

# PHILOSOPHERS' GUIDE

## TO THE

# AGE OF ARCANA

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### *Campaign Setting*

**Introduction:** Deep in the Frosted Wood, an elf druid's boots crunch through a thin layer of snow as she hums a song of memory and sorrow for her people, scattered from the continent of Erath, and tends to their forgotten cairns. Where she walks, the Old Gods rise.

In the bustling hum of Frankfurt's markets, human nomads and tabaxi emissaries from the Sandy Sea trade silks and icons from Old Ellohia for Luft pistols and rifles. Above them, built into the rocky face of the Spine of the World, students of the Frankfurt University study the eight schools of arcane philosophy and seek ways to create more effective items such as those being traded in the market below.

In Olay, the tall spire of a church steeple rises above a clanging bell calling Élysians to mass through the thick, swampy air. Not too far away, a rogue disguised as a gondolier stabs a single oar into one of the many Larmes de Olay and studies the various homes left empty during mass, his fingers longingly squeezing a near empty belt-pouch tied to his waste.

In York and Santa Megal, the sharp, salty tang of sea-touched air is punctuated by gargantuan ships-of-the-line being loaded with people and goods destined for the "New World." Sailors and soldiers make sure that the ships' rows of cannons and stockades of cannonballs are properly secured and cared for. Should the ships happen to meet on the open sea, those cannons are likely to spew smoke and death as greetings.

In the "New World," called Tír na Aval by those who have lived there for thousands of years, the courts of the Archfey and their beastfolk allies consider how they might cast the human colonists and their monotheistic religion—Aviorism—from the shores of the ancestral fey and beastfolk homelands. Rage still stains the memory of the fey exodus from their colonies in Erath; hatred still festers when they contemplate their final retreat from the shores of Thelas Anore, a city the humans now call York...

*by David Milman*



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# Welcome to the Age of Arcana

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The **Age of Arcana** is a campaign setting for the **Dungeons & Dragons** game. D&D typically contains a certain degree of historical anachronism in its various settings: largely medieval worlds exist alongside early modern technology, such as plate armor; other early modern technologies, such as pistols and rifles, are often nowhere to be found; in campaigns like Eberron or Ravnica, however, modern luxuries like coffee and newspapers, or even magical trains, punctuate their world's life.

It would be a lie to claim that the **Age of Arcana** contains no anachronistic qualities. It is, however, an effort to build a campaign whose setting is less

anachronistic, and more coterminous with the spirit of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. As on Earth, the world of the **Age of Arcana** is undergoing powerful colonial conflicts. Additionally, the world's philosophy has begun to mutate into a potent force capable of marvels under the wary eye of a monotheistic religion. Where that mutation, in the real world, gave birth first to natural philosophy and then to science, however, in the **Age of Arcana** that mutation has given birth to arcane philosophy. The scientific and technological marvels of Earth are, in this fantasy setting, magical. The analogs of Descartes and Galileo are, in the **Age of Arcana**, wizards.

This book is your point of entry into the Age of Arcana, a world on the brink of arcane and colonial revolution. This book should be treated as a guide to creating characters and adventures set in its unique historical, political, and colonial turmoil.

Chapter 1 is about building characters. It explains the role that the various race and class options (from both official and third-party D&D products) play in the **Age of Arcana**. It also provides new race, class, and feat options designed to foster the tone of the setting.

Chapter 2 describes the typical focal region of a game set in the **Age of Arcana**: Erath. Erath is a continent composed of four regions and a city-state collectively known as the Kingdoms of Aviorodom: the countries of Crealand, Élys, Luftland, and Tortugal, as well as the city-state of West Ellohia. The continent is primarily populated by humans, though small pockets of wood elves, dwarves, halflings, and rarer creatures such as the mythical firbolgs can be found there as well. That being said, humans and their monotheistic religion—Aviorism—are the dominant power of Erath, and they seldom let anyone forget it. Erath is a continent plagued by xenophobia and stifling religious laws.

Chapter 3 describes the twin to Erath's influence: Tír na Aval. This continent was, for 1,193 years, lost to the Prime Material plane which Erath calls home. In 1493AD, 123 years before the setting's assumed beginning in 1616AD, however, Tír na Aval returned from the Feywild and rejoined the Prime. The reasons for its return are unclear. Its connection to the Feywild remains strong. As Erathian colonists attempt to claim the eastern shores of this massive continent for their own needs, the various fey, beastfolk, and halflings who call it their ancestral home struggle to free themselves from humankind's unwanted presence.

Chapter 4 provides additional context regarding the various factions of the **Age of Arcana**. This chapter summarizes various Aviorite sects, Erathian

guilds, Archfey courts, military organizations, and universities that, collectively, divide the loyalties of the people of Erath and Tír na Aval between them. This chapter also provides suggestions for using these factions as patrons or villains in a campaign, as well as a description of the common races and classes found in any given faction, and the benefits that a faction can give to its members.

Chapter 5 is dedicated to campaign specific rules regarding new and existing items found in the *Age of Arcana*. This chapter contains new rules for firearms and their use in this setting, as well as new mundane and magic items. You can find explanations for such concepts as a firearm’s “misfire” chance here.

Chapter 6 is a campaign-specific bestiary. It features various new creatures as well statistics for the campaign’s important figures. You can find the statistics for such characters as King Richard of Crealand here. The chapter also provides suggestions for using creatures from other D&D products in the *Age of Arcana*.

## History of the Age of Arcana

While the history of the world is ancient beyond reckoning, the history of the Age of Arcana begins 1,616 years ago when humans first found their way across a great desert known as the Sandy Sea, discovered the Golden Path through a virtually impenetrable mountain range known as the Spine of the World, and in doing so gained entry to the continent of Erath. Upon doing so, the human immediately began a war to colonize the continent and subjugate it to the will of their god—Avior. The beginning of that war marked the instantiation of the Erathian “After Dawn” (AD) calendar.

### The Dawn Age: 0AD—820AD

The Dawn Age is marked by the beginning of the Dawn Crusade. When the humans first reached Erath from across the Sandy Sea, they were unified under the auspice of a single faith: the Ellohian Church. Composed of three orders—the Order of the Book; the Order of Illumination; the Order of the Sword—and two knighthoods—the Knights Hospitaller and Knights Templar—they believed that it was their religious mandate to bring Aviorism to the “heathens” of Erath.

The first people they encountered in the eastern regions of Erath were the tribes of Maglubiyet. Under the onslaught of divine Aviorite magic, however, the Conquering Host of Maglubiyet quickly found itself conquered. After shattering the goblinoid people, the Ellohians founded the city of West Ellohia in 49AD, then proceeding to turn against the remaining military factions of Erath: the fey, the dwarves, and the orcs.

The atrocities of this war were fueled by the religious zealotry of the Ellohian Empire. Confronted with magic unlike any practiced by the Ellohian Church, the humans were convinced that the religious and magical practices of Erath were an affront to Avior. By 107AD, the fervent pitch of the conflict with eladrin spellcraft—deemed witchcraft by the Ellohian Church—led to the formation of a new order tasked with rooting out unclean magic and destroying it: the Order of Purification.

By 213AD, the dwarves had grown tired of constant conflict with the Ellohian forces. The dwarven kingdom of Hammerdeep, located under Mount Dolom, sent out a proclamation welcoming all dwarves looking to escape the encroaching Aviorite faith to their halls. By 272AD, the Dawn Crusade reached the town of Hammerfast at the foothills of Mount Dolom, and the mountain dwarves sealed Hammerdeep. At the time, many thought that this would be the last encounter that the surface world would have with the dwarves of Hammerdeep. The following year (273AD), the conversion of dwarves to Aviorism was declared a success, and Hammerfast was inducted into the Ellohian Empire.

Of course, these victories did not come without a cost. As West Ellohia gained power over Erath, it also began to lose contact with Old Ellohia. Traveling the Sandy Sea has always been a dangerous affair. As West Ellohia became more self-sufficient, its need for constant trade with Old Ellohia waned, eventually disappearing completely. By 227AD, political ties between Old Ellohia and West Ellohia collapsed. The “Ellohian Empire” of Erath was actually, for all intents and purposes, the West Ellohian Empire.

This collapse and the West Ellohian victory over the dwarves only fueled the West Ellohian fervor when it came to eradicating elvish magic and its ardent eladrin practitioners. In 281AD, the elves, also growing tired of constant conflict with the humans, began an organized retreat away from their colonies in Erath back to their homelands in Tír na Aval. By 298AD, the last eladrin mass exodus—from the city of Thelas Anore—sailed east across the Misty Ocean. The following year (299AD), on the ruins of that once great city, the humans founded the city of York. From there, West Ellohia expected to follow the eladrin eastward to Tír na Aval, but to humankind’s dismay, powerful elvish magic was used to sunder Tír na Aval from the Prime and cast it fully into the Feywild.

With access to Tír na Aval blocked to them, humankind turned to fully subjugating Erath to the will of Avior. Abbeys were erected on top of eladrin ruins. Dwarves were requisitioned to build roads, bridges, towns, cities, and churches in the name of Avior, thus providing Erath with a new imperial infrastructure. Were orcs could be found, West Ellohian forces continued to eradicate them.

In 376AD, the last orcish settlement in Erath was destroyed, the lands were officially “civilized,” and the Dawn Crusade was at an end. To commemorate the dead, the West Ellohian Church formed a new order: the Order of the Shroud. Forever after, their job would be to sanctify the loss of life and honor West Ellohia’s fallen faithful. Similarly, in 446AD, the Order of the Garden and the Knights of the Garden were sanctified so that the land of Erath could forever be tended and protected in Avior’s name. To this day, however, certain apocryphal theologians whisper that some of the Garden’s practices are actually modified eladrin witchcraft.

As one might expect from such rumors, in the face of their victory, without a common enemy to unite them, infighting began between various West Ellohian sects and fiefdoms. When exactly the infighting began is a matter of academic debate, but various conflicts and political machinations have caused 508AD to be the year that most scholars agree to label as a serious instantiation of civil conflict. By 800AD, this conflict had reached a fervent pitch. Erath was threatened by civil war. Then, West Ellohia demanded the “Reclamation” of Old Ellohia. Cynics claim that the church hoped to unify its fiefdoms and put an end to almost 300 years of infighting. Whatever the case, the Pilgrimage of Reclamation ended in disastrous losses.

## The Age of Politics: 821AD—1542AD

In 821AD, the Pilgrimage of Reclamation came to end. As a result of its losses, the West Ellohian Church officially relinquished all political power to its four major fiefdoms: Crealand, Élys, Luftland, and Tortugal. This date would come to be known as the fall of the Ellohian Empire and the rise of the Kingdoms of Aviordom. The various cold wars and bouts of occasional (but often historically undocumented) conflict following this rise came to be known as the Age of Politics.

Crealand was the first country to significantly shift the power dynamics of the Kingdoms of Aviordom. In 829AD, Crealand sent emissaries to the gates of Hammerdeep hoping to initiate trade with their hermetic neighbor. What they found were clans of hardened warriors who had spent hundreds of years battling something known as “the illithid” deep beneath Mount Dolom’s surface. Eager to escape a life of constant danger, the mountain dwarves signed an agreement with Crealand in 830AD known as the Ascendant Accords. Dwarf children as well as adults who served a term of service as Crealish Dragoons would be given permission to worship their own gods on Crealish soil. The Crealish Dragoons came to be a force feared and hated by Crealand’s foes.

Then, in 893AD, a relative balance of power was restored when orcs descended in dagger-boats from

Skålland, across the Frosted Sea, to raid northern Crealish settlements. The Orcs seemed to favor attacking Aviorish monasteries. These attacks have continued with sporadic frequency until the current day, and as a result, Crealand has been forced to act as Aviordom’s norther shield against orcish aggression.

In fact, hostilities reached a peak between 1001AD and 1004AD when Crealish forces—with the blessing of the Ellohian Church—initiated the Skållish Crusades in retaliation for over a hundred years of raids. While the Crusade was ultimately deemed a failure due to Skålland’s inhospitable weather and landscape, members of the Order of Purification continue to go on sporadic “pilgrimages” to Skålland.

Then, in 1102AD, after rediscovering arcane magic during a pilgrimage to Old Ellohia, Eléone Bailliu of Élys returned to West Elohia as a bard and convinced the Ellohian Church to accept bardic magic due to the way such magic could be used to literally sing praise of Avior. To this day, Élys boasts bards of incredible skill, and more than one scholar claims that this date should be listed as the true beginning of the Age of Arcana.

Almost as soon as arcane practice found a home in the Kingdoms of Aviordom, it began to change under the auspice of arcane philosophers seeking to better understand its secrets. By 1262AD, wizardry officially made its mark in the annals of Aviorish history when Nicolas Auguste of Élys used evocation to turn the tide of battle in a conflict between Élys and Tortugal. For a time, it looked as if arcane magic would make Élys the new center of power in the Kingdoms of Aviordom. By 1299AD, however, practitioners in other Kingdoms began to challenge Élysian supremacy; during that year, Gert-Jan ter Hogt of Luftland became the first wizard to—as a matter of public record—use transmutation to permanently enchant large quantities of gunpowder, and the gunsmithing industry was born.

For a time, the progression of arcane philosophy reached a plateau. During that time, in 1488AD, Tortugal discovered the Sunset Isles while trying to find a way to navigate across the Misty sea to the eastern lands that could otherwise be reached only by way of the Golden Path and the Sandy Sea. Soon after, Tortugal and Élys initiated efforts to “colonize” the Isles, and the slave trade in “half-orcs” began.

In 1492AD, Tortugal expelled all “full blooded dwarves” from its borders. Associating dwarves with various losses suffered to Crealish Dragoons, and generally suffering from xenophobia, the Tortuguese crown believed that half-orc slaves would better fill the gaps in industry usually occupied by dwarf laborers or soldiers.

It was 1493AD, however, that provided the Kingdoms of Aviordom with a true colonial goal;

suddenly, without explanation or reason, the currents of the Misty Sea changed. Shortly after, it was discovered that Tír na Aval had returned from the Feywild. Crealand, Élys, and Tortugal all initiated competing efforts to colonize the “New World.” For the most part, Crealand stuck to the central and north eastern region of the continent. Tortugal focused on trying to colonize the central and south eastern region of the continent. Élys, lacking the ports of its sister Kingdoms, was forced to focus on Tír na Aval’s southern jungles. This put Tortugal between both Crealand and Élys, fighting a war on two fronts, which quickly strained its political relations.

It was not only the Kingdoms of Avior that descended into infighting during this period. On the contrary, as a result of theological conflicts between various Aviorish sects, the first religious upheaval occurred in 1534AD. Tensions had been growing between Crealand and the Ellohian Church ever since the Ascendant Accords. When King Henry fell in love with a half-elven girl and requested that the Ellohian Papacy exonerate her elven blood so that they could wed, the Papacy, despite granting such exoneration to countless Élysian nobles, refused. King Henry declared that the Papacy was not needed to speak to Avior, thus siding with various hitherto apocryphal theologians who had been arguing as much for some time. As a result, King Henry named the Crealish crown the head of the newly formed Church of Crealand, and officially espoused the doctrine that any soul willing to accept Avior as their savior was exonerated in the eyes of the Crealish Church.

In 1535AD, tired of living under the Ellohian Church’s autocratic theocracy which no longer served the needs of either the merchant or arcane classes bringing prosperity to Luftland, the Crealish Reformation inspired the Luft Revolution. The Luft monarch—King Klaus van Dijk—tried to use Tortuguese allies to quell the Revolution. After six years of brutal civil war, however, he lost and was executed. The newly formed Merchants’ Council and Wizards’ Council became the two parties of a new Luft Republic. Under their auspices, the Golden Age of Luftland began. Relations between Luftland and Tortugal, however, have remained strained.

In 1542AD, Luftland signed trade agreements and treaties with Crealand giving Crealand preferential access to the Golden Path in return for similar access to trade with Crealish colonies in the “New World.” As a result of events in the following year, this agreement came to be known as the last treaty of the Age of Politics.

## The Age of Arcana: 1543AD—1616AD

In 1543AD, the Frankfurt University of Luftland became the first secular, arcane center of academic

study. To this day, it is the major source of arcane innovation in Avior. The opening of its doors has officially been recognized by most scholars as the beginning of the Age of Arcana.

Tortugal and Élys, threatened by the growing comradery between Crealand and Luftland, created their own trade agreements in 1544AD. As a result of these agreements, Tortugal gave up claim to all but one colony in the Sunset Isles, primarily relinquishing control of the Isles to Élys. In turn, Élys, relinquished control of all but one of its colonies in Tír na Aval, seceding control of the “New World” to Tortugal. This agreement has put a permanent strain on Crealish-Élysian relations which, since the Crealish Reformation, had already begun to deteriorate; the two have been on the verge of war ever since.

For a time, between the suddenly invigorated conflicts it was fighting in the “New World,” continued economic strain from Skállish raids, and the threat that open war would break out with Élys, Crealand suffered. Then, in 1577AD, a Crealish shipwright named Quentin Watson redesigned the Crealish Navy after taking inspiration from Skállish dagger-boats. By combining the width-to-length proportions of Skállish dagger-boats with the traditional deep keels of Aviorish design, and slightly reducing the height of traditional Aviorish fore-and-aft castles in favor of extra decks in the hull of the boat, Watson invented ships-of-the-line capable of an unprecedented combination of speed and fire-power. Soon after, shipwrights across Avior began trying to emulate Watson’s success.

In 1598AD, Queen Isabella of Tortugal took the throne after the death of her father—King Philip—by old age. She was only thirteen when she first ascended to the throne. In 1603AD, King Richard ascended to the throne after Queen Elizabeth died of disease and left Crealand without a direct heir. He was thirty-seven when he ascended. In 1610AD, King Louise ascended to the throne after the death of his father, King Henry. He was nineteen when he ascended. Rumors circulate that King Henry was poisoned, either by Crealish agents or King Louise himself. As a result, Élysian relations with Crealand have continued to deteriorate. Arcane philosophy, on the other hand, continues to provide Avior with new and unexpected marvels...

## Life in the Age of Arcana

Life in the *Age of Arcana* strongly depends on one’s locale. In the capital cities of Erath—Frankfurt, Olay, Santa Megal, West Ellohia, and York—life can take an almost cosmopolitan quality. Travelers from all over Erath congregate for the purposes of trade and adventure. Occasionally, travelers from the Sandy Sea or even more exotic locations make their way through

these urban hubs. Of course, in Erath, even the most cosmopolitan environment is usually poisoned by latent xenophobia waiting to erupt.

In rural Erath, Aviorish xenophobia is anything but latent. Such communities are fearful of strangers, often forbidding even lightfoot caravans from entering their borders. The less one looks human in such towns, the less likely one is to be welcomed. Of course, smaller towns tend to have weaker military presences, which means that if a traveler is threatening enough, they are unlikely to be accosted by villagers, at least until those villagers band together into a pitchforked mob.

Tír na Aval is another story entirely. There, fey and beastfolk gather in cosmopolitan communities whose politics are both arcane and whimsical by Aviorish standards. On the eastern shores of Tír na Aval, Aviorish colonists try to recreate Erathian villages. Outside the boundaries of any given village, however, the landscape is—at least according to the colonists—lawless; Tír na Aval's natives tend to see it the other way around.

Likewise, the availability of civilization's comforts also depends on where one is. In Frankfurt, Olay, Santa Megal, West Ellohia, and York, one can visit a café during the day, sipping a Tortuguese blend, and read newspapers hot from a local, magical press. At night, one can find any beverage they care to consume: Crealish dwarven ale, Élysian wine, or Luft liqueur can all be found, for a price. In rural locations, the villagers might gather around the pub and listen to a public reading of that same newspaper, a week or more after its initial printing, instead. Imported luxuries in such locations are unlikely to be found. On the other hand, local products are readily consumed in lieu of their foreign counterparts. In Tír na Aval, all Erathian luxuries are rare. Of course, adventurous souls might be able to obtain native delicacies instead, if they are willing to overcome their prudish fear of foreign products.

## Early Modern Adventuring Life

Adventuring life in 1616AD bears many similarities to the typical D&D setting, but there are also differences. Heavy armor has started to go out of style, but it is still worn by various men-at-arms, particularly among those who live as nobles and wealthy adventurers. Plate armor is especially popular as a status symbol, if one can afford it. Medium armor is still common, and both breastplate and half-plate are frequently worn by cuirassiers (armored, mounted pistol wielders). Most common soldiers, however,

cannot afford both armor and firearms, making light armor the most commonly worn during the period.

Compared to other D&D settings, firearms are both inexpensive and common. Virtually all nobles and wealthy adventurers use them. That being said, they are still too expensive for peasants and those who are down-on-their luck to purchase them with ease. Often, a local village tavern-keep will have a blunderbuss stowed behind their bar. This item is their prized possession, and the product of many weeks of savings. Most villagers, however, would prefer to use a crossbow rather than a firearm. Both the item and the quarrels it shoots are less expensive. Likewise, firearms are still relatively inaccurate. As a result, hunters and sharpshooters tend to prefer traditional bows and crossbows as well. Finally, swordsmanship is still seen as a more "civilized" martial-art, even if various musketeers, pistoleers, and cuirassiers are slowly changing that perception.

As in other settings, adventurers wander off into the wilderness to eke out a living and search for fame. Some hunt down the legends of local monsters and haunts in remote Erath, protecting rural communities from the remains of the Old World. Even to date, creatures like hags or goblins hide in the deep woods, occasionally preying on those who venture out late and alone. Other adventurers head out on the open sea, visiting foreign lands, perhaps aiding in the colonization of the "New World."

There is, of course, another breed of adventurer: the disenfranchised and downtrodden who see Aviorism as villainous zealotry. Wood elf druids tend to their communities and keep their magic secret from the prying eyes of Puritans or Ellohians. People in desperate need, and without the means to study wizardry "properly," make warlock pacts to gain the power they need to protect their communities and loved ones. Sometimes, such characters will actively oppose Aviorish values. Contrary to Aviorish doctrine, however, such practices do not inherently a villain make, and many such characters are just as drawn to help those in need as an Ellohian paladin.

In Tír na Aval, fey and beastfolk adventurers often take up their people's plight, seeking to oust Aviorish interlopers from their homeland's shores. Such adventurers see Aviorites in much the same light that Crealand perceives of Skål raiders. Of course, there are threats to the Prime Material Realm which sometimes unify everyone with a vested interest in protecting the world, be they Ellohian paladin, eladrin warlock, or Luft cuirassier. Various diabolical cults and demonic incursions are a threat to every sane creature. Sadly, the turmoil and atrocities of war have left many less than sane...