receiving appropriately training for their positions. Inherited positions are the norm, though in rare cases of incompetence or corruption, a family may assign another individual from the same lineage to fill a vacant position.

The discovery that the power of magic could pass by birth resulted in the outlawing of couplings among non-noble sorcerers. Social circles further impressed the mandate by the fact that both parents lose some of their magical potency as a part of conception. In lesser mages, it can result in nullers – offspring who not only lack magical power but which suppress or steal the magical powers of others around them. Such individuals often manifest severe retardation or mental illnesses, creating an even greater desire to prevent such unions.

The sorcerous ghani themselves perform special and secret rites as part of their coupling to ensure that magical ability correctly transfers according to birth order and that magical ability is not diluted in successive generations. Generally the first-born child gains a significant copy of their parent's magical potential and all subsequent children only receive enough ability to perform their social duties, which likewise only manifests during puberty.

RELIGION

The populace rightly worships Hameru as the father of humanity. Likewise, each of the major cities honors one of the twelve children of Hameru. Many households also revere at least one of the twenty-three emperors; commonly citizens place such faith in the current emperor, though elder individuals may still pay great respect to the twenty-second as well.

MAGIC

Magic is the lifeblood of the empire; without it, there is no proper way to determine the right to rule. Magic in the form of sorcery is in great abundance among the nobility. Among the lower castes, one can witness wizards among our citizens and foreigners to our empire sprinkle in the magic of shamanism and runecasting. Before the Great Devastation, elemental magic was growing popular among the nobility. However, all the great cities except Oidos now hold it in contempt. Most officials

will punish elemental practitioner dabbling in such uncontrollable magics within their city walls.

There are many martial academies across Eth'Authuram that attract gurus and martial artist to their midst. Ancient shinobi cults from Misrador still practice their ninja and samurai secret arts in our lands.


While arcane magic is the currency of our land, we cannot overlook the power of faith in our father Hameru and his children. Many temples and shrines dot the cities and well-trod desert trails of our nation, and those devoted to our father can expect to call down mighty miracles of power in his name.



ADVENTURING

Outside the protective city walls of Eth'Authuram lies a blasted wasteland ready to devour those who brave it. Minor communities are often happy to accept any aid presented to them, and though they are unable to pay handsomely, can provide a relatively safe haven and supplies in return for aid.

Likewise, brave souls are in constant need to protect our shipping lanes from the corsairs from Norcast and Axatheum, who prefer to strike while our fleets are elsewhere.



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Hunters in the employ of a city track down and eliminate the threat of nearby errant striders or behemoths wandering the desert wastes. At other times, they hunt down criminals or brigands who prey upon those passing between cities. In rare cases, hunters penetrate enemy lands to prevent those who would plot against us from mounting their own attacks against our lands.

Lest one believe that excitement only occurs outside the city walls, every city is laden with chances for an individual to prove their worth. From protecting merchants to aiding the town guard or a local bureaucrat, there are many opportunities that a skilled fazeera or tasked khubz might find to occupy their time.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

Each community or city has numerous unique ceremonies celebrated on an annual basis. The most common is a day celebrating the foundation of the city or community and a second celebration on the birthday of the lineage of the Twelve that founded their community. Listed below are the observances that are common to all communities across Eth'Authuram.

The Raising: Usually held on the Feast of Emperors, this yearly ceremony occurs in one fashion or another in every community across Eth'Authuram. It commemorates Hameru's return from the Hollow Mountains to establish the wall around Asul. On this day, residents erect a similar marker at the community's edge – for a city it may be a new or revitalized section of an existing wall, and for many smaller communities it may a cornerstone towards the building of a protective wall or a simple monolith.

The Dark: Held on Lenis 14th, this ceremony is a remembrance of all the evil that has befallen the empire over the centuries – the Emperor Wars, The Kazin Wars, the Strider Wars and most commonly, the Great Devastation. The ceremony occurs at sunset on the first new moon after Harvest and lasts until the last of the oil lamps run out. Families gather behind closed doors re-enacting stories or plays of those dark days. There is only one simple meal of bread that day, sprinkled with a few ashes and some water shared among all those present.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

FAR ZABAS

The End of the World, Doorway to the Jinn Realm

Capital: None

Government: Various Autocracies

Leader: Various jinn lords

Population: Anhiyawen (17%), Tyres Haul (<1%), Kazin shazira (80%), Jinn (Unknown), Nomi (2%), Human (<1%)



OVERVIEW

The ancient home of the jinn, Far Zabas is a forested realm populated by jinn creatures and kazin shazira, who find themselves, caught in a mortal realm they neither fully understand nor wish to participate.

HISTORY

Originally, the realm known as Zabas was home to the earth spirits of our world. As Eth'Authuram grew and expanded westward, we pushed the wild spirits further and further into the west. When all that they held of Aurtheum was the quickly vanishing Unknown Woods, the earth spirits conspired with the nearby water spirits to construct an army to take back their lands from the children of Hameru.

Using the Unknown Woods as a staging and barracks for the newly formed armies of the kazin shazira, their reign of terror began once Hameru left our great empire.

After the Kazin Wars, the kazin shazira settled in the Zapathos forest and the majority of the earth spirits retreated across the sea to continent of Far Zabas. Since that time, the earth spirits have vigorously defended their far-flung continent from human invasion, allowing only their kazin shazira children, a handful of anhiyawen and other spirit

rares to visit their wild realm. The inhabitants of Far Zabas have even rebuffed Norcast raiders, despite their Kraken granted power. Both the earth spirits of Far Zabas and the water spirits of the Zabas Sea have combined their might to drive away such raiders as well as otherwise curb the Kraken's influence on the mainland.

ALLIES/ENEMIES

Far Zabas sees Eth'Authuram, Norcast and Axatheum as mortal enemies. They are cool towards the few Paerahim sailors who visit their land, but are warm towards the kazin shazira of the Zapathos Forest. We believe that Far Zabas entertains visits from beings of Caltheus, but we are truly unaware of the nature of which such beings visit from that strange land or what their business in the far south may be.

LAND

Far Zabas tends to have localized weather, controlled by local jinn spirits. Generally, as the seasons advance, control over the seasons passes from the jinn of one court to the next – spring, summer, fall and winter. However, rogue elements of these courts on occasion attempt to exert their out-of-season control over an area, though generally the members of the other courts frown on this behavior and will put the rogue jinn in its place.


The Skyhills: These sharply rising foothills lie at the easternmost edge of impassible mountains that stretch into the clouds. The jinn charge powerful efreets with preventing mortals from passing into the mountains, and though we know of expeditions into the lands beyond, we have no record of any of them ever returning.

Zabas Forest: This wild, yet bountiful forest is lively with jinn spirits. They flit unfettered by mortal frame through the intertwined branches and brambles of this jungle-like forest. Kazin shazira rangers are ever vigilant to eradicate any human presence, but nearly all other jinn-crafted races are welcome in this strange realm.

PLACES OF WONDER

The Great Tree: Visitors can observe this massive tree from miles away. Its towering foliage looms over the treetops of the Zabas forest. The jinn claim that all other trees across the world are descended from this first tree and the health of these nature spirits ties to this ancient ancestor's own health.

The First Rock: A large clay and granite boulder covered in strange handprints nestles in a gentle valley at the heart of the Skyhills. According to



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the jinn that jealously protect the boulder, the mortal world was fashioned from this ancient stone, and the six-foot diameter boulder is all that remains of that effort. Urea claimed to have visited this boulder in ancient days and wrote that this stone had the power to reform the very land itself – or any item fashioned from the stone or minerals thereof.

GOVERNMENT

Despite being relatively free spirits, jinn do sometimes congregate or form communities. Likewise, the anhiyawen and kazin children of the jinn congregate in the land, forming temporary communities along family lines. These communities tend to have very few laws and do not feel the need for bureaucrats to administrate their kind. Thus, while tribes hold local elders in respect, no being can expect to force another to their bidding. Without such organized government, communities remain small, numbering perhaps less than fifty per group.

CITIES

Far Zabas lacks any sort of permanent structures. Tents or lean-to's are the most complex structures to be found, with caves or the hollows beneath a fallen tree likewise being the domicile of choice for those with a mortal body.

PEOPLE

The mortal beings that dwell in Far Zabas are a mere step up from savage beasts, living in uncultivated wildernesses and without the advantage of the written word or true leaders. Various tribes occasionally fall upon one another and even devour the members of another tribe.

RELIGION

The mortal sentient of Far Zabas recognize the Jinn lords and know nothing of Hameru and his children. Shamanism is the norm for this land, where such practitioners communicate with ancestral spirits or the jinn themselves as needed.

MAGIC

Despite the savagery of this land, magic is plentiful among the mortal races, either through the utilization of pacts with fey powers or through shamanistic magic.

ADVENTURING

Though humans are unwelcome in Far Zabas, there are always elements from our empire

seeking to harvest the resources or secrets of this strange land.

Despite the nature of those who visit this realm, there is plenty of activity in this untamed land for any who visit. Petty tribal wars flare up through the land, and the fey exhibit capricious and selfish ways, presenting opportunities to act for or against them – sometimes in both ways at once.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

As there is no central authority in Far Zabas, there are no established holidays and observances. However, each of the tribes native to these lands tends to observe the changing seasons, though they do so in their own way and to varying levels – each tribe does tend to have a favored season and venerates it over all others.

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HAADARAST

The Warrior's Realm, The Land of Haad

Capital: Haadar

Government: Multiple Monarchies

Leader: Hudjpar the Mighty, Yjinaar the Bloody, Kali'shaama the Black, Vedi'injamani the Corpulent

Population: Anhiyawen (Grepthan) (80%), Hellchilde (Rakshasa) (2%), Human (3%), Rakshasa (15%)



OVERVIEW

Haadarast is a land of treachery and baleful illusions. Driven by hatred and deceit, the inhabitants of Haadarast eagerly seek victims to indulge its ruler's malevolent and bloodthirsty desires.

HISTORY

When Hameru exiled himself from Eth'Authuram, his travels brought him to this place. Here, he found a land populated by jinn and elemental spirits.

Still filled with hate and bile at his children's betrayal, Hameru slowly sowed the seeds of discord among the native spirits. As part of his guile, he tricked the spirits into forms of flesh, filling their minds with thoughts of desire and mistrust. As in Eth'Authuram, the jinn not only took corporeal form, they transformed the simple animals of the islands into sentient beings to serve their creators.

Hameru hoped to whip the spirits into an army with which to drive back to Eth'Authuram and wrest the empire from his quarrelsome children, but the ploy backfired.

Instead of gathering together into a great army, the various spirits fell upon one another,

bickering and struggling for dominance as Hameru's children had.

As they fought against one another, some of the jinn learned they could augment their magical powers by devouring the essence of another spirit. The most powerful and ruthless of these jinn, known as the Rakshasa, enslaved their servants and tasked them with bringing them more souls to devour.

Hameru fled the island before he himself fell prey to the Rakshasa, but the bloodshed on the isle continued until only ten Rakshasa of great power remained. Still lusty for blood, the Rakshasa thrust their slaves outward, seeking more souls on which to feed. After several centuries of raiding and internal rivalry, the Rakshasa discovered Misrador, and learned that Hameru had fled to the island. The remaining seven resolved to strike and devour Misrador, believing the one who could consume the father of civilization would have magical power without bound.

However, Hameru had already left Misrador long ago and returned to Aurtheum – and was in fact lingering in a dungeon in the depths of Asul.

ALLIES/ENEMIES


The Rakshasa make numerous raids into Misrador and are always plotting to seize the Well of Souls in E'Lendon. Priests of the Kraken have approached them, and through them, the Rakshasa have become aware of Axatheus and the easy prey on that continent.

LAND

The Grave Fields: These ruin covered wild grasslands exhibit patches of burnt or blood-soaked ground. This area marks the rise from the lowlands to the hilly area of the greenbacks. They are an area of contention between the forest tribes of the anhiyawen and the Grepthan. The Grepthan use the grave fields to establish barracks from which they raid into the Greenbacks, while the anhiyawen of the jungle conduct raids to destroy these barracks and drive back the Grepthan.

The Greenbacks: These jungle-covered hills hide nomadic and xenophobic tribes of anhiyawen. The Rakshasa use these beings as subsistent feeding stock and allow their bloodthirsty Grepthan to hunt them.

The Plains of Haad: Once covered in hills and jungles like the greenbacks, the Grepthan transformed the land into fields of crops fertilized by the blood-drained corpses of the Rakshasa. Numerous small communities of enslaved anhiyawen and their Grepthan masters



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dot the countryside, as does a crisscross network of roads that lead to the capital of Haadar. Numerous shrines composed of the skulls of the fallen mark the road, with the piles increasing in size and carnage as one approaches the capital.

PLACES OF WONDER

The Bloodfalls: Located in the heart of the capital city of Haadar, these red waters cascade down from the high reaches of the royal palaces to the common quarters of the Grepthan below. The waters themselves are made of highly diluted blood, and the Grepthan of the city seek to feast themselves on it should they lack the means to acquire living prey. The waters drive mad unfortunate foreigners who drink of the blood-red liquid, or causes imbibers to succumb to the will and bloodlust of the Rakshasa.

Cliffs of Lost Souls: Along the southern coastal reach of the Bloodfields are tall dolomite bluffs from which the Grepthan hang the mutilated bodies of anhiyawen rebel leaders. In some cases, the capricious Rakshasa animate and inhabit the corpses here, using them to strike terror amongst any anhiyawen from the Greenbacks that defy them.

GOVERNMENT

The anhiyawen apes (Grepthan) of this large island treat Rakshasa as living gods. The Rakshasa rule the heart of the capital city, Haadar. There, they dwell in a mass of elevated, gold-gilded palaces.

In the city below the Rakshasa, the Grepthan hold bloody rule in their master's names. Grepthan officials acquire their position by slaying their superiors and assuming the office – and hold it by slaying any challengers to their position. Those Grepthan physically closer to the royal palaces rule over those further away, with those Grepthan who dwell along the coast being the lowest in the chain – only a step above non-Grepthan prey.

Most Grepthan who wish to advance quickly join the ranks of soldiers in the Grave fields, where they hope to increase their station by devouring the souls of the anhiyawen they capture in the Greenbacks. However, this is not as easy a task as one may believe. The Grepthan soldiers have standing orders to capture, not kill anhiyawen – they pass on prey they capture to their betters or the Rakshasa themselves. Only by special permission – such as single-handedly finding a large cache of anhiyawen or revealing a superior incompetent or weak – allows a given soldier to feast on a portion of captured prey, or seize a superior's position by eliminating the former.

Likewise, the leaders in Haadar occasionally organize coastal raids when it is felt that the anhiyawen stock of the Greenbacks is running low. Usually these organized raids occur every ten years where masses of war canoes travel to the Plains of War and other lands to capture and bring individuals back to Haadar. Though the Rakshasa devour the majority of the captured anhiyawen on the spot, they release some of the captives into the Greenbacks to reproduce and replenish the stock there.

The ruling Grepthan – generally those who reside in Haadar – undergo a sorcerous ritual that turns their skin white and eyes a glowing red. These Grepthan have usually devoured a dozen souls or more and not easily defeated by those who desire to move up through the ranks. Often, the more cunning ruling Grepthan provoke their lesser into a fight so that they may consume the upstart's soul and increase their own power for a play against a long-standing rival.

CITIES

The multitudes of small communities spread across the Plains of Haad tend to be rustic clumps of mud-brick huts built into hive-like tiers. Larger communities may have these huts stretching out from the highly decorative cylindrical mansion of a Grepthan silverback. Meanwhile, the coastal communities and ports use wood construction, with bamboo struts reaching out to raft-based houses on the ocean's surface.

Haadar: Known also as the Red City, this city consists of clay mixed with the blood of victims and workers. It is a perfectly round, ivy-bedecked city with three concentric districts that rise over forty feet taller than the previous district. The center of the city is composed of five ivory and lapis palaces separated by low walls. These palaces are home to the Rakshasa lords and even the Grepthan are not allowed within the district; instead the grape-laden palace grounds are tended to by strange, human-faced, blood-drinking six-winged insects the size of a fist known as strix.

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PEOPLE

Grepthan force ape anhiyawen from other lands they encounter who come to Haadarast to undergo a magical ritual that transforms them into obedient Grepthan. Those that refuse or whom the Grepthan considered unworthy are executed or forced to flee into the Greenbacks, where they become prey for the Grepthan and their Rakshasa rulers.

The anhiyawen apes, known as Grepthan, populate the rest of the vast island. Most Grepthan live in the fertile lands outside the city of Haadar and tend to crops or other peasant chores under the watchful eye of a Silverback. Silverbacks display a white-tinged coat, with such coloring gained from the soul feast he has devoured as part of the ritual to make him or her noble.

Only silverbacks and prominent Grepthan partake of a blood meal, which provides them sorcerous powers and the right to rule. The remaining Grepthan survive primarily on the crops they grow and any flesh they might acquire from lax or foolish anhiyawen. However, without the special and secret ritual that accompanies a meal of raw meat, a common Grepthan cannot hope to acquire the sorcerous powers of a silverback or the rise in station the white fur of the ritual brings.

RELIGION

The anhiyawen Grepthan made bloody sacrifices to their Rakshasa lords, whom they treat as gods. The Rakshasa punish worship of any other being with swift death.

MAGIC

The magic the Rakshasa teach the Grepthan is based in the spilling of blood; to use magic, a Grepthan must spill blood (its own or others), but this allows it to access magic more powerful than similar magic users. As these blood mages spill more blood, they can fuel spells more frequently and of greater power.

ADVENTURING

The Grepthan see outsiders as nothing more than prey, though there are rumors that some Norcast have been able to reach an accord to trade individuals for sacrifice.

Those willing to help the wild anhiyawen of the Greenbacks can find generous employment – if they can get past the xenophobia of the tribes. Likewise, Misrador and the tribes of the Plains of War encourage forays against Haadarast to keep the savage Grepthan from ever organizing an armada again to take their bloodlust beyond the island's shores.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

The Soul Feast: Held in the year of the Spade in the month of Venis, this is the only chance many Grepthan have for advancement to a silverback. Those Grepthan who have survived 25 years or more drink from a silver cup filled with Rakshasa blood. Those few that survive the transformation brought on by the draught become silverbacks bound to one of the Rakshasa lords of Haadarast.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

I'MAGOS

The False Land, Land of the Siren's Call

Capital: None

Government: Anarchy

Leader: The Three Sirens

Ka'Li the Black,

Mee'Ki the Purple,

Emi'Ka the Rotted

Population: Unknown



OVERVIEW

This storm-swept island is the unfortunate home of castaways and three powerful Rakshasa sisters. The approach to the island drives mortals mad from the howling winds and adds the cargo from wrecked ships to the riches scattered across the island.

HISTORY

For many ages, I'magos was generally uninhabited. Hameru, who used it to strand three sailors from Misrador who had displeased him, briefly visited it.

In the years that followed, other sailors of Misrador followed Hameru's lead, using the island as a sort of prison, dumping unwanted individuals off on its shore and leaving them to fend for himself or herself.

Somehow, when the Rakshasa attacked Misrador, they discovered the existence of this island

from captured Misradorian sailors. The Rakshasa used the information to trick three strongly disliked Rakshasa into traveling to the island. These three, known as the Siren Sisters, believed souls filled the island that they could devour at their leisure. However, when the three landed the remaining Rakshasa magically bombarded the isle, killing as many inhabitants as possible and stranding the three sisters without their Grepthan forces to defend or aid them.

Trapped on the island, the three sisters fell to bickering and blaming each other for their situation. Their acts clouded the sky in a perpetual storm and filled the howling winds around the island with a shrieking wail that drive passerbys mad and unable to steer their ships out of the wild winds that dashed their ships upon the rocks. The sisters apparently abandoned any hope of rescue or leaving the island and now a deadly reef of wrecked ships surrounds the storm-shrouded island and the wind howls with the siren's wail of the three ravenous sisters.

ALLIES/ENEMIES

I'magos stands alone and the three sisters that rule the land despise and devour those forced upon their island shores.

Although the isle is out of normal shipping lanes, the sisters can use their wild storms to capture and draw ships from as far away as the Axor hills in Axatheus, leading them in a slow, enchanted procession to the wind-swept rocks of their island.

LAND

The Crawling Hills: These blasted heaps of volcanic rock hold little vegetation or cover from the howling island winds. Fungus-lit caves riddle the porous rock and within their confines, the animalistic survivors hide and eke out an existence.

PLACES OF WONDER

The Upthrust Hand: This five-spired tower resembles its namesake. Red and green-lit windows perforate the black basalt of the structure. Luminous spotlights sometimes streak outward to scour the surrounding fog-shrouded crater in which it stands. This structure is the home of the three siren Rakshasa sisters, with each inhabiting their own tower. Who or what haunts the additional two towers remains a mystery, but survivors report strange sounds and baleful shadows stalking them through the twisting corridors and dank rooms.

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GOVERNMENT

In a manner of speaking, the three Siren Sisters control I'magos, though each vies for absolute control of the island. No one has seen the three sisters themselves in several hundred years, though they make their will known to the lords of the Grepthan that serve them.

The Grepthan have established their own leaders and established their own regimented martial ranks. They offer their services to the sisters in return for favors, power and blood magic to sustain their kind.

Surprisingly, the Grepthan that work for the warring sisters do not appear to fight among themselves when undertaking the Sister's bidding – it seems these Grepthan have enough weight that they can ignore orders that force the Grepthan to work against or harm each other.

According to incomplete messages recovered from the island, a council consisting of the heads of the city's numerous gangs rules the independent city of Shale. Occasionally gangs fall in and out of power in the city as secret rivalries are played out in the alleys and dilapidated buildings.

CITIES

There are no known cities on the surface of I'magos, but there are rumors of two underground cities that house the majority of the surviving island's population. There are other minor communities dotting the land that consist of survivors huddling in caves. Some of these caves are large enough that they house ramshackle buildings scavenged from washed-ashore shipwrecks.

Shale: This purported underground city is home to numerous races of sailors and their shipwrecked descendants. One survives by organizing or joining one of the many petty gangs that fill the city. According to rumor, the inhabitants heavily defend the city against the predations of the sister's Grepthan, but there are also hints that there may be some sort of secret dealing done to keep the Rakshasa-bound Grepthan from overrunning the city.

Wailless: According to legend, this eerily violet-lit city is directly beneath the Upthrust Hand and is home to the Grepthan still under the Siren Sister's control. However, the sorcerous screams of the sister are silent in the city, the vast cavern echoes with the howls of the Grepthan and punctuated with the screams and pleas for a quick death from their victims.

PEOPLE

Tales speak of the remnants of former crews that inhabit the cave-laden island. Most survivors succumb to madness due to the constant howling in the magical winds or become eccentric hermit elemental mages seeking some means to survive or escape the atrocious conditions on the island.

If the city of Shale exists, it is calm in the screaming sea, inhabited by castaways from Haadarast, the Plains of War, the Settled Lands, Misrador, Axatheum and elsewhere – and their descendants. In Shale, there are no castes and no royalty – a being must make their own way and any power they possess they seize by their own hand.

Ash-painted Grepthan scour the isle for individuals to feed the Siren sisters, but many Grepthan exist who abandoned following the sisters to start their own underground tribes on the isle. Some of these tribes actively work against the sisters, seeking to bring them down and end the maddening winds that scour the island surface.



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RELIGION

Most of the individuals who have been on the isle for some time have given up on any sort of worship and have forsaken the idea of outside help. Even the Grepthan who work for the sisters do not worship them, but simply perform their duties out of fear of what would happen to them if they did not.

MAGIC

The very air of I'magos ripples with magical energy. Very brave – or foolish – elemental mages sometimes pass close to the isles to replenish or augment their magical abilities. However, refugees must perform such an attempt with care, for the wild storms that sweep through the area can easily dash a ship upon the sharp reefs that surround the isle.

ADVENTURING

Without the aid of special precautions, those nearing the isle go mad by the perpetual shrieking of the Rakshasa sisters. Those capable of navigating the wild winds can explore the sundry caves and grottos of the isle. The rotting cargo of hundreds of ships fills many of these locations with vast treasures.

However, it is rare to find such treasures unguarded, either by beings driven mad by the shrieking wind or by creatures formed from the strange magic that permeates the very air.

Of course, laden with treasure, the most difficult task comes in escaping the storm-tossed seas that pull ships into the island's grasp.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

None



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JORMANGDAR

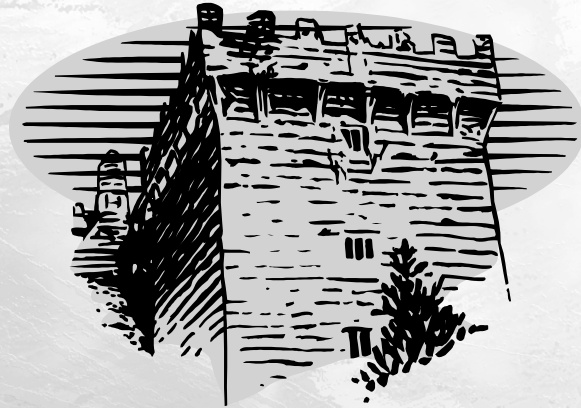
Dwarfhome, the Buried Realm

Capital: Jormangdar

Government: Monarchy

Leader: The Council of Thirteen

Population: Anhiyawen (<1%), Tyres Haul (<1%), Dwarf (90%), Kazin shazira (<1%), Hellchilde (<1%), Sa'heer-jinn (5%), Human (4%), Mageborn (<1%), Orkan (<1%), Titanborn (<1%)



OVERVIEW

Nestled among the Grimjaw Mountains, the realm of Jormangdar runs through the valleys and under the roots of the mountains there. Though the dwarves claim the northern grasslands as theirs, raids from various forces have left the surface lands devoid of dwarves.

The northern barren grasslands only sentient populace is a handful of raider humans (and some anhiyawen) from Norcast or outcast from Axatheum or Durathast as well as nomadic tribes of native sa'heer-jinn. The sa'heer-jinn primarily trade weapons and gear to the raiders in return for stolen treasures, and sell the goods to the dwarves.

HISTORY

At the end of the Kazin wars, the dwarves found themselves without purpose. Several of the warrior clans that had been at the forefront of the war retired to the nearby Grimjaw Mountains rather than return to their home in Sturmberg. There they created a second, more mercenary dwarven empire. In the years that followed, the dwarves of Jormangdar sold their services to any willing to pay their fees.

Following an internal schism that spanned both Jormangdar and Sturmberg a hundred years after the end of the Kazin war, several families left the halls of Jormangdar and established their own realm in the plains, called Belitar. The city became a hub of trade between Urthios in Eth'Authuram and the

cities of Axatheum until the Great Devastation, which laid the city to waste.

After the Great Schism, Jormangdar drifted from its tight relations with Eth'Authuram, and increasingly began to side with Durathast, sending hundreds of its warriors to fight on the side of the anhiyawen for gold.

The destruction that the Great Devastation wrought spared the fortress of Jormangdar, but until the reunited empire approached it after the Strider Wars, it closed its doors to the outside world – even distancing itself from the dwarven aeries scattered throughout the Grimjaw Mountains. Even when it finally reopened its doors to foreigners, it remained aloof, its once prized mercenary warriors remaining home to defend its own realm.

Only after Nuassian warriors began to seize the lands of Norcast did Jormangdar begin to sally forth once again, lending its warriors to Axatheum and Eth'Authuram to quell the grasping tentacles of the kraken. As armies in the capital city of Nadragar in Norcast gathered to begin marching east, Jormangdar seized and cut off numerous passes through the mountains, effectively preventing the great army from marching landward through its realm. Though the Norcast managed to seize the northern plains for a short time, Jormangdar eventually marched on the Norcast settlements and barracks, driving the invaders into the sea.

Even once the army drove Norcast raider's back, Jormangdar strengthened its fortifications and made its presence well known so that Norcast would not dare march against the dwarves.

Today, the passes through the Grimjaw Mountains are heavily fortified and guarded. The dwarves exact toll from any being using the overland trails through the mountains, and only allows a few select paying individuals or trade organizations to use its rapid underground system of tunnels to travel from place to place.

ALLIES/ENEMIES

While Jormangdar has not declared open war on the Norcast, they are definitely wary for any signs of invasion from that realm.

Likewise, Jormangdar is cool towards Axatheum, for it has suffered many corsair raids from that realm in the past.

Jormangdar retains friendly relations with Eth'Authuram, providing a tithe of dwarven warriors to supplement the forces that protect Hek'Tesa, in return for trade concessions with the Empire and beyond.

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LAND

Grimjaw Mountains: While Eth'Authuram obstinately rules the surface of this towering wall-like chain of mountains, the dwarves have made their homes in isolated aeries scattered throughout the mountains and linked by vast networks of underground roads and tunnels. Vital passes into, out of and through the mountains are guarded by dwarven fortress and heavily tolled to keep overland traffic to a minimum – and the moving of surface armies impossible.

Plains of Jormangdar: These wild scrub plains have somewhat recovered from their scouring in the Great Devastation. The remnants of overgrown, abandoned communities and devastated defensive towers are intermixed with the scrub-shrouded heaths and clumps of wild vegetation. The revival is due to a partial reclamation by Norcast forces before the combined might of Axatheum, Jormangdar and Eth'Authuram drove the raiders into the sea.

PLACES OF WONDER

The Lifehalls: Deep beneath the capital city of Jormangdar resides a copy of the original forges of Sturmberg that forged the original dwarven race. New dwarves are fashioned by the painstaking manipulation of limestone flows in the cavern and stored in a vast series of catacombs. The rulers of Jormangdar allow only dwarves to see or enter the Lifehalls.

GOVERNMENT

The dwarves of Jormangdar are ruled by a council of thirteen lords, each one the head of one of the most prominent clans of the realm. All major government positions are military in nature, and held by dwarves with some sort battlefield experience.

Despite the martial mindset of the dwarves, there are numerous minor functionary positions held by dwarves with minimal battle experience; often an oath to wield a weapon in defense of one's office is enough for these positions. Some of these positions require military training or yearly drilling, but some positions busy individual to avoid such "distractions".

While participating in the mercenary companies is strongly encouraged, it is not required. However, a true "civilian", with no military training, experience or the desire to heft a weapon cannot fill a government position.

CITIES

The Grimjaw Mountains are dotted with defensive outposts carved into the very stone of the mountains. Those outposts with attached communities stretch deep into the mountain, with few or no structures in the open. Most of the communities connect together by a well-mapped and patrolled series of natural or carved tunnels.

Jormangdar: Greatest of the dwarven cities and the capital of Jormangdar, this massive, brooding fortress protrudes from the foot of the southernmost curtain wall that is the backbone of the Grimjaw Mountains. Though mighty in appearance and defense, the majority of the cavernous city lies in the belly and bowels of the mountain, where many dwarves live their life never seeing a glint of the sun.

Ruins of Belitar: Formed by dwarven artisan after the Great Schism, this was an above-ground, circular walled city crafted by dwarven hands with stone from the Grimjaw Mountains. The Great Devastation cast it asunder, and later only partially rebuilt before the Norcast again razed it. It has been abandoned by the dwarves since then, but foreign settlers have moved into the ruins and partially rebuilt and inhabit the city.

PEOPLE

Two castes divide the dwarves of Jormangdar into warriors and non-warriors.

While the non-warriors, such as artisans and common laborers, outnumber the warriors, the highest regard goes to active warriors. The government deems that only experienced warriors are fit to rule over their betters, and even the dwarven descendants of the noble households cannot inherit their titles until they have made their first, non-dwarf kill.

The dwarven families of Jormangdar divide its citizenry into great households known as clans. Noble, blooded dwarves head the clans. These clans contain not only the household's warrior relatives, but also non-warrior families who have sworn to aid and serve the household.

Unlike the stone-fashioned dwarves of Sturmberg, the dwarves of Jormangdar are somewhat distanced from the furnaces of Hellstorne and fashion new dwarves differently than in Sturmberg. When married dwarves reach the peak of their profession, they come to the Lifehalls of Jormangdar, where they undergo a ritual to fashion jointly fashion offspring. When fully formed, these offspring return with their parents to their homeland, where relatives train and guide them in the ways of their kind.

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The sons and daughters of non-warriors have the option to take up a military career upon reaching the age of ascension (about 15 years of age) and joining the warrior ranks of their own clan – or in rare cases can “defect” to another clan for which they feel a stronger affinity. Usually this occurs due to inter-clan marriage or to orphaned dwarves.

RELIGION

The dwarves of Jormangdar respect Hameru and the Twelve, especially the latter who brought them life. However, being stone, the dwarves know they cannot ascend to the heavens but only eventually return to the earth and remade. If Hameru is willing, careful crafting can refashioned them whole in a new dwarven body.

There are likewise secret elemental cults among the dwarves. These blasphemers believe that dwarves are, in truth, elemental spirits drawn into and giving life to their stone bodies. These misguided individuals generally believe that the dwarves should not bow to men or give thanks for their existence, and that instead they delude themselves to believe that they are more akin to the jinn and elemental lords of the wilderness such as Far Zabas.

MAGIC

Sorcerous magic fashioned the dwarves and occasionally that magic displays among dwarves in the ability to fashion that magic into spells. However, they are rarely as adept as other races at wizardry. Elemental magic seems to come more naturally to them, while they seem to struggle with shamanism.

Since the Strider Wars, many dwarven artisans have turned their eye towards clockworks and incorporating its supernatural mechanics into their works of art and other masterwork items.

ADVENTURING

The Grimjaw Mountains ring with wild and dangerous beasts, as well as scouts from Norcast looking for holes in the dwarven defenses. Mercenary dwarves hire themselves out for nearly any war or military duty. They will also eagerly take on those who show themselves competent in the art of war.

Likewise, the fame martial weapon schools of the dwarves exist across the continent, and many foreign applicants duel for the chance to train under dwarven eyes.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

Jorm's Day: Held Melis 9th, this day in late fall celebrates the founder and namesake of

Jormangdar. There is much feasting and celebration and dwarves gift each other with wondrous tools and tokens to celebrate friendship and display skill. Tournaments for the warriors are a common theme in many of the celebrations, and dwarves travel to many local tournaments throughout the week to compete in as many as possible. The last, Grand Duel in Jormangdar occurs on the actual, last festival day.

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MIDNITE ISLES

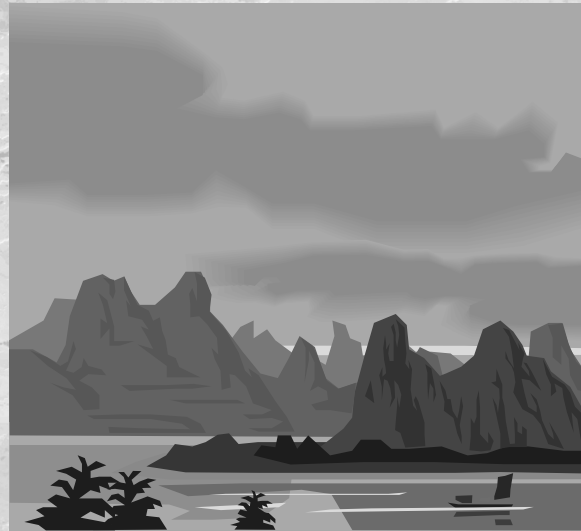
The Evergreen Isles, the Land of Mist and Water

Capital: Atlantea

Government: Monarchy

Leader: Obyrn and Tytanya

Population: Anhiyawen (12%), Draemani (<1%), Kazin shazira (7%), Jinn (80%), Human (<1%)



OVERVIEW

Home to the ancient jinn lords of Air and the Waters, the Midnight Isles are an area of shifting and ever-changing island chains.

HISTORY

Before Hameru strode upon Eth'Authuram, he sojourned in the semi-corporeal lands of the Midnight Isles. During his initial reign, he visited the Midnight Isles to bring jinn servants to the capital of Asul to power many of that city's great civil machines.

After his children overthrew Hameru, he attempted to return to these lands, but the islands hid from him under the commands of Obereth and Tytanya.

Since that time, the islands have remained elusive and only reachable by the most determined or lucky of souls.

ALLIES/ENEMIES

The Midnight Isles refuse to ally themselves with other nations or people. However, the Midnight Isles has been unreachable by raiders from Haadarast and the rulers Obereth and Tytanya have made it clear they disapprove of that nation's actions.

LAND

Fevre: This island rises and falls beneath the sea in semi-regular intervals. Lush, seaweed like fronds covers the island and strange bird-fish live off the surrounding schools of true fish. Rumors speak that Tytanya keeps a great coral mansion upon the isle, tended by elite jinn guardians known as tritons.

Forte: Dense woods and a bizarre variety of avian wildlife cover this mist-shrouded isle. An ancient and somewhat eccentric elemental mage hermit purportedly cares for the isle, though generally little is known of the man – though it is well known he is a cannibal and seemingly immortal.

Harbinger Isle: Sheer cliffs surround this island on all sides. Grassy knolls and standing corpses of trees also dot the island. Each corpse is a portal to another realm – some bright and cheerful, others dark and fearsome. The jinn create and use these portals to entertain themselves, populating the worlds to suit their fancy. There are some legends that say one of the worlds was the home from which Hameru reached the mortal world or in which he now resides.

One: The thickly forested island of One is home to Obereth. Strange, shape-shifting jinn fill the land. Many take animal shapes and enjoy irritating visitors with unending questions and riddles. Obereth himself makes his home in a bramble hut that lies in a great crater in the center of the isle.

Sassos: This barren island is made of smooth pebbles as white as bone. Closer examination of the pebbles reveals that they are, in fact, bone. How this bone came to be piled upon this isle is unknown, but the isle is infected with strange, vaguely humanoid skeletal undead hidden among the bits of bone.

Treta: This hilly, forested island is the largest and most stable of the isles. It is home to many small and peaceful anhiyawen tribes, who are eager to greet and carouse with foreigners. Surprisingly, though there are numerous tales of Misradorian sailors landing upon and staying with the gregarious tribes here, no native human or draemani presence exists on the isle.

Twii: Home to the water sprites of Tytanya, Cypress trees covered this half-sunken isle. Gigantic lily pads crisscross the rippling pools, providing the primary means of navigating the undulating waterways. Monstrous frogs belch through the firefly-filled nights and strange jinn in serpentine shape slide through the many lakes and ponds of the isle. Tytanya herself makes her home in a

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reed castle upon the northern shore of the island, and many tales speak of her taking in lost or stranded sailors and nursing them back to health before returning them to civilized lands.

PLACES OF WONDER

The Groves: These small rings of trees mark where the dream-realms of the jinn lay on Harbinger Isle. Though they are unassuming to the mortal eye, stepping into the dense foliage deposits one into an entirely different world.

The Bone Stones: Huge skull-like bones reside at the cardinal compass points of Sassos isle. Each stands atop of heap of human skulls, and a horde of armed and armored skeletal sentinels defends the mighty markers. Their true purpose is unknown, but necromancers claim that taking one of the lesser skulls from pile beneath the gigantic skulls grants the thief the ability to raise and control hordes of mindless undead (but does not allow the possessor to control the skeletal frames on Sassos).



GOVERNMENT

While the Midnite Isles supposedly belong to Tytanya, she shares the governance of all things in the island chain with Obereth. While the Lord or Lady clearly expects jinn and other inhabitants to follow their directives, rare is the occasion that either feels inclined to interfere with the affairs of the island's inhabitants.

Generally, the jinn of the island are respectful towards one another and adhere to a complex creed dictated by oaths and bonds between the various spirits. Breaking these bonds has serious, detrimental effects to the jinn, up to and including the annihilation of their spirit forms for the most egregious acts. Thus, there tends to be an eerie mantle of courtesy among all the beings of the Isles. However, even the threat of breaking an oath or bond can bring down the unbridled fury of jinn upon an individual – even over a matter that might seem trivial to an outsider.

CITIES

As is common for jinn, the Midnite isles house few communities. Any existing settlements tend to be for a jinni that has assumed a mortal form and visitors should approach them with caution – if at all. There are, likewise many abandoned structures located in the Midnite Isles; opulent houses once inhabited by jinn but later abandoned when they grew bored of mortal life.

Atlantea: Atlantea the pearlescent travels each moon to a new location with the Midnite Isles. Though the jinn and kazin shazira of this land know the pattern the city takes, they do not freely share the information with the other races. The city is composed of iridescent shells and coral, shaped into slender towers and domes. Tidal pools permeate the city; exotic marine life fills each pool and they extend as far beneath the surface as the city's terraced towers rise into the sky.

PEOPLE

Incorporeal and mortal jinn flit across the isles, taking forms as it suits their fancy. Unlike the jinn of E'London, the jinn of the Midnite Isles often change their form - and do not regularly assume humanoid shapes. The only exception to this is the inhabitants of the city of Atlantea, where it is generally required that the jinn take mortal, humanoid form while within the city's bounds.

The jinn of the Midnite Isles are perhaps the most untamed and wild spirits in all the world. They do not bind themselves to any of the laws of civilization and tend to live like wild beasts on the ever-shifting isles. They can be murderous or pleasant - often within the span of a breath.

The children of the jinn, the anhiyawen, dot the many isles, living in primitive but generally peaceable tribes. Unlike the anhiyawen of many other lands, the anhiyawen of the Midnite Isles tend to have exceedingly short lives, allowing them to shed their mortal frame and choose a new one before they tire of their existence.

Likewise, many kazin shazira have taken residence in the city of Atlantea, but few can be found elsewhere in this land. The kazin shazira of Atlantea are cultured and noble beasts on the surface, but still retain a wild and untamed heart at their core.

RELIGION

The kazin shazira and anhiyawen of the Midnite Isles revere Obereth and Tytanya exclusively. The wild jinn respect Obereth and Tytanya, but do not worship these powerful jinn. All

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beings and spirits of the Midnite Isles frown on any display showing reverence to Hameru, the Twelve or any other deity. They punish those individuals who display worship of the Kraken or the Rakshasa of Haadarast.

MAGIC

The Midnite Isles are a font of jinn and elemental magic, and it permeates all things in the island chain. The shape and contents of the isles shift in the magical winds that blow across their surface. The magic within the surrounding seas push the islands from place to place.

Mortal spellcasters have found great difficulty in manifesting and controlling their magic in these isles. Civilized magic often fails utterly while elemental magic tends to become more powerful and easily spirals out of control. Undesired effects and side effects abound with the use of spirit-based magic, and often attracts unwanted attention from the jinn as well.

ADVENTURING

If one can locate the Midnite Isles, every step of these strange lands can provide adventure. There are vast and strange otherworldly realms to explore, hermitic jinn to visit and deal with and a realm whose nature can change at the whim of its inhabitants.



HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

Twelfth Moon: Held on Zapados 21st - 28th, this festival celebrates the end of a year and the completion of a cycle of the city of Atlantea's journey throughout the Midnite Isle. It is a

week-long festival of merrymaking that nullifies and voids all oaths.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

MISRADOR

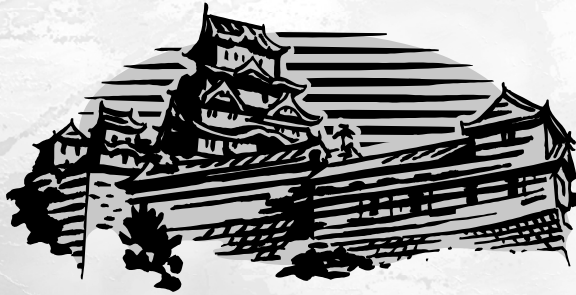
The Crescent Realm, Land of the Northern Sun

Capital: Mizadar

Government: Monarchy

Leader: Emperor Mizrador III

Population: Anhiyawen (Usagi) (24%), Draemani (<1%), Kazin shazira (5%), Hellchilde (<1%), Human (55%), Mageborn (15%)



OVERVIEW

The second home of Hameru, Misrador is a realm of law and order devoted to its departed founder. It is home to honorable samurai and secretive ninjas.

HISTORY

After his failure to convert the spirits of Haadarast into an army, Hameru fled to the steep-bluffed lands here. After the queen of E'Lendon visited Hameru, he resolved to start his life anew.

Inspired by the beauty and grace of E'Lendon, Hameru fashioned himself a new wife, Imzada. Satisfied with his new bride, Hameru established a new kingdom on Misrador and began to populate the land with his new offspring.

In time, Hameru left Misrador to return to his old lands, leaving his new wife to rule Misrador in his absence. When the Great Devastation struck Eth'Authuram, Hameru disappeared from that kingdom, but did not return to Misrador.

In Hameru's absence, his new descendants populated the mountainous land of Misrador. Hameru's new wife Imzada remained behind to rule over Misrador when Hameru and a great fleet had left to retake Eth'Authuram. However, Hameru never returned and it was unprepared when the Grepthan warriors of Haadarast found them. The Haadarast would have overrun the Misradorians if it were not been for the intervention of E'Lendon, who brought into being the anthropomorphic rabbits known as Usagi-san to bolster the depleted ranks of Misrador's warriors.

After a hard-fought war, the alliance decimated the forces of Haadarast, and sent the

Haadarast fleet to the bottom of the ocean at the battle of the Wolves' Teeth. With its fleet crushed, Haadarast could no longer threaten Misrador, except with small raids.

After the destruction of the Haadarast Armada, Empress Imzada declared that she would undertake a journey to discover the fate of her husband, Hameru. She left her two children, Mizrad and Nemzada in charge of Misrador in her absence.

Imzada traveled south to Eth'Authuram, but discovered that Hameru had long ago departed that land, and she likewise departed – sending word back to Misrador of the new leg of her journey. After that time, no one heard from her again, nor did any other of her remaining fleet return to Misrador.

Later, when the Great Devastation struck Eth'Authuram, Misrador found itself in the eye of a fierce typhoon that threatened to destroy that land. Only the living sacrifice of the land's greatest shugenja, the Emperor and Empress Mizrad and Nemzada quelled the storm and saved the land. In the wake of the passing of the last of Hameru's children, the next generation – Emperor Xie Mizrad III took the throne and continued the lead established by his ancestors.

Following the Strider Wars in our own realms, the restored empire of Eth'Authuram – through Axatheum - reached out to Misrador to establish relations with our distant cousins. However, Emperor Xie refused, branding the children of the Twelve as renegades punished sorely for betraying our father, Hameru. Since that time, Misrador has purposely kept us at arm's length and we only know of its existence from the trickle of exiles from that distant land.

ALLIES/ENEMIES

Misrador constantly guards against the possibility of Haadarast invading her shores once again. However, so far Misrador has only had to content with minor, individual raids by elements from the Rakshasa-controlled isle.

Like Haadarast, Misrador is watchful for raiders from the Plains of War or the Wild Wastes. However, Misrador does not recognize these two areas as "nations", and has allowed Misradorian colonies to be set up on the northern shores of these lands to cultivate the exotic resources of these foreign lands.

Misrador is friendly towards the Settled Lands and conducts trade with the realm, though it rightly believes the anhiyawen-controlled realm is inferior to its own – often taking advantage or dictating the terms of trade.

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Misrador is likewise friendly with E'Lendon and conducts trade with that realm. However, unlike with the Settled Lands, Misradorians finds they must conform their conduct to match E'Lendon will.

Unfortunately, Misrador incorrectly sees Eth'Authuram as a corrupt land ruled by upstarts to worthy Hameru. The realm believes our lands only value is in exiling her miscreants to our shores as punishment. Misrador rudely rebuffed our attempts to make peaceful contact.

LAND

Misrador has many unique plants and geological features not found in any other region of the world. The Emperors, sorcerers and shugenja have fashioned many of these strange and wonderous features for defense against Haadarast or for the noble's pleasures.

Misrador Mountains: These volcanic mountains are rather low but steep, with wide valleys filled with bamboo forests

The Deep Woods: This forest is well tended and spacious due to the constant culling of wood for the city of Mizadar. Sorcerers magically grow the trees of this wood. An attending force of shugenja - specifically trained for the task - shape the growing trees. The forest also doubles as a menagerie, housing many varieties of strange animals and beast collected from across the isle - with special enclosures for animals brought from afar.

PLACES OF WONDER

The Temple of Hameru: This golden temple is the tallest structure in Mizadar, and attached directly to the Imperial palace. Within it stands a towering statue of Hameru himself, bearing the tablets of law on his shoulders. A hundred shugenja tend the edifice and daily sacrifices ring the base of the statue, stacked shin high.

GOVERNMENT

Hameru brought the laws of civilization to Misrador as he did to Eth'Authuram, but in addition, he put into place additional safeguards so that the people of his second wife would never overthrow him.

To this end, Hameru borrowed the caste system his children invented and put a similar one in place in Misrador.

Only the ruling caste, the samurai, fills positions of power in the government. The Emperor assigns individuals to the top tier positions - known as Daimyo. A binding magical oath prevents the

subordinate from plotting or acting against his superior.

The various Daimyo likewise require oaths from those serving under them, but their own oath to the Emperor likewise passes a portion of the Daimyo's magical oath to the subordinate, preventing them from likewise betraying the Emperor. Likewise, should the Emperor remove a Daimyo from power, the magic of the oath remains in place upon the subordinate, preventing them from rebelling or revolting to restore their master's position.

Exiles from Misrador report that following the Ninja wars on our land, the secretive ninja clans of Misrador infiltrated and subverted the weakened government. This has led to true power lying with a shadow council headed by ninja clans, to which the Misrador Emperor is only a figurehead. These ninja clans, whose leaders have sworn no oath to the Emperor, have seemingly moved unseen and unfettered throughout Misrador.

The worst of these ninja clans is the Yakuzu "family", whose debased members spread through several Daimyo clans and involve themselves in all sorts of overt criminal activities. Legends tell that one can recognize the Yakuzu by the unusual kanji tattoos they bear. These tattoos record the deeds and crimes that the individual has committed, and the number of tattoos indicates the member's status in the "family".

CITIES

Most of the communities in Misrador are small, walled communities constructed entirely of wood with stone protective outer walls to protect against raids from Haadarast or the Savage Tribes. Larger communities have a central, elegant temple dedicated to Hameru, while smaller communities have at least a shrine dedicated to our father.

Mizadar: a gleaming, pearlescent wall of stones dredged from the harbor surrounds this fortified port capital. Most of the buildings in the city are made of wood from the nearby Deep Woods. Fire is a constant hazard in the city - so much that walled wards divide the city to prevent fire from razing the whole.

PEOPLE

Unlike Eth'Authuram, where humanity reflects all the diversity of the Twelve children of Hameru, all of the humans of Misrador are the direct offspring of Mizrad and Nemzada, the children of the Empress Imzada. The first generation of these children benefitted from Hameru's experiences in Eth'Authuram, and rituals first learned in

CRIMSON EMPIRE

Eth'Authuram secured the innate sorcerous power of the firstborn of Misrador, resulting in many more mageborn in this realm as well as a lack of rogue magic appearing in one's descendants.

This has created a singular lineage of powerful sorcerers, and likewise secured claims of direct lineage for the throne of Misrador itself.

The remaining humans of Misrador have clustered into clans, consisting of close family members and their retainers. The eldest matriarchal or patriarchal member, granted the title of daimyo by the emperor, heads each of these clans. There are nearly three dozen daimyo clans in Misrador, of varying size and power.

While humans rule Misrador, they rely on a large population of anhiyawen hares known as the Usagi-san. The Usagi-san forms the lowest caste of farmers and laborers respectively. They may not join the samurai caste, nor hold governmental positions. They are, however assigned to the various clans, according to the needs and desires of the ruling daimyos.



RELIGION

All of Misrador worships Hameru, the father of humanity – even the anhiyawen Usagi-san. However, unlike on Eth'Authuram, the Misrador respect and offer appeasements to the jinn lords in return for becalming their hand and the environment around Misrador.

MAGIC

The Emperor of Misrador is the most powerful sorcerer in the land, with direct firstborn lineage direct to Hameru himself, undiluted through the rest of the population.

The remainder of spellcasters on Misrador is primarily shugenja, whose power is a mix of elementalism, oaths to various jinn and ancestors and pleas direct to Hameru himself.

There are cults of ninja, known as ketsueki u-izado, who practice the blood magic of Haadarast. The populace greatly fears these individuals and the practice of blood magic is punishable by death.

ADVENTURING

Misradorian officials look down on those who go out of their way to seek danger or adventure – unless it is part of one's occupation.

However, there are plenty of opportunities for danger across Misrador and beyond. There are constant threats of raids from Haadarast and the Plains of War, and in the seas beyond the Wolves' Teeth, there are dangerous corsairs who lie in wait to steal the exotic shipments destined for the colonies in the Axxor Hills.

In Misrador itself, there are dangerous creatures from the Misrador Mountains that fall upon civilized lands, and there are occasional excursions into these mountains to find the lairs and progenitors of these creatures and destroy them or subdue them for display in the Deep Woods menageries.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

Hameru's Day: Held on Coris 1st, while meant to celebrate Hameru's birthday, it truly celebrates the arrival of Hameru to Misrador itself. It is a day full of parades and magical fireworks, with much feasting and other social activities observed throughout the land.



CRIMSON EMPIRE

MYTHOS

The Windswept Isle, the Mountains of the Sky

Capital: Aeolios

Government: Patriarchy

Leader: King Paneos

Population: Anhiyawen (75%), Draemani (5%), Hellchilde (15%), Sa'heer jinn (4%), Human (<1%)



OVERVIEW

A land of rock and biting winds, the mountains of Mythos whistle with strange songs, half-glimpsed people and shining, unreachable spires of colored glass.

HISTORY

Spirits of the air have long populated Mythos. When the wandering Hameru passed through the realm, his corporeal form intrigued many of the spirits and they took semi-solid forms to interact with him. Unlike the E'Lendon, the wind spirits of Mythos did not remain in corporeal form, but instead seamlessly switched between mortal and spirit forms. They did adopt many of Hameru's civilized ways, though.

However, always aloof, the spirits of Mythos have maintained a realm thereafter with one foot in the spirit realm and one foot in the corporeal realm.

ALLIES/ENEMIES

The ability of Mythos inhabitants to revert to spirit form has kept the aloof spirits from involving themselves with the mortal world. Though they tend to favor peaceful interaction, they can simply avoid most physical threats and will simply avoid dangerous or provocative individuals.

LAND

Almost all of Mythos is covered with mountains, which spill directly into the sea surrounding the island. Only a few hidden coves exist at the island's edge, which have become havens for the mortal dwellers on the island.

Heaventouch Mountains: This series of mountains covers Mythos, with the smaller peaks at the northern and southern ends and rising towards sheer, titanic peaks in the middle. Glass aeries dot the higher reaches of the mountain, tinkling in the soft winds that race through the multiple peaks. Spirit creatures of many sorts likewise haunt the mountains, though few are dangerous to mortal beings.

PLACES OF WONDER

The Celestium: This great domed tower rises above all others in Aeolios. The twenty-three story tall tower is open to any who wish to use it. The bottom three stories are a sort of open-air market selling many wondrous and truly magical items. If one can acquire a key in the emporium to the fourth story – and there are many true keys bought or traded in the first three stories – the remaining floors reveal themselves collections of strange, otherworldly objects that may or may not be stars. If one perseveres to the twenty-third level, they will find a jinni known as the Astronicum and his marvelous looking glass. The Astronicum is a servant of Paneos, and has been order to allow any visiting individual three glances through the looking the looking glass. The looking glass itself can see to any point on the world, or instantly focus to any point in the night sky – including viewing into Nirvana itself.

GOVERNMENT

Beyond the presence of King Aeolios, there is no bureaucracy or standing army. If the need should arise, however, King Aeolios can count on the air spirits of the island to rally to his call.

CITIES

Several small fishing villages huddle in the few protected coves surrounded by the massive frames of the Heaventouch Mountains. Most of the buildings of these quaint villages protrude directly over the water, with a few of the more elaborate structures carved directly into the stone of the adjacent mountains.

Aeolios: Also known as the Great Windchime, this glass, crystal and ice city forms the peak of the greatest of the Heaventouch Mountains. It is too cold for most mortals to withstand exposure to the city's exterior for long, but heated interiors protect and host many visitors from afar who have come to trade with the wind spirits here.

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PEOPLE

The native population of Mythos is comprised of air jinn. Most of these jinn refer to themselves as the children of Paneos. Though they are much more civilized than other jinn, many still prefer to remain in spirit form the majority of the time, only taking mortal form when dealing with other mortal beings.

The coastal reaches of the land hold a smattering of draemani, who are half-breeds of native air jinn and visiting anhiyawen.

There are a few small communities of Hellchilde with air jinn and Misradorian ancestry. These Hellchilde remain on Mythos, for they are considered undesirables back in their homeland.

Human or anhiyawen visitors from the surrounding realms occasionally make landfall to deal for exotic goods created by the natives.

RELIGION

The jinn and most mortal beings on Mythos revere their “father” Paneos. Some half-humans also revere Hameru and possibly the twelve. There are no restrictions against the practice of these peaceful religions in this land, but those who aggressively use these religions to harm others, or openly practice the bloody sacrifices of the Kraken or the Rakshasa of Haadarast are punished for such displays.

MAGIC

Unsurprisingly, most beings in Mythos wield some form of elemental air magic. Those with human ancestry may also practice sorcery of one sort or another, based on Misorian traditions. There are rumors that at least one sorcerous ninja family has made its home in Mythos, using its dark magic to conceal its presence from all the other residents of this island.

ADVENTURING

Mythos is relatively peaceful, but there is some danger from capricious jinn or the wild beasts of the mountains.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

None

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NORCAST

Land of the Kraken, the Shaken Lands

Capital: Nadragai

Government: Theocracy

Leader: High Theocrat Karados Norcast

Population: Anhiyawen (<1%), Tyres Haul (<1%), Dwarf (<1%), Kazin shazira (<1%), Nomi (<1%), Hellchilde (5%), Sa'heer-jinn (<1%), Human (75%), Mageborn (1%), Orkan (15%), Titanborn (3%)



OVERVIEW

Norcast is a new realm, which has only appeared in the wake of the fall of Eth'Authuram. A near-albino human race infests this land. These red-haired raiders worship a demonic beast known as the Kraken.

The Norcast leadership is extremely xenophobic and seeks the "purification" of all other races; a somewhat odd view, considering the number of orkan in their armies.

Norcast has a large population of hellchilde, said to be gift of the Kraken. Special monasteries raise individuals to become Templars in the service of the Kraken.

HISTORY

Shortly after the Great Devastation, the populace of the great island of Nuass was bereft of a

stable government. The desert-making destruction visited upon Eth'Authuram proper spared their island. However, they found themselves beset by monstrous creatures spawned by the wild elemental magics that spilled over from the Great Devastation. The communities of Nuass fell into barbarism and took to raiding and sacrificing others to the vile monstrosities of their island to survive. Eventually, the strongest of these raiding cults was one dedicated to the Kraken.

Not long after the Strider Wars, the raiding forces of Nuass fell upon the barren lands west of Jormangdar. These forces swiftly seized the independent cities of Zollos, Hwightos and Ghastron. The forces of the Kraken quickly won over the populace with their ability to return the barren lands outside the city into lush green plains and croplands. Within a month, the raiders had the support of each city's military forces, and in a coordinated effort, the three cities marched on Nadragar and took the city by force. With these great cities under their control, the Nuass took up the new nation name of Norcast – named for the family that led the Kraken cult - and continued to seek to expand their new empire.

Luckily for the empire, the Norcast struck south and north simultaneously, deliberately avoiding marching into Jormangdar or against the kazin and jinn of the Zapathos Forest.

Norcast's strength was in lightning sea-borne raids fostered by Kraken magic. However, they found themselves no match for Axatheum's corsairs in the north. Heavy losses inflicted by Axatheus pushed back the Norcast raiders. In their retreat, however, the Norcast were able to decimate the communities and dwarven fortress-city of rebuilt Belitar.

In the south, while the Norcast scored early victories against the cities of Zebo and A'lak Ahera, they found Coranthium impenetrable and Umjin resisted their flora-reviving Kraken magic with uncharacteristic effectiveness. As the assault stymied at the foot of the Zapathos Forest and against Coranthium, the corsair fleet from Axatheum was able to slip into the Zabas Sea and destroyed the remaining Norcast fleet, stranding the besieging raiders in Coranthius. Caught between the land-based defenders and the seaborne corsairs, Norcast's assault faltered and eventually collapsed. Though Norcast managed to retain control of Zebo and eventually reestablish a trickle of reinforcements, it dashed the Kraken's dreams of conquest.

ALLIES/ENEMIES

Eth'Authuram and Coranthius have openly declared themselves enemies of Norcast. Jormangdar

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reels from the loss of the fortified city of Belitar, but has entered into a peace treaty with the Norcast. Axatheum is officially cool towards Norcast, but in reality, the two spuriously raid each other's trade lanes and ports, looking for ways to claim each other's shores.

LAND

Krakenhome: This luscious, tropical island has an enormous hunk taken out of its center. This black, vast hole marks the physical home of the kraken worshipped by the Norcast. The great beast travels between the ever-present whirlpool just southwest of the island and this vast chasm.

Deathspire Mountains: These black peaks stretch into the sky like the twisted tentacles of the kraken. Weird and mutated creatures spawned of the kraken itself fill the area. Like all things touched by the kraken, lush vegetation covers these fierce mountains in what seems to defy all reason for its mere existence in such rocky and forbidden terrain.

Deepways Jungle: This dense, dark jungle ripples with slime-filled vines and the salty tang of the ocean. Cold shivers run down the backs of those who visit the raucous, fauna filled jungle. Small barbaric, tribal communities of cannibalistic kraken worshippers break the wilderness in many areas.

The Green Plains: This vast stretch of civilized farmland is a wonder in the current age. After the Great Devastation, the area known as Norcast was a bleached desert, but the arrival of the Nuass brought with it strange magic that turned the barren sands into fertile farmland. The rich, watered lands has caused numerous small communities to form across its reaches – communities that eagerly winnow themselves to appease the bloody appetite of the kraken and keep the green land from being overwhelmed by a growing population.

The Sargasso: This vast, slowly swirling reef of tangled seaweed and rotting ships is a strange land of castaways and opportunists. At the center of the vast Sargasso is mile-wide whirlpool that sucks anything drifting to close to the inner portion of the Sargasso down to the depths of the ocean floor, where the Norcast kraken waits.

The Nightmarsh: Consisting of cypress forests and seas of swampy reeds, the night marsh was once fertile grasslands until it fell into the sea as part of the Great Devastation. When the Nuass invaded Norcast, their magical rituals raised this land from the sea, providing additional land for

crops and communities. However, after the destruction of the majority of Norcast's fleet, the land has been slowly sinking back into the sea, and is now mostly swamp overrun with the fell and bloodthirsty offspring of the kraken.

Nuass: The original home of the Norcast, exotic flora and fauna overruns this lush island. Numerous fishing communities dot the island, and the interior jungle is scattered with primitive tribes.

PLACES OF WONDER

The Great Altar: Hidden deep in Nuass, this oddly singing jade and serpentine statue depicts the kraken in all its glory. Its surface is kept wet with sacrifices of blood and organs. In return, vegetation grows rampant about its base and supposedly, any being making sacrifice to it becomes fertile and virile. Proxy sacrifices sometimes occur, and an entire household occasionally performs a sacrifice at the statue's base.

GOVERNMENT

The High Theocrat, the most savage and fanatical of the priests of the kraken, controls the government of Norcast. The High Theocrat surrounds himself with a council of fanatical priests, who each command a host of prophets and inquisitors to keep the populace in line.

Those who show their devotion to the kraken receive Governmental positions, and dark oaths bind the office's loyalty to the ministers of the High Theocrat. The wealth and prestige granted by these positions is highly desired by members of the populace, and those in power are ruthless in keeping their position – sometimes murdering or betraying those they feel threaten their position or office.

CITIES

The smaller communities of Norcast usually consist of wood and stone buildings built in close, defensive clusters. Roads are rarely paved, and most communities are contained within a perimeter demarked by waist-high walls made of river stones. Many of the buildings in a community actually have roofs that are in truth raiding galleys. These buildings during the spring and summer months are often roofless when the ships are put into action.

Ghastron: Taken intact, this beautiful city is the jewel of Norcast. The ancient, engineered city streets are wide and well maintained, making it the cleanest and best-organized city in Norcast itself.

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Hwightos: When the war with the Nuass began, fire razed this city when it refused to surrender. The Norcast rebuilt it into a thriving port city and shipyard for their fleets. Shipbuilders bring Great Cypress trees from the sinking Nightmarsh to use in shipbuilding, and the distance from this source has made the rebuilding of Norcast's fleet slow going.

Nadragal: Once, this city was the largest and best-defended city on the peninsula. The iron-walled city smells of death from the rotting corpses that fill its streets. Where once its wide, opulent streets brimmed with trade it is now a tight, cramped city filled with wretches and blood-spilling gangs.

Zollos: This former port city thrived on vast nets filled with fish. During the Great Devastation, dark ash filled the city's harbor, leaving the city land-locked. The city's verdant and tasteful crops fill the old harbor and new docks ship its bounty to whoever is willing to pay its exorbitant fees.

PEOPLE

The barbarians of Norcast are a simple people, pulled down from civilization by their bloody worship. Where once intelligence and craftsmanship was beloved, now the people of Norcast are petty and grasping, always attempting to stay one step ahead of the sacrificial knife.

Cannibalism is rampant among the less successful members of society, and the successful enslave those beneath them. There are no Norcast nobles - an individual has what he can keep with word or deed.

RELIGION

Worship of the kraken is not only encouraged, it demands it. Any sign of worship of Hameru, the Twelve or any of the great jinn lords is punishable not only by the death of the offender, but their lineage as well. Powerful prophets and inquisitors devoted to the kraken constantly scour the land for non-believers, encouraging citizens to turn in any individual who does not show proper respect and reverence for the bloodstained kraken.

MAGIC

The kraken grants its most devout worshippers strange and powerful abilities. While most of these abilities require bloody sacrifices to manifest, they all have the side effect of flushing the nearby area with life - whether causing lush vegetation to grow or voracious beetles or other

carnivorous creatures to emerge from the very earth around the caster.

Likewise, several bloodlines of individuals who claim to be "kraken-touched" display sorcerous powers mimicking the devout worshippers of the kraken. However, unlike the priests of the kraken, these sorcerers do not need to invoke bloody sacrifices to utilize their power - though spilling blood seems to strengthen the magic.

ADVENTURING

A good number of Norcast's populace is rogues or criminals of some sort. They are always looking for some means to an easy profit. Some profit in helping individuals fulfill their desires, while others profit by stealing success from others.

Raiders thrive in Norcast and they will accept any individual of skill who desires to join their ranks.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

Day of the Kraken: This month-long festival marks the month of Meris and the Feast of Emperors as the beginning of the Norcast year. The festival consists of consuming great banquets, performing human sacrifice and blood-shedding tournaments. Arena sports are the most popular activity throughout this time.



CRIMSON EMPIRE

THE PAERAHIM

The Realm of Trumpets, the Land of Ivory

Capital: Phaeros

Government: Plutocracy

Leader: The Twelve Titans (see Government)

Population: anhiyawen (non-Paerahim) (20%), anhiyawen (Paerahim) (75%) sa'heer-jinn (<1%), human (<1%), mageborn (<1%), orkan (<1%), titanborn (<1%)



OVERVIEW

Paerahim is a sea of grass interrupted by opulent tents that are home to the roving caravans of the Paerahim – enormous, elephant-like anhiyawen. Others know the Paerahim far and wide as exotic merchants, powerful sorcerers and tenacious warriors.

HISTORY

Following the destruction of Eth'Authuram, one of the Demon Lords of Durathast – Hati Raja - began to doubt the wisdom of continuing the war against Eth'Authuram. When unable to convince the other lords of Durathast to cease the Last War, the Hati Raja seceded from the greater empire.

Unfortunately, the other Demon Lords did not take kindly to the attempt to secede and sent troops to bring Hati Raja before them for punishment, and reclaim his lands. While the Demon Lords were able to confront and kill Hati Raja, it proved impossible to reabsorb the lands of his people.

Bereft of their leader, the Paerahim continued to oppose the Demon Lords of Durathast and established a realm under the guidance of the various great merchant families. The Paerahim even went so far as to open trade with the surviving coastal cities of Eth'Authuram and Axatheum, while still trading with the various cities of Durathast.

ALLIES/ENEMIES

The Paerahim despise the pirates of Axatheum and wage a sporadic war against raiders sent from Haadarast to steal the aether-laden jewels and handcrafted merchandise of the various Paerahim tribes.

LAND

The Unending Plains: Flattened and kept fertile by the primal magic of the Paerahim themselves, these crop-laced plains look like vast, wild wheat fields that are only occasionally interrupted by sculptured variances in the terrain and carefully tended contemplative gardens.

PLACES OF WONDER

The Burial Grounds: Originally, the Paerahim buried Hati Raja in this isolated valley after his sacrifice. It has since become a series of burial mounds and graveyards for the honored dead of this land. A secret place is heavily guarded and trapped.

GOVERNMENT

Hati Raja in part rebelled against the other Demon Lords for he found enlightenment in Hameru's original laws of civilization. Thus, the Paerahim have largely emulated our laws and customs, with some pagan modifications.

The Hati bloodline rules the Paerahim, dispensing political offices to cousins and other relatives of the original bloodline. Those of sorcerous power hold each of these great offices - unique among all the anhiyawen. This structure extends down to the division of the land of the Paerahim into twelve districts - five of which encompass the city of Paerhoon itself.

There are currently twelve rulers of this land, known colloquially as the Twelve Titans. The four titans of the cardinal directions hold and defend Paerahim's borders. They are Senajit (Tiger of the North), Vipra (Thunder of the East), Dharma (Fog of the West), and Sahadeva (Sea of the South). Each of the four titans has an army of Paerahim at their disposal to carry out their duties.

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The three titans of the plains control and monitor the remainder (and majority) of the vast unending plains. They are Jaswal (Wind of the plains), Rupinjaya (Moon of the plains) and Ajaka (Sun of the plains).

The titan of the coast, currently Subhala, is the overall lord of the city of Paerhoon, and the remaining four administrative sectors of the city (2nd through 5th districts). These four are Niramitra (Paerhoon 2nd district), Srutasrava (Paerhoon 3rd district), Dridhasena (Paerhoon 4th district) and Ayutayus (Paerhoon 5th district).

Beneath the district level, each of the Hati line fills in any additional political positions with individuals nominated by the locals - sometimes a position may have several individuals nominated to fill it. Upon accepting the nomination, the district level Hati fills the position for one year. An individual can renew their nomination for office for the first five years in a similar manner. After the fifth year, the Hati then serves in five-year terms if they continue to hold the position.

CITIES

There are many semi-permanent tent-based communities across the Paerahim. Larger communities have established a central communal building of stone engraved on the outside with the laws of civilization.

Paerhoon: Axatheus originally established this port city to trade with the nomadic tribes of the Paerahim. Thus, Axatheus merchants erected most of the initial buildings in Paerhoon. Most of the Paerahim buildings are semi-permanent yurts, and the population fluctuates wildly as the various tribes mull about to trade and then depart back into the wilderness.

PEOPLE

The Paerahim are a breed of anhiyawen that resemble a cross between an elephant and a rhino. They can be both wise and sage-like or vengeful and warlike. Of all the races of the anhiyawen, they are the least nomadic, controlling vast stretches of civilized lands from their semi-permanent cities made of wood and crude stone.

Beside the Paerahim themselves, there are many human and anhiyawen visitors from the surrounding lands trading and visiting in the nation. The Paerahim do not allow non-Paerahim to establish permanent residences in the

land, nor can they attain citizenship. The Paerahim tend to be suspicious about any outsider who has remained in their realm for more than six months at a time and have been known to expel individuals they learn have remained in their kingdom for a year or more.

RELIGION

The Paerahim worship civilization itself. They are extremely fond of logic and the enlightenment that results from its pursuit. Paerahim produce a great number of gurus, and have surprisingly few shamans, oracles or prophets for a civilized race.

MAGIC

The Paerahim are extremely unusual in that they are among the only known anhiyawen who regularly produce sorcerous offspring. There are even reports of mageborn Paerahim, though no true evidence exists to prove such a blasphemy.

ADVENTURING

Despite the nurturing magic of the Paerahim, the wild grasslands are home to many wandering anhiyawen from the Savage Tribes. Likewise, Durathast looks for any opportunity to move against, retake the verdant lands, and throw down the Paerahim.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

Hati's Day: Held Xathis 13th, this day is a celebration of Hati Raja's birth, life and death all rolled into one. It is a day of reflection, filled with introspection and the burning of incense. Celebrants sing wordless tunes in his memory and exotic community dinners are prepared in the evening. The day ends quietly and suddenly; as darkness falls upon the land, citizens extinguish all light in the community until the next dawn.



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THE SAVAGE TRIBES

The Uprooted Lands

Capital: None

Government: Various Tribes

Leader: Various Chieftains

Population: Anhiyawen (90%), Draemani (<1%), Tyres Haul (2%), Dwarf (1%), Kazin shazira (3%), Jinn (1%) Nomi (<1%), Hellchilde (<1%), Human (2%), Mageborn (<1%), Titanborn (<1%)



OVERVIEW

The Savage Tribes are various uncivilized races; most rank just above animals, but just below humans. The most dangerous of the savage tribes are the goblins, creatures filled with base hatreds and fears, preying on all other races they encounter. The savage tribes are composed of animals that gained sentience due to their association with jinn races (initially as pets).

HISTORY

The Savage Tribes was a wilderness that covered the entire continent of Aurtheum and Durathast in ancient days. In that time mere animals and jinn spirits at best, inhabited it.

When Hameru established the city of Asul, the jinn took notice and began copying his children, creating the first of the anhiyawen races. The jinn, as capricious and fleeting as ever, left the anhiyawen to their own devices.

As the fledgling empire of Eth'Authuram spread, it pushed the wilderness further and further back. It was not until after the Kazin wars, however, that the anhiyawen began to organize into the rival nation of Durathast. Those anhiyawen who continued to reject civilization retreated further back into the wild lands known as the Undending Woods, the Wild Wastes, The Watered Wastes, the Plains of War and the nearby isles.

As time has continued to pass, the lands of the Savage Tribes has fluctuated, though the wild lands have overall been shrinking in the face of expanding civilization.

ALLIES/ENEMIES

Though the Savage Tribes are not universally organized and more often war among themselves more so than with outside entities, there are constant border skirmishes with Durathast and occasionally the Paerahim.

Occasional coastal raids occur against Axatheum, Misrador and Eth'Authuram, but these hit-and-run raids rarely have a lasting effect except to produce reprisal retaliatory strikes against the Savage Tribes. These retaliatory strikes seek to eliminate and/or enslave the offenders and their supporters.

Of all the nations, the various tribes fear Haadarast the most. Though it is uncommon, Haadarast occasionally sends ships to the lands of the Savage Tribes hunting for anhiyawen to capture for their sacrifices or enslave to repopulate the hunting grounds of the Greenbacks. Their greatest opposition comes from the semi-organized Wolf Clans of the Wolves Teeth, who not only protect their own lands, but also actively prowl the seas to engage and sink Haadarast raider galleys that they encounter.

LAND

The Blessed Isle: White plaster cities controlled by the Leonine dominate this scrub-filled island. Despite this odd token of civilization, the remaining feline anhiyawen tribes that erect their tents on this island are relatively passive and content to live their simple lives seasonally farming small gardens and hunting the native wild boar population.

The Dark Gap: This narrow stretch of forest winds between the Reaper and Shadow Mountains. It allows seasonally migrating anhiyawen tribes to pass between the Wild Wastes and the Plains of War. The thick forest has a dark reputation as it has many places that are excellent for ambushing travelers – and Falcon Clan members use the pass for seeking raw bodies, mutant raiders from the Shadow Mountains, slavers from Haadarast or simply by tribes from the Plains of War looking to ambush enemy tribes.

Hatheros: This arctic grassland is home to tribes of seal anhiyawen, who favor riding elk. They survive by fishing and hunting small whales or foraging the summer plains for wild berries.

The Green Mountains: These heavily forested, low temperate mountains are well-watered and various underwater springs boil through cracks

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in the ground and run down to feed the watered wastes. A host of nomadic raven, deer and goat anhiyawen traverse the lands between the Watered Waste and the Green Mountains.

The Lost Plain: This perpetual sea of grass is the remnant of ancient deforestation by Savathuram. Once covered with small towns that owed their allegiance to Eth'Authuram, the land is slowly returning to wilderness. Most anhiyawen tribes avoided it and it has become infested with various swarms of rodents and other vermin whose voracious consumption of tree seedlings has prevented the Unending Woods from reclaiming the plains.

Plains of War: These wild grasslands are home to a host of a wide variety of anhiyawen tribes. The area gains its name for the number of intra-tribe skirmishes that seem to crisscross the land, sometimes spilling into nearby realms or across the seas.

Reaper Mountains: These black, soil-rich mountains are dotted with dense woods. While the mountains are home to many anhiyawen tribes, the most notable is the ferocious Falcon Clan – from which the mountains have gained their name and dark reputation. The necromancers of the Falcon Clan despise intrusion into their lands, and make gruesome examples of those that trespass upon their land. Furthermore, the Falcon Clan consists of powerful martial artists, who use their necromantic lore to deliver deadly blows to critical areas of their foe's body.

Red Mountains: These mountains gained their name from the large red clay content in many of the mountains exposed surfaces, which makes these sharp peaks appear like jagged, bloodied teeth. Strange and dangerous beasts fill the Red Mountains. Capricious jinn created the creatures as a means to unseat the nearby inhabitants of Thyventhos.

The Red Woods: Trees with dark, reddish trunks dominate this thick forest. Like the Red Mountains, strange and dangerous beasts infest the Red Woods and resist attempts at lumbering or civilizing the areas.

Shadow Mountains: These sharp, tall mountains echo with strange birdcalls and reclusive, mutated and disfigured anhiyawen. There are tales of a strange green, glowing mineral found throughout the heavily forested mountains that causes these bizarre deformities, but likewise grants those near it strange and marvelous magical powers.

The Sliver: Treacherous terrain covers these forested mountains located south of the Way of

Wooded Death. A bevy of wild and predatory beasts also permeates this area. Likewise, undead cast out of Savathuram infest caverns and abandoned buildings within the mountains. These beings rebelled against their Queen's directive to slay every living being and instead enslaved the local savage anhiyawen to serve their dark desires to conquer and rule.

Tall Mountains: These mighty mountains are difficult to navigate and inhabited only by the most brutal and hardy anhiyawen tribes. There are numerous individual anhiyawen of giant proportions amid the mountains, leading to tales of these anhiyawen having the blood of Hrothra's giants in their veins.

The Watered Wastes: These green, rolling lands are dotted with streams and ponds. Small anhiyawen nomadic tribes inhabit the plains, as well as a few nomadic human tribes that survived the aftermath of the Great Cataclysm.

The Way of Wooded Death: This rapidly regenerating forest east of the city of Belios resists attempts to cull its strange woods. Undead from Savathuram infest the area and certain areas seem to be a staging ground for attacks from Savathuram into Durathast itself.

The Wild Wastes: This vast expanse of rolling grassy fields is occasionally dotted with clumps of overgrown trees. There are occasional true hills spread through the area, as well as ancient burial/worship mounds. The anhiyawen that roam this expanse are generally peaceful, but occasionally organize raids against civilized incursions into these plains.

The Wolf's Teeth: These terraced mountains are the exclusive home of the vast Wolf Clans, who have transformed the mountains into a fortress against intrusion. The Wolf Clans have eradicated all other anhiyawen tribes in the mountains and surrounding foothills. While still only consisting of clans of hunter-gatherers, their might and skill has proven a match for the likes of Haadarast and even the armada of Misrador, both of which they have repelled in the past.

Unending Woods: This wild wood is home to capricious jinn known as goblins. These dark creatures relish torturing and teasing those who fall into their grasp, whether they are human or anhiyawen. Despite the goblin presence, a few tribes of anhiyawen make their home in the massive woods, often dwelling in the treetops and out of the sight of most of the goblins that tread the forest floor.

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PLACES OF WONDER

The All Totem: At the foot of where the Plains of War touch the Dark Gap stands a foreboding painted wooden totem pole displaying a head for each surviving anhiyawen clan in the Plains. The totems reputedly adds and removes heads as clans form or die off, and warring tribes consult it to determine if survivors of enemy clans still exist.

Fang Rock: The seat of power of the Wolf Clans in the Wolves' Teeth Mountains, the engraved visages of prominent Wolf Clan anhiyawen covers the surface of the mountain. Many of the carvings have manifested spiritual totemist power after the passing of the individual and the growth of their legend. Pilgrims from across the clans come to the feet of these visages to plead for assistance or to revere significant ancestors.

The Great Library: Deep within the white plaster palace of the Leonine Clan, this gold-domed building contains many underground rooms storing scrolls of anhiyawen genealogies from across the Savage Tribes. Leonine scribes work in the upper reaches diligently divining and charting each birth and death among the anhiyawen tribes. In addition, by the use of magical means, they pen biographies and histories of the various members of the anhiyawen race.

GOVERNMENT

There is no central government among the Savage Tribes. However, the individual tribes tend to have a patriarchal or matriarchal organization, with the eldest and most respected member of the various families acting as a mediator for any disputes among the tribe.

Some warlords lead tribes with real or threatened violence. These tribes tend to be short-lived, rarely outlasting the current leader – the death of whom tends to lead to duels for succession and splintering into smaller groups or simply disbanding. Anhiyawen evolved from predatory creatures are

more likely than other anhiyawen stock to produce such tribes.

The three most organized tribes of the Savage Tribes that has survived multiple generations are the enlightened leonine clan of the Blessed Isle, the tyrannical lord of the Wolf Clans in the Wolves Teeth and the esoteric lords of the Falcon Clan in the Reaper Mountains.

The Leonine Clan leads a peaceful life of contemplation and enlightenment on Blest Isle. Their peaceful existence has attracted numerous other tribes to share in their ascetic lifestyle.

The threat of outside interference holds the Wolf Clans together.

Pacts of loyalty and threats of ex-communication from their homeland further enforce the bonds between clans. The Jagged Eye wolf clan currently is the ruling force, and has held undisputed control for the last eighty years – having led a bloody coup against the former wolf clan that held power.

The Falcon Clan is an oligarchy of several lesser falcon anhiyawen clans bound together by a desire to control and master necromantic magic. Lesser clans consist of owl, sparrow and parrot folk whom round out the composition of the Falcon Clan. However, ruling oligarchy allows only true necromancers of falcon stock into its ranks. At the same time, the various martial schools of the Falcon Clan allow for masters of non-falcon stock, though these positions hold little power.

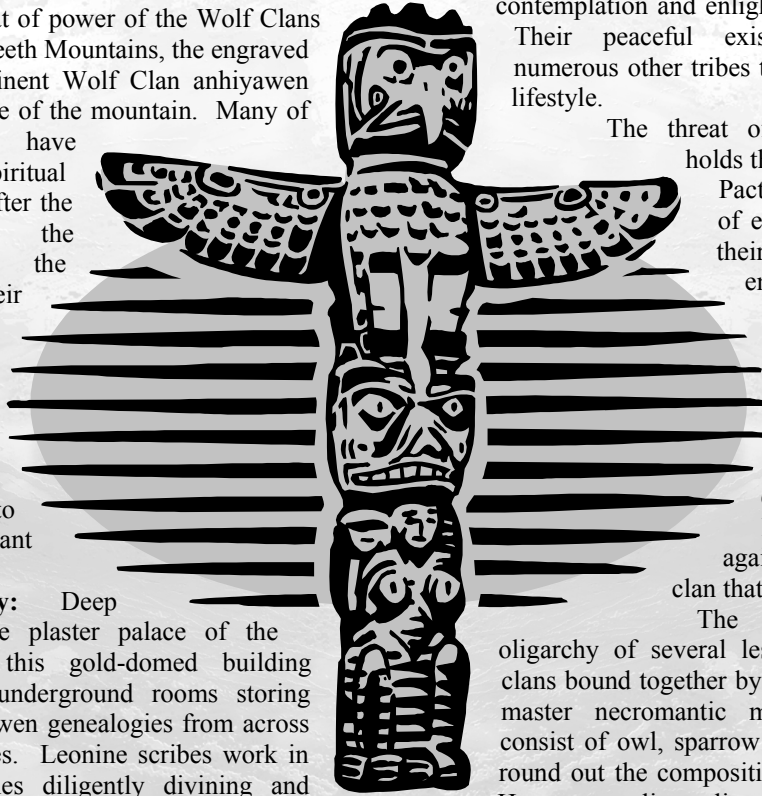
CITIES


The lack of permanent settlements demarks the expanse of the Savage Tribes, with the exclusion of the white plaster palaces of the Leonine Clans and the defensive reaches of the Wolf Clans.

Most tribes are nomadic, with only a few clans settling into semi-permanent locations – usually tents with areas of seasonal crops.

PEOPLE

The lands of the Savage Tribes are composed mainly of unaligned nomadic tribes of various breeds of feral anhiyawen. Most tribes derive





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from a single animal stock, but there are notable tribes of intermixed “species” throughout the land.

Most anhiyawen of the Savage Tribes despise their civilized cousins in other lands such as Durathast, seeing them as weak and/or corrupt. The anhiyawen reserve their greatest contempt for humans and the civilization we represent. These savages usually murder any humans they meet out of sheer mistrust and fear we may destroy their way of life.

RELIGION

The anhiyawen of the Savage Tribes are generally shamanistic or druidic in nature. They revere the untamed wilderness and many tribes turn to the spirits of their ancestors for guidance - and aid in times of trouble.

The anhiyawen universally despise Hameru and the Twelve as tyrants and dictators, not the bringers of civilization and culture we know them to be. Those foreign anhiyawen traveling to this land found practicing reverence for our father or his children are usually “put in their place” and even executed if they do not turn from their “corrupt ways”. Death awaits humans found revering these individuals openly.

MAGIC

The Savage Tribes derive most of their magic from sources in nature or from their jinni creators. Some exhibit shamanistic practices calling upon the spirits of ancestors or the animals of the wild. Wizardry is a very rare and foreign form of magic among the natives, and sorcery is unheard of.

ADVENTURING

The wilderness of the Savage Tribes provides many opportunities for exploration, conquest or exploitation of natural resources.

Non-humans can find employ in the various tribal wars as either aggressors or defenders.

Merchants to these lands are very rare, but the merchants of Verdeep and the Paerahim have proven that, with caution, these occupations can be undertaken for there are tribes willing and needful enough to barter or trade for goods.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

While uniformly recognized holidays and festivals do not exist in this land, most tribes celebrate the changing of the seasons in some way. Most have their own celebratory observances – often based on the tribe’s founding or a successful or pivotal event in the tribe’s history.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

THE SETTLED LANDS

The Fair Lands, Land of the Siren's Call

Capital: Iglevich

Government: Bureaucracy

Leader: Sir Regin of Iglevich

Population: Anhiyawen (Canine) 90%, Anhiyawen (other) 8%, Hellchilde (<1%), Sa'heer-jinn (<1%), Human 1%, Orkan (<1%)



OVERVIEW

These lands of canine stock anhiyawen carved itself out of the Savage Tribes at the behest of E'Lendon. Now a growing sea power, the Settled Lands is slowly expanding and civilizing the lands around it as it establishes trade with human-dominated Misrador.

HISTORY

Shortly after Hameru's visit to E'Lendon, the lord of E'Lendon looked across the sea and became aware of the many savage tribes on the nearby mainland.

Stretching forth her senses, she contacted the wild anhiyawen of what are now the Settled Lands and filled their savage minds with the lessons of civilization she herself had learned from Hameru.

With this new gift, the anhiyawen began to organize and develop the lands around them. By the time Hameru had fled Mythos and settled in Misrador, the greatest of the canine tribes, the Kanuak, had established a small city. They heeded E'Lendon's call to aid Hameru in Misrador, sending many vessels to defend the land.

Likewise, the Kanuak discovered the native Usagi of Misrador and with E'Lendon aid, they

uplifted the wild anhiyawen into faithful servants and warriors to defend their native Misrador.

In the ensuing sea battles against Haadarast, the alliance crushed the enemy fleet. With a new, burgeoning civilized society, the Kanuak established a sea-going empire and began to work on civilizing the lands around its first and foremost of cities, Iglevich.

For centuries, the Settled Lands and Misrador continued to work together and trade with one another. While Misrador stretched out to create colonies in north Axatheus, the Kanuaks primarily remained in nearby waters, strengthening their control of the Settled Lands and only expanding slowly, but deliberately.

Of late, the Settled Lands have been concentrating expanding into the east, slowly advancing against the wilderness there and terraforming the land as they go to suit their own needs.

ALLIES/ENEMIES

Since the time of the war with the Haadarast, the settled lands and the residents of Misrador have openly traded goods and ideas between the two lands.

Likewise, Haadarast continues to be a bane to the shipping lanes between Misrador and the settled lands.

Finally, the Settled Lands must constantly deal with savage anhiyawen from the Savage Tribes. Many of the wild anhiyawen resent the civilized, almost human qualities of the Kanuak and raid the borderlands to prevent the settled lands from spreading south.


So far, there has been no direct contact with the settled lands and Durathast, though the two are vaguely aware of each other's existence.

LAND

The Settled Lands: The Kanuak have not only cleared large tracts of lands for their own use, they have used both manual and magical means to shape the very land for their use – flattening hills, raising valleys, redirecting rivers and eradicating or fashioning lakes and ponds as needed. This has created a gridded, terraced landscape that stretch for miles on end. Mundane and magical methods are used to maintain these areas – including keeping the weather fair and pleasant.

PLACES OF WONDER

The Fisherman: This unusual quay in the port city of Iglevich traps the fish of the bay and forces



CRIMSON EMPIRE

them up onto the decorated tile of the shore. In the morning and evenings, long lines of citizens form to take their fill of the day's catch before moving on with their daily duties or retire home for the evening.

GOVERNMENT

Out of the many canine breeds, the Kanuak hold the highest places of power and nobility.

A governor, elected by the noble council for a term of five years, heads the government. The Governor is primarily an arbitrator, though he or she has the ability to organize and direct the national army in times of crisis.

Each of the noble families upon the council controls a section of the Settled Lands directly, overseeing the wealth and well-being of the serfs beneath them. Each noble can also boast of a militia-level force to enforce the law.

Additional noble merchant families control the trading costers that ply the sea and land routes throughout the empire. However, being generally landless, these nobles wield less power and influence than their landed kindred do.

CITIES

There are numerous small rural communities scattered across the Settled Lands. Each is a hub for the multiple farmers who work the surrounding crops that support the community. Each community itself produces some good or trade for use across the realm. There is very little overlap between different community's manufactured goods or skills practiced in each region. A myriad of methods punish those practicing a trade or manufacturing an item in the wrong community. These punishments range from fines, imprisonment or even exile, depending on the severity of the infraction.

Iglevich: This bronze-roofed capital is the premier trading port of the Kanuak settled lands. The opulence of its painted buildings rivals the cities found in Axatheus and Eth'Authuram. Stone pylons sunken into the nearby sea allowed the city to build outward into the bay. This allowed for a larger than normal port area for loading and unloading goods.

PEOPLE

The Kanuaks are a breed of anhiyawen that control the area known as the Settled Lands. The Kanuaks resemble various breeds of canine and unlike most anhiyawen that tend to prefer the company of those who closely resemble each other, the "breeds" mix and live together freely. They have settled into small cantons from which they operate

large farms, and even have taken up sea-borne trade to the neighboring areas; so far, however, trade to Axatheus has proven too treacherous to maintain at more than a haphazard scale.

RELIGION

The anhiyawen of the Settled Lands revere Hameru, and respect both the children of Eth'Authuram and Misrador. The nobles of the Settled Land have outlawed the worship of the Kraken, and they tend to look down upon other anhiyawen who practice shamanism as backward or inferior.

MAGIC

The Settled Lands embrace of civilization has surprisingly sparked the appearance of sorcerers among the ranks of the Kanuak. There are also several wizard schools found across the land, and many nobles receive private tutoring in the ways of magic.

After dealing with the likes of the Cult of the Kraken, the government outlawed pact magic and its ilk, and inquisitors prowl the lands to ensure that no one practices such magic in the realm.

ADVENTURING

While outwardly the Settled Lands presents a calm and safe veneer, there is much political maneuvering and manipulation among the nobility.

Likewise, the common populace often finds itself in need of a strong arm to keep the rabble in line or to keep savage anhiyawen from disrupting the lives of its citizens.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

Keel Day: In the Settled Lands, the Feast of Emperors is instead a day that celebrates the sinking of the great Haadarast fleet by the cannon-borne ships of the empire.

The Call: On Meris 1st, the Settled Lands celebrate the founding of their realm (even though the actual founding day was in the month of Dis) and the start of a new year. On this day, residents come together to erect homes for new families and celebrate the coming of spring.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

SAVATHURAM

The Land of Unquiet Death, the Desert of the Dead

Capital: Savathius

Government: Undead Tyranny

Leader: Queen Savas Thyvena

Population: Anhiyawen (<1%), Hellchilde (<1%), Human (8%), Mageborn (<1%), Undead (80%)



OVERVIEW

Savathuram was once one of the most far-flung cities of the Eth'Authuram Empire. However, during the Last War, the forces of Durathast isolated the city from Eth'Authuram and the Great Devastation laid waste to the lands and city. It has become a land held by vampires and ruled by a great ghul – the ghul believed to be the former sorcerous ruler of the city of Savathuram.

HISTORY

Savathuram was once part of the empire of Eth'Authuram. Ava, wife of Thyvena, founded the city and named it Avathuros.

Durathast besieged the city of Avathuros early in the Last War, but with the direct support of Thyvena himself, the city managed to hold out against the Demon Lords of Durathast.

However, when Urea invoked the Great Devastation, the city was doomed without the direct protection of one of the twelve children of Hameru. Ava, with her vast knowledge of magic did her best to stave off the doom, but it was not enough. The

Great Devastation shorn the souls of the city's inhabitants from their shells, and as in the rest of Eth'Authuram, the land was stripped and battered to dust.

Yet Ava's magic was strong enough that slowly, over many years, the souls of the city's inhabitants filtered back to the blasted city. Returned to bodies ravaged and blasted by magic winds, the dead of Avathuros returned to life. Moreover, they hungered in a land blasted to sand.

Even Ava herself returned to life, trapped in a sand-blasted husk. Her rage and her hunger were vast, and she slaked both on any being foolish enough to wander into the wastes and across her or her people's path. When she learned that Eth'Authuram had survived where her own life ended, her rage turned to cunning madness.

Renaming the fallen city to Savathuram and taking up the name of Savas, she sent envoys to far Eth'Authuram to lure its inhabitants into her clutches.

Savas slew and drank the vitae of many of the first to arrive, to appease her unnatural thirst. However, as time passed, Savas began to spare some of those who arrived at the blasted city, making foul pacts to spread her undead kindred westward into the heart of the empire.

Savas's plans would have gone unchecked had not Caliph Batharas of Hek'Tesa traced the undead savaging his land back to the ghul queen Savas herself.

Thus warned, the emigration of Eth'Authuram citizens to the fabled golden shores of Savathuram slowed. Heroes stopped and burned the black ships from her land before their hideous cargo could be unloaded into our lands.

Checked, but not stopped, Savas silently continues her plots against the empire to make the living slaves to her dark desires.

ALLIES/ENEMIES


Savathuram has vocally declared itself an enemy of Eth'Authuram, Axatheum, Thyventhos and Durathast, swearing it will not rest until it has slain each nation's inhabitants.

The undead of Savathuram have worked with Norcast raiders against the empire, but just as often Norcast allies fall prey to the undead's unholly appetites.

Though Savathuram has not openly declared itself hostile to other lands, it greedily feeds on all life it encounters.

LAND

The Dead Wastes: The magic of the Great Devastation scoured all life and nutrients from



CRIMSON EMPIRE

the desert dunes of Savathuram, creating a wasteland where even the rare oasis is nothing more than a brackish pool of fouled water. Amazingly, sandling creatures wander the wastes, fueled by arcane and magical means.

PLACES OF WONDER

The Ruby Tower: Once, this structure was part of the palatial noble palace of the city of Avathuros. It gains its name from the ruby onion dome that tops this lone alabaster tower. It is the home of the sorcerous lich Queen Savas Thyvena, who uses the tower as her gruesome feeding ground and experimentation lab.

GOVERNMENT

Queen Savas rules Savathuram with an iron fist, directing vast undead hordes far and near to do her bidding. She primarily involves herself in various nefarious plots to bring doom to the living and to subvert the other nations to fall to her necromantic wiles.

Underneath her are several "noble" families of vampires, formed from the original aristocracy. Though these vampires answer to Queen Savas's plots, they are otherwise free to follow their own aims - often engaging in political maneuver against other noble families to acquire feeding stock for their own macabre purposes, whilst likewise limiting or stealing the stock of other nobles.

CITIES

Beyond Savathuram, there are a few villages whose remains have been swallowed the Great Devastation that are now the haunts of ghosts, sandy zombies and other undead abominations.

Ruins of Avathuros: This once noble city has crumbled and been half-lost in the shifting sands. Piles skulls replace the river stone sections of the outer wall. Femurs and other bones line the tops of several rebuilt towers. Distant wails echo through the wind-swept streets and most building entrances show signs of clawed hands digging away the encroaching sand. Shadowy, shuffling shapes slip through the darkened alleys by day and dart through the cramped streets by night. Dried husks shuffle through the sun-scorched streets, ready to devour passer-bys.

PEOPLE

The undead spirits of those slain in the Great Devastation and the spirits of subsequent victims haunt the streets and sand-choked structures of Savathuram. An unusual bond connects them to the

Lich Queen, granting the undead empathy to her desires and likewise informing her of the undead's status.

The city of Savathuram is primarily a home to plagues of vampires, wandering ghosts and flesh-craving ghouls. In the deeper deserts, mummified zombies and necromantic animated skeletons scour the landscape for victims to bring to the capital.

RELIGION

The intelligent undead of Savathuram have divested themselves of religion and instead pursue all means to prolong their life. Some have made unholy pacts with demons to ensure they fall out of the karmic cycle upon their mortal destruction and ensure their continuance in the Fell Realms.

MAGIC

There are many sorcerous undead in the ranks of the vampire nobles of Savathuram. While necromancy is popular in the realm, curiously the corpses of Savathuram laughingly dismiss and berate the blood magic practiced by worshippers of the Kraken.

ADVENTURING

Many nations have placed large bounties on the destruction of the various undead creatures in Savathuram. Likewise, a large number of treasure seekers have dared to enter the realm, seeking out lost treasures hidden away in the sandy wastes or even hidden in the capital itself. Most such seekers have short lives, and disappear after extended outings into the city.

On the other hand, the undead nobles of Savathuram have corrupted more than a few and bound them into service to deliver their kind to far away realms to spread their disease and destruction. Many of those pathetic beings who willfully engage in such activity seek the "blessing" of longevity, despite the damning of their own souls.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

None.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

STURMBERG

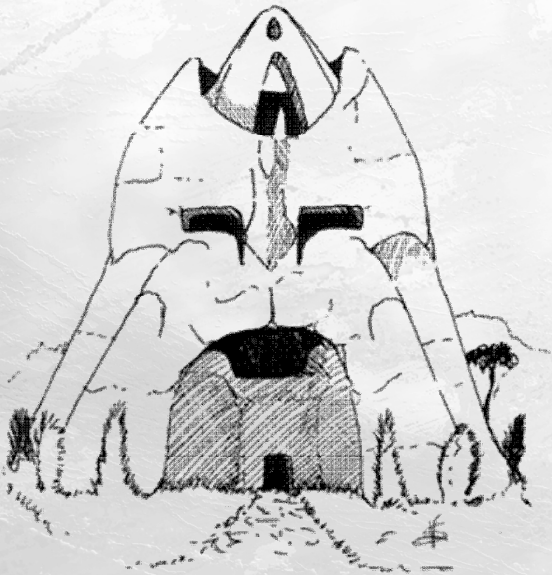
Jewel of the North, the Land of Giants

Capital: Hellstorne

Government: Monarchy

Leader: Jarl Hrotha XIII and the Council of Crafts

Population: Dwarf (32%), Giant (55%), Nomi (<1%), Hellchilde (Giant) (<1%), Human (8%), Mageborn (<1%), Titanborn (5%)



OVERVIEW

This land is the original home of the dwarves, and the font of their creation.

HISTORY

During the kazin wars, Axatha Hameru and Urta Hameru met in the Hellstorm Mountains to plan a strategy against the might of the kazin shazira and their jinn overlords. After twenty days of contemplation and experimentation, the two fashioned the first of the kazin ad'hudjar – the dwarves – to aid in the war against the kazin shazira.

For nearly a hundred years, the furnaces beneath Hellstorne blazed as armies of dwarves were fashioned to battle the kazin shazira. Then, as suddenly as the war had begun, it ended – and the furnaces went cold.

Suddenly finding themselves without a purpose, the dwarves turned against those who created them and seized the furnaces of Hellstorne for themselves. The dwarves once again lit the fires of the great furnaces to continue to perpetuate their

race and began to look for a new way to fit into the world around them.

While Sturmberg was the home of dwarven creation, many dwarves decided to remain in the Grimjaw Mountains in the fortress of Jormangdar, where they were sure that the war with the kazin shazira would once again blow hot.

Within a hundred years, a great schism erupted among the dwarves and the new nation split. Those dwarves who could not put aside their martial ways fell under the sway of the Jormangdar general-turned-king in the west.

Those dwarves who turned their skill to crafting and other pursuits remained behind in Sturmberg – along with a handful of warriors to defend the realm. Though the far dwarven nation of Jormangdar formed an alliance with the empire of Eth'Authuram, the dwarves of Hellstorne sought independence and forged the realm of Sturmberg.

ALLIES/ENEMIES

Sturmberg remains staunchly neutral in the affairs of the world. They will trade with any nation - Norcast, Durathast, Misrador, Zapathos Forest, The Settled Lands, the Paerahim, Thyventhos, Axatheum or even Eth'Authuram. They have no connection with Haadarast, Alagos, The Savage Tribes or Savathuram and no interest in these far realms.

LAND

Hellstorm Mountains: These ragged, twisting mountains have offered little value to those on the surface, but veins of precious minerals and deep natural caverns lace the mountain interiors. The giants of this land have claimed many of the vast underground caverns, though the dwarves have a networked community stretching for many miles around the furnaces of Hellstorne – reaching from the Fireflow to the canyons of Hedgerow Mountains. The sparse surface communities are a mix of human and titanborn communities, heavily defended against raids from the giants of the deep mountains.

The Fireflow: This rocky desert plain contains several hardened rivers of obsidian. The dwarves continually harvest the tracts of obsidian to fashion new bodies and objects for the nobles for their race. The Fireflow is relatively devoid of sentient life, but has many unusual sandling creatures that wander the wastes.

The Thanes: These boulder-strewn hills are important to the dwarves as a spiritual source of stone for the creation of new dwarven laborers. An ingenious system of rails and mine carts has

CRIMSON EMPIRE

been fashioned by the dwarves to move broken-down boulders from the hills to the furnaces of Hellstorne. The rail system contains several well-defended, redundant paths that protect against acts of sabotage by giants or other beings.

PLACES OF WONDER

The Furnaces of Hellstorne: These massive stone furnaces, powered by flows of magma, are the heart of the dwarven kingdom of Sturmberg. Normally only two of the massive twenty or so furnaces are alit at any time, slowly breathing life into the carved stone frames of new dwarves. Though the furnaces are capable of fashioning scores of new dwarves in a single casting, moreover the supernatural flames and fumes of the great furnaces give existing dwarves their unnaturally long lifespans and great resistance to harm. The dwarves believe that were their furnaces be allowed to grow cold that their entire race would slowly wither and die – returning back to the lifeless stone from which they were made.

GOVERNMENT

Hellstorne is the seat of power for the dwarves of Sturmberg and all power derives from the dwarven king designated as the Keeper of the Flame.

The various crafting clans sit in council with the King of Sturmberg to determine policy for the realm. When replacing the head of clan – a rare occurrence – a new body for the aspiring replacement is fashioned from obsidian from the Fireflow. A magic ritual transfers the applicant's soul from his crude granite body into the new obsidian form.

Each clan has a small body of warriors attached to it to protect their interests and homesteads from outside attacks. In the rare cases of invasions that have occurred in the past, the King can call upon these house guards to form a larger army for the defense of all of Sturmberg.

Overall, the dwarves of Sturmberg are an orderly, tightly organized and well-knit group. The various clans focus on the crafts and skills pertinent to their own projects, but are willing enough to work together to ensure the survival of the whole. However, such networking has its price in the maze of formal laws and procedures meant to protect each clan's niche and secrets – which can produce delays of years, if not centuries for common or trivial projects.

The dwarves of Sturmberg have little care for the surface-dwellers of their realm. As long as they receive an appropriate tithe and these

communities do not raid or otherwise harm the dwarven populace or bow to another realm, the government allows them to rule themselves as they see fit. Most of these human or anhiyawan communities follow the laws and mores of the realm they came from, with the occasional adoption of some of the dwarven laws from nearby dwarven communities.

In comparison, the giants of Sturmberg are organized into simple tribes led by the most belligerent or powerful giant in the group. A leader usually enforces it will by intimidation or force and often these giants rise up and assault nearby non-giant communities for goods or out of spite.

CITIES

Numerous dwarven communities riddle the hills and mountains of Sturmberg. Only the oldest and well established have causeways that lead to the surface realm. All such communities, however, have a system of tunnels or natural caverns that lead to other, larger communities and eventually to Hellstorne itself.

On the surface, there are a few settlements and homesteads near the southwest edge of the Hellstorm Mountains. Human settlers inhabit most of these well-defended settlements. Most are prepared to repulse attacks by giants or dwarven patrols intent on uprooting the "squatters".

Hellstorne: An active volcano is the seat of this city that lies in the mountain's smoldering core. Smoke and ash stream from the mountain's top, and a thin stream of magma flows down the mountain's northern side and into the Fireflow. Grand cavernous galleys lit by pools of magma carve through the depths of the mountain. Dwarves and enslaved giant laborers fill the entire city, with a sprinkling of visiting foreigners. An entire section of the city is set aside for visitors and merchants that are unable to stand the blistering heat of the interior.

PEOPLE

Sturmberg is home to three distinct classes of beings. It is the dwarves who claim to hold and rule Sturmberg, and do so with great zeal and skill. The dwarves of Sturmberg organize themselves into clans according to artisan skills. When a new dwarf is forged, he is given a month to try his hand at a variety of skills until he finds a skill that suits him. At such time, a clan that has mastered the same skill inducts him into its ranks. The dwarf then remains a part of that clan for the remainder of his existence.

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The second major group in Sturmberg is the giants of Hrothra, who dwell in vast caverns beneath the mountains or in clouds above the realm. In contrast to the dwarves, the giants are relatively unorganized and barbaric, lashing out wildly against dwarven incursion or otherwise keeping to their own business. The dwarves and the giants often clash, for their lord Hrothra resents the “theft” of the mountain’s precious minerals by the dwarves.

The last major group consists of former humans and anhiyawen from the empire of Eth’Authuram or beyond. Many were originally traders or miners seeking wealth in the lands of Sturmberg, but found life in the mountainous terrain preferable to the sandy wastes of our empire.

RELIGION

The dwarves of Sturmberg revere Axatha and Urta of the twelve, though they mistakenly cast the two children of Hameru in dwarven form.

The giants and titanborn of Sturmberg obey and worship Hrothra and have dedicated several gem-laden caverns as holy shrines to their lord. The dwarves have created much resentment among the giants by their tunneling and seizing of several of these holy shrines.

Most of the humans dwelling in Sturmberg revere Hameru and the Twelve, though to appease local dwarves may only openly revere Axatha and Urta.

MAGIC

The dwarves of Sturmberg have an entire clan dedicated to the art of wizardry in the name of Urta. However, despite this unusual clan, the majority of dwarves are bereft of the ability to channel magical forces, and quite often – perhaps due their physical makeup – resilient against magical effects. There are no sorcerers, hellchilde or mageborn equivalents among the dwarves, though there are a few rare shamans or oracles among their number.

As such, dwarves sometimes seek out human or anhiyawen mages when they find themselves in need of magical ability. The dwarves pay handsomely for such services, and there are few clans without some sort of spellcaster among its ranks.

The giants and titanborn of Sturmberg practice elemental magic, and their relative closeness to the jinn lord Hrothra makes their magical abilities much stronger in areas where the jinn lord’s precious minerals can be found.

ADVENTURING

The dwarves of Sturmberg are insular, but lack the martial forces of Jormangdar. As such, they are in constant need for mercenaries actively seeking out threats to their rule.

Likewise, the dwarves of Sturmberg engage in a great deal of trade with the other nations and foreign merchants are often in need of escorts, dealers and other individuals to assist in the buying and selling of goods within the land or beyond. It should be noted that the dwarves of Sturmberg themselves rarely leave their own lands and require buyers to come to them, so it is rare that outsiders are required or wanted into the dwarven side of affairs.

Dwarves operate the majority of mines in Sturmberg, but there are a few independent operations under the direction of other races searching for wealth in the land. These operations need not only defenders, but scouts and traders as well.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

Sturmdae: Held on the Feast of Emperors, his festival celebrates the creation of the dwarven race and the founding of Sturmberg itself. On this day, the dwarves fire up all the furnaces in Hellstorne, in the belief of spreading prosperity and good health to all dwarves across the world. There are likewise many activities and celebrations held across the land, and dwarves engage in gifting each other with hand-worked items of great beauty and value.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

THYVENTHOS

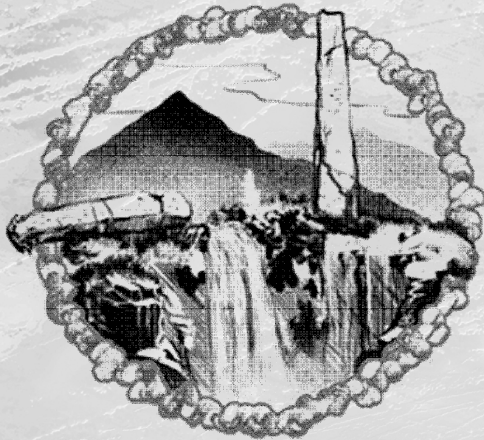
The Golden Palace, Far Eth'Authuram

Capital: Thyventhos

Government: Democracy

Leader: Council of the Free (changes frequently)

Population: Anhiyawen (25%), Tyres Haul (<1%), Dwarf (<1%), Kazin shazira (5%), Hellchilde (2%), Sa'heer-jinn (3%), Human (64%), Mageborn (<1%), Orkan (<1%), Titanborn (<1%)



OVERVIEW

Thyventhos is a far-away city-state, the furthest known settlement in the north no longer held by Eth'Authuram. Once home of the Emperor's Palace, the city has gained autonomy and survived numerous raids by elements of the Savage Tribes. There are rumors that its magic portals to the ancient capital of Asul still exist and select few individuals in Thyventhos use them to visit and trade with the mainland.

HISTORY

During the reign of Empress Jania Ath Hameru VI, a great expedition urged by Urea Hameru traveled to some of the farthest and most exotic lands of the world. In the realm south of Caltheus, the explorers erected a stone henge that allowed magical travel from the capital of Asul to the foreign land. Though Eth'Authuram shortly thereafter recalled the expedition, Urea secretly used the portal for many years afterward to defy the prohibition of travel to the far realms, learned many of the lands strange secrets, and saw many of its bizarre wonders.

During the reign of Emperor Vidaelga Aelsinine Hameru IX, Urea managed to convince the emperor to establish a minor city on the far side of the magical portal. By the time of Emperor Husayen

Thyvena X, the proposed community had grown into a city known as Ureaton. As the war with Durathast began, Emperor Husayen Thyvena ordered a palace built in the city and the capital moved from Asul. In the process, it was renamed Thyventhos.

When the Great Devastation erupted in Eth'Authuram, the royal mages attempted to destroy the portal in the hope they could avoid the calamity from leaking through and devastating the city and destroying the royal lineage dwelling there. Though the portal temporarily shut down successfully, Urea had previously planted assassins in the city of Thyventhos. These assassins snuck into the palace and slaughtered the royal family. Before the assassins could seize power in Urea's name however, the royal guard rallied and ended the assassin's lives. However, the damage was irreparable, as the entire royal lineage had been lost.

Distant and now directionless, the head of the royal guard turned to the remaining heads of the noble families. Unfortunately, the families fell to bickering and infighting in an attempt to seize power, and it threw the city-state into chaos for the next hundred years.

Eventually, the noble houses decimated each other, and into the vacuum of power the common people of Thyventhos rose in revolt and seized power for themselves.

When the empire of Eth'Authuram finally re-established contact with the realm, the common riff-raff who had seized power rebuffed our attempts to reintegrate the far realm. Without the ability to foster a large-scale army to retake the distant realm, Thyventhos began to thrive with the renewed contact with our realm and the nearby realm of Axatheum.

ALLIES/ENEMIES

Thyventhos mistakenly sees us as their enemy. They have rebuffed all attempts to rejoin the Eth'Authuram Empire. Luckily for us, they have also spurned allying with Axatheum, in part due to the Axatheum sponsored corsair raids they regularly suffer on their shipping.

While Thyventhos has been cool towards us, it has an open hatred of Norcast and Alagos, both of which have made several assaults against the city-state. We have offered assistance against future attacks from these nations, but Thyventhos has declined to accept our olive branch in these matters.

Thyventhos has remained cool towards the Durathast and Misrador, and has even set up trade relations with the two nations, receiving foreign ships in their land and on rare occasion venturing out to those distant realms.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

LAND

Gorewood Mountains: These dense, tall and forest-shrouded mountains are the home of many aggressive tusked and horned beasts, from which the mountains draw their name. These hunting grounds feed the exotic appetites of the capital city of Thyventhos itself

The Plains of Plenty: Terramancers forged these lightly rolling, sculpted plains using magic. Over a hundred years ago, forests and mountains existed in place of the current plains. This left little land for developing crops. With the “settling” of the Plains of Plenty, numerous small towns and vast farms have sprung up across the land. Thyventhos has concentrated modifying the terrain towards its west, and has refrained from developing the lands eastward, as something appears to be resisting the terramancer’s magical alterations.

Lake Thyventhos: This deep-bottomed lake rests against the southeast corner of the capital. Trade ships pass from the docks of Thyventhos across the lake and along the wide river through the Gorewood Mountains to reach the Nordic Sea – and vice versa. The lake and river are heavily fortified and defended by the army, and has been sufficient to repel armada attacks from Norcast and Axatheum with equal ease.

PLACES OF WONDER

The Silver Falls: The ancient royal palace in the capital of Thyventhos underwent a peculiar transformation at the tail end of the assassination of the royal lineage. Slaying the last of the royal family tripped some sort of magical defense that resulted in the entire structure and everything within transmuted to silver. Within minutes, a geyser of aqua regia poured from the tallest tower of the palace, and has continued to cover the palace in sheets of flowing water ever since. Recent discoveries reveal that those of noble birth can drink from the water or pass through the sheets of falling water and find themselves rejuvenated and refreshed. All other beings perish in an instant, as if doused in the most deadly and efficient of acids. With Thyventhos rejection and hatred of nobility, the palace has remained uninhabited and unclaimed.

GOVERNMENT

The rulership of Thyventhos is by a mob of common citizens who have loudly elected to their positions by an entourage of supporters. These administrators hold and seize power over whatever they can take by force or coercion. A coup is

possible at any time should a man or a woman achieve enough prominence to do so.


Despite the unorganized state of its political members, the military is quite a different matter. The national army of Thyventhos is comprised of commissioned individuals who serve in terms of three to five years – three for common soldiers and five for officers. The organization of the army is similar to the royal army of Eth’Authuram, following a strict hierarchy of common soldiers at the bottom led by faris officers of increasing rank. At the head of this entire arm is the General of the Army, who answers to no one – least of all, the political body. The army itself determines when and where it will deploy – and has done so to defend Thyventhos borders successfully for several centuries.



CITIES

Only since the Great Devastation have communities begun to spring up in the lands beyond Thyventhos. Each tends to be a walled collection of family buildings, with a central defensive tower or other fortified building for times of trouble. Many community leaders are Earth wizards who also provide for the well-being of surrounding crops and livestock.

Thyventhos: This opulent walled city has vastly expanded beyond its initial hillside enclaves of noble houses and palaces into a rolling, half-planned sprawl of a city. Towering curtain walls divide the city into multiple not only defensible wards, but also likewise are meant to keep rivals family clans separated from each other. Thyventhos southeastern port has remained largely unchanged since before the Great Devastation, though the shores of heavily fortified Lake Thyventhos protects against waterborne attacks.



CRIMSON EMPIRE

PEOPLE

The citizens cast down the caste system of Eth'Authuram and the fazeera caste best describes the remaining citizenry. Thyventhos has not only executed all its former nobility, it refused to recognize such status in those visiting from afar.

Likewise, the government outlawed slavery in the land, and there are stiff penalties for those who attempt to retain slaves or bring slaves to the realm.

RELIGION

While Thyventhians revere Hameru, they do not acknowledge the Twelve or the Twenty-three emperors. Oddly enough, Thyventhians scorn Hek'Tesa as well – perhaps for her role in the overthrow of Hameru. Thyventhians mistakenly believe that Hameru shows no favoritism to the birth order or generation of his children, and instead believe all humans to be equal in his eyes.

However, there has been a growing movement in Thyventhos to turn from the worship of Hameru and switch to an agnostic view, with an emphasis on respecting the natural world around them. This movement has been especially growing among the political leaders of the realm, but opposed by the military. The latter has aggressively removed any individual promoting a subversive view against the worship of Hameru.

MAGIC

Lacking nobility, sorcerers are practically unknown among the ranks of Thyventhians. In fact, evidence of sorcerous ability can induce fear or a mob-like retaliation against one displaying such abilities.

Since the common citizen of Thyventhos cannot differentiate in the subtle difference between pact, blood, elemental and sorcerous magic there are very few practical open practitioners of the art in the realm, with the sole exclusion being perhaps the terramancers and their magical academies in the capital.

ADVENTURING

Thyventhos is a wild land, often beset by raiders or strange beasts, and in need of a strong arm to face such hazards.

However, even Thyventhos own citizens can be a danger, and the political leaders sometimes incite their supporters in a violent clash against other groups for political or selfish gains.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

The Day: Held on Melis 2nd, the nation celebrates this festive day and marks the fall and outcast of the last of Thyventhos nobility. It is a day of merry-making and drinking, during which handfuls of citizens are strangely “elected” as nobles for the day. Others wait hand and foot on these “nobles” and present gifts to the chosen individual in a token of appreciation for their civil services. These elections are as much popularity contests as they are fund-raisers for the poor and needy.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

ZAPATHOS FOREST

Realm of the Kazin shazira, the Waking Woods

Capital: Aeridon

Government: Oligarchy

Leader: Prince Louelathum

Population: Anhiyawen (1%), Kazin shazira (90%), Jinn (5%), Hellchilde (<1%), Sa'heer-jinn (3%), Titanborn (<1%)



OVERVIEW

The Zapathos Forest has become the home of xenophobic wild kazin shazira. Once an enchanted forest whose elvin nobility tied their love of nature with the beauty of natural palaces, it has become overrun with ruins as the wild nature of the kazin shazira has once again come to dominate the verdant forest.

HISTORY

After the empire forced Hameru out, the enemies of Eth'Authuram saw a chance to bring the empire down finally. Gathering their might, the five jinn lords combined their power to give life to the forest known as the Unknown woods and create the kazin shazira as an army to bring down the bickering lords of the empire.

The kazin shazira struck silently and skillfully at first, organized into small raiding parties that left no human alive to warn others of the growing threat. Only when the kazin shazira fully surrounded three cities of Aelsinine, Eilene and Yagda did the kazin shazira reveal their full forces and strike in earnest. Within hours, the entirety of the Zapathos forest raced across the civilized lands of the empire, splitting what is now Coranthius from the rest of the empire and besieging no less than five of the empire's greatest cities.

Unfortunately for the elvin forces, the cities proved impenetrable with Hameru's children present to defend them. Further, the leaders were able to send word to their remaining brethren of their plight.

In response to the elvin threat, the children of Hameru combined their strength in the nearby Grimjaw Mountains and fashioned an army of their own – the kazin ad'hudjar – to face the elvin threat.

The kazin ad'hudjar proved to be adequate to their task, and drove the kazin shazira back into the woods of the Zapathos Forest. However, it proved too difficult for the forces of humanity to drive the kazin shazira from the forest that they had erected, and a stalemate settled on the two lands.

Eventually a peace treaty formed between the expanding empire and the untamed wilderness. The kazin shazira allowed passage between the cities of Umjin and Coranthium in the west and its daughters of Aelsinine and Eilene in the east. Even the city of Yagda began to associate freely with the kazin shazira, becoming a jewel often frequented by elvin nobility until the time of the Great Devastation.

When the Great Devastation struck Eth'Authuram, the heads of the kazin shazira nobility sacrificed their own lives to save the forest from devastation. A great enmity arose from that fateful day and the kazin shazira retreated to their woods and refused to deal with humans thereafter, closing even the ancient roads between Coranthius and Eth'Authuram. To this day, the forest lords remain at arm's length against human intrusion, and the wild kazin shazira that live within the woods have constantly proven they no longer wish to extend the hand of friendship to humanity – whether Norcast, Eth'Authuram or Coranthium.

ALLIES/ENEMIES

The kazin shazira of Zapathos Forest are allies of Far Zabas. There have been rumors that the kazin shazira have aligned themselves with the Demon Lords of Durathast as enemies of Eth'Authuram. However, the kazin shazira nobles of the Zapathos Forest claim neutrality towards their distant spiritual brothers. Unfortunately, we cannot be sure if their northern subjects feel likewise, but we see no evidence of any sort of alliance forged between the two.

LAND

North Zapathos Forest: North of a line drawn between Umjin and Aelsinine, the Zapathos forest is dramatically different. As the forest approaches Jormangdar, the host of trees seems thicker and darker, with the trees growing thick enough to block nearly all light from reaching the forest floor itself. The kazin shazira of this area are feral and more capricious and xenophobic than further south.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

Mid Zapathos Forest: The area of the Zapathos forest between the lines of the cities of Coranthius and Eth'Authuram have had much contact with humanity and it has somewhat cooled interactions with the kazin shazira of this portion of the forest. Trails have been cultivated that allow travelers to travel between the realms of Coranthius and Eth'Authuram. Many of these trails actually have inns along them tended by kazin shazira, and small communities of the children of the jinn exist along the way through the branches and leaves of this beautiful forest.

South Zapathos Forest: South and west as one leaves the cities of Eilene and Yagda the well-tended forest land rises steadily until the entire southeast tip of the forest rises above the sea like a fortress wall. The kazin here have an unusual, noble kinship to the local jinn. Many kazin shazira of this area have a sorcerous bend that matches many of our own most learned sorcerers and mageborn.

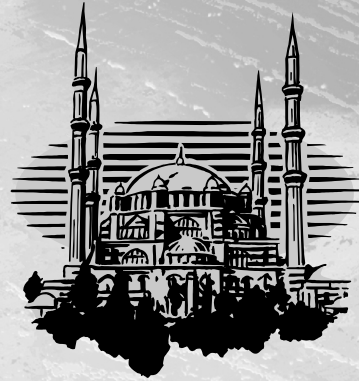
GOVERNMENT

The most ancient of the kazin shazira rule from a great palace in the southern forest. However, the kazin are a race who chafe against tyrants and dictators, so the rulers of this realm only involve themselves in the matters of the realm in a defensive manner.

An arbitrator oversees local communities, and has little power other than resolving disagreements. Officially, no organized body collects taxes, though individuals may combine their resources for any community projects that may need to be undertaken. Likewise, when nobles find themselves in the need of coin, they simply march north and extort what they need - in a variety of amusing ways - from the local citizenry.

CITIES

There are no known major cities in Zapathos forest, though there are many communities dotting the forest realm. In the north, these communities tend to dwell in natural shelters or are nomadic. As one travels southward, the communities become more complex and opulent until one reaches the staggering towers and domes of the southlands.



PEOPLE

This land only accepts the kazin shazira as citizens, though there are many anhiyawen dwelling in and human visitors passing through the realm.

The northern kazin shazira are extremely xenophobic, and disdain even anhiyawen treading upon their lands. The kazin shazira of this area live the simplest of lives, shunning the trappings of civilization.

The mid-realm kazin shazira are perhaps the most tolerant and open, somewhat embracing civilization and its benefits, as well as greeting outsiders warmly. This has caused some friction with northern kazin shazira, to the point that some northerners have begun to tread mid-realmers as corrupt and are willing to dispatch those whom they see as embracing their enemy.

The southern noble kazin shazira are xenophobic like their northern folk, but have completely embraced the self-serving benefits of civilization. Decadent and foppish, they revel in the finery crafted by those beneath them and greedily seek to acquire goods crafted elsewhere - though they only deal with their own kind to acquire said items. The courts of the southerners survive on the backs of their enslaved lesser, many of them are former mid-realm kazin shazira drawn in by the gilded lure of opulence but snubbed for their non-noble birthright.

RELIGION

The kazin shazira revere the Lords of Nature to the exclusion of all else. They are dismissive of those who worship Hameru and his children and do not tolerate the worship of the Kraken within their lands.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

MAGIC

Runecasters and wizards are common among the kazin shazira. Though they will freely teach magic to anhiyawen, they will not apprentice human mages for fear our kind would use the magic against them. At the same time, they will not act against our own wizards – unless such individuals act overtly against their people or lands.

The only exception to this tolerance of spellcasters is for those who practice necromancy or diabolism. The kazin have no use for these magics that upset the karmic cycle and will put to death any individual they find practicing such foul magics.

ADVENTURING

Foul monsters that not even the kazin shazira tolerate overrun many wild areas of the Zapathos forest – giving monster hunters free reign in such areas.

Merchants are popular in the midlands, and there are many opportunities for business-minded folk or those seeking to guard the caravans and wares from bandits or kazin shazira hostile to the trinkets and trappings of civilization.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

Autumnal: Held on Harvest's Festival, this day celebrates the end of Goethe's summer reign and the arrival of swift-winded Paneos. Revelers mark the festival by feasting and playing various wind instruments throughout the day.

Berthday: Held on the First Festival, this day marks the first day of spring and the thaws that drive back snow as Obereth takes over from Reaper. It is a day filled with tourneys and parades and it is common that individual take oaths for the new year at this time.

Midsummer's Day: Held on Midsummer Festival, this day celebrates Goethe with fire-themed festivities and activities. Likewise, ritualistic burning of areas of the forest allows for new growth to take the place of old or diseased areas.

Winterfell: Held on Deepwinter Festival, this day celebrates the arrival of Reaper and winter. The kazin shazira sacrifice criminal outsiders, mystic virgins and rotted food to the Ender of All. The kazin shazira likewise bury stone altars lined with animal bones in the first snows to appease Reaper.



CRIMSON EMPIRE

ZARASTAR

The Lowlands, the Backward Realm

Capital: Zeolios

Government: Matriarchy

Leader: Queen Calypsos

Population: Anhiyawen (75%), Hellchilde (20%), Mageborn (5%)



OVERVIEW

Zarastar is the home of the jinn Queen Calypsos, who has forsaken her immortal heritage to rule a mortal kingdom.

HISTORY

When E'Lendon harbored Hameru after his self-imposed exile from Eth'Athuram, he inspired many jinn to take mortal forms and experience mortal passions and sensations. Greatest among the jinn – besides E'Lendon herself – were Paneos and his Queen, Calypsos.

Calypsos became enrapt with Hameru, but he spurned her advances and fickle nature. Enraged, Calypsos concocted a trap for the Lord of Humanity. Knowing that Hameru was enraptured in the unobtainable E'Lendon, she arranged a private dinner for the two and drugged them both. She then abducted E'Lendon and left clues that pointed to Hameru being at fault.

Paneos found Hameru and his guard as Calypsos intended, but Hameru proved unconquerable, escaped from Paneos grip, and became a fugitive pursued by Paneos and his wind-swift guard.

Eventually, Hameru learned the truth of the abduction and tricked Calypsos to meet with him. He led her to believe he had finally succumbed to her request for a romantic tryst. Instead, Hameru used his might to imprison Calypso. The condition of her release required she reveal her abduction of E'Lendon to Paneos, and release E'Lendon from the

prison realm in which Calypso had sequestered the jinn princess.

After this incident, Paneos rent his home of Mythos in two and exiled Calypsos to Zarastar. There he forced her to remain in mortal form for a hundred years.

Even after her punishment ended, Calypsos remained upon her own island, though Paneos and Calypsos mended their relationship. Calypsos was never able to obtain Hameru's forgiveness before the latter vanished, but she was able to make peace with the succeeding Emperor of Misrador and repair relations with the children of Hameru.

ALLIES/ENEMIES

Zarastar is vulnerable to attack from Haadarast, and openly hates the Grepthan and their Rakshasa overlords. Likewise, there are occasional raids from the Savage Tribes, but there are also many peaceful tribes that visit and trade with the anhiyawen of Zarastar.

Zarastar has friendly trade relations with Misrador, Axatheum and the Settled Lands, though it has repelled various attempts by the three to seize the fertile grasslands of the island.

LAND

The Blue Lands: Grasslands cover Zarastar in an unusual blue tincture, giving its rolling landscape the look of a storm-touched sea. Most of the trees growing in clumps across the Zarastar plains are mimosa trees, unsuitable for use in boat building or house building – though very beautiful to look at.

GOVERNMENT

Fickle Queen Calypsos rules Zarastar directly, though she is generally too involved in her own affairs to have an active role in governing others.

However, natives consult her, ranging in matters of resolving disputes to seeking oracular insights into present and future matters. In these matters, Queen Calypsos does not hold a set court, but instead surrounds herself with a sycophant host of jinn paramours who only allow those they deem worthy to see the Queen.

Queen Calypsos has in part given up her jinn heritage for a mortal's life – of sorts. She grows and ages as a human might, often having children by her husband Paneos or her paramours throughout her life. As the Queen approaches the age of sixty, she bears one last child, passing the embodiment of her soul into the child. Her former frame becomes nothing more than a surrogate to support her new form does.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

The new body rapidly matures, reaching the equivalent of a five-year-old within the span of that many days, but retaining all her former knowledge and abilities. She does however, gain a partially new personality and physical looks. At the end of this time, her old host body expires and she ages normally, until again she reaches the age of sixty, and then repeats the process.

Because of the relative isolation of their queen, most of the citizens of the island have set up their own tribal structure. Though these tribal leaders obey the rare directives that come from Queen Calypsos in her palace in Zarapan, they are otherwise free to rule as they please. When the Queen learns of them, she aggressively punishes genocidal feuds between the tribes.

CITIES

There are only a few small communities of anhiyawen upon Zarastar. Most such communities are refugees from the Plains of War or the Wild Wastes. They tend to be simple communities who are weary of conflict and seek a simple, quiet existence.

Zarapan: Calypso's own magic pulled up this elegant port city from the pearlescent stone of the seabed. It consists of natural hexagons of quartz and basalt, each large enough to contain a single household if properly carved. Elaborate scrollwork decorates these otherwise harsh geometric formations. Colorful, translucent awnings, tinkling seashells, stone coins or other trinkets that sing in the salty wind decorate many buildings.

PEOPLE

The majority of citizens on Zarastar are anhiyawen who have fled the tribal wars of the Savage Tribes. Though they generally retain their disdain of civilization for a nomadic lifestyle, the tribes here are far more willing to work and intermix than on the continent of Durathast.

Most of the inhabitants of Zarapan are hellchilde mixtures of anhiyawen and jinn blood. Though outwardly human in appearance, they are as animalistic and wild as their heritage indicates.

The last group of individuals in Zarastar comprises the court of Queen Calypsos. Consisting of primarily paramours but also other former jinn who have partially given up their spirit forms, they used the blood and cast-off (or stolen) flesh of human slaves to become a form of mageborn. Though they will eventually cast off the chunks of flesh they have stolen and knitted with blood, these dark creatures are always on the prowl for more flesh and blood to bind


together their forms. While it is extremely rare for these beings to kill, they are not above taking fingers, toes, organs or even carving hunks of flesh out of victims from which to fashion their strange forms.

As Queen Calypsos would punish the theft of flesh or other aggressive acquisitions, most of Calypsos court bargains for the flesh and blood they desire in return for favors requested of them. Desperate or degenerate courtiers have, however, been known to secretly take what they want – but risk dire punishment if they are found out.



RELIGION

The anhiyawen of Zarastar recognize Queen Calypsos as a living god as well as a ruler. She has banned the worship of the Lords of Nature and has twisted her own history to depict herself as a wife of Hameru, encouraging the anhiyawen and jinn of the land who worship her that she can grant them beauty, power and immortality by assuming human form as she has.



CRIMSON EMPIRE

MAGIC

Queen Calypsos herself is a sorcerer of immense power, and fills her court with sorcerous beings that practice a blood magic that is an odd variation of the blood magic employed by the Norcast and Haadarast.

However, among the anhiyawen of the land shamanism is most common and beloved by the peaceful races dwelling there. Those wishing to elevate themselves into Queen Calypso's graces practice wizardly magic, though other anhiyawen look down upon such individuals as "stretching beyond one's station".

ADVENTURING

Zarastar is relatively peaceful, but individuals can find work repelling raiders from the Savage Tribes, Haadarast or even corsairs from Axatheum. For those of less noble means, there is profit in seizing local anhiyawen for slavery in other lands. Others become bounty hunters, returning anhiyawen fleeing from tribal feuds back to their enemies.

Likewise, merchants bringing in foreign and unique goods from other lands can find the locals quite willing to trade.

Finally, Calypsos courtiers are always on the lookout for skilled individuals willing to bring them "samples" of fresh blood or flesh. There is also a market in bringing individuals to court that need favors performed in return for a payment of flesh and blood.

HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

Rejuvenation: Calypsos donates her surrogate's corpse to her court for use in fashioning new or sustaining old forms. It is a time of festivities and courtly intrigue, inducting new paramours into the ranks of the courtiers and removing or exiling careless out-of-favor courtiers.

CHAPTER 7 - RELIGIONS OF THE EMPIRE AND BEYOND

Izdihar stood atop the flat granite rock, her thoughtful gaze cast up to the blue sky above. She had come to the heart of the broken glade, to the crux of the incident that had brought L'gahdaen upon the woodsmen of Ja'badir. Her skin was nearly as charcoal colored as the five gnarled and burned trees that surrounded the roost upon which she stood. Dressed in gossamer golden robes, she waited for L'gahdaen to find her.

It was not a long wait.

"How dare you," the tall, lithe kazin shazira called out from behind her. Izdihar slowly turned towards the voice, lowering the arms she had held out in supplication. The jin-mann had skin like spruce and bedecked in leather locals stated he skinned from his Ja'badir victims. Though it was nearing summer, the kazin shazira was bare of the leaves she had seen on others like him, as if he were a tree in the dead of winter. He bore a black bear cloak upon his back, the creature's snarling face forming a clasp to hold it to his chest. In his left hand, he bore a poleaxe made from a stout branch, the axe head itself taken from a woodsman who had been foolish enough to attempt to hunt the manslayer down. As the stories had claimed, she could see that kazin shazira had not wiped his victim's blood from the dark red metal wedge.

"You have long ago sated the requirements of justice," Izdihar stated as she turned towards the proud jin-mann, "and now you only seek to feed your desire for revenge, Master L'gahdaen."

"Look at the trees around you, manling," L'gahdaen snarled, pointing at the blackened trees in which she stood. "Each once held the soul of a blood relative - burned by the carelessness of your ax-wielding kind. How can you dare to measure the short lives of your kind against those that are ageless? The only justice is a life for a life, and a year for a year." He paused, then gripped the poleaxe with both hands and stated defiantly, "I will not rest - I will not cease - until time itself stops!"

"So be it," Izdihar grimly nodded. She beckoned to the unseen stars above as L'gahdaen charged her, a cry borne of unrelenting, soul-deep agony upon his lips. However, as Izdihar stiffened, L'gahdaen's soul-searing roar erupted into green flames that consumed his frame. In moments, L'gahdaen charge ceased and his smoking, charcoal

corpse came to rest at the edge of the stone on which Izdihar stood.

"Your pain is at an end, L'gahdaen," Izdihar stated softly, "Now you are free to be reborn in the eternal spring with your brethren once again."

THE COURTS OF MAN

Though humanity is hardly the oldest race in our world, Hameru was the first sentient mortal whose knowledge granted him great control over magic and uplifted him from the wild beasts of the lands. As he civilized his surroundings, he brought the gift of sentience and order to the world around him. Through order and civilization, Hameru taught humanity to become masters of the world around him, and it is for this reason we venerate him and his powerful children.

HAMERU

The first man, we hold Hameru as our sacred progenitor. He brought to the unordered and chaotic world law, civilization and logic. Though flawed in his desire to rule absolutely over all things, as time passed this attitude mellowed and he came to share in the achievements of his children. Though Hameru has passed from our shores, he still can answer our pleas and visit his rewards on us from afar, as we build societies in his name.



CRIMSON EMPIRE

HEK'TESA

The first wife of Hameru, she was the paragon of obedience and caring, though Hameru was ultimately blind to it. She always showed great respect to the Father of Humanity and cared for her children even when they rebelled against their own father. Though Hek'Tesa no longer walks our lands, her guiding hand cares for us and keeps us from harm - including harm we would do to each other.

THE TWELVE

It is from Hameru's first twelve children that subsequent lineages followed. Each of the Twelve had a hand in founding of our great cities and contributed to the civilization that Hameru established. As Hek'Tesa had come to Hameru, to each of the twelve children came a spouse borne of that child's needs. From those unions were born the myriad hosts of the rest of humanity. The thinned blood of each successive generation fell further and further from the glory and might of their ancestors. However, the firstborn of each generation retained much of their ancestor's glory and magic.

We rightly hold the twelve children of Hameru in high esteem as the protectors of our lineage and they are the source of our emperors. Without the mastery of civilization each possessed being passed on to successive generations, we would devolve into chaos and anarchy - such as ruled the land in the years following the Great Devastation.

Though the Twelve have passed from the mortal world, they can guide us through dreams and portents. Those closest to their blood can call upon their memories, magics and their favors, guiding us in the troubled times.

Coran (M), the crusader: First born son of Hameru and Hek'Tesa, Coran always fought to protect his brothers and sisters, as well as all their kin. However, Coran's desire to rule in his father's place first drove him to rally his brothers and sisters against his father, and then turned his siblings against him when he attempted to seize the throne for himself. It was Coran who mastered Abjuration magic and his lineage are strong practitioners of the defensive magics he discovered.

Yagda (F), the hag: Always intrigued by what the future would bring, the Lady of Yagdos was the second child of Hameru and Hek'Tesa. At a young age, a bear mauled her, and the horrendous scars she thereafter bore garnered the title of hag. She long delved

into many magics, but was most proficient in Divination. She disdaining those who survived on their looks, though in this regard she turned a blind eye to her sister Eilene.

A'Raga (M), the berserker: The third child and Lord of A'Ragos, A'Raga was ever driven by a mad contrariness and shortsightedness that resulted in endless bickering and bloodshed. A'Raga struck his father with a club when the poison fed to Hameru failed to put our Father into a dreamless coma. Though A'Raga had little patience for magic, the deadly spells of Evocation magic suited him well.

Urta (M), the magician: The fourth child and Lady of Urthios, Urta's comely beauty was only matched by her intelligence. Urta was the only child to master all the known forms of magic and was closest to her sister Yagda, whom she would spend much time with. Urta always thought everything through into the littlest detail, a trait that often made her siblings impatient with her.

Axatha (M), the merchant: Cool and aloof, the fifth child of Hameru and Hek'Tesa was born with an unparalleled greed - and a desire to acquire anything and everything his eyes fell upon. It was thus natural that Axatha would master the magic of Conjunction. Luckily, Axatha knew how to keep his greed from overcoming his good sense, and though he desired much, he was careful to acquire it by legitimate and hard-won means.

Ath (F), the gentle: The sixth child of Hameru and Hek'Tesa, the Lady of Athos held the greatest beauty of the Twelve. Suitors flocked to her in droves, but only one man would ever win her heart, and through him, she would bear many children. Ath naturally became the mistress of Enchantment magic, and many of her magical secrets were lost upon her passing.

Eilene (F), the flirt: The seventh child, the Lady of Eilene was born with a laugh on her lips. Where Ath was curt and demure, Eilene was bold and flirtatious. Like Ath, she had many suitors, but unlike Ath, none could hold her heart for long. She gave birth to many illegitimate children - several while she was in the guise of lesser mortal women. She became the undisputed master of Illusion magic and it is unknown how many of the acts attributed to her are truthful or mere hearsay.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

Aelsinine (F), the vain: Following the birth of Eilene, the eighth child of Hameru and Hek'Tesa was born with a scowl on her face. Through hard work and toil, she became the Lady of Aelsinine and sought solace away from her brothers and sisters whenever she could. Aelsinine became the mistress of Transmutation magic.

Melin (F), the pure: The Lady of Melin'jla was the ninth child and most beloved by all her siblings. When nothing else could unite her brothers and sisters, Melin would be the common ground under which they would rally. Her father as well as her mother doted upon her, and her brothers and sisters vigorously defended her from harm. It came as a surprise to all her relatives when she became the mistress of shamanistic magic. However, she had long been a friend of all beings - sentient or not, and this understanding led to her ability to call upon and manipulate the very souls of creation.

Thyvena (M), the decadent: Ever corpulent, the Lord of Thyventhos was born the tenth child of Hameru and Hek'Tesa and always reveled in excess. Trouble followed him and he became the secret master of Necromancy and creator of the undead. He taught his dark magic to Urea when the latter blackmailed him after tumbling upon his torturous experiments.

Oid (M), the silver-tongued: The Lord of Oidos was the eleventh child of Hameru and Hek'Tesa, and his parents planned for him to be last of their parent's lineage. He quickly discovered the secrets of pact-based magic and manipulated forces and beings to his whims. He and Urea spent much of their childhood together tormenting their siblings, but Oid eventually grew out of goading the others and became a respectable lord of his lands, much to the frustration of his mischievous brother.

Urea (M), the beguiler (traitor): The scandalous Lord of Uretheon, Urea was the twelfth child of Hameru and Hek'Tesa. Truly the runt of the Twelve, Urea bitterly fought and scraped for every achievement in his life. Initially bereft of magical ability, he persuaded Oid to teach him pact magic. Later, Urea came to understand and master the Elemental magic of the jinn, though he also had a powerful understanding of Necromancy. In addition, Urea betrayed the empire and brought up Durathast to fight against us. When denied in his quest to

seize the throne by Coran's intervention, he brought the Great Devastation upon Eth'Authuram.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

THE GOD-EMPERORS

Herein is listed the imperial lineage of Eth'Authuram, from its first emperor to the current. I have included a summary of each, so that the reader may familiarize themselves with the tenor and greatest accomplishments of each emperor. As has been the custom since the passing of the first emperor, we revere each and though deceased, their name is called upon to for aid and succor by the living. Unfortunately, the might of those emperors who have passed is limited, and their ability to influence the mortal world is far more limited than our Father's, Hameru is. It is also possible that some of these emperors may have been reborn into their descendants, and walks this world even now.

As my Emperor is now no doubt aware, the ruling Emperor or Empress is required to take a spouse from a lesser noble house – a descendant of the second or third child of the Twelve – so that there is no question of where the power of the throne lies.

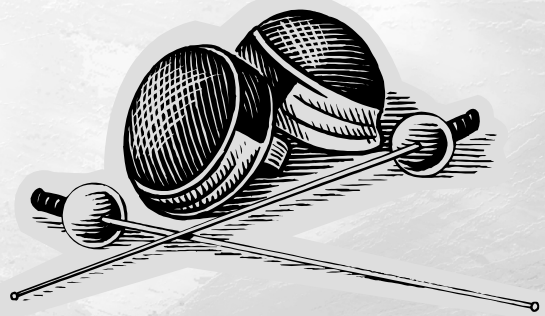
- 1) **Hakeem (Oid) Oidos Hameru (M).** Known as The Wise, Hakeem had a knack for listening and speaking in a manner to garner support for all that he did. We revere him for establishing the founding rules and customs of the empire that are still used to this day.
- 2) **Baghru Yagda Hameru (F).** Known as the Builder, Empress Baghru undertook massive civil projects – even during her time as Vizier under Hakeem's rule - that improved the living standards of all its citizens.
- 3) **Hakeros A'Raga Hameru (M), Known** as the Tradesman, Hakeros was a merchant as far back as the time of Hakeem's rule. He established trading costers and built the Empire's entire economic system. When he assumed rulership, he was the first to mint coins and established the Empire's first banks.
- 4) **Nua'da Urta Hameru (F), Known** as the Dreamer, Nua'da was the first to be born after Hakeem had already held the throne. She encouraged the citizens of the empire to revitalize Baghru's civil projects and saw the first clockwork inventions appear during her rule.



- 5) **Szam'na Axatha Hameru (M), Known** as the Conqueror, Szam'na was the first emperor to ascend the throne who was married to the previous ruler and was a first child of Axatha instead of a second or third. We remember Szam'na for his aggressive expansion of the empire into new lands, despite the protest and resistance of its former inhabitants. Due to Szam'na poor treatment of even those in the empire, the nobles of Eth'Authuram forced him to step down before a century had passed upon taking the throne. His mismanagement led to the requirement that the spouse of future emperors or empress not be a first child of the offspring of Hameru's children.
- 6) **Jania Ath Hameru (F).** Known as the Beloved, the nobility of the empire cast down Szam'na in favor of Jania. She managed to negotiate peace with the many factions Szam'na offended and even averted a civil war. She continued Szam'na expansions, but in a peaceful and benevolent manner that created unity within the empire.
- 7) **Al'Heru Eilene Hameru (F), Known** as the Healer, Al'Heru was hand-chosen by Jania to succeed her on her deathbed. Though she proved not to be as effective as Jania, we remember Al'Heru for the shrines and hospitals she established across the empire in the wake of a terrible plague that struck the lands early in her rule.

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- 8) **Vidaelga Aelsinine Hameru (F/M)**. Known as the Weak, Vidaelga spent most of her time dallying with the lesser nobles of her court and left the day-to-day affairs to the machinations of the most powerful nobles. Late in her rule, she magically transmuted herself to be male in a futile effort to garner increased respect. Shortly after his passing, his tomb was defiled and his burial riches distributed to the poor of Asul.
- 9) **Yemena Melin Hameru (F)**. Known as the Mad, Yemena spent her time fostering secret cults of sorcerers and dabbling with forbidden magic among hellchilde from Thyventhos. Legend has it that she died as a sacrifice to one of the cults she founded.
- 10) **Husayen Thyvena (Thyventhos) Hameru (M)**, Known as the Decadent, Husayen continued the corrupt practices established by Vidaelga and Yemena. An introvert and philosopher, he is remembered for spending the empire's wealth on frivolous palace decorations and moving the capital from Asul to Thyventhos when Durathast threatened the empire. The Demon Lords of Durathast poisoned Husayen.
- 11) **Dul'Fiqar Coran (Ceranthium) Hameru (M)**, Known initially as the Savior, Dul'Fiqar was a courageous and righteous warrior who strove to eradicate the corruption in the empire and drive back Durathast. The Great Devastation unleashed by Urea slew Coran, even as his army marched against the Demon Lord of Durathast in the final battle of the Last War.
- 12) **Urea Hameru (M)**, Known as the Cold, we also cite this son of Hameru as the Missing Emperor. With the death of all other members of the royal lineage, Urea attempted to seize the empire for himself, but quickly found it slipped from his grasp. After only a handful of years, Urea vanished and no one ever heard from him again.
- 13) **Zarestu Oid Hameru (M)**. Known as the Forge, Zarestu claimed the throne in an age when royal lineage was unclear. Zarestu managed to rebuild Eth'Authuram by uniting the cities of Oidos and Hek'Tesa and the lands between the two.
- 14) **Kal'Amara Aelsinine Hameru (M)**, Known as the Crusader, Kal'Amara was a righteous follower of Hameru and is renowned for reuniting lower Eth'Authuram in the wake of the Strider Wars.
- 15) **Be'Thalma Ath Hameru (F)**, Known as the Silver for her silver tongue and tolerant attitude, Be'Thalma expanded Eth'Authuram by absorbing Athos, Melin'jla, Aelsinine, Eilene and Yagda and creating peace with the kazin shazira of Zaphathos Forest.
- 16) **Da'Hearu Axatha Hameru (M)**, Known as the Bluenose, we remember Da'Hearu for his conquest of the east and his tyrannical oppression of the nobles. Many greatly despised him for his overly elitist attitude towards even his courtiers. In Da'Hearu's twilight years, the nobles forcibly removed him from power and he retired to a monastic life. Shortly thereafter, he passed away under dubious circumstances.
- 17) **Umaz'zha-de Coran Hameru (F)**, Known as the Righteous, Umaz'zha-de came to power in a bloodless coup that replaced Da'Hearu. She brought peace and stability to the reformed empire, but also forced into making many concessions that granted much power to the noble families.



- 18) **Inan'ji Urta Hameru (M)**, Known as the Reluctant, Inan'ji ascended to the throne at the tender age of twelve over his older sister. Upon reaching his 18th birthday, Inan'ji proved, however to be a formidable presence. He exiled several troublesome patriarchs and matriarchs to Riguus for abusing their power and set into place several social reforms that reaffirmed the rights of the fazeera, especially stopping the re-enslavement of freed members of khubz by greedy merchants or nobles.
- 19) **Gel'daqinn Eilene Hameru (M)**, Known as the Bright, the approachable Gel'daqinn reinstated several of the nobles exiled by Inan'ji and set up strict laws governing the practice of sorcererous magic. He also established academies for nobles to train and utilize such abilities in responsible manners.
- 20) **Rha'Verg-aman A'Raga Hameru (F)**, Known as the Explorer, Rha'Verg-aman was a proud and powerful empress who sought to reclaim the glory of the original empire. She fostered many expeditions to the far corners of the empire in the hopes of reclaiming lost lands and communities. While these expeditions did much to reveal the shape of the empire, they reclaimed little lost lands or people.

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- 21) **Mi'Zhadora Thyvena Hameru (M)**, Known as the Warrior, Mi'Zhadora attempted to take by force what Rha'Verg-aman had attempted to reclaim through nostalgia. More so, we remember Mi'Zhadora for combating both Norcast and Savathuram. Unfortunately, Mi'Zhadora received grievous wounds and aged by ghoulish assassins after pushing back Savathuram. He died a few short years later but in the meantime denounced his relatives, wishing to see none of them ascend the throne upon his death.
- 22) **In'Shen-Zinji Yagda Hameru (M)**, Known as the foreigner, In'Shen-Zinji was the first emperor of half-Misradorian blood to ascend the throne. He was unpopular for his open tolerance of foreign nations and his respect of their boundaries. His rule was generally ineffective and lead to much corruption among the bayya.
- 23) **August Melin (Makathereal) Hameru (M)**, Known as the Phoenix, disappeared from Eth'Authuram when a traitorous uncle who desired the throne for himself abducted the youth. Savage anhiyawen of the Wolf Clan, who purchased him as a slave, raised him before he escaped to dwell in Durathast. In'Shen-Zinji found and saved him during a foreign visit to that land. After dealing with his uncle, In'Shen adopted the young man and named him as successor upon his deathbed.



CRIMSON EMPIRE

THE LORDS OF NATURE

Before Hameru strode the lands of Aurtheum, the wild jinn rode the chaotic swells of the old world. They were with name but without form and they raged against each other for dominance.

When Hameru came to the land, he brought with him the wisdom of law and order. The great jinn looked upon this with envy and began to copy the ways of Hameru.

In their curiosity, Hameru befriended them, and then enslaved them. He bound them into mortal shapes and swore them to pacts and oaths. These chains of order, though it limited them, ceased much of their bickering. In the wake of their domestication, the world's shape took a constant form and the seasons have since come and gone in regular intervals.

OVERETH

The Lord of Wood rules over the spirits in Far Zabas. From his throne of branches, Obereth oversees the kazin shazira of our world, ever ready to stretch out his hand to aid his kin. Where Obereth steps, wild trees grow, and with a sweep of his hand all plants blossom and produce their fruit. Obereth is also the Lord of Spring.

PANEOS

The Zephyr Lord, Paneos rules from the glass palace in Mythos, tending to the breezes and gales that blow across our world. He is also the Master of Autumn, bringing the cooling breeze that end the steamy days of summer and warns of the approach of winter.

TYTANYA

Tempest-nature Tytanya rules the seas and its infinite depths from her mother-of-pearl throne in the coral palace upon the isle of Alagos. From her we reap the bounty of the seas and ply the calm waters. Nevertheless, we must always beware her wrath and savagery in the storm-tossed waves and the cutting teeth of sharks that devour those who flounder in her seas.

GOETHE

The lesser brother of Hrotha, the Lord of Fire and Sand now makes his domain upon the basalt throne within the ruins of the empire's palace in Asul. Sent by Hrotha to punish us for our pride, we drove him back to the ruined city in the Strider Wars.

Though we successfully thwarted his attempts to destroy us, his dark heart still seeks only our destruction.

The Firelord lashes us with his whip of fire and makes our lands drink deep from his cup of sand. Unable to strike at us again with an army of Striders, Goethe now uses the sandlings to torture us and deny the rebirth of our lands.

The Jinn lords have also given Goethe.

HROTHA

Known as the Mountain King, he dwells in the bowels of the Hellstorm mountains. For many ages, Hrotha ignored us, until we learned the art of mining in his dark lands. As we took more and more from his kingdom and made no effort to compensate him, he turned his hand against us. Hrotha shakes our cities and collapses the mines upon our workers.

Hrotha unleashed Goethe upon us in his wrath, but he shunned his brother after he discovered the younger was perverting the giants he had sent to Goethe with the mission to retrieve the fruits of the earth we had taken.

Hrotha tends to the gems and minerals of the earth, employing his great giants to thwart the greedy delving of the dwarves who seek to uncover his riches.

REAPER

The Winter Lord, this aged, arthritic old man rules the end of all things. He dwells within his icicle-laden castle on Deathloop Isle. Reaper is also the bringer of winter – everlasting winter, if he had his way.

SOLARIUS

The Patron of Sky, Solarius rules from a golden throne nestled deep on Star Isle. Solarius rules the daytime sky, his fiery chariot blazing a path for all to see.

SELENE

The Mother of Night, Selene rules from a diamond throne in the Midnite Isles. At night, she slowly assembled the moon of Kolthis in the night sky, and again disassembles it over the period of a month. Under her quiet care, she brings sleep and rest to the world. However, she is also the Mother of Nightmares – both of the horrid dreams that haunt the wicked and of creatures that go bump in the night.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

CULTS AND SECRET ORDERS

While the many realms dictate or otherwise have a hand in the worship of their citizens, there are, unfortunately, several cult beliefs that arise across the land. Presented here are the most widespread and powerful cults to be found in one's travels.

Likewise, there are several secret orders – some of them centuries old – to be found in our empire and beyond. Again, we list only the most prominent and influential groups here.

THE CABAL

Consisting of mageborn, hellchilde and various wizards all trained in the magic academies of Yagda, this secretive organization seeks to muster and preserve magical knowledge and power among its members.

While generally altruistic, many of its members in the past have shown a propensity for the accumulation of power and has on more than one occasion attempted establish their own petty kingdoms – or replace existing ones.

Emil

Rumors hold that this Hellchilde brotherhood exists in Axatheum with headquarters in Epsea'on. These sorcerers seek to replace the worship of Hameru with an agnostic reverence of the natural forces of the world. The most powerful members believe themselves to be akin to gods and seek the worship of those outside their order.

KRAKEN

We believe that the Great Devastation spawned the Kraken. This terrible beast makes its home in an exposed coral castle at the bottom of the great whirlpool just off the small isle of Krakenhome. The kraken is a symbol of bloody rebirth, and it demands blind obedience of its followers to achieve its dreams of conquest.

The kraken does not only take willing volunteers but has also been known to “mark” individuals that it finds appealing, forcing them to become kraken-touched and a vessel to the will and power of the kraken itself.

THE TWENTY-TWO FINGERS

While the meaning of this secret order's name is unknown, its place of origin is not. Spawned in Axatheum, this criminal organization has chapters

spread across the civilized realm dealing in theft, blackmail, slavery and just about every unsavory method of making money. Luckily for us, the various sects of this organization are prone to backstabbing and mistrust – though they will never co-operate with outside entities to bring down one of their own.

THE UREA-BORN

Consisting either of demonic hellchilde or individuals born of the Urea bloodline (anhiyawen-blooded draemani, mageborn or simple human relatives bearing the Urea name), these individuals continue the dark work of their ancestor to bring chaos and despair wherever they can. Many conspire with demons or anhiyawen of Durathast to bring down Eth'Authuram or bring areas under their diabolical control. The worst of the lot work to free their father Urea from his supposed imprisonment in the nether realms.

THE WATCHERS

This well-known secret organization of gurus and martial artists performs helpful deeds across the various continents. Composed of human and non-human members they seek out wrongs to right, using magical masks and other methods to conceal their identities. Many people revere watchers as folk heroes and not a few have operated for multiple generations. Whether these heroes have magically extended their lifespans or been subtly replaced by successors is unknown – and has added to many of the watcher's mystique.

THE WHITE WITCHES

An exclusively human-only group, these white-painted sorcerers, wizards, shamans and gurus seek immortality by eventually joining the ranks of the undead. Many work covertly to aid Savathuram in spreading into the mainland or retrieving stock to covert for established undead in return for longevity or the future promise of immortality.

YANOSHI

Among the deadly Yakuza of Misrador is an elite circle known as the Yanoshi – also known as the Worshippers of Shadow. Legends state that these followers actually are working for a Rakshasa exiled from Haadarast that has infiltrated Misrador's political scene and is attempting to overtake the entire realm for its own nefarious reasons.

CHAPTER 8 - THE WORLDS BEYOND

Mahdi circled behind the rune-emblazoned *menir* as he heard the approaching footsteps. Concealed by tall grasses, drooping branches of the manya trees and the stone of the *menir* itself, he quietly watched the troupe of silver-skinned Algalue march past his location. They were still searching for him, and Mahdi knew he must act quickly to decipher the faintly glowing yellow runes before they backtracked to find him.

He waited until the last passed out of sight and then turned to begin reading the sigils once again. He compared them to the scrap of parchment he had acquired from the vaults in the Yagda citadel. They had led him beyond Axatheum and into the Bane Sea. He had deciphered the astrological markings hidden within the map, leading him to the unmarked isle in the Midnite Isles.

If he were correct, he was on the isle from which Hameru had departed the world forever. However, this was no mere excursion to this distant realm merely to meet and greet with the father of humanity - the Empire was in trouble. Some dark evil lurked in the shadows of the palace of Hek-Tesa, and it plotted against the empire. Mahdi had seen its effects as it had gnawed upon the roots of the empire. The rise of secret cults, the passing of coin for nefarious plots - something was slowly eating at humanity and somehow Mahdi knew only Hameru could stop it.

Something stirred in the trees near the *menir*, rousing Mahdi from his thoughts and studies. It was here, he could feel the dark - the cold. It was watching him, he was sure, and preparing to strike. Even though Mahdi was confident that his practiced art of Tahtib would protect him from most mortal foes, he could not allow himself to be prideful and delay alerting the Father of All. After all, that pride had felled his former master, Najib - the Lord of the Setting Sun - and rest the completion of that noble master's quest squarely upon his shoulders. They had found the remnants of the former master in a sealed room, his innards decorating the four otherwise plain walls.

Ever since Mahdi had read the letter his master had left for him, he had the sensation that first someone - then something - had been following and watching him from the shadows of wherever he went. As he had delved deeper and deeper into the Empire's

dark secrets, he could feel the forces that had monitored his progress had grown in stature and threat as well. He had been only moments ahead of this unseen enemy when he had been driven from Eth'Authuram; framed for the murder of a noble sacrificed to the dark cause in Hellstorne the day he was set to depart. His enemy had preceded him to Axath'os and only the warnings of Master H'tosi of the Noon Sun had allow him to escape the assassins waiting there for him, though now he was also falsely wanted for the murder of the Master of the Noon Sun. He had felt the dark force watching his fleeing journey across Axatheus, pitting him against bounty hunters, bandits and other entities turned from their pursuits to the single-minded destruction of the master. The stakes had reached their climax when the mercenary Algalue outcasts of Alagos had brought a war galley to sink the small dhow upon he departed Axatheus. Only a cleverly summoned fog cloud by the on-board wind mage had allowed them to evade the ship - at least until they had made landfall on this island in the Midnite Isles.

As Mahdi saw a dark form glide down from the upper reaches of the trees nearby, he acted. He had already deciphered the ancient script and with the touch of two runes, he completed the connection to a distant realm.

Whatever had swooped down from the trees was now galloping for him. Mahdi did not look back now that his goal was in sight and he could smell the dry musk of the creature closing in on him. With three long strides, he passed through the shimmering blue tear in the air. He felt the swipe of razor-sharp claws slash behind him but it was a hair's breath behind him.

The tear in the sky sealed behind Mahdi and it was only then that he turned to look behind him, drawing himself up in a martial stance. On the sandy patch behind him, where the portal had stood lay the bleeding stump of some midnight blue clawed hand. It was easily large enough to hold Madhi's head in its clasp. There was no sign of its owner on the desert plain on which he now stood.

Mahdi glanced skyward at the sun high above, and then looked to the horizon all around him. Desert surrounded him on all sides and in the simmering distance; he could make out the towering pyramids of wind-worn mountains. Back in the direction, he had first stepped from the portal stood the mighty walls of an Eth'Authuram city he knew well - Hek'Tesa.

"So this is the world Hameru has passed to?" He stated to himself with a hint of a grimace before he marched towards the banner-topped walls of Hek'Tesa.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

THE ORIGIN REALMS

Elementalists are aware that the mortal realm is composed of four elements – earth, fire, water and wind. Further, there are four great forges created by the most ancient jinn to manufacture these substances. These powerful forges spur the existence of the four elemental nodes.

The Earth Mines: This great forge deep within the heart of the earth is where Hrotha fashions dirt, granite, gemstones and all the raw materials upon which we tread. Legends state that a deep, spiraling maw bordered by a gemstone-laden staircase somewhere in Far Zabas leads to the heart of the Earth Mine. Creatures of solid stone swim through the soil and stone that surrounds the great maw, with a smattering of giant communities who carry great stones from the maw's core to plant them like seedling to grow in the world above.

The Flame Furnace: This immense blast furnace, made of solid flame itself, is the source of all fire and guarded by the fierce beasts somewhere south of the Jakurim Desert. It lies within a realm of heat-blasted obsidian and charcoal pounded by showers of molten lava. The primary residents are fire-loving jinn who make their homes of molten lead and brass.

The Wind Chimes: As these glimmering crystals of solidified air tinkle, they generate the icy breezes and warm winds that feed the entire world. Legends place the Wind Chimes beyond the howling winds that whip over the towering ice walls at the northern edge of the Ice Fields, under the control of Paneos. The jinn who play the chimes exist in a groundless void beyond the world's edge, where an entire world exists within the ever-shifting clouds that fog the source of the wind chimes.

The Water Mill: This foam-soaked wheel of pure aquamarine water lies at the bottom of the Sea of Athos. As it constantly spins and generates more water, it stirs the world's oceans and recollects the waters that fall from furthest edges of the world. The world around the great Water Mill is home to Tytana's jinn and their pearl-and-coral laden plantations. It is at these expansive plantations where great schools of fish and the myriad wonders and bounty of the ocean are borne and sent forth to fill the oceans.

THE AFTERLIFE

The fifth element, aether, grants life to all living things. All spirits, such as jinn, are composed of the marvelous material. When a mortal creature dies, the aether within its mortal frame rips from its body and returns to the lifewell, where its aether mixes back into primal matter to form new life.

However, it is possible for strong-willed sentient creatures to retain enough consciousness to partially or even fully survive the sundering from their body and be reborn in part or in full in their next life.

Sometimes a being not only survives their passing, but passes out of the karmic cycle and remains in the spirit realm. This has occurred to enough spirits that the beings have carved out their own realms.

Nirvana: The home of the ascended, this starry realm is protected by Hameru's Twelve children and home to those beings who have passed into a spiritual paradise from which they need not be reborn into the mortal world. Nirvana resembles a series of great, flat bronze gears up to a mile wide covered with lush vegetation and palatial mansions, interlinked by a series of smaller gears that keep the whole turning and provide passage between the massive gears.

Unlike Hell, where misery and unfulfilled desire chains the occupants to their realm, the inhabitants of Nirvana may choose to take mortal form again – whether for a short time or to live a full life from birth to death once more before returning to their stately realm.

Hell: Many tales state that this abyss formed when Urea attempted to ascend to Nirvana and his siblings heavily cast him back down to the mortal realm. However, true sages know that this realm preceded Urea's disappearance by many centuries – if not millennium. Though the open crater has since covered itself over, there are many cavernous leaks across the world that leads to this underworld realm of fire and misery. The vast cavern that is Hell still burns with unquenchable aetheric fire from the fall of the first demon that came to this realm. Since this unknown fallen being's arrival, evil spirits continually filled the realm through magical pacts or corruption of the being's aether in a manner so dark it cannot or will not return to the Well of Souls. Fortunately, the darkness that allows an individual to end up in this realm also traps it here, so that only those who know the secret ways to unbind or draw up the hellish chains can bring them back to our mortal world.

CRIMSON EMPIRE

ALTERNATE EXISTENCES

Beyond the strange realms listed above, one can find enchanted portals that lead to a myriad of other realms small or large, similar to our own or strange and lethal to existence. Most such portals exist among the Midnite Isles, but other doorways to these realms sometimes manifest in other areas – even if for a brief moment. I will but list a few of the better known and researched here – there are many, many others.

Amberos: Some believe this human-dominated world may have been an existence that Hameru traveled to during his sojourns. However, the people of this world have fractured into a myriad of small and petty kingdoms battling one another much as we did during the dark years following the Great Devastation.

Aurora: Also known as the dream realms, this little world consists of three small continents each representing a different part of the subconscious. The continents are: Hyperborea – made of aspirations and daydreams, Chysolis – fashioned from nightmares and night terrors and Kladindia – a land formed from dreamless sleep that is almost an exact mirror of the waking world.

Gaius: This realm was once home to a race of powerful beings known as the Pathos, who erected mighty towers to bathe their world in magic, and then left it for a myriad of races they created. However, mighty dragons that dwarf those of our own world have destroyed all but one of the great towers, leaving the realm a shadow of the wonder it once was.

Kaershoon: A dark spirit that has blotted out the sun rules this world of darkness and misery. Overrun with creatures such as werewolves, black-skinned elves and the dead who arise upon their passing, this is a realm not visited lightly.

Moltaire: This small universe is naught but a single city once ruled by angels and now handed over to the remaining mortal occupants.

The Pale Empire: This mirror universe to our own world is an evil and dark reflection. In this world what bright light humanity shines is instead a dark hole – and vice versa.

Romani: This shattered universe consists of world in upheaval after a great rain of starry material had struck across the land. The land's kingdoms are in ruins and its races in turmoil as they battle for dwindling resources. Refined remnants of the star – known as nitrate – are used to powerful strange and deadly weapons in a never-ending war to destroy creatures mutated by the strange emanations of the unrefined glowing star's remnants.

Sundri: This world is a barbaric realm ruled by elemental wizards who clash in an eternal war of seasons. The land quakes with awe-inspiring behemoths spawned by the great dragons. It is from which the land's elemental magic is drawn.

CHAPTER 9 - MAGIC

"You lose manling," the demon lord spat from its circle of soul-searing fire. The blood-spattered bodies of royal guard and courtiers who had not been quick enough to escape ringed the throne room following the demonic assault. Dozens of misshapen, slain demons littered the room as well, but the fiery demon cared not; his minions would await him in the nether realm and with his victory, he could simply open the gates to that infernal realm again to unleash them back upon the world.

"I am not defeated yet," the Emperor of men - August Melin Hameru - spoke through blood-speckled teeth. His one hand gripped his crimson-soaked side, but he held the black iron tulwar in his right. The ancient metal looked rusted and pitted but it had been fashioned specifically to deal with this fiend - if only he could get close enough. The demon had watched the blade make short work of his minions, but it had been too little and too late for the Emperor to save his men from being torn apart by his forces. They had done their work; the Emperor was bleeding to death. No one could arrive in time to save him.

The towering, goat-footed creature cracked its whip as it let loose a maniacal cackle. With arrogant strides, the flame-surrounded creature strode to the ivory throne and sat, grinning menacingly at the wounded, lone emperor.

"You had lost before I even tore open the portal to Hell itself," it chided, dipping its finger in a drop of the Emperor's blood on the otherwise white throne's armrest. It smiled at the sweet taste as it brought the firstborn's blood to its lips.

"You think I did not know you had disguised yourself as the Emir?" August spat back, limping towards the throne. He now held his lion's cloak guardingly to protect him from the demon's flame that rose from the once white stone surrounding the throne.

"I do not care; you did nothing to stop me," it replied idly. It raised an eyebrow as the Emperor inched closer. "Why come forward to die? As I sit on the throne, you could perhaps spare your life by abasing yourself before me." The thought seemed to amuse the demon and it leaned forward, resting its hairy chin on its curled, six-fingered hand. "In fact, I'd like to see you beg."

The Emperor shook his head negatively as the loss of blood began to show in his slowing steps. He continued to advance, holding his cloak against

the demon's flames in one hand and the pitted blade in the other.

"You will die soon," it noted, as the Emperor stumbled a step.

"Yes," the son of Hameru admitted. "But I will be reborn again and again. If I do not stop you here," the Emperor spoke, "I will stop you in my next life - or the one after that."

The demon rose from the throne, bored at the son of Hameru's idle threats. "You fool," it snorted, uncoiling the fiery tendrils of the whip in its offhand. "This will be the last chance you have to strike at me. And you have wasted that chance already."

The whip rose into the air, and the Emperor responded by flinging open his cloak. From the concealed depths, four warriors sprang forward like lightning, each holding a magnificent blade in their hand. The great demon frowned as it realized the inside of the cloak was itself a portal to some other realm in which the four had been concealed.

Masked Assad moved the swiftest, his lightning blade cutting arcs through the air as he sped forward and shredding the demon's great whip.

Just behind him rushed painted Hatori with gleaming katana that shone like the noon sun, its light forcing the demon to wince against its glow.

Squat Firh Ghalib followed next, his mercurial scimitar held above his head as he leapt past the demon. With a single stroke, he sheared the tyrannically demon's bat-like wings from its back.

L'har was there too, his curved dagger drawn as he darted to the side and circled about the great demon. As he came to the throne's side, he placed one hand to the ground. The marble of the palace floor shook, shuddered and began to arise in a humanoid form that dwarfed the towering demon. The besieged demon growled and stumbled from the throne as the ground split and heaved about him.

With his attention focused upon the assault before him, the demon failed to note the shimmer behind him as Budur and Izdiyar silently cast back their cloaks to unveil their presence. Ice flared from Budur's hands at the fiery demon as Izdiyar's chant bound the creature in chains forged not from steel, but the very words of the Empire's laws itself. Great goutts of steam rose into the air as they quenched the demon's flames. The advancing warriors likewise took their toll against the entangled demon before them, slashing and cutting its rock-hard skin.

The great demon crashed to the ground from the onslaught, his chin landing at the foot of the still advancing Emperor. The great demon bled from a host of cuts across his body as the Guru Mahdi supported the Emperor.

"This cannot be!" the Demon roared.

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"It would not have been," the Emperor chided the demon, "If you had not underestimated my subjects. You thought it was only me you needed to fell to take the throne, and these others were beneath you."

The Emperor rested the pitted Tulwar on the nape of the demon's neck, and it quickly began to redden from the heat. "They saw the signs, as well as I," the Emperor continued, "They have dealt with your dark allies as I will deal with you, Urea - once son of Hameru."

The demon roared long and loud before the Emperor took its head.

TYPES OF MAGIC

There are four main types of magic known to us. These are not the only types; different professions and specialties over the years have cropped up that have divided magic differently, but usually they are subsets or different mixing of the main four.

ARCAINE

Arcane magic draws on latent forces that lie unseen that define the laws of reality. By tweaking these laws to allow the impossible to become reality, magic subverts the ordinary into the extraordinary. However, tweaking reality has a significant cost – an escalating cost as the change in reality has a more powerful effect. At the highest end of the cost is returning health or life to the injured or dead; the cost of such is generally demanding the same from the caster – healing wounds transfers those wounds to the caster, and the cost of returning life is very often the life of the caster in return.

DIVINE

Whereas arcane magic tweaks the forces of reality, divine magic draws upon the might inherit on living things, and their ability to affect the world around them. While divine magic tends to be slightly less powerful than direct arcane magic, it has the advantage that it can draw small amounts of power from many living things at once, granting divine casters the ability to use magic for healing – or even calling the dead back to their former mortal forms.

PRIMAL

Primal magic draws on elemental bonds. Primal magic cannot quite muster "something from nothing" like arcane, but can access the multitude of

creation for spells that are just as dangerous as the natural forces of the world. Practitioners of primal magic can often also access life magic, drawing a small amount of life from living elemental material to infuse another being. The drawing out of life from others is generally displaced to so many creatures its effect is not noticeable. It also has the drawback of being unable to return life to the dead.

SOURCES OF MAGIC

Beyond the various ways the learned group magical effects, there are many ways to invoke magic. In most cases, the belief of how magic works strongly ties to differences in methods; while two casters can produce identical effects, how they arrive at those effects can be vastly different. The more popular forms of "casting" magic are listed below.

CHANNELING


Considered the be the oldest form of magic casting, channeling allows a mortal creature to tap the power of an immortal creature and "channel" magical power, like a conduit. Most channelers are priests to one of the many gods, though there are warlocks who bind themselves to elemental, fey, alien, or infernal beings to access magic. In these latter cases, the binding to an immortal power may not be a direct link, but instead access through a pact or bond put into place by the immortal being long ago. Such pacts are accessible by those who learn the secrets of the contract and abide by its rules and clauses.

The downside to these pacts is often that the wielder of such power offers their service (or servitude) to whatever power granted them their magical ability in life.

Divine and Primal magic generally are channeled spells.

RUNECASTING

By inscribing the power of magic into durable objects such as stones, tablets, trees or metal plaques - objects strong enough not to shatter under the stress of holding the letters of magic. Thus inscribed, magic radiates from the item, providing a constant magic effect according to words written or carved into the material. The problem with runecasting was that any spell took time to activate, as one must carve the words into a resilient source. Second, practitioners must carve the long, complex formulas into objects that are rarely mobile. Finally, once activated, there was no "off" switch to the spell, unless the object in which it was inscribed was



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shattered, destroyed or somehow wiped clean of the runes.

Runecasting is the primary method of using Rune magic.

SORCERY

Sorcery is the innate power of a being to accomplish magic. A sorcerous being does not need to memorize a cryptic formula nor write down arcane words into objects to manifest spells. Like the Hameru and the jinn, sorcerers can draw upon the might of magic with a thought. While the mortal frame cannot long support the channeling of such power through its system, in short bursts and with proper training, a sorcerer can produce powerful and wondrous effect to match any wizard. The primary downside to sorcery is both its explosive nature that can quickly get out of control and the fact that one is born with the talent of sorcery, or never possesses it. Even those who possess the talent of sorcery sometimes never learn the trigger to properly use their ability, and thus never come to recognize the innate talent they may have had all along.

Sorcery usually employs arcane spells, with some elements of Primal spells.

WIZARDRY

This is among the most popular method non-humans use to perform magic. By studying and memorizing arcane and complex formulas, wizards trap the magic of a spell within their mind and later unleash the spell by completing the formula through word, gesture or with a material component. Wizardry is a refinement of Runecasting, where sentient thought and action brings life to the inactive words of magic. The advantage over runecasting was an individual could incomplete the incomplete formula into less durable materials such as books or scrolls, or even tattoos inscribed into the flesh of the caster. Activation merely required the caster to complete the remainder of the formula in their mind.

Wizardry usually employs arcane spells, with some elements of Rune magic.

LEARNING SPELLS AND RUNES

Spellcasters generally start out with a handful of spells they have already learned and mastered.

As the character travels and studies, he may learn additional spells as he encounters them, either by seizing the magical formula from enemy spellbooks, trading with other spellcasters for the formulas or by experimenting and studying to

recreate known formulas or fashion new spells. This is even true for sorcery, where an individual may learn the method by which they can call up and form powerful magic through exercise, rituals or simple practice.

In some rare cases, creative and/or intelligent spellcasters may experiment and learn new, unbefore-known spells. In this age, such an occurrence is rare, and more often than not “new” spells are often the simple rediscovery of spells lost to us following the Great Devastation.

CHAPTER 10 - DEVELOPER NOTES

Creating a completely new world takes a bit of time; it is not something that comes together in seven days. From start to what you hold in your hands now (or are viewing on your screen), it has taken a little over four years to develop. A good portion of it I simply had to wait on for the ideas to fill my head – at times, what this country or that country might play out I simply could not fathom. They were a name, some colored hexes and that is about it. I had to wait for inspiration, and sometimes it did not come easy. Moreso, it was a matter of time – this was always a side project at best and finding the time to sit down and work on it came in spurts and sputters. I do hope you enjoy what you find here, and that it is all wonderfully different enough to catch and hold your attention.

It is rather funny to me that a random map created in hexographer – and an idea for a video game inspired this campaign world. What started as some staid catalogue of this world had new life breathed into it with the offhand creation of the Am'Al-a-Quna persona in the introduction. The attempt to interject a simple quote transformed this document from a somewhat bland enumeration to a somewhat more engaged treatise by an equally somewhat biased individual – a tutor writing a treatise to teach the newest emperor about lands he might know little or nothing about, a world seen through the eyes of a “learned” old man.

Further, I had wanted to do a middle-eastern themed campaign world for some time, as my old campaign world was so fiercely a generic European-styled setting. So, with that in mind, this project started with the world map and its slightly offbeat names.

At the same time, I had been dabbling into learning how to write video games and I had an idea where the player would be a cast-out samurai turned pirate, seeking to get his revenge against the shadowy ninja clans that had overtaken the government. I have yet to develop that game, sadly.

As you can probably guess, that pretty much is where Misrador and the Ninja War section came from. It was never my intent to put much focus on Misrador – Eth'Authuram was supposed to be the “center” of this campaign universe and everything else was how it interacted with that empire. But, hey – pirate samurai with ninja overlords using transformable galleon-giants to fight dinosaur-riding

martial artist faris who are protecting walled cities defended by clockwork engines and protected with cannons. Think about that one for a moment, and how awesome it could have been.

Kharik straightened upon the horse's back, even though the long ride had tired him. The remains of the caravan had finally reached Urthios, consisting of only Kharik, Ab'him and the goods they could salvage to drag along on a litter attached to the horse. Ab'him's poorly chosen guards had succumbed to their base desires in an illusion-covered mirage two days ago, and it had cost them their lives.

However, at the city gate the spears of the soldiers had turned upon them. There had been an attempt on the Emperor's life and Ab'him had found his name on a list of individuals to round up for questioning.

As one of the soldiers moved forward, roughly taking custody of Ab'him, Kharik pulled at the blade strapped to his side. “This fool is under my protection,” he warned. The blade made an odd sound as if cutting glass as several inches came free of the scabbard. The revealed, crystalline surface was etched with a singular kanji character. In an instant, all of the surrounding city guardsmen likewise pulled at their weapons and turned toward Kharik.

The captain of the guard squinted when he saw the script on the blade, as if he could not believe his eyes. “There is no eighth blade of Katchori Ameratsu,” he spat.


Kharik was impressed the guard could read the foreign characters, though not surprised that these men were familiar with the weapons – it was well-known that the Emperor himself wielded the blade known simply as Seven.

“There is,” Kharik replied, betraying no emotion. “I asked him to forge it for me himself.”

The captain paused as he considered Kharik's word. Clearly, the crystalline blade he saw was no ordinary weapon and he knew as well that only the most skilled or worthy individuals could obtain one of the seven. To ask for one to be fashioned spoke not only of surpassing skill, but arrogance in that skill as well. The captain felt no desire to put the man to the test, and perceived his compatriots did not as well.

The captain gave Kharik a cautious bow. “Forgive our poor manners,” he stated. “But Ab'him must come with us.”

Kharik looked to the pleading merchant and hesitated. In short, Ab'him stood accused of treason – and the merchant knew it. Yet Kharik knew the merchant well enough from their travels to know that



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while the man was as greedy as Axatha, he was foolish and naïve. If the merchant had betrayed the Emperor, it had been unwittingly.

However, it also explained much of the strange occurrences he had witnessed on the trip – the incompetent caravan guard “relatives”, the inferior trades made at Asul, the griffon’s attack that had meant to slow them in the deserts and the strange fortune teller’s mirage a day back that had consumed Ab’him’s “relatives” to a man. More than likely, Ab’him’s fellows had been the real cargo meant to reach the city, no doubt for some nefarious purpose. Yet Kharik believed that Ab’him was unaware of this, and had most likely been duped into delivering them to the city.

Kharik finally nodded to the captain. “I will accompany you then,” he stated. “I am under contract to deliver this man and his goods safely,” and he stated the last so that Ab’him would hear and understand, “And my contract is not yet complete.” At the least, Kharik thought to himself, he would get to the truth of this matter and see his home of Thyventhos again one day.

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