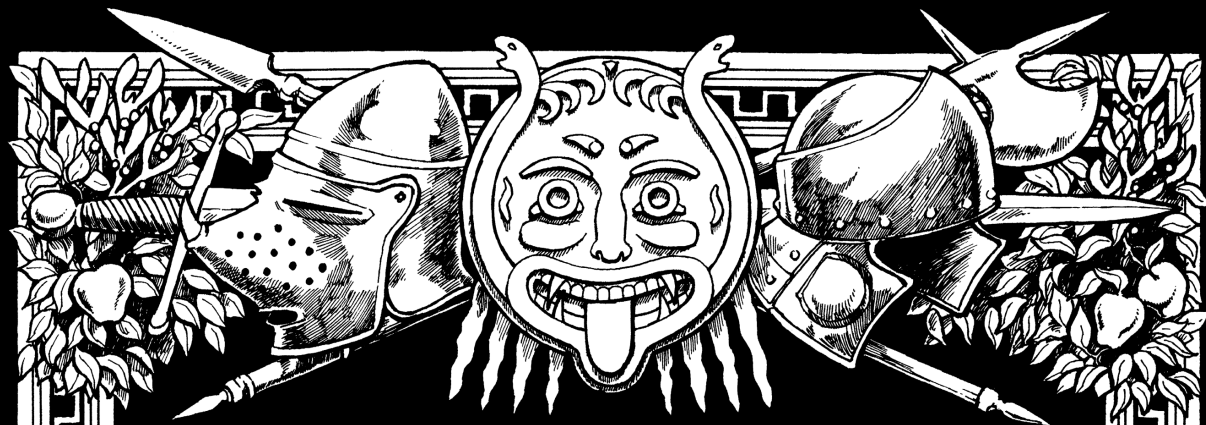


THE ARTESIA COMPENDIUM



A Compilation of Essays by Mark Smylie
for the *Artesia* Graphic Novel Series



Being a compilation of Essays and Appendixes on the Known World, originally published as part of the first three *Artesia* series and graphic novels and here collected for your amusement and edification. The material herein may also be found in full, in part, or expanded upon as part of the histories of the Known World contained in the *Artesia: Adventures in the Known World* Roleplaying Game.

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A GUIDE TO THE DIVINE

YHERA, QUEEN OF HEAVEN

Yhera is the Goddess of Night, Queen of the Waters, and one of the goddesses of the Moon. She is worshipped by the Daradjan Highlanders, amongst others, as the Creatrix, the divine origin of all that is. She is the Great Goddess of language, sovereignty, rulership, wealth, wisdom, love, fertility, protection, and war. Yhera is known by countless names and epithets, so as *Yhera Cosmopeiia* she is the divine World Spirit, as *Yhera Luna* she is the Goddess of the Moon and sister to *Adjia* and *Djara*, as *Yhera Chthonia* she is the primordial earth and sister of *Geniché*, as *Yhera Tredéa* she is the protective goddess of all life, as *Yhera Anath* she is the goddess of war, and as *Yhera Invictus* she is the undefeated Queen of Victory.

GENICHÉ, QUEEN OF THE UNDERWORLD

Geniché was once Goddess and Queen of the Earth, the giver of life, and, with her sister *Geteema*, the mother of all within *Yhera's* creation. The Earth was once her garden, and she ruled it as a Paradise until, in a moment of grief and anger, she abandoned the world and fled into darkness. She created the Underworld and spoke the First Law, mandating that all born of her Earth must follow her into Death. The cause of her grief has been shrouded in mystery.

ADJIA LUNA, THE MOON HUNTRESS

Adjia Luna, sometimes called *Adjiana*, is one of the three goddesses of the Moon, along with her sisters *Yhera* and *Djara*. She is the goddess of transformations, of birth, growth, maturity, maternity, and death. She is also the goddess of transitional places and moments – as *the Huntress*, she is the goddess of the space between man and animal, between culture and nature; as *the Dreamer*, the giver of good visions and dreams, the goddess of the space between consciousness and unconsciousness, the Heavens and the Earth.

DJARA LUNA

Djara, sometimes known as *Urgale* or *Morgale*, is the Moon goddess of Death and Darkness; she is the queen of ghosts and dark magic, the giver of lunacy and nightmares, the keeper and revealer of secrets. Many of her dark brood serve *Geniché* as guardians and guides to the dead. She is most commonly worshipped like her twin sister *Adjia* as the goddess of crossroads, both literal and figurative, though she is often invoked in secret by anyone using curse magic or divinatory magic, as she acts as an aid to both.

GETEEMA

Sister to *Geniché*, *Geteema* is the monstrous Queen of the Dark Earth. She is sometimes known as *the Dragon Mother* and *the Mother of the Giants*, and her children include *Irré the Black Sun*, *Amaymon the Whisperer*, *Vani the Mountain King*, *Heth the Sea King*, and many others. Out of jealousy she sent many of her children to destroy ancient Ürüne Düré, and she herself consumed the body of *Agdah Cosmopeiia*, after which *Yhera* imprisoned her in the Underworld.

AGDAH COSMOPEIIA, THE YEAR-GOD

The God of the Shining Sky, *Agdah Cosmopeiia* is the god of the year-cycle: the growths of spring, the harvests of the fall, and the deprivations of the winter. Worshipped as *Agdah Helios*, he is the Cosmos Sun, the Sun as the source of life. As *Ammon Agdah* he is the Keeper of the Animals or the Household Protector, the guardian of herd and hearth, giver of fertility, luck, and household prosperity, and sometimes the lord of forests and wild animals, and as such is almost always portrayed as having an animal's head or horns or antlers. He taught the peoples of the world the arts of survival after *Geniché* abandoned the Earth. As *Agdah Cosmopeiia*, he was slain by *Geteema* in defense of Düréa, but later restored to Heaven.

DAEDEKAMANI

A son of *Yhera*, *Daedekamani* is considered by many the first magician and creator of the magical arts, especially alchemy; he created the first magical runes, and gifted them and the secrets of their use to mankind, particularly to his descendants amongst the ancient Golans. *Daedekamani* is a wanderer, and so is often considered a patron of travelers as well as a guide to the dead.

SEEDRÉ, GUARDIAN OF THE DEAD

A son of *Geniché*, *Seedré* was the first to follow his mother to the Underworld and became the Judge of the Dead. He watches over the corporeal remains of the deceased, sends *Djara's* daughters to guide them on their journey, and judges them when they appear before him in the Underworld. He is sometimes called *Osidred*.

ILLIKI HELIOS, THE SUN-BULL

Illiki is the Sun-Bull, a son of *Agdah Cosmopeiia* and *Ami the Morning Star*. He lived for a time in Ürüne Düré, until it was lost beneath the sea. He was the father of *Islík* the Divine King. He is worshipped in his guise as *the Spring Sun* as the bestower of progeny and the promoter and protector of vegetation and crops, an archetype of divine kingship; as *the Winter Sun*, he is the dying god with knowledge of the Underworld, cast from the Heavens by his half-brother *Irré* the Black Sun. He was later restored, either by *Yhera* or by his son *Islík*.

IRRÉ, THE BOW-BEARER

Half-brother to *Illiki Helios*, whom he usurped for a time, *Irré* is the Black Sun, bringer of unbearable heat, drought, and the blinding intensity of both darkness and light. *Irré* is the bow-bearing god of plague and fire; he is the Black Goat, a god of war, struggle, disaster, disorder, the desert and the wilderness. He is often held responsible for illness, disease, and sudden death, and so is worshipped in a propitiatory manner to prevent or reverse such events; more positively, *Irré* is a protector of entrances, and so is invoked in the defense of buildings and cities against fire and siege.

HATHHALLA

The Devouring Fire of the Sun, *Hathhalla* is worshipped as the lion-headed goddess of battle and vengeance. *Hathhalla* is the goddess of the Sun's righteous strength, and at *Yhera's* behest she imprisoned *Irré* in the Underworld after he cast down her brother *Illiki Helios*. Some believe her to be a guise of *Halé*, the Goddess of Slaughter.

AMI-AND-DIEVA, THE MORNING AND EVENING STARS

Twin daughters of *Yhera*, *Ami* and *Dieva* are the Maidens of Dawn and Dusk, respectively. *Ami* is a goddess of love, and is associated with fertility and fraternity in their more romantic and socially approved aspects; *Dieva* is a goddess of sexuality, and is often associated with licentiousness and immorality. They are worshipped singly, as a pair, or as the single entity *Amadieva* the Sun Maiden (the strong sun of the morning and the weak sun of the evening).

ISLIK, THE DIVINE KING

Islík is a demigod son of *Illiki Helios*, the Sun-Bull. He was the first of the Illian Dragon Kings, the founder of the Sun Court, and ruled as King of the Earth. After his father was cast down by *Irré*, Islík was usurped by *Ishraha the Rebel*, who cast him into exile. After wandering the world for 21 years, he returned to reclaim his throne, and after imprisoning *Ishraha* in the Underworld, Islík ascended to the Heavens and became King of both Heaven and Earth. His worshippers believe that rather than descending to *Geniché's* Underworld, they ascend to the Heavens to Islík's Palace after they die.

AGALL

Agall is a demigod son of *Agdah Cosmopeiia*. Equally famous for his considerable temper as for his strength and courage, he is worshipped as the First Hero. The Sacker of Cities, he fought alongside *Geteema's* children at the destruction of Ürüne Düré. Though already old, he joined *Islík* in exile as the Black Sail, and helped him regain his throne.

THE GORGONÆ: MOGRAN, HALÉ, AND MÉDÛRE

The Gorgonæ are the Triple War Goddess, daughters of *Djara*, worshipped singly and in combination. *Mogran*, the Riot Goddess, is the goddess of terror, confusion, and dissension; *Halé*, the Goddess of Slaughter, is the goddess of (mindless) rage and berserker fury; and *Médüre*, the Cunning One, is the goddess of warlike skill and heroic valor. They are kept chained in the Underworld, and only *Yhera Anath* or her general, *Ariahavé*, may set them loose. Amongst the Palatians and the Thulamites, they are known as the *Wargarad*.

ARIAHAVÉ

Ariahavé is *Yhera's* brightest and most rebellious daughter. Known as the Civilizer, she is the protectress of cities and citadels and their citizens and defenders; she is the patroness of civilization and its heroes. After *Geniché* abandoned the Earth, she taught the lost peoples of the world the arts of society -- agriculture, poetry, spinning, pottery, music, and mining. She is also the chief war goddess of the Palatians, her most dedicated adherents.

BRAGE THE SMITH

Brage, also called *Abrage*, *Bragea*, and *Braphagos* is the first smith, the creator of the arts of metal-working; he is the fire-god of hearth, kiln, and foundry. He is the creator of a rune-system that bares his name, and a series of wondrous magical artifacts, some of which may still be found throughout the known world. For a time Brage lived amongst the Düréans, and he fell in love with the Galéan Queen *Surtara*. They eloped to the Isle of Khael, and their daughters became the Oracle Queens of Khael.

ACHRE

A daughter of *Brage*, Achre rebelled rather than undergo the ritual to become an Oracle Queen of Khael and lose her eyesight. She crippled Brage, drove him into the Underworld, and escaped the Isle. In her wanderings Achre was adopted by *Ariahavé* the Civilizer, who had been her secret tutor on the Isle of Khael. Achre bound the great Dragon of the Pallithanes and, as the mother of *Archaia*, is the demi-goddess ancestress of the Palatians.

ARCHAIA

The daughter of *Achre*, tutored by *Ariahavé*, Archaia is the founder of the city of Palatia and built its Seven Gates. She bore three daughters, *Divinhrada*, *Vargate*, and *Baséa*, who founded the three most ancient Houses of Palatia. With her daughters, she sailed to war against *Geteema's* children, and was slain in defense of Düréa.

THULA

A daughter of *Geniché*, Thula is the demi-goddess ancestress of the Thulamites, the snake-queen fire-stealer who took the secrets of magic and civilization from the Düréans and the Otherworld for her descendants. She and *Achre* duelled with both weapons and dance to a standoff, and according to some stories she performed magics that allowed her to bear a child by Achre. Thula sailed to defend Ürüne Düré against *Geteema's* children, though she had herself weakened its defenses. She is known variously as *the Forked Tongue*, *the Mother of Heroes*, and *the Fire-Queen*.

DALL AND PULMA

Twin daughters of *Thula*, Dall and Pulma were placed by Thula in the care of *Ami* and *Dieva* as infants, and they made the Heavens their first home. They used their mother's stolen magics to bind horses, fought by her side at the sinking of Düréa, and later they returned to the Heavens and now appear as the Twins constellation.

CERAM

A son of *Thula*, Ceram is the demi-god ancestor of the Ceraics, exiled by his mother after he refused to aid the Düréans. He is called the Thunderer, and his father is said to have been *Illiki* the Sun-Bull, seduced by Thula in Ürüne Düré during her raid there, making him the half-brother of *Islik*. Ceram hunted Islik and the Four Kings in Exile when they passed through the great deserts of the Midlands.

VANI

Demi-god ancestor of the mountain-dwelling Vanimorians, Vani is the son of *Ammon Agdah* and *Geteema*; he is often depicted as having either an eagle or vulture head. He is called the Mountain King, and brings the Spring thaw. Worship of Vani spread considerably during the Vanimorian dominance of the Thessid-Golan Empire, but with the rise of the Isliklids (who champion *Irré*), his worship has largely retreated back into the mountains.

LIGRID, THE TEMPTRESS

A daughter of *Geteema*, Ligrid is the Queen of Licentiousness and Perversity; she is often thought of as either a rival to *Dieva*, *Dieva's* secret tutor, or even as a guise or mask of *Dieva*. While *Dieva's* sexuality

is generally socially acceptable, Ligrid is the breaker of taboos and the corruptor of flesh and spirit.

AMAYMON, THE WHISPERER

The Prince of Intrigue and Secret Power, Amaymon is the dark rule-breaker. He is the son of *Geteema* and *Daedekamani*, though his father rejected him and denied his paternity. Amaymon is now his father's greatest rival and enemy. He is the god of secret knowledge, bribery, corruption, and assassins, worshipped by those who want something for nothing. He counseled *Irré* to overthrow *Illiki Helios* and *Isbraha* to begin his rebellion against *Islik* the Divine King, thus beginning the War in Heaven.

ISHRAHA, THE REBEL ANGEL

A demigod son of *Irré*, Ishraha was a faithful general to *Islik* after his ascent to the Sun Throne of Illia and the creation of the first Sun Court. After *Irré* cast down *Illiki Helios*, Ishraha led a rebellion against *Islik* and usurped the throne, casting *Islik* and his loyal followers into exile. *Islik* later returned to claim his rightful realm, casting Ishraha into a prison in the Underworld before ascending to the Heavens.



THE DÜRÉANS

In the difficult years following *Geniché's* abandonment of the Earth, amongst the peoples of the world wandering lost in confusion were three tribes of the Moon's descendants. They were the *Améans*, descended of *Adja* Luna and her Companions; the *Numéans*, descended of *Urige*, daughter of *Yhera* Luna; and the *Galéans*, descended of the Gorgonæ, the triple daughters of *Djara* Luna.

Ammon Agdah showed them how to survive in the harsh new wilderness that had overtaken *Geniché's* gardens, and then Ariahavé one by one brought the three tribes across the sea to an isle. Ariahavé taught them the arts of the world, and showed them many of her mother's secrets: beauty and magic, love and war, building and unbuilding. They built a great city on the isle, and planted great gardens in its palaces. The three tribes of the Moon named the isle *Ürüne Düré* (usually translated as either *Mountain of Thrones* or *Heart of Thrones*), and in time they were called the *Düréans*.

For a thousand years, Ürüne Düré was the the greatest and most beautiful city on the face of the Earth, rivaled in art and learning only by the cities of the Gola founded by *Hashuwaht* the First King, where *Daedekamani* taught alchemy to his worshippers and descendants. The Queens of Düréa were fabled for their wisdom, beauty, and knowledge, and men and women came from every corner of the world to learn from them. The Düréans sent explorers and colonists to found cities and build great palaces of marble and clay. *Bragea* the Smith came to live in Ürüne Düré, and set up his great forge there, producing wonders for the Düréan Queens. Illiki the Bull saw the city from the sky above, and came to live there for a time. He ruled from Ürüne Düré as the Bull of Heaven, and the Düréans built temples to him wherever their ships went.

After a thousand years had passed since its founding, the Queens of Ürüne Düré awoke to a bleak vision: *Geteema*, Goddess of the Dark Earth, had looked upon the treasures of Düréa and had been filled with jealousy, and she was sending her children to destroy it. This came to pass, and an army of demigods, giants, titans, monsters and great heroes led by a dark and fiery Dragon crossed the sea to destroy the Isle and its defenders, who were led by the Düréan heroine *Hannath Hammergreia*. A great siege began, and gods and heroes from across the world came to aid in its defense, but the Last Queens had already foreseen their fate. For thirty-one years the siege raged, but in the end *Geteema* consumed *Agdah Cosmopeia* and drove *Illiki Helios* back into the Heavens, and her army swept triumphant over Ürüne Düré's great walls. The Last Queens bade *Achre* of Palatia and *Thula* of *Téthédre* and *Oloma* of *Sabuta* to take the last of the Düréans with them across the sea, out of the doomed city. The last three Queens -- *Néma*, Queen of the *Numéans*, *Evaka*, Queen of the *Galéans*, and *Hercyna*, Queen of the *Améans* -- performed a final enchantment and the Isle crumbled into the waters, taking the armies of *Geteema* with it. Ürüne Düré was lost forever beneath the sea, and the Düréans were scattered into the world.



A MYTH OF THE BLACK HUNTER

Before the dawn of history, one amongst the Race of Men committed a grievous crime, and Geniché abandoned the Earth and withdrew into the Underworld. Different cultures have different myths of the Crime that ended the Age of the Gods, but most believe it was Theft, Murder, or Rape: something that was taken, rather than received as a gift. The unknown perpetrator was cursed by Geniché, Yhera, and Hathhalla with horns as a mark of his crime, and the Horned Man has been a popular scapegoat ever since. Bereft of the presence of Geniché, the Earth, once a Paradise, became a dangerous and desolate wilderness, and the creatures of the world wandered lost in confusion.

Some amongst Geniché's children chose to follow her into the Underworld. The first was her son *Seedré*, also called *Osidred*, who became the Judge of the Dead, appointed by his mother to greet the dead at the place of their judgment and listen to the accounts of their accusers, even as he awaited the arrival of the Horned Man. Many of the spirits of the Earth followed after him, as did beasts great and small, and parts of the world were no longer fertile. And many of Djara's dark brood followed her, dark-hearted spirits who became Death Guides and furies, nightmares and carrion eaters, and teemed in the darkness of the Underworld.

Some of Geniché's children stayed behind to help the peoples of the world in their struggle to survive their harsh new environs. Others stayed behind to hurt them, blaming them for their mother's decision to abandon the Earth. One such was her youngest son, who grew angry that the world had driven his mother into exile. His brother, Ammon Agdah, had forgiven the Race of Men, and was now helping the lost peoples of the world to survive, but Geniché's youngest could not forgive them. He looked up to the sky, and saw Hathhalla sharpening her great axe, and he prayed to her for guidance. She whispered in his ear, and he fashioned a huge barbed spear out of an ancient oak and summoned a great steed, and he began to hunt across the Earth.

Wherever he went, he would fall upon the lost peoples of the Earth with a great roar, taking the still-living heads of those he speared as trophies to dangle from hooks, and casting a compulsion upon others to make him join his vengeful quest. In time his first name was forgotten, and he came to be called **the Black Hunter**, and his mad entourage was called **the Wild Hunt**, and they were a plague upon a desolate world.

The Wild Hunt raged across the Earth for long centuries, and one day the Black Hunter spied three tribes gathering upon an isle, and sought to hunt there. The Wild Hunt jumped the Silver Scale Sea and landed upon the shores of Ürine Düré, but the goddess Ariahavé leapt from the skies and drove them back across the sea, barring them from returning. Ariahavé taught the way to defeat the Black Hunter to the Düréans. They in turn taught Achre and Thula, Ceram and Oloma, King Hashuwaht and Agall together, Cewert, Surep; in time, a thousand heroes from across the world learned the way to defeat the Black Hunter and one by one they did so, until he roared only in the dark places of the Earth where even heroes rarely went. Finally the Düréan Queen **Hannath Hammergeia** sought him out, and though he killed her once, she returned from the dead as was her wont and the tables were turned, and the Black Hunter became the hunted. She caught him and banished him to the Underworld.

When Geniché found her youngest son finally returned to her, she summoned Hathhalla from the Heavens, and sent Hathhalla as an emissary to her sister Yhera, to ask that her son be allowed one night of the year to hunt upon the world. Hathhalla brought her request to the Queen of Heaven, and after long thought Yhera relented and commanded that the Black Hunter be loosed upon the world the night before the Day of the Law, which marked the coming of Death, to hunt those that strayed from shelter.

So now once a year, at the beginning of winter, the Wild Hunt rides and the peoples of the world must seek shelter: behind door or gate, in house or city (protected by *Ammon Agdah* and *Ariahavé*); nearby blessed hearthstone or campfire (protected by *Ammon Agdah*, *Yhera Parage*, or *Ariahavé Parage*); or within a magic warding. All others are fair game for the Hunt.

But sometimes the Wild Hunt breaks loose from the Underworld, and rides out unannounced into the world.



A YEAR OF THIRTEEN MOONS

Three primary calendrical systems are used throughout the Known World. The oldest is the Düréan Lunar Calendar, which divides the year into a cycle of thirteen full moons that appear over the course of 364 days. Each moon cycle lasts 28 days, and is divided into four seven-day weeks. The Düréans marked the first day of the year on the anniversary of the return of Ami and Dieva from the Underworld, announcing the return of Helios. Traditionally, the months of the year are **First Moon** (*Arisa-luna*), **Spring Moon** (*Nisa-luna*), **Axe Moon** (*Labra-luna*), **Green Moon** (*Tamaz-luna*), **Bull Moon** (*Auros-luna*), **Twin Moon** (*Diana-luna*), **Scarab Moon** (*Rab-luna*), **Harvest Moon** (*Elul-luna*), **Red Moon** (*Marina-luna*), **Judgment Moon** (*Hannan-luna*), **Scorpion Moon** (*Urgala-luna*), **Twilight Moon** (*Daradana-luna*), and **Last Moon** (*Annuu-Luna*).

The Düréan Lunar Calendar is essentially the official Festival Calendar of the Cult of Yhera, and is still used, sometimes with different names, in Khaal, Palatia and its territories, by the Ceraic and Oceraic nomads of the Midlands, and in parts of the Far West and Far North. The Düréans dated their calendar from the founding of Ürine Düré, and according to the scribes of Khaal the current Lunar year is 2616 (usually marked with a 'd' to indicate the Düréan Calendar, as in d2616). The Palatians begin the dating of years from the founding of the City of Palatia Archaia, and mark their dates with a 'p,' so for them the current year is p1640.

Almost as old as the Düréan Lunar Calendar is the Golan Celestial Calendar, based upon the cycle of the Star Signs. The appearance of a new Sign in the Heavens marks the beginning of a new month. The Signs of the Celestial Calendar are **The Ram** (*Nisanu*), **The Bull** (*Ayargu*), **The Sky Twins** (*Hasiggisah*), **The Scarab** (*Dam'uzu*), **The Sun Lion** (*Lebargu*), **The Maiden** (*Urigu*), **The Scales** (*Tashru*), **The Sphinx** (*Djarahsvan*), **The Archer** (*Hanun'at*), **The Dragon** (*Tiamet*), **The Star-Child** (*Shebetea*), and **The Serpent** (*Adaral*).

The Celestial Calendar is the official secular calendar of the Thessid-Golan Empire and the neighboring Queendom of Amora-and-Meretia, though they both use the Imperial Avellan Calendar as the official Divine King liturgical calendar. The dating of Celestial years began with the institutionalization of the calendar by King Hashuwaht, and generally mark the current date as c2432 (with a 'c' to indicate the Celestial Calendar). Official Imperial annals in Thessid-Gola are generally dated from the ascent of Akkalion to the Emperor's throne, 446 years ago, though some in the Empire insist on dating recent years from when he fell into the Gray Dream, 406 years ago.

The third primary calendar is the Imperial Avellan Calendar, created and instituted by the Court of Dauban Hess, the Golden Emperor (at the time the Court was located in Avella, in Thessidia). The year begins on the anniversary of the Divine King's return to Illia from exile, when Islik emerged from his ordeals in the Underworld to regain his throne (corresponding to the 4th day of the First Moon in the Düréan Lunar calendar). The year is divided into twelve months based upon the anniversaries of various heroic deeds performed by the Divine King: ten months to mark His Ten Victories (**Telesium**, **Sirenium**, **Myradéum**, **Arathéum**, **Ceranium**, **Midéadad**, **Édorum**, **Hemodium**, **Mortium** and **Illianum**), one month to mark his reign on earth (**Emperium**), and one month to mark his ascension to the Heavens (**Ascensium**). The Imperial Avellan Calendar functions as the official liturgical calendar of Divine King worship.

The Imperial Avellan Calendar is also the official secular calendar throughout Sun Court Divine King lands, including the Hemapoline League of Cities (comprising the Isle of Illia, where the Sun Court is located, and the Hemispian Peninsula), the Middle Kingdoms, and amongst the priestly hierarchy of the Phoenix Court of the Thessid-Golan Empire. The calendar was backdated from the time of Dauban Hess to the ascension of Islik the Divine King into Heaven. The current year (marked with an 'i' to indicate the Imperial Avellan Calendar) is generally recorded as i1472.

In the Highlands of Daradja, both the Lunar Calendar and the Imperial Avellan Calendar of the Middle Kingdoms are used, as is the Avellan Year, currently i1472.

The events of this book take place beginning on the 26th day of Green Moon.



DRAGON KINGS & EMPERORS

Islik was born a half-mortal, the demigod son of *Illiki Helios*, the Sun-Bull, and *Herrata* the Blessed, a daughter of the line of the ancient hero *Myrcalion*, was born on the isle of *Illia*, sometimes called the Isle of the Sun, standing as it does between the Silver Scale Sea and the great Golden Sea of the East. He ascended to the throne of *Illia* and established his Sun Court soon after reaching manhood. As King of *Illia* he warred against the barbarian warlords of the Hemispian Peninsula, and eventually brought those lands under his control. Tributes were sent to him from the Gola and Galia, and he was then called for the first time King of the Earth.

Islik was overthrown by *Isbraha*, the Rebel Angel, who usurped his throne and cast him into exile. For 21 years, *Islik* wandered the world with *Agall*, *Coromat* of *Vanimoria*, and *Jala* of *Samarappa* as the four Kings in Exile, traveling beyond the Midlands and finally even into the Underworld. He performed Ten Victories during his journeys to prove his right to the throne, the last of which was casting *Isbraha* into Hell. After siring many sons he ascended into the Heavens into a new palace of his own making. There *Islik* became the Divine King of both Heaven and Earth, at least according to his followers.

His descendants and followers held near-divine power in his name throughout *Illia* and *Hemispia*. The greatest of them were called **Dragon Kings** in the manner of days of old, for they seemed to have in them the powers of the ancient followers of *Cewert*, the great hero of *Hemispia*, but without having to kill dragons and giants to gain their powers as *Cewert* had taught; such power was simply their birthright as the heirs of *Islik*.

DAUBAN HESS

In time, however, the Dragon Kings of *Illia* and *Hemispia* fell to squabbling, and war rent the land until **Dauban Hess**, a descendant of *Islik*, unified them again under his own banner and was hailed as the Conqueror King. Some said that *Islik* had come down from Heaven to sire *Dauban Hess* himself, so great was his power.

Dauban Hess consolidated *Illia* and *Hemispia*, and then struck out into the world. He conquered *Amora* with ease, and then the ancient courts of the Gola welcomed him with open arms, and he established his court at the city of *Seker*. There he was told of *Nymarga the Tyrant*, the great lord of *Thessidia*, by rumor a son of *Isbraha*. *Nymarga* had taken power in the West, and was being hailed as the Worldly Tyrant.

Divine King seers proclaimed *Nymarga* a son of *Isbraha* and *Ligrid*, the Temptress Queen. So in i221 *Dauban Hess* led his armies out of the Gola into *Thessidia*, and began a great war, the war between the Conqueror King and the Worldly Tyrant. Twenty years passed in bloody conflict on a scale not seen since the War in Heaven, until *Dauban Hess* slew *Nymarga* in *Tir-en-Tiel* and took his crown. *Nymarga's* body was cursed by priests of the Divine King and entombed in salt.

Dauban Hess conquered *Thessidia* and *Vanimoria*, far into the West to *Metea* and *Samarappa* and the lands of the *Ghal*, where he drove out the *Islikidiae*, False Pretenders who claimed descent from *Islik* as he did, before returning to conquer *Dania*. He received tribute from *Khael*, and in all the known world only a minor city-state, *Palatia*, refused to recognize him as the Golden Emperor of the World.

Dauban Hess moved the Sun Throne of *Illia* to *Millene* and established his own political court in *Avella*, capital of *Thessidia*, ruling over the largest empire in history. He tired of court life, however, and soon left on a great expedition to the East to find the Dawn, where *Helios* the Sun rises each day. He was never heard from again.

THE WORM KINGS

Before sailing into the Golden Sea, *Dauban Hess* had appointed a series of great Kings who held power over his territories, each given a Dragon Throne as a sign of their authority in his name. As time passed without word from the Emperor, some of the Kings declared themselves powers in their own right, and fell into squabbling. After

divinations seemed to reveal the death of *Dauban Hess*, a split emerged between the generals appointed by *Dauban Hess* and the Dragon Kings of *Illia*, *Hemispia* and *Dania*, who held power as hereditary monarchs of the ancient Sun Court. None could hold the Golden Empire together on their own, and soon the Empire broke into many pieces, ruled by the Successor Kings.

Worship of the Divine King suffered a schism. In the east and in *Dania*, where *Dauban Hess* had kept Dragon Kings in power, the principle of inherited kingship was championed by those who reinstated the Sun Court in *Illia*. In the south and west, the Successor Kings of *Thessid-Gola* proclaimed their allegiance to the Phoenix Court at *Millene* in response, and asserted non-hereditary claims on kingship, being for the most part generals appointed to power.

As it was once the Imperial Court of *Dauban Hess*, the Phoenix Court at first outshone the Sun Court, but in time, the *Thessid-Golan* Kings fell prey to the subtle influence of magic inherited from *Nymarga's* rule in *Millene*. Since rule by appointment could not guarantee the lasting legacy of an inheritance passed on to descendants after death, some of the rulers of the Phoenix Court grew increasingly interested in enchantments to extend their lives. The use of alchemy and sorcery increased, as did the worship of dark Forbidden Gods amongst the Successor Kings of the Phoenix Court. They became twisted and corrupt shadows of their former selves, and their bodies rotted but did not die, and they were called the Worm Kings. They waged war against the Sun Court, warring against the Dragon Kings, *Amora*, *Khael*, and *Palatia*, even as rebellion swept *Thessid-Gola*.

A Worm King fleet sacked the Oracle City, on *Khael*, and in so doing brought about their doom. They were cursed by the Oracle Queen with her dying breath, and their capital of *Millene* disappeared in a volcanic maelstrom, taking with it the original Sun Throne and plunging the world into the *Winter Century*.

After the destruction of *Millene*, *Thessid-Gola* disintegrated. *Vanimoria* and the Gola, now called *Grand Sekeret*, went their separate ways. New kings and priests came to power in *Thessidia*, and they led the great purge of Worm King influence from the new Phoenix Court. They rejected the title of King, and called themselves *Emirs*, ruling by appointment in the Phoenix Court tradition. Throughout the world, the last of the Worm Kings were hunted to their deaths, though the hunt took centuries. The last known Worm King, *Githwaine*, was found disguised in *Uthed Dania*, and there *Erlwulf*, called by some the last true Dragon King, was slain in its pursuit. *Githwaine* was unmasked and destroyed, and *Uthed Dania* was blighted and became *Lost Uthedmael*.

THE LION EMPEROR

In time a new power rose in *Thessidia*, the young emir *Akkalion*, scion of a princely house untainted by a Worm King past. A great warlord, he led his armies into *Grand Sekeret*, but after conquering the land he submitted himself to the testing of the Golan Great Schools, and so was hailed as the *Thessid-Golan Emperor*. He reconstituted the Phoenix Court in *Sekeret*, and then turned west and conquered *Vanimoria*, *Metea* and *Ramoristan*, intent on reestablishing the Golden Empire of *Dauban Hess*.

He was unable to conquer *Samarappa* from the *Islikids*, who had returned to rule the West, and *Akkalion* returned from his conquests having learned humility. He conquered *Amora* and received tribute from the Sun Court cities of *Illia* and *Hemispia*. He turned then to the land of *Dania*, now called the Four Kingdoms of *Dania*, *Auria*, *Atallica*, and *Maece*. He landed with a great fleet in *Maece*, and there was met by the Watchtower Kings of the coast, backed by inland allies. The night before their battle *Akkalion* was overcome by a strange dream from which he did not awake, and in the morning *Irré*, the Black Sun, rose in the sky; bereft of their Emperor, the demoralized *Thessid* army was driven into the sea.

The Black Day Battle marked the end of the Empire's expansion. *Akkalion* was taken back to his capital, *Avella*, but his mind remained trapped in his dream. The Sun Court lands of *Illia* and *Hemispia*, organized now into the Hemapoline League of Cities, ceased their tributes, and the Queens of *Amora*, backed by the upstart city-state of *Palatia*, threw out their *Thessid* overlords. Power in the Empire fell first to the Phoenix Court and the priests of the Emperor's own cult, but eventually a Sultan was appointed to speak in the Emperor's stead and lead the Imperial emirs.



TALES OF THE WITCH-QUEEN

Of the three goddesses of the Moon, the most feared is *Djara Luna*, the goddess of the waning and Dark Moon, when the Moon disappears from the Heavens and travels the distant and secret paths of the Otherworld and the Underworld. When the Moon is dark, the door between the worlds is open and may be passed through by those who know the way, and by the unwary. Since before time Djara has walked the paths of darkness, and she is said to have known Death even before Geniché first pronounced her Law. Djara built the Underworld from her dreams and held its throne in readiness until Geniché descended to become Queen of Death as she had been Queen of Life.

Despite her dark and secret ways – or perhaps because of them – Djara has a great unnumbered brood, both by unnamed consorts and by her own magics. Her children include Sleep and Doom, who serve Yhera herself, and Din and Discord, who serve the Gorgonæ. Angels of death and dooms, nightmares, furies, death guides and guardians, haunts and other frightening spirits – almost all of the inhabitants of the dark and secret parts of the Underworld and the Heavens are her children, according to the *Corpus Divinica Dürëa*, the first codified book of stories about the gods.

Of her children, all but four were born into the Otherworld and claim the Otherworld as their proper domain. Her four children born in the worldly sphere were four daughters: **Annaft**, who dwells on an isle in the Golden Sea where Ami the Morning Star first comes to call each day; **Hemwayne**, also called the Sand Queen, who dwells in an oasis of the Ulik Desert and leaves no footprints in the dunes; **Memyra**, who dwells on a wooded isle of the Panoch Sea, north even of Palatia; and **Urgrayne**, who dwells upon a lofty crag in the Harath Éduin mountains.

Urgrayne has haunted the world since before human memory. Though she is called *the Witch-Queen of the Harath Éduius* and makes her residence in those mountains by all report, folktales tell of her presence throughout the Midland steppes and deserts, the mountains of Metea and Vanimoria (where she is called *Geteema's midwife*), and even into the distant Kessite kingdoms (where she is called *the Seer of Kings*). Amongst the Isliklids, who migrated from Kessite lands in the Far West to the Dain Éduius, fighting and then joining the Thessid Empire along the way, she is reportedly called *the Pathfinder*.

Legends say that Urgrayne and her sisters were active in the courts of Ürüne Dürë. In more recent times Urgrayne has been rarely seen, and is more often spoken of in folktales and popular stories in which she is encountered at night by travelers on the road. According to these folktales, Urgrayne appears riding an ornamented sled drawn by a team of black horses, accompanied by armed and armored knights who never speak or show their faces. Some tales say that her bodyguards are merely hollow suits of armor that have been enchanted with the semblance of life; other tales claim that her bodyguards are men who have gazed upon her face and form and become enchanted by the sight of her, leaving their former lives to exist solely on the sustenance of her presence. Several ballads based on such tales – *the Erl and the Witch Queen*, *the Knight of Thorns and the Witch Queen*, and the more recent (and some say, historical) *Lord Malcolm and the Witch Queen* – are popular throughout the region.

Amongst the Highland Clans, by both legend and local report, are self-proclaimed members of **the Witch's Host**, who claim some connection to Urgrayne; they claim her blessing is a mark of fortune for their chieftains, captains and priestesses. She is described as their patron and protector, though no clear benefit seems to result from this association. Some claim she directs their actions in secret, but no evidence of this has ever been found. The warlords who fought Dauban Hess' legions long ago and the leaders of the Highland companies that fought the Empire at the Black Day Battle were all from the Witch's Host, according to popular lore.

Even less certain is her influence upon practitioners of magic throughout the Middle Kingdoms. The Divine King order of Agall, dedicated to their hero-patron's hatred of unlicensed practitioners of the magical arts, have long held that Urgrayne is the titular and actual head of a vast network of evil-doers. They have blamed her and her agents as the frequent cause of disease, pestilence, drought, rebellion, and sedition throughout the Middle Kingdoms.



CITADEL KING & HIGHLAND CLAN

The Danian Highlands, which include the Harath and Dain Éduin mountain ranges, comprise some of the worst terrain in the region of the Silver Scale Sea. According to legend, the Highlands were once green and prosperous in the days of Geniché's Eden, but became blighted and desolate with her absence from the world. The original inhabitants of the Highlands were descendants of **Queen Dara**, daughter of Yhera, and called themselves *Daradjans*. Under barbaric kings and queens they led an isolated life, though they are recorded as amongst the defenders of Dürëa at the Isle's fall.

After the fall of Dürëa, the Daradjan warriors who returned brought with them Dürëan refugees, who were granted lands and accepted as subjects of the realm of Daradja by Queen Lanys. Her hospitality and openness angered some amongst the mountain folk, who rejected the newcomers and began to refer to themselves as *Highlanders* (to distinguish themselves from the newer lowland arrivals to Daradja).

Though never a cause of outright violence, this schism continued to the point where even today the term *Highlander* is only applied to those that claim a direct descent from the original Daradjans, while the term *Daradjan* is used for anyone who lives in the Highlands regardless of bloodline or origins. Dürëans who fled the sinking of the Isle, Danians and Aurians from the lowlands, Déskédrans and Téthédrans from the north, Galians and Vanimorians who settled there during Dauban Hess' brief rule, Hemispian adventurers who hunted Githwaine, even slaves and servants of the Isliklid who have fled the Dain Éduius – all have over time mixed with the original peoples of the land, and come to be called Daradjans, though the realm of Daradja ceased to exist centuries ago in any meaningful political sense after the four daughters of **Arathea** plunged her realm into civil war, fighting to control the four Great Citadels of Daradja: An-Athair, Finleth, Dara Dess and Heth Moll.

The stone citadels that dot the region, built by the ancient Daradjans and their most lasting physical legacy, have long fallen into the hands of different competing factions. In addition to the four Great Citadels, at least twenty minor citadels of ancient provenance (and perhaps hundreds more castles, keeps, and towers of more recent construction) serve as seats of local power. The rulers of the ancient citadels generally claim the title of King or Queen, though the usage of such titles is far more informal than the strict hierarchies of the Middle Kingdoms. The only title of rank for high-born landholders acknowledged throughout the whole of the Highlands is **lord**; lords acting in a martial capacity who can muster a full **banner** – a military unit of at least 20 mounted soldiers – are called **banner lords**. Other titles (the ancient Danian *erl*, the Hemispian *baron*, the Imperial title of *dux* or *duke*) are claimed on occasion, but are not common.

The Highlanders that claim direct descent from the ancient Daradjans long ago established themselves as the **Highland Clans**, the First Children of Dara, and claim the status of exiles in their own land. The Clans generally eschew the politics of the region's other inhabitants, and dwell in the most desolate areas from the Dain Éduius to Pela's Gap. Twenty-eight Clans are generally acknowledged, though that number is in dispute as several of them are factions that have split off from larger Clans. By tradition the Clans' military might has been the Free Companies, standing bodies of mercenaries that seek service with clan chieftains in times of strife, the oldest of which were formed around i1065 to follow King Cynan to fight at the Black Day Battle. Eight Highland Companies of some history – the **Marauders**, the **Blackhearts**, the **Long Claws**, the **Leatherskins**, the **Bronzehearts**, the **Blackwings**, the **Silverwings**, and the **Ironclads** – currently serve the King of Dara Dess.

Many consider the Citadel Kings and Free Companies of Daradja to be little better than brigands and pirates, and indeed many of them have either risen from such pasts or slunk into those careers in times of trouble and want. The Highlands have long been a gathering ground for bandits and worse, in particular for criminals and exiles banished "over the mountains" from the Middle Kingdoms. Some brigand bands have elaborate histories, such as the **Cyr Faira Mal**, who have seemingly haunted the Vale of Skulls since the dawn of time, and the **Bloody Hundred**. The northern coast of Daradja is dotted with seaside citadels and fortified ports that act as the home base for fierce pirates.



TALES OF THE ISLIKIDS

After the fall of Ürüne Düré, Yhera left the Heavens to wander the Underworld in search of the spirit of Agdah Cosmoepia. In her absence, Illiki Helios was overthrown from his throne as the Sun King by his older brother Irré the Black, who accused him of abandoning the defense of Düréa and too hastily claiming the mantle of the Sun God after Agdah's death. And for a brief time Irré the Black ruled the Heavens as the Sun. But Islik, the King of the Earth and once heir to his father Illiki's throne, denied the validity of Irré as the Sun King, and so withheld the sacrifice due the Sun.

Islik's general, Ishraha, used this to foment rebellion against him, and Islik was overthrown. Wandering in exile, Islik met three other Kings who had rejected the rule of the Black Sun: ancient Agall, in exile from his Kingdom after the disgrace of his war on Düréa and the loss of his army; Coromat of Vanimoria, roaming the earth after the binding of Geteema, Queen of the Dark Earth; and Jala the Good Prince, son of Surep, King of far Samarappa, exiled by a magician of the Celestial Court after the death of his father.

While the exploits of the Kings in Exile are part of Divine King lore, no mention is made in traditional Sun Court or Phoenix Court texts of Islik having children while in the Far West, where the Kings in Exile spent time in their wanderings. *The Ten Victories of Islik* includes a Victory over the magics of the Kings of the West, and a Victory over the treachery of an enemy called the Blooded prior to Islik's descent into the Underworld and his victory over Death, but no mention of him having any descendants.

But according to Golan scholars of the Great Schools who have studied them, the Islikids make this claim: that the four Kings in Exile, while pursued by Ceram the Thunderer, came across the Midlands to lands near Jala's Samarappa, where they dwelt in safety amongst the Rajiks, and took wives and bore children. Islik, who called himself 'the son of the True Sun,' was greeted by the people of the desert West as the son of Irré, who blazed black in the sky, and they conquered the nearby Khaghals for him, and for a time he ruled the Kingdom of the Sun by Lake Hazrat. But in time his sons and daughters asked why they made no sacrifice to the Black Sun, as was considered proper; and Islik revealed his true paternity, and proclaimed his rebellion against Irré.

His children gathered in great dismay, and after much heated discussion amongst themselves they chose to defy the edicts of Islik and revive the practice of sacrifice to Irré and the other gods, and war broke out between the Kings in Exile and their children. Jala listened to the reasoning of his children, and was swayed; he left with his children and returned to Samarappa, and became King, and made sacrifice to the gods. Coromat killed his children in battle, and lost his mind, and fled into the wilderness. The great hero Agall was slain by his sons, who roared their anger and rage as they rent his flesh. Islik fought his progeny, but could not kill them, such was their strength. When he saw Agall dead, he mourned his beloved companion, and descended into the Underworld to save his friend, and while in the Underworld, Islik placed a curse upon his rebellious children.

Islik's descendants – the Islikids, or *Islikidae* – held thrones in the West despite the curse of their father, though they now called their domain the Kingdom of Hazrat-Ghal. They extended their rule over the peoples of the Western Midlands, the Rajiks and the Khaghals and the Urghals, and eventually over parts of Samarappa, challenging the princely sons of Jala. The Islikids ruled with an iron grip until the coming of Dauban Hess, the Conqueror King, and his army. At first, hearing that Dauban Hess claimed descent from Islik, they greeted him as their brother and cousin. But Dauban Hess denounced them and their false claims, saying they were the children of Ishraha and Irré, and condemned them for sacrifice to the gods and other unseemly and degenerate practices. For 16 years the armies of Dauban Hess and the lords of Hazrat-Ghal fought throughout the West, until at last Dauban Hess drove the Islikids into exile, in the year 262 (of the Imperial Avellan calendar, marked as i262).

For a time, the Islikids disappeared from the Known World. According to their own histories as revealed to the Imperial Court, they took service with the Emperors of Califa in the Unknown World for several centuries. They reappeared in the Far West in the Winter Century, leading an army of warlords and thralls through the Valley of

Hooves. They first reconquered the Lake Hazrat region, driving out or enslaving the Kessite lords, then the entirety of Samarappa, destroying the Celestial Court and ending the direct line of descent of the sons of Jala the Good Prince. The Islikids proclaimed their lands as the Kingdom of the Düméghal, and ruled for four dark centuries.

In i1038, the new ruler of the revived Thessid-Golan Empire, Akkalion, finished his conquest of neighboring Ramoristan and established a temporary court at the City of Opals. He sent emissaries to the Islikids, proclaiming his ancient right to the lands of the Kessites and Samarappans, but the Islikids sent back the bones of his messengers. Akkalion launched campaigns against the Islikids for ten years, and despite some victories he was thwarted at every turn, and so he returned to the East having learned humility.

At the Black Day Battle against the Middle Kingdoms, Akkalion fell under the spell of what would come to be called the Gray Dream. When word of this reached the Islikids, they abandoned the Kingdom of the Düméghal, leading their warlords and thralls into Ramoristan. They conquered the City of Opals by i1083 and invaded Thelea and the Sea of Sands, warring against both the Empire and the Ceraics. The Islikids came slowly east, spreading darkness and death and pestilence and slaughter; first Thelea, then Metea, then Pfalk, until by i1150 they had invaded Vanimoria and were driving the Princes of the Mountains from their cities. For over fifty years, the Empire poured the armies of the East into Vanimoria to fight off the predations of the Islikids, but finally in i1206 the Islikids sacked the ancient Vanimorian capital city of Tir-en-Tiel and were on the verge of invading the lowlands of Galia and Thessidia.

The Empire offered the Islikids any price for peace, then. For six years, the Islikids were silent, and held their warlords in check, poised above the Thessid-Golan lowlands, until they finally assented to a truce and alliance with the Treaty of Tir-en-Tiel. The Islikids led their warlords and thralls north, across the Red Wastes and into the Dain Éduins. With the help of the Empire, they subjugated the wild Kings of Djar Mael, who ruled in the far reaches of the mountains, and by i1214 they had proclaimed three kingdoms – Boradja, Ugeram, and Morica. No great love existed between the Middle Kingdoms and the subjected Djar Maelites, but the Defender Kings of Maece, who had led the Middle Kingdoms against Akkalion, sought to aid their distant Mael cousins against the conquering Islikids, and launched a series of crusades to liberate them. Their wars were in vain, and over the course of the next fifty years the strength of the Defender Kings was broken in Lost Uthedmael and the Dain Éduins, and Maece ceased to exist.

Over time the Islikids' warlords, the Düméghal, were granted places in the Emperor's court, and became the chief generals shaping the Empire's military might, displacing the Vanimorian princes and warlords who had held those positions. In the western reaches of the Empire, where the Islikids carved their path of depredation, a period called the Fire Crusade is sometimes spoken of, when the lords of the West purged all remnants of their passage, but given the Islikids' place of power in the Empire they are not openly criticized. Their goals and interests in the East are a matter of great speculation, even in the Empire amongst their nominal allies.



THE DÜMÉGHAL

The warlords, warriors, chief servants, and spokesmen for the Islikids are called the Düméghal. The name is usually translated as either *The Doomed of the Ghal* or *The Dooms of the Ghal*, and is generally believed to be a reference to the origins of the Islikids' warlords amongst the Khaghals and Urghals of the Lake Hazrat region. The ranks of the Düméghal currently also include the descendants of Samarappans, Ramorites, Theleans, Ceraics, Metics, and Djar Maelites who chose to serve the Islikids as warriors rather than as slaves and thralls – even by rumor Califans and others from the Unknown World. No Islikidae has been seen in public since they ensconced themselves in the Dain Éduins; while they are reported to travel the Empire in secret, their public affairs, even at the Imperial Court, are conducted entirely by the Düméghal.



THE WORM KING

NYMARGA

Born when the world was young was **Nymarga**, a great and powerful magician who came out of the wilderness and served in the Celestial Court of Samarappa as Vizier to King Surep. Nymarga's heart was dark – some say he was born evil, others that he listened to the whispers of Amaymon the Spider – and he plotted against his King. Surep was poisoned, and Nymarga broke the Celestial Court and remade it in his own image, casting Jala the Good Prince, son of Surep, into exile. Nymarga's dark rule cast a shadow over Samarappa, and eventually his influence even reached into the Heavens, and Irré the Black Sun replaced Illiki the Sun Bull for a time. But Jala returned after long years in the wilderness, and with his sons and daughters and new allies he drove Nymarga from Samarappa and remade the Celestial Court anew.

Nymarga fled east into the mountains, and there he shaped his own empire. He masqueraded as a loyal servant to King Coromir under the name of **Maelfess**, until he killed the King and usurped his second throne. As a tyrant on the throne of Vanimoria, he came in time to rule the Metic Kings and the Princes of Thessidia and Thessure, Galia and the great city-states of the Silver Scale Sea coast as well.

In i221, the great war between Nymarga, as the Tyrant of the West, and **Dauban Hess**, as the Conqueror King of the East, began after Divine King seers proclaimed Nymarga a son of Ishraha, the hated Rebel Angel, and Ligrig, the Temptress Queen. Nymarga and Dauban Hess warred for many years, but Dauban Hess' skills as a general and warrior proved Nymarga's undoing in campaign after campaign in Thessidia and Galia and finally in Vanimoria itself. In i240, Nymarga was slain by Dauban Hess in his capital of Tir-en-tiel and his body cursed by priests of the Divine King and entombed in salt.

WORM AND DRAGON

After divinations in i281 were rumored to confirm the death of Dauban Hess in the East, his generals began to whisper that they, and not the Dragon Kings of Illia and Hemispia, deserved to rule the Golden Empire by right of Dauban Hess' trust in them. And so the Empire he left behind broke into many pieces, as his Successor Kings squabbled amongst themselves about the proper mode of succession -- heredity or appointment, kingship based on *blood* or *trust* -- and the Dragon Kings of the East broke all contact with the Imperial Court and established their own court in Heliopolis, which they called the **Sun Court**.

At first the Imperial Court in Millene, which took the name of the **Phoenix Court** -- both to symbolize the rebirth of a trusted general as a King, and the rise of the Court from the ashes of Dauban Hess' disappearance -- outshone the Sun Court of Illia. The Phoenix Court, influenced by the Great Schools of the Gola, was the model of the civilized, imperial court, as the educated and the ambitious sought appointment to seats of power. But in time, the Phoenix Court grew darker and dimmer. Since rule by appointment could not guarantee the lasting legacy of an inheritance passed on to descendants after death, some of the rulers of Phoenix Court lands grew increasingly interested in magics that could prolong life. Practitioners of alchemy and sorcery, arts with long traditions in Thessidia and the Gola, gained many new patrons, and Nymarga's old advisors and adjutants began to reassert their power in what some called *the Return of the Magicians*, making themselves useful in this pursuit of long life and even immortality. The underground worship of dark and ambitious gods grew slowly but steadily, as secret temples to Amaymon the Whisperer and Ligrig the Temptress and Ishraha the Rebel were built throughout the cities of Thessid-Gola. And many believe that the stage was finally set for the entrance of the Worm Kings by the plundering of Nymarga's tomb in i360, when the Oracle Queen of Khael cried out that his spirit had been released into the world once more.

The Phoenix Court was in open warfare with the Sun Court by i380. Wars were launched against Amora, Illia, Hemispia, Dania, Palatia, and Khael; cities were sacked or conquered, the Kingdom of Telesia centered at Agrapios was destroyed, and slowly the deaths of Dragon Kings began to mount in number. The Kings of the Phoenix Court withdrew into seclusion, even as they sponsored intrigues in neighboring lands, sent their fleets and armies out to sack and

despoil almost indiscriminately, and sought out gold and slaves for the darkening city of Millene as rebellion spread through overtaxed and depleted provinces. Eventually the reason for their seclusion was revealed, when in i475 emissaries from Amora bearing tribute finally gained an audience with the Phoenix Court, and fled in terror at the worms that dripped from the rotting, still-living flesh of the depraved Kings and Lords of Thessid-Gola, some of them kept alive since Dauban Hess' time by strange rituals and bloody human sacrifices. Word spread quickly throughout the Known World, and the damned rulers of Thessid-Gola became known as the **Worm Kings**.

Their secret revealed, the Worm Kings lashed out at the world, sending their fleets to destroy and pillage in a campaign of destruction that culminated in the sack of the Oracle City of Khael in i498. The Oracle Queen was raped, and as she lay dying she called up omens of destruction, and pronounced her last prophecy as a curse. Seven days later, the city of Millene, capital of the Worm Kings' empire, was destroyed in a great volcanic explosion, a maelstrom which buried the entire city, drove back the sea, and turned the sands black for a hundred miles in every direction.

Most of the Worm Kings were destroyed in the explosion, as was the Phoenix Court, countless other lives, the ancient city of Millene, and even the original Sun Throne, brought from Illia to Millene by Dauban Hess when he established his capital there. But some of the Worm Kings managed to escape the destruction, and a great hunt began. For a hundred years after the destruction of Millene, Helios the Sun hid his face in shame, and Hathhalla the Sun Veil held the sky during the *Winter Century*, as the Known World sought its vengeance on the Worm Kings. The Dragon Kings and their allies sought the Worm Kings out and slew them wherever they or their dark servants hid, whether in tomb or cave or disguised on a throne. The last Dragon Kings set sail into the Great Southern Sea and into the Far West in their pursuit of the last of their fleeing enemies.

GITHWAINE AND ERLWULF

The power of the Dragon Kings was expended in this great hunt for the Worm Kings, however, and only one true Dragon King, **Erlwulf**, of the line which had been granted rule of Dania, remained to return to the East in i648. Upon his return, he found a dark kingdom grown near his own; a Worm King had insinuated itself in Uthed Dania, gathering battle lords and war captains from the Utheds and the Kings of Djar Mael, and turning them to its own evil purposes, though Erlwulf did not know with certainty who the Worm King was. The world was already fatigued from its long war with the Worm Kings, but Erlwulf rallied some of the lords of Dania, Auria, and Daradja, and with a handful of Mael Kings and adventurers from throughout the Known World, they launched a small crusade against Uthed Dania.

A long and cruel war ensued, the last tired fight between the last Worm and the last Dragon. The Worm King remained hidden and masked, using terror and stealth to war with Erlwulf through disguise and poison and ambush. In i657, Erlwulf was slain on campaign, he and his guard taken by surprise returning to the Daradjan Citadel of Heth Moll through the Vale of Barrows. Erlwulf's cause was taken up by other heroes, however, from Dania and Daradja and even from foreign lands. In i666, some of the Mael Kings and the hero **Fortias** of the city of Therapoli unmasked the last Worm King: **Githwaïne**, once a minor general to Dauban Hess, masquerading as a local Uthed lord. He escaped them, however, and was not slain until i675, when Fortias trapped him and slew him face-to-face. Githwaïne's body was spirited away by his followers, however, and was buried in secret. The priests of the Sun Court pronounced a great curse upon Uthed Dania in the name of the Divine King, blighting the whole of the land.

Uthed Dania was from then on called *Lost Uthedmael*, to remove the taint of the Worm King from the name Dania. The Mael Kings who had fought against Githwaïne resettled to the coast of the Middle Kingdoms, becoming the Kings of Maece. Utheds and Djar Maelites who had fought for Githwaïne withdrew into the harsh fastness of the Dain Éduin mountains, and were shunned by the rest of the world. Fortias was made King of Atallica and High King of the Middle Kingdoms by the Sun Court, and granted the rights to the Dragon Throne of Therapoli. His first act as High King was to build a great wall between the Middle Kingdoms and the cursed land of Uthedmael. **Awain**, High King of Therapoli, is his descendant.



ACHRE AND ARCHAIA

While **Bragea**, the first smith, lived in Ürüne Düré, he fell in love with **Surtara**, a Galéan Queen. Surtara was also an oracle, and tradition forbid her from taking a consort, so they left Düréa and with their followers eventually settled on the island of Khael in the year d577. It was there that Bragea created the Book of Dooms for his Queen, 22 brass plates based on images he had seen in Yhera's Celestial Book. Peridia, the daughter of Bragea and Surtara, ritually give up her eyesight to become the next Oracle Queen, and then she lay with her father and bore him a daughter. This rite was repeated with each generation, and in short time the daughters of Bragea became known as the greatest oracles of the Known World. This continued until d819, when **Achre**, due to become the twelfth Oracle Queen, refused to undergo the ritual and be blinded. Always a rebellious girl, she had been tutored in secret by Ariahavé, who had come to Khael in disguise. Achre crippled her father in their battle over the ritual, and drove him into the Underworld.

Achre and her followers were exiled by her sisters, and they went to the nearby Pallithane Peninsula, a wild and mountainous land. She brought the native Héskédran barbarians under her rule and in time she slew the Great Dragon of the Pallithane Mountains and bound its spirit to her own with great magics. She bore to the Dragon a child, pregnant for 3 years to bring her daughter **Archaia** into the world in d933. Archaia received the tutelage of Ariahavé as her mother had, and was a Companion to Adjia Luna on her hunts, along with her half-sisters Dall and Pulma, the daughters of Achre and Thula. Archaia founded the city of Palatia in d977 (which the Palatians mark as p1, the first year of their calendar), and built its Seven Gates. From her consorts amongst the Héskédran princes she bore three daughters, **Divinh rada**, **Vargate**, and **Baséa**, who founded the three Great Houses of Palatia. Achre and Archaia and her three daughters slew monsters, moved rivers, built roads and bridges, and in so doing tamed the Pallithanes.

The great women of Palatia were amongst the first to respond to the summons of Ürüne Düré when it came under siege. Archaia died there in d1109, slain while defending the fallen **Hannath Hammergreia**, the last great Carrion Queen killed by the spirit of the King of Brass. The Last Queens ordered the abandonment of Ürüne Düré two years later, and Achre returned to Palatia with her daughter's body. In grief she sealed herself in the earth in her daughter's tomb, and left her granddaughters to rule Palatia.

So began the cycles of the **Veiled Queens** in Palatia, when the city was in mourning and withdrawn from the world. The Veiled Queens ruled for over 200 years, until the migration of Aurian invaders from the north threatened to overcome their isolation. The Aurians were barely driven off, and later settled on the Danian Peninsula, where they accepted the Divine King and became part of the Middle Kingdoms. The Veiled Queens looked about the Known World then, and saw the rising dangers of Dauban Hess and Nymarga in the south, and threw off their torpor, and became the **Black Arrow Queens**. The Black Arrow Queens founded the first legions and the first Sea Houses, with which began the great Palatian fleet. They fought Dauban Hess to a standstill, though in truth he thought the city so poor that he could barely be bothered, and were in open warfare with the Worm Kings long before most suspected the extent of the evil at the heart of the Phoenix Court.

AUDRA THE VOYAGER

After the destruction of Millene and the Winter Century, Queen **Audra** of the House of Baséa set sail to Khael, to see for herself the ruins of Oracle City. Even as the Palatian rebuilding of Khael began, she descended into the Underworld and spoke to the last Oracle Queen, to learn if their line continued. Armed with her knowledge, she quested for and found the Book of Dooms made by Bragea, and set sail into the East, and found Ursula, the heir to the throne of Khael, in hiding in the Islands of the Dawn. Audra returned with her and reinstated her as the Oracle Queen in p812, placing the Book of Dooms upon her lap.

Audra then embarked on a series of expeditions – to Hemispia, and south to Amora, to Sekeret, the cities of the Déskédran coast, and north past Magara's Land into the Panoch Sea. Her voyages marked the true end of the Winter Century, establishing the network of sea trade that would make Palatia a formidable power in the centuries to come. She established the **Arsenal** of the City, the great dockyards of the Palatian fleet, and created new ships and sail designs unmatched for centuries. Audra is commonly called the last of the **Black Arrow Queens**, and the first of the **Copper Queens**.

THE ASSASSIN CYCLES

The Copper Queens, who were also called the Queens of the Arsenal, ruled during Palatia's first great expansions. Labira, Haralia, and the T'goonai Kingdoms became Palatian provinces, and the Copper Queens expanded on Audra's voyages, sponsoring fleets south to the Gold Coast and Sabuta and north across the Panoch Sea to the Wood Kings, and sent the first caravans across the Midlands to the West, establishing the Spice Road. For over six centuries, the Copper Queens solidified their hold on the north of the Known World, and ruled the sea lanes with little rivalry, even from Akkalion, until Queen Pherusa died in p1425 (d2402) with no clear heir amongst the Great Houses. Palatia plunged into a period of chaos and upheaval, as wealthy Houses struggled for control over Palatia's thrones – the **Queen's Throne**, traditionally held by a woman of a Great House, descended of Archaia's daughters; the **Ducal Throne**, held by a male of a Great House; and the throne of the **Countess Palatine**, held by a woman of any House. The bloody period earned the name of the **Assassin Cycles**, as over the next 128 years over 90 different throne-holders met unnatural ends.

THE USURPER AND THE LORD MOTT

The early 16th century (by the Palatian calendar) saw the rise of **Hamellus** of House Devarra, who became a great power in the House of Lords and in the **Archaiaite**, the Palatian Council of War. He led the legions to victory in the north against uprisings amongst Palatia's allies amongst the Lycinians. Though he was not from a Great House, Hamellus was made the Duke of Palatia in p1551 by dispensation of the House of Lords. Hamellus soon stretched for more power, and in p1553 he declared that since the Queen's throne was vacant and without candidates, he would become *King* of Palatia, and end the Assassin Cycles. The populace, weary of the bloodshed of the preceding years, accepted his proclamation, and some even whispered that Hamellus had the powers of one of the ancient Dragon Kings. But on the eve of his coronation, one of Hamellus' most trusted lieutenants, **Urech** of the Sea House of Aiths, led a violent and bloody coup, and he killed Hamellus in the Great Temple of Palatia Archaia. With the help of the legions and the acquiescence of Hamellus' Grand Vizier, the **Lord Mott** of the House of Pylon, Urech imposed his own rule over Palatia, and though he was not from a Great House he sat upon the Ducal Throne, and came to be called the **Usurper**.

With Akkalion still trapped in the Gray Dream, many consider Urech to be the most dangerous man in the Known World, though the Lord Mott – a renowned alchemist and creator of the first Indexes of the ancient texts – is often rumored as the true power in Palatia. Indeed, the Lord Mott is sometimes called the *King in Waiting*, and some of his disciples claim that great prophecies predict the coming of an Empire of Reason, with the Lord Mott as its Philosopher-King. Many believe the Usurper to be little more than his puppet.

Whatever the truth, in the last 86 years Urech has annexed the cities of Lycinia and the Déskédran coast; fought two wars against the Thessid Empire for control of the Spice Road across the Midlands, the second of which ended with the sacking of the Thessid cities of Daubia, Lephdro, and (most embarrassingly for the Empire) Thalos; and signed the Stone Treaty with the Thulamites and fought their enemies, the Lokhite barbarians of the West, to a stand-still. He courted a Thulamite Queen, **Nihagen** of Desmagria, during Palatia's war with the Lokhites, and she bore him twin daughters before she was slain by assassins. His daughters are being raised amongst the Thulamites, and have never seen their father's city.



THE ARCANa

When Yhera created and ordered the cosmos, she codified the magical foundations of the world; she set the first patterns which all things must follow. When she had finished creating the cosmos, she wrote her first book, and upon each of its pages she scribed and fixed one of the great principles underpinning her creation. 21 of those pages were numbered, and there was a 22nd page, which was unnumbered. The magical principles of her creation are usually called the Arcana; they are at once ideals, archetypes, themes, memes, principles, agents, and actors in the lifeblood of the world. The Arcana, with their numbers, are sometimes known by a variety of names – I. **The Magician** or **Minstrel**. II. **The Great Priestess**. III. **The Empress**. IV. **The Emperor**. V. **The Great Priest**. VI. **The Lovers**. VII. **The Hermit** or **The Lover** or **The Seeker**. VIII. **The Sword** or **The Chariot**. IX. **Justice**. X. **The Wheel of Fortune** or **The Fates**. XI. **Strength**. XII. **The Hanged Man**. XIII. **Death**. XIV. **Temperance** or **The Circle**. XV. **The Sphinx**. XVI. **The Riven Tower**. XVII. **The Stars**. XVIII. **The Moon**. XIX. **The Sun**. XX. **The Last Judgment** or **The Rose**. XXI. **The World**. And last and unnumbered, **The Fool**.

The Arcana manifest themselves in the world in many ways; they are present in the divine world, part and parcel of the gods, and they manifest as creatures and spirits in the celestial, chthonic and material worlds. Their powers can be accessed as spells, magics, and ecstasies, learned through priestcraft, magical study, or inborn and innate knowledge. The Arcana of the Lovers, for example, is closely identified with the goddesses Amj and Dieva, and can be seen in the celestial world as the Graces and angels of love, in the chthonic as spirits of lust and succubi and incubi, in the material world as sirens and satyrs and rabbits. The Lovers inspire powers of mesmerism and fascination, charm and lust and empathy, and fuels spells and magics devoted to love, fellowship, attraction, and lust of all sorts.

ENCHANTMENTS

Enchantments are one of the principle forms of magic in the Known World, aimed at awakening or imbuing magical power in objects, locations, and people. Many things found in the natural world have a latent magical power that can be focused and made manifest by ritual or rune. The skin and mane of a lion, for example, can become a magical aid to strength, vigilance, and rulership with the proper rituals, and will sometimes be made into an enchanted mask, hood, or cloak; a brown agate, inscribed with a victory rune, becomes an aid in war and conflict to its bearer. Animal parts and gem stones are the most common kinds of enchanted objects carried or used in cultures that allow them; while the Old Religion embraces the use of enchantments, the cult of the Divine King tends to proscribe such items.

Common enchanted items include apotropaic herms, guardian statues, cult statues, and cultic amulets; less common examples include spirit masks, which magicians use to see into the Otherworld, and magical grimoires, which are often written with a magic ink. Despite a general hostility to magic, high nobles in Divine King lands wield a triad of magical objects – orb, scepter, and crown – which aid them as magical symbols of their offices. Enchanted arms and armor are produced by almost every culture: the Palatian Arsenal produces enchanted copper armor, the city of Hemelin produces enchanted steel harnesses for the League, and the smiths of the Imperial Court make scimitars capable of cutting steel plate.

Enchanted items of great power belonging to the gods or great heroes have even been passed down through the ages. The divine smith, Bragea, made numerous items of great power which he gifted to kings and queens and cities, perhaps most famously the Dragon Throne of Islik the Divine King, lost in the destruction of Millene, and a number of famous (or infamous) magical swords are known from history and legend, including *Daybringer*, the sword of Dauban Hess forged of sun-metal, and *Ghavaurer*, certainly the most evil sword of note. Forged by Nymarga to have special powers against the blood of Islik and his descendants, the Dragon Kings, *Ghavaurer* was bested when Nymarga tried to use it against Dauban Hess; but Githwaine used it quite successfully to end the lineage of Islik when he killed Erlwulf, the last Dragon King.

ALCHEMY

Alchemy is an ancient practice, first discovered by Ariahavé, and later refined by Daedekamani, who inscribed his secrets upon tablets and gifted them to his followers and descendants amongst the Golan scholars of the Great Schools. Alchemy in the Known World primarily pursues the refinement of the two great chemicals, mercury and sulfur, into the **White Elixir**, capable of great acts of healing; the **Red Elixir**, the elixir of immortality capable of transforming the spiritual as well as the body and made from scrapings of the Philosopher's Stone; the **Alkahest**, an elixir of transmutation capable of transforming the material; or the **Black Elixir**, a flammable black powder that generates heat and energy. Over the centuries, Daedekamani's original writings have spawned different methods of varying success for achieving the various elixirs, and these processes are jealously guarded secrets passed from master alchemist to apprentice. Various uses for those elixirs have also been discovered, ranging from the creation of the dreaded basilisk to the transformation of lead into gold. Generally, two camps exist amongst alchemists – those who pursue the Elixirs for the material powers that they possess, and those who believe that alchemy concerns the transformation of the spirit of man and the attainment of immortality.

RUNES AND SIGNS

To aid in the casting of spells and enchantments, magicians have over the centuries created a number of different systems of magical runes, sigils, and glyphs, which can be used to focus the deeper powers of the world. The oldest runes are the **Daedekine Runes**, the *daedeki grammata*, created by Daedekamani himself. First used in the Gola, they have spread far and wide, but fallen into disuse in more recent times, with the advent of newer sign systems. Bragea developed a set of runes in his forges while in Düréa, but he was the only one who could use them; **Brage's Runes** may still be found on many of the wondrous magical artifacts that he gifted to the world. The **Riven Runes**, also called the *labira grammata*, or the witch's runes, were inscribed upon the cult statue of Djara Luna taken from Ürüne Düré to the Great Temple of Labira. They are used mostly by practitioners of the Old Religion, who still hold Yhera above all others – mostly in Palatia and Amora, and amongst the Thulamites and some other barbarians on the edges of the Known World. Of more recent creation are the signs and glyphs variously called the **Thessid**, **Imperial** or **Daubanite Sigils**, which were created in the court of Dauban Hess prior to the sailing of the Golden Fleet. The Imperial Sigils are fewer in number and in scope than the runes of other systems, but have benefited from both a certain ease of use and the official endorsement of the Empire. Imperial magicians use them almost exclusively, and they are also widespread throughout Divine King lands. Another set of runes has appeared of late in the north, amongst the Panagh Kings across the Panoch Sea. The Panaghs call their runes **Dragon Runes**, while they are called *cattara grammata* (lit. *claw runes*) by the Palatians.

Artesia's sword bears upon it five Riven Runes.



A **glamour** rune – an aid to glammers and illusions, towards magics which transform surfaces and appearances.



A **binding** rune – an aid to entrapping, binding, and controlling otherworldly spirits.



A **command** rune – an aid to leadership and the magical control of spirits, animals, or men.



A **victory** rune – an aid towards victory and success in conflict and battle.



An **oath** rune – an aid to oath magics, giving strength to vows and promises.



THE GODS AND GODDESSES OF WAR

AN OLD DÜRÉAN TALE

In the Golden Age, when the Düréans recreated Geniché's Garden on their isle, rumors of their wealth spawned jealousy and greed amongst many outlanders. The strongest of the barbarians came together, and conspired to build a fleet, and sail to Ürüne Düré, and rob the Düréans of their wealth. The oracles of Düréa dreamed dark visions and learned of this raid, and they turned to their predator goddess, to the great consumer of sacrifice, to Dread **Yhera**, for deliverance, asking her to show them how to defend themselves from the raiders.

Yhera called the other devouring beasts – first **Adjia** and **Irré**, the sun-masked archers, the huntress and the hunter, the javelin-wielding killer of women and the bow-bearing killer of men; then **Hathhalla**, the Devourer, the goddess of grief and vengeance; and her hunter and animal keeper, her consort **Ammon Agdah**. And she set them and their Companions to defending the Düréans. The raiders came and many died, stalked by Adjia, and Irré, and Agdah, but still they pillaged the Isle of many of its treasures and left triumphant with slaves and booty. Yhera looked down with sadness at the destruction they had wrought, and was filled with the grief of her children. Hathhalla came to her then, and whispered in her ear, and awoke the secret in her heart.

Yhera summoned **Ariahavé**, her brightest daughter, and bade her make unbreakable chains, and sent her to capture three of the fiercest half-mad daughters of **Djara**, who were the mothers of the Galéans and called the **Gorgonae**. So Ariahavé searched the dark places of Düréa, and found the Gorgonae hidden in their daughters' shame, and bound them, and brought them to Yhera: **Mogran**, the Riot Goddess and Queen of Discord; **Halé**, the Goddess of Rage and Fury; and **Médüre**, the Cunning One. And Yhera consumed them, chains and all, and then she gave a great cry and she disgorged them from her belly, and Yhera gave bloody birth to War.

Soon the raiders returned, unsatisfied with their first plunder. Yhera unchained the Gorgonae and they went amongst the Düréans, and taught them the secrets to transform themselves and become warriors, the ways to harness din and discord, rage and cunning. They danced, and drummed, and drank potions, and marked themselves and donned masks, and the Düréans armed themselves to war. And they greeted the raiders with the howls of lions and the speed of serpents, and drove them back across the sea. The Düréans pursued them into the outlands, and slew their families, and freed the slaves they had taken. And when they had returned to Düréa, the Gorgonae showed them how to purify themselves and take off their masks and stop being warriors, and become themselves again.

So the Gorgonae were the first goddesses of War and Battle, the goddesses of warrior transformation, who invoked war and ended it, and first made it an art. Yhera held their chains, and became **Yhera Anath**, the Queen of War and Victory, Dread and Unconquered. Adjia and Irré came and learned from them, and Adjia became the initiator, the first to take a child and show them the ways of war, and Irré became **Lykeios**, the old wolf, the destroyer prayed to by gray-haired veterans. Agdah and his hunting band came too, and they learned to become a warrior band, the Consort-Defender and his companions.

But Ariahavé, the goddess of civilization, had been midwife at the birth of War, and she learned better than them all. She went to her



forge, and made skins and scales of metal for the Düréans to wear, and made the first sword, and shared her secrets with Bragea. She taught them the arts of forage and supply, so that warriors could go where they wanted when they wanted. She taught the Düréans how to take the dances that they loved so much, and turn them to war and give battle a rhythm: how to make many move as one, and make one part of many, how to make *warriors* into *soldiers*. And for all these things Yhera made Ariahavé her general, and gave her the chains of the Gorgonae for safekeeping.

IRON, FIRE, FURY

The Yheran goddesses and gods of war still hold sway where the Old Religion is practiced, supplemented by local gods and heroes. Amongst the Palatians, Ariahavé is held the most dear, along with the hero cults of sharp-speared **Achre**, **Archaiä** the Defender, and **Audra** the Voyager, Queen of Sails. **Ami** the Morning Star is invoked as protectress of harbors and ships in war in Palatia, the Déskédran cities, and the Gola. Amongst the Amorans, where the worship of the Sun Bull is still strong, **Illiki Helios** is revered as the Consort-Defender, following in the footsteps of his father. The Thulamites make sacrifice to Yhera Anath and the Gorgonae, but hold their ancestress **Thula**, who stole the secrets of war from the Düréans, as their goddess of war above all others. They also follow the hero cults of **Dall** and **Pulma** of the Starlight Spears, and **Ceram**,

the Storm King, who initiates their warriors. In some armies Irré is still invoked as the Lykeios, and in some places as the Last Defender, who averts siege and disease and pestilence, and brings them, too.

In Divine King lands – the Thessid-Golan Empire, the Middle Kingdoms, and the great Hemapoline League of Cities – **Islík** the Divine King is naturally held as the god of war, as war is seen as the prerogative of the King. Divine King knights usually join the orders of a number of hero cults, the most popular being the several orders dedicated to **Dauban Hess**, the Conqueror King, held as warrior initiator, logistician, and hero of armies. The Daubanite orders sworn to the Phoenix Court are the backbone of the Imperial armies drawn from Thessidia, Galia, and Sekeret, and maintain cordial relations with their brethren in the Middle Kingdoms and the League, even during hostilities. Orders dedicated to **Coromat** and **Jala**, two of the other Kings in Exile, have adherents in the Phoenix Court, but not in the Sun Court, where the greatest non-Daubanite order is that of **Cewert**, an ancestor-hero of the ancient world known as the first King to kill a Dragon. **Agall**, the Hero King, was worshipped and propitiated already as Sacker of Cities before he joined with Islík's cause and became his warrior champion. His order is known for its zeal in battle and in pursuit of Agall's old enemy, the Witch. The Agallite order is small but powerful; it has adherents primarily in the Middle Kingdoms and to some extent in the League, but oddly is not popular in Galia, the land of his descendants.

The Imperial armies have any number of hero-cults outside the Divine King orders amongst its diverse soldiery; notable amongst them are **Myrcalion**, the hero wanderer, called the greatest hero that ever lived, whose cult is popular in Thessidia and Galia; **Vani**, worshipped as both the vulture-headed earthshaker and as the eagle-headed warrior-ancestor of the mountain princes of Vanimoria; **Hamarat** the Night Fire, the Defender King popular amongst the Metics for his efforts to purge their lands of the taint of the long occupation of the Islíklids; **Ceram**, invoked by the Ceraic tribes who have sworn to the Empire; and **Illiki Helios**, still worshipped by some soldiers from Galia and the Gola, though his invocation is frowned on by the Phoenix Court. The Islíklids and their Düméghal warriors are said to invoke Irré as their chief war god, as the Wolf and the Locust, the wilderness at war, and they are said to make bloody offerings to him, a practice tolerated but unloved by the Phoenix Court, but other rumors claim they hold no gods of war but themselves.



A BRIEF GLOSSARY of DEITIES, PLACES, PEOPLE, and EVENTS

ACHRE – rebellious daughter of *Brage*, who refused to become an *Oracle Queen*. Instead she wounded her father, bound a great Dragon and, as the mother of *Archaia*, became ancestress of the Palatians (see *Palatia*).

ADJIA LUNA – the Moon Huntress, one of the three goddesses of the Moon, along with her sisters *Yhera* and *Djara*. She is the goddess of birth, growth, maturity, maternity, the hunt, dreams, and death. Sometimes called *Adjiana*.

AGALL – demigod son of *Agdah Cosmopeia*, famous for his considerable temper, strength and courage; he is worshipped as the first Hero. The Sacker of Cities, he fought alongside *Geteema's* children at the destruction of *Ürüne Düré*. One of the *Four Kings in Exile*, slain in the *Far West* but redeemed by *Islik* in the Underworld.

AGDAH COSMOPEIA – the Year God and God of the Shining Sky, the god of the year-cycle: the growths of spring, the harvests of the fall, and the deprivations of the winter. He was slain by *Geteema* in defense of *Düréa*, but later restored by *Yhera* to Heaven. Also called *Agdah Helios* (the Cosmos Sun) and *Ammon Agdah* (the Household Protector and the Keeper of Animals).

AGE OF LEGENDS, the – the second age of *Known World* history, beginning with *Islik's* ascension to the Sun Throne in Heaven and ending with the destruction of the Imperial capital of Millene some 498 years later.

AKKALION – the Lion Emperor of *Thessid-Gola*. The first prince of Thessid-Gola to claim the throne of *Dauban Hess* since the wars of the *Worm Kings*. He embarked on a series of conquests to restore the Empire to its former glory until he was overcome by the *Gray Dream* the night before the *Black Day Battle*. His mind has been trapped in the *Gray Dream* ever since, and he has sat dreaming on his throne in *Avella* ever since.

AKINE MOG – Sorcerer-King of Kathek, a city in *Setine*, who rose to power in the *Winter Century*. Started the Fire War with Sekeret in which cannon and bombards were used for the first time (see *Grand Sekeret*).

AMAYMON – the Whisperer, the Prince of Intrigue and Secret Power, and the god of secret knowledge, bribery, corruption, and assassins, worshipped by those who want something for nothing. He counseled *Irré* to overthrow *Illiki Helios* and *Isbraba* to begin his rebellion against *Islik* the Divine King, thus beginning the *War in Heaven*.

AMI - the Morning Star, the Dawn Maiden, twin sister of *Dieva*, and the goddess of love, fertility, and romance.

AMORA – anciently a *Düréan* colony favored by *Illiki Helios*, now a realm balancing the worship of the old gods and more recent influence of the *Sun Court*. Once part of the *Thessid-Golan Empire*, Amora is now independent with the help of *Palatia*, and has annexed nearby *Meretia* as a buffer state with the Empire.

AN-ATHAIR – a castle and small city in the *Erid Wold*, once the center of a realm ruled by the *Spring Queens*. Birthplace of Artesia.

ANGOWRIE – one of the *Middle Kingdoms*, originally the hold of one of the *Watchtower Kings*. The current King, Euwen Jaraslas, betrayed *Awain* and swore an oath of fealty to the *Sultan*.

ARCHAIA – the daughter of *Achre*, student of *Ariahavé*, and the founder of the city of *Palatia* and builder of its Seven Gates. She

bore three daughters, who founded the three most ancient Houses of Palatia. With her daughters, she sailed to war against *Geteema's* children, and was slain in defense of *Düréa*.

ARIAHAVÉ – the Civiliser, *Yhera's* brightest and most rebellious daughter. She is the protectress of cities and citadels and their citizens and defenders; she is the patroness of civilization and its heroes. After *Geniché* abandoned the Earth, she taught the lost peoples of the world the arts of society -- agriculture, poetry, spinning, pottery, music, and mining. She is *Yhera's* general and the chief war goddess of the *Palatians*, her most dedicated adherents.

ASSASSIN CYCLES, the – hundred-year period in recent Palatian history of internecine, inter-House struggle for control over the thrones of *Palatia*, ending with the rise of the *Usurper*.

AUDRA – the Voyager, legendary Queen of *Palatia* at the beginning of the *Bronze Age* largely responsible for that city's rise to current power. Last of the Black Arrow Queens and first of the Copper Queens.

AURIA – a principality of the *Middle Kingdoms*, and ancient name for the lands settled by the *Aurians*, seagoing pillagers descended of *Heth*.

AWAIN – the current High King of *Therapoli* and the *Middle Kingdoms*; a descendant of *Fortias the Brave*.

AVELLA – the Immortal City, current Imperial Capital of the *Thessid-Golan Empire*. Once a minor city of *Thessidia*, it was chosen by *Akkalion* to be his capital while he was recuperating from wars against the *Isliklids* and transformed into a city of great beauty. Home to the *Phoenix Court*.

BLACK DAY BATTLE, the – battle fought on the shores of *Dania* between the forces of the *Middle Kingdoms* and *Daradja* and the invading Thessid Empire beneath *Irré* the Black Sun. Because of the Emperor's absence in the thrall of the *Gray Dream*, the Empire was routed.

BLACK HUNTER, the – son of *Geniché*, brother of *Ammon Agdah*, leader of the Wild Hunt. At the beginning of winter and sometimes when he escapes the Underworld, he leads a host of ghosts, spirits, and demons across the *Known World* hunting those that stray from protected shelter.

BOOK OF DOOMS, the – book of 22 plates created by *Brage* for his Queen and their descendants to aid their oracles. Based upon the Celestial Book of *Yhera*. Briefly lost after the sack of *Khael*, but recovered by *Audra*.

BRAGE – the first smith, the creator of the arts of metal-working; he is the fire-god of hearth, kiln, and foundry, creator of rune-systems and artifacts of great power. Brage cloped with a *Düréan* Queen to the Isle of *Khael*, and their daughters became the *Oracle Queens*. Also called *Abrage* and *Braphagos*.

BRANIMIR – the Wolf of Dara Dess, son of *Coromir* and *Ella*. King of Dara Dess for a time, now beheaded and bound to the citadel.

BRONZE AGE, the – the third age of *Known World* history, dating from the *Catastrophe* and the *Winter Century* to the ascension of *Akkalion* to the throne of Thessid-Gola some 528 years later.

CATASTROPHE, the – the destruction of *Millene*, capital of the *Thessid-Golan Empire*, at the end of the *Age of Legends* by a volcanic maelstrom caused by a curse from the *Oracle Queens*; begins the *Winter Century*.

CELESTIAL COURT, the – the ruling court of *Samarappa* during the *Golden Age*, which under *Surep* included the deities of Heaven in its ranks. During the *War in Heaven* the Court was

ruled by *Nymarga*, until he was deposed by the return of *Jala*. The Court faded in power during the *Age of Legends*, was held by the *Islıklids* for a dark time, and ended after the disappearance of its hero-savior, *Dauban Hess*.

CERAM – the Thunderer, a son of *Thula* and *Illiki* the Sun-Bull, ancestor-god of the nomads of the *Midlands*. Ceram hunted the *Four Kings in Exile* across the Midlands.

COROMAT – a son of *Geteema* and tragic hero of the ancient world. Banished from *Vanimoria* for withdrawing from his mother's war on *Düréa*, he became one of the *Four Kings in Exile* and went mad for many years before returning home to reconcile with his people and resume his throne. Deposed and slain by *Nymarga*.

DAEDEKAMANI – a son of *Yhera*; the first magician, creator of the magical arts and the first magical runes. Daedekamani is a wanderer, a patron of travelers, and sometimes a guide to the dead.

DALL AND PULMA – twin daughters of *Thula* and chief amongst her children. They bound horses, fought by Thula's side in defense of *Düréa*, and now appear in the Heavens as the Twins constellation.

DANIA – lands of the Danians, now part of the *Middle Kingdoms*. Once comprised of Uthed Dania and Dania proper, until Uthed Dania was lost in the war against *Githwaine* (see *Lost Uthedmael*) and Dania split into Dain Dania and Erid Dania.

DARA – first Queen of *Daradja*, from which the land derives its name. Slain by *Thula*.

DARA DESS – called the greatest of the four ancient citadels of *Daradja* (*Dara Dess*, *Heth Moll*, *An-Athbark*, and *Finleth*), now held by Artesia.

DARADJA – traditional name for the mountainous highlands of the *Middle Kingdoms*. Literally “Realm Of Dara” in *Old Éduinan*.

DAUBAN HESS – the Golden Emperor, the Conqueror King, greatest of the *Dragon Kings*. He was reputed to be a son of *Islík*, who rose to power in *Hemispia*, defeated *Nymarga* and drove the *Islıklids* out of the *Celestial Court*, and came to rule the whole of the *Known World*. He set sail to find the *Dawn Isles* to greet his alleged father, and was never seen again.

DAWN ISLES, the – fabulous islands at the edge of the world, where every morning *Ami* throws open the Gates of the Dawn to let in the Sun.

DÉSKÉDRÉ – swath of coastal cities just north of the *Middle Kingdoms*. Déskédran cities are known for their licentiousness and devotion to the worship of *Dieva*.

DIEVA – the Evening Star, the Dusk Maiden, twin sister of *Ami*, and the goddess of sex and physical pleasures.

DJAR MAEL – land of the Maelites, a cursed people distantly related to the Daradjans and Danians, now servants of the *Islıklids*.

DJARA LUNA – the Moon goddess of Death and Darkness, the queen of ghosts and dark magic, the giver of lunacy and nightmares, the keeper and revealer of secrets; goddess of crossroads, curse magic and divinations. Also called *Urgale* or *Morgale*.

DRAGON KINGS, the – ancient Kings possessed of great might and powers of dominion. *Islík* was the first, *Dauban Hess* was the greatest; descent from either indicated Dragon King blood and great latent power, but they were wiped out in wars exterminating their hated enemies, the *Worm Kings*, during the

Winter Century.

DÜMÉGHAL – warlords and warriors of the *Islıklids*, recruited from their subjects in the *Far West* and bound to their service by foul magics.

DÜRÉA – ancient queendom of the *Golden Age* and crucible of civilization. Lost to the armies of *Geteema* and sunk beneath the *Silver Scale Sea* at the end of the *Golden Age*. (See *Ürüne Düré*).

ÉDUINS – mountain range in the *Midlands*, forming a peninsula into the *Silver Scale Sea*; constituted by the Dain Éduins in the west, the Harath Éduins in the east, and the minor ranges of the Bora, Djar, and Tel Éduins as well as many smaller *Moles*.

EMIR – Thessid-Golan term for an officer of high rank.

ERID WOLD, the – a great wood in *Dania*, once ruled by the *Spring Queens* and now a haunted place, full of ghosts and spirits and reputed the refuge of witches fleeing the persecution of the *Sun Court*.

ERLWULF – last of the known *Dragon Kings*, slain by *Githwaine*.

FAR WEST, the – common name for any lands west of the *Midlands*.

FORTIAS THE BRAVE – Aurian hero-knight of the *Middle Kingdoms*, who slew *Githwaine* to end the *Winter Century* and who later built the Great Wall that stands between the Middle Kingdoms and *Lost Uthedmael*. His descendants are the High Kings of the Middle Kingdoms.

FOUR KINGS IN EXILE, the – during the *War in Heaven*, four kings banished and in exile – *Islík*, *Agall*, *Coromat*, and *Jala* – joined together for adventures. They fought many battles, resisted the temptations of the Daradj Queen, were pursued by *Ceram* across the *Midlands*, and broke up their fellowship in the *Far West* after the death of *Agall* at the hands of a treacherous enemy called the Blooded (see *Islıklids*).

GALIA – an emirate of the *Thessid-Golan Empire* just south of the *Middle Kingdoms*. Anciently the kingdom of *Agall*, now a realm of prosperous merchant-traders.

GENICHÉ – Queen of the Underworld and once Goddess and Queen of the Earth, the giver of life, and, with her sister *Geteema*, the mother of all within *Yhera's* creation. The Earth was once her garden, and she ruled it as a Paradise until, in a moment of grief and anger, she abandoned the world and fled into darkness. She created the Underworld and spoke the First Law, mandating that all born of her Earth must follow her into Death.

GETEEMA – sister to *Geniché* and *Yhera*, monstrous Queen of the Dark Earth, the Dragon Mother and the Mother of the Giants; her children include *Irré* the Black Sun, *Amaymon* the Whisperer, *Vani* the Mountain King, *Heth* the Sea King, and many others. Out of jealousy she sent many of her children to destroy ancient *Ürüne Düré*, and she herself consumed the body of *Agdab Cosmopeiia*, after which *Yhera* imprisoned her in the Underworld.

GITHWAINE – last of the *Worm Kings*, discovered amongst the warlords of *Djar Mael* and Uthed Dania. He killed *Erlwulf*; the last known *Dragon King*, before being slain by *Fortias the Brave*; his death marked the end of the *Winter Century*.

GOLA, the – name for the lands of the south around the Leta river and home to some of the oldest cities in the *Known World* now organized as *Grand Sekeret* and *Setine*, key emirates of the *Thessid-Golan Empire*.

GOLDEN AGE, the – first age of *Known World* history after *Geniché* left the Earth for the Underworld. Generally dated from the founding of *Düréa* and considered to have lasted just over

1000 years, until the fall of *Ürüne Düré* and the *War in Heaven*.

GORGONAE, the – the Triple War Goddess, daughters of *Djara*, worshipped singly and as a trio. The Gorgonae are kept chained in the Underworld, and only *Yhera* Anath or her general, *Ariahavé*, may set them loose.

GRAND SEKERET – the city-states of the *Gola*, as they have come to be known, after their victory over *Akine Mog*; scene to some of the greatest fighting in the wars against the *Worm Kings* following the *Catastrophe*. The largest and oldest is Seker, followed by Camathune, both of which have some of the oldest *Great Schools*.

GRAY DREAM, the – the cursed dream that befell *Akkalion* before the *Black Day Battle*, now the subject of intense speculation amongst mystery cults throughout the *Thessid Empire*, the *Hemapoline League*, and *Palatia*.

GREAT SCHOOLS – halls of learning originally founded and patroned by *Daedekamani* himself, found throughout the *Gola* and *Thessidia*.

HALÉ – the Goddess of Slaughter, goddess of (mindless) rage and berserker fury. One of the *Gorgonae*.

HANNATH HAMMERGREIA – greatest of the last Queens of *Düréa*, and considered by many its last True Queen and last of the *Retbet Thesa*. A virgin huntress and voracious warrior, she defeated the *Black Hunter* and died many deaths, until her final death at the fall of *Ürüne Düré*.

HATHAZ-GHÜL – *Old Éduinan* name for cursed once-men, things that should be dead but cling to life by feedin on the bodies of the living and recently deceased. They are often said to come from *Lost Utbedmael*.

HATHHALLA – the Devouring Fire of the Sun, worshipped as the lion-headed goddess of battle and vengeance, goddess of the Sun's righteous strength. At *Yhera's* behest she imprisoned her half-brother *Irré* in the Underworld after he cast down her half-brother *Illiki Helios*. She ruled the Heavens as the Sun's Veil during the *Winter Century*.

HEMAPOLI MAGNI – greatest city of *Hemispia*, and a rival to *Palatia* in all things merchantile and military.

HEMAPOLINE LEAGUE, the – a patchwork of city-states and kingdoms in *Hemispia* and *Illia* dedicated primarily to trade, led by the rulers of the city of *Hemapoli Magni*. Stronghold of the followers of the *Sun Court*.

HEMISPIA – lands east of the Silver Scale Sea now ruled by the *Hemapoline League*. Anciently the lands of the first *Dragon Kings*.

HETH – the Sea Bull, the Sea King, god of surface waves, and ancestor-god of the Aurians.

ILLIA – isle just north of *Hemispia*, favored by the gods of the Sun and location of the first Dragon Throne. Home to the *Sun Court*.

ILLIKI HELIOS – the Sun-Bull, a son of *Agdab Cosmopeiia* and *Ami* the Morning Star, the father of *Islik* the Divine King. As the Spring Sun he is the bestower of progeny and protector of crops, an archetype of divine kingship, and as the Winter Sun, he is the dying god with knowledge of the Underworld, cast from the Heavens by his half-brother *Irré* the Black Sun. He was later restored, either by *Yhera* or by his son *Islik*.

IRON AGE, the – the fourth and current age of *Known World* history, beginning with *Akkalion's* assumption of the Imperial throne 446 years ago and leading to the current date: 1472 in the standard Imperial Avellan calendar, 2616 in the old *Düréan*

calendar, 2432 in the Celestial calendar, or 1639 in the *Palatian* calendar.

IRRÉ – the Black Sun, bringer of unbearable heat, drought, and the blinding intensity of both darkness and light; the Bow Bearer, god of plague and fire; the Black Goat, god of war, struggle, disaster, disorder, the desert and the wilderness; the Last Defender, who guarded the gates of *Düréa* from the armies of *Geteema*. He overthrew *Illiki Helios* for abandoning *Düréa* before its fall, starting the *War in Heaven*.

ISHRAHA – the Rebel Angel, a son of *Ligríd* and a general to *Islik* when he was King of *Illia*. After *Irré* cast down *Illiki Helios* at the start of the *War in Heaven*, Ishraha led a rebellion against *Islik* for withholding the sacrifices due the gods and usurped his throne, casting *Islik* into exile. He was defeated when *Islik* returned and is imprisoned in the Underworld.

ISLIK – the Divine King, demigod son of *Illiki Helios*. He was the first of the Illian *Dragon Kings*, the founder of the Sun Court, and ruled as King of the Earth. After his father was cast down by *Irré*, *Islik* was usurped by *Ishraha*. After wandering the world for 21 years as one of the *Four Kings in Exile*, he returned to reclaim his throne, and after imprisoning *Ishraha* in the Underworld, *Islik* ascended to the Heavens and became King of both Heaven and Earth. His worshippers do not make sacrifices to the old gods and believe that rather than descending to *Geniché's* Underworld, they ascend to the Heavens to *Islik's* Palace after they die, but they have divided into two rival schisms, the *Sun Court* and the *Phoenix Court*.

ISLIKIDS, the – strange and evil Kings who arose in the *Far West* and conquered the lands of *Djar Mael* some 200 years ago, dividing the land into three Kingdoms: Morica, Ugeram, and Boradja. They claim descent from *Islik* the Divine King, and are served by the *Dümméghal* and *Maelite* warlords. Also called *Isliklidae*, *Islikids*, and the *Pretenderai*.

JALA – the Good Prince, son of *Surep*. One of the *Four Kings in Exile*, he returned to *Samarappa* to confront *Nymarga*, regain his father's throne, and restore the *Celestial Court*.

KHAEL – isle just east of *Palatia*, where the *Oracle Queens* live. Sacked by the *Worm Kings* at the end of the *Age of Legends*, now protected by *Palatian* legions.

KNOWN WORLD, the – term used to describe the whole of the known, mapped world, to distinguish it from the unknown, unmapped world.

LIGRID – the Temptress, the Queen of Perversity, the breaker of taboos and the corruptor of flesh and spirit; a daughter of *Geteema*, she is described variously as a rival, tutor, or mask of *Dieva*.

LOST UTBEDMAEL – name given to *Maelite* and *Danian* lands loyal to *Githuaine* and cursed by the *Sun Court* after his fall at the end of the *Winter Century* (see *Djar Mael* and *Dania*). Now a barren and ashen wasteland of inhospitable ruins.

MAECE – name of the realm taken by the *Maelites* Kings who stood against *Githuaine* (see *Djar Mael*). Their strength was wasted in wars against the *Isliklids*, and they remain only as the *Watchtower Kings*.

MÉDÜRE – the Cunning One, goddess of warlike skill and heroic valor. One of the *Gorgonae*.

MERETIA – small realm next to the *Gola*, once part of the *Thessid-Golan Empire* and now annexed by *Amora*.

MIDLANDS, the – common name for the lands to the west of the *Silver Scale Sea*. Once the Paradise of *Geniché*, now mostly inhospitable desert and mountain.

MIDDLE KINGDOMS, the – common name for the Aurian and Danian kingdoms on a peninsula in the *Silver Scale Seas* (see *Auria*, *Dania*), all aligned with the *Sun Court* and ruled by the High King of *Therapoli*.

MILLENE – legendary capital of *Dauban Hess'* Golden Empire, destroyed by a volcanic maelstrom in the *Catastrophe*. All that is left are a few ruins at the center of a plain of volcanic ash.

MOGRAN – the Riot Goddess, goddess of terror, confusion, and dissension. One of the *Gorgonae*.

NYMARGA – the Magician, called by some the first and greatest evil of the *Known World*, who first rose to power in the *Celestial Court*. He slew King *Surep* to usurp the throne of *Samarappa*, but *Jala* returned and threw him down. He next appeared in *Vanimoria*, where he killed *Coromat* to usurp the throne, conquered *Thessidia*, and ruled as the Worldly Tyrant until he was defeated by *Dauban Hess*.

OLD ÉDUINAN – ancient language of *Dania*, *Daradja*, and the Maelites (see *Djar Mael*), similar to the language of ancient *Düräa*.

ORACLE QUEENS, the – the descendants of *Brage*, possessed of the greatest oracular visions in the *Known World*, and rulers of the Isle of *Khael*.

OSIDRED – a son of *Geniché* who was the first to follow his mother to the Underworld and became the Judge of the Dead. Also called *Seedré*.

PALATIA – city-state of the northern *Silver Scale Seas*, founded by *Achre* and *Archaiä*. A minor city in the *Golden Age*, but now the center of a vast and expanding empire, possessed of legions, fleets, and merchant networks rivaled only by the *Hemapoline League* and *Thessid-Golan Empire*, each of which it has defeated in recent wars. Now ruled by the *Usurper*.

PHOENIX COURT, the – the Imperial Court of the Empire of *Thessid-Gola* located in *Avella*; also the highest Divine King authority in the West (see *Islik*). Opposed to the *Sun Court*, the Phoenix Court advocates a model of kingship based on appointment or election rather than inheritance, and so chooses or elects the officers of the Court and the emirates of the Empire. Briefly but disastrously corrupted by the *Worm Kings*.

RETHET THESA, the – name for the Carrion Queens of *Düräa* during the *Golden Age* when they were most active in the *Known World* as warriors, hunters, and conquerors, just prior to the fall of *Ürüne Düré*.

SAMARAPPA – fabled land of spices in the *Far West*, known for its literate and sensuous peoples.

SEATED KING – a King recognized by the *Sun Court*. Seated Kings were granted power once it was obvious there would be no more *Dragon Kings*.

SETINE – an emirate of the *Thessid-Golan Empire*, inland of the cities of *Grand Sekeret* in the *Gola*. Ruled by *Akine Mog* during and after the *Winter Century*, until his defeat by the armies of *Sekeret*.

SILVER SCALE SEA – inland sea framed by *Hemispia* in the east, the *Gola* in the south, the coast of the *Midlands* to the west, and the territories of *Palatia* in the north.

SPRING QUEENS, the – priestesses of the Green Temple of *An-Athair* during the *Age of Legends*, who created a wondrous and magical land centered in the *Erid Wold* by marrying the kings of surrounding realms. Their realm was ended by the arrival of the Aurians (see *Auria*).

SULTAN – title given an *Emir* elected by the *Phoenix Court* to

speak in the name of *Akkalion*. The current Sultan is *Agameen tep Marabet*.

SUN COURT, the – the highest religious authority in eastern lands devoted to *Islik*. Located on *Illia*, once the home of *Islik* himself, the Sun Court stands against the *Phoenix Court* and champions the tradition of hereditary kingship passed from father to son. Sun Court lands include the *Hemapoline League*, *Amora* and *Meretia*, and the *Middle Kingdoms*.

SUREP – son of *Yhera* and *Agdah Cosmopeitia*; a legendary and divine ruler of *Samarappa* during the *Golden Age*, slain by *Nymarga*.

THERAPOLI – ancient capital of the *Middle Kingdoms*, built during the *Golden Age*.

THESSID-GOLAN EMPIRE, the – name for the vast empire first created by *Dauban Hess*, then dismembered after his disappearance, first during civil wars between the *Sun Court* and rebel generals in the west, and then by the wars of the *Worm Kings*. At the height of its expansion under *Dauban Hess* in whole of the *Known World* only *Palatia* and *Khael* were outside the Empire and even they sent tribute. *Akkalion* began to reconstitute the Empire after the *Bronze Age*, but his efforts were halted by his lapse into the *Gray Dream*, and have only been recently been continued by the most recent *Sultan*. Includes *Vanimoria*, *Thessidia*, *Grand Sekeret*, *Setine*, *Galia*, and a host of minor emirates and principalities.

THESSIDIA – principal emirate of the *Thessid-Golan Empire* just to the west of the *Gola*; home to the current Imperial Capital of *Avella* and site of the ruins of the old capital, *Millene*.

THULA – a daughter of *Geniché*; the Forked Tongue, the Mother of Heroes, the Fire Queen who stole the secrets of magic and civilization from the *Düréans* and the Otherworld for her descendants, the *Thulamites*. She killed *Dara* in one of her many raids, and dueled *Achre* with both weapons and dance to a standoff; according to some stories she performed magics that allowed her to bear a child by *Achre*. Thula sailed to defend *Ürüne Düré* against *Geteema's* children, though she had herself weakened its defenses. Mother of *Ceram* and *Dall* and *Pulma*.

THULAMITES – barbarians of the *Midlands*, horse-riding raiders who dwell in great stone citadels. Now allied to *Palatia*.

URGRAYNE – a daughter of *Djara Luna*; called the Witch-Queen of the Harath *Éduins*. Active throughout the world since the days of *Ürüne Düré*, she has a reputation as a mysterious meddler. Some *Daradjans* are said to follow her instructions and are called members of the Witch's Host (see *Daradja*).

ÜRÜNE DÜRÉ – a great isle in the *Silver Scale Sea*, where *Ariahavé* led her favorites in the *Golden Age* to teach them the arts of civilization and found the realm of *Düräa*. Lost beneath the sea at the end of the *Golden Age*. Usually translated from the *Düréan* as "Mountain of Thrones."

USURPER, the – common name for *Urech Aiths*, the current Duke of *Palatia*, who took the Ducal Throne in a coup at the end of the *Assassin Cycles*.

VANI – a son of *Ammon Agdah* and *Geteema*, often depicted as having either an eagle or vulture head; the Mountain King who brings the Spring thaw. Ancestor god of the *Vanimorians* (see *Vanimoria*).

VANIMORIA – mountainous land to the west of the *Silver Scale Sea*; considered part of the *Midlands*, but during the *Golden Age* was the earthly realm of *Geteema*, and so was spared some of the desolation which has marked the rest of *Geniché's* Paradise. Inhabited by proud, martial mountain barbarians and considered a key component of the *Thessid-Golan Empire*.

WATCHTOWER KINGS, the – Maelite and Danian kings and warlords who fought against *Githwaine* and were granted citadels in western *Dania* to keep watch over *Lost Ühedmael* and the *Thessid-Golan Empire* by *Fortias the Brave* (see *Djar Mael*). Once their domain was called *Maece*.

WORM KINGS, the – common name for the kings and generals of the Imperial Court of the *Thessid-Golan Empire* who became twisted by foul magics after the disappearance of *Dauban Hess*. To retain their appointed thrones, they embraced bloodthirsty rituals that extended their lives at the price of their humanity and the corruption and decay of their bodies. The *Oracle Queens* cursed them in revenge for the sack of *Khael*, and after the *Catastrophe* befell them, they were hunted to extinction by the last of the *Dragon Kings*.

WAR IN HEAVEN, the – a 21-year war at the end of the *Golden Age*. After the sinking of *Ürüne Düré* and while *Yhera* wandered in grief, *Irré* accused *Illiki Helios* of abandoning the defense of *Düréa* to become the Sun King after the death of *Agdah Cosmopeiia*, and organized a rebellion in the Heavens against him. Illiki Helios was cast into the Underworld and Irré assumed the mantle of the Sun King. On Earth, *Ishraha* usurped the Dragon Throne of *Illia* from *Islík* in a parallel rebellion. At the end of the war, *Yhera* returned from the Underworld and restored Agdah and Illiki to the Heavens, though neither could be Sun King. That position was taken by Islík himself, who returned from exile to claim both the Dragon Throne and the Sun Throne.

WINTER CENTURY, the – period of over 100 years following the *Catastrophe*, during which the world saw a period of cold and darkness, and *Hathballa* ruled as the Sun's Veil. The hunt for the *Worm Kings* is most intent during this period. Ends with the death of *Githwaine*.

YHERA – Queen of Heaven, Goddess of Night, Queen of the Waters, one of the goddesses of the Moon, and often worshipped as the Creatrix, the divine origin of all that is. She is the goddess of language, sovereignty, rulership, wealth, wisdom, love, fertility, protection, and war. Also known as *Yhera Tredea*, *Yhera Negra*, *Yhera Cosmopeiia*, *Yhera Luna*, *Yhera Chthonia*, *Yhera Genetra*, *Yhera Parage*, *Yhera Fortuna*, *Yhera Hegemone*, *Yhera Daradja*, *Dread Yhera*, *Yhera Anath*, and *Yhera Invictus*, amongst other epithets.



THE WAR IN HEAVEN

AS TOLD IN THE HIGHLANDS OF DARADJA

After the death of Agdah Cosmopeiia at the hands of Geteema, his son Illiki the Bull left the embattled walls of *Ürüne Düré* and rode the Moon Path into the Heavens. There he assumed the Sun Throne and was hailed as Illiki Helios, the Sun Bull, the new god of the Sun, and he took over the solar duties of Agdah Cosmopeiia, seeing that golden Helios followed its route along the Sun Path each day. But *Yhera*, the Queen of Heaven, did not greet Illiki as the new Sun, so gripped by mourning was she for the loss of Agdah; for nine years *Yhera* grieved, even as *Ürüne Düré* fell to Geteema's jealous children. *Yhera* grieved until *Hathballa* came to her and woke the anger in her, and guided her to where Geteema hid in her Garden, mourning her own losses. *Yhera* and Geteema fought and the world roiled with their battle, until *Yhera* drove her sister into the Underworld and imprisoned her there. But *Yhera* too experienced death of a sort, and she

wandered lost in the Underworld clothed in ashes, seeking the spirit of her lover, Agdah.

THE CLAIM OF IRRÉ

While she searched the Underworld for 27 years, the War in Heaven began, for not all accepted the new order. Irré the Black Goat, the Locust of the Wilderness, had been the last consort of *Yhera* to stand on the walls of *Ürüne Düré*, and the exiled *Düréans* now held him as the Last Defender, who had brandished his courage at the howling hordes of Geteema's children. And Irré looked about the Heavens and did not like what he saw. Agdah had been consumed, but death to a god, even at the hands of another god, is not a final state, and he should have returned; but Irré instead saw Illiki on the Sun Throne.

Irré came to the Heavens wrapped in a mantle of dark fire and smoke, and came to the Court of Heaven and stood before the Sun Throne itself, and there he accused Illiki of abandoning the defense of *Düréa*. Illiki freely admitted doing so: the Sun Throne had been vacant, and needed to be filled, and so he had taken the seat of Helios. And then Irré used these words from Illiki's own mouth to condemn him further, saying that Illiki had seized the Sun Throne improperly and was a Usurper, as it was *Yhera's* right to appoint the next Sun God, and that Illiki's haste to claim power had sealed the death of Agdah Helios, his own father, by preventing his return.

Illiki at first laughed, thinking Irré insane to come and accuse him of such things in his own Court, but then he realized that very few were laughing with him. Irré had done his work well, as had Amaymon, and many of the Court had already had their hearts poisoned against Illiki. Fear and anger gripped Illiki then, and he cried out for his guards to arm themselves, and he flung himself off the Sun Throne at Irré and they battled in the Court of Heaven.

For a year and a day they fought, and around them battled the Celestial orders; on Illiki's side fought many of the angels of light and the celestial spirits of fire and air, but many of them also fought on Irré's side, as did many of the Star Dragons and the spirits of storm and thunder, even nightmares and angels of death who came up from the Underworld. And finally Irré prevailed, and sent Illiki the Bull crashing down from the firmaments of Heaven into the pit of the Underworld, where he was imprisoned. Irré took the Sun Throne then, and it was a Black Sun that rose the next day, and for the next 22 years. But the spirits and angels that had sided with Illiki refused to accept Irré on the Sun Throne, and so the War in Heaven continued unabated, as angel killed angel and Star hunted Star across the turbulent Heavens.

A WAR ON EARTH

On Earth the reign of Islík in Illia grew troubled; his father had been cast out of Heaven, and now a Usurper rose each morning in his place. In anger Islík renounced Irré as a murderer, and renounced the gods for allowing Illiki's ouster, and he ordered that sacrifice be withheld from the gods until they restored his father to the Sun Throne and the Cosmos to its rightful order. *Yhera* had been silent for some years, and many of the priests and priestesses had already begun to doubt her return, so most accepted his law. But some did not, and they began to speak out against the King on Earth. Amongst his Court was a general named *Ishraha*, a prideful half-angel born of the blood of *Ligríd*, who had come down from the Heavens to serve in Islík's army. *Ishraha* was displeased with Islík's renunciation of the gods and he wished to side with those that wanted to keep to the old ways, and Amaymon knew this and began to whisper to *Ishraha*. *Had not Islík sat idly by while his own father was thrown down from Heaven?* asked Amaymon. And as *Ishraha* thought on this he realized that

if Islik had not aided his father it was because he could not have aided his father; that despite his power, Islik did not have the strength or the knowledge to travel any of the Paths to Heaven.

And so Ishraha came to suspect that the real cause of Islik's anger at the gods was Islik's own weakness, his own inability to aid his father in his time of need, and Ishraha found delight in this, and a great hate for Islik and his weakness was born in him. He conspired with others in the Court of Illia and with other spirits of the Celestial Realms, and he overthrew Islik, and cast him into exile. Ishraha reinstated sacrifices and offerings to all the gods, beginning with Irré.

Islik wandered for 21 years in the wilderness, and during this time the War in Heaven came often to the Known World, as the angels and spirits seeking to depose Irré also turned to war against Ishraha on the Throne of the World, and men and angels fought side by side and against each other under the visage of the Black Sun.

THE RETURN OF THE QUEEN

Yhera's wanderings came to an end in the Court of her sister Geniché, who initiated her into the mysteries of death and loss and showed her the path back to the Heavens. But Yhera could not leave without Agdah, and naked and unveiled she bowed down before her sister and pleaded for Agdah's release. Geniché relented, and revealed the secret of where Agdah was imprisoned, and guided by a small but bright light Yhera quested deep into the Underworld to find him in the belly of Geteema, and they battled once again until Yhera had Geteema pinned within the Earth. Yhera held her sister's gaping maw open and reached in and plucked Agdah out, and to her surprise she found Illiki had been swallowed too, and so she freed both of her consorts, and left Geteema chained and bound in deepest darkness.

Yhera returned to the Heavens with Agdah and Illiki to find the Celestial World aflame with war, and Irré upon the Sun Throne. As Yhera gazed upon the angels of Heaven their fighting stopped. Irré rose and greeted his Queen and his King, but at first he would not step down from the Sun Throne, for neither Agdah nor Illiki had returned from the Underworld by their own power. Yhera saw the hatred that had grown in the Heavens during Irré's reign, and did not want to confirm him as the Sun, and she despaired until there was a clangor of trumpets, and Islik ascended to the Heavens.

For Islik, too, had been recently in the Underworld, where he had journeyed to free his companion Agall from the clutches of Death, and he had returned in triumph to reclaim his Throne on Earth from Ishraha. He had finally seen the Way to Heaven, and after setting his earthly kingdom in order he had ascended the Sun Path, and stood to claim the Sun Throne of his fathers. Yhera welcomed him then, and Irré acquiesced before his brightness, and Islik became a King in Heaven, as he was a King on Earth. Agdah became Cosmopeia again, the Cosmos King, and Illiki became the Sun Bull again, and Irré too still laid a claim to the Sun Throne on some days, but none was truly the Sun King anymore; instead, they shared that title in turn.

Irré returned to the dark parts of the Earth from whence he came, but many of the angels and celestial spirits that had fought with him did not much like the new King in Heaven, and they followed Irré into darkness and fire, and became the orders of the dark angels of the Underworld, the Rahabi: the Dhuréal and the Golodriel, the Bharab Dzerek and the Sharab Deceal, the Gamezhel and the Ghazharab. And many of the Rahabi remained armed for war, and still fight the War in Heaven when they think Yhera is not looking.



THE TEN VICTORIES OF ISLIK WHILE IN EXILE FROM HIS EARTHLY THRONE

In the temple lore of the Divine King, Islik achieved Ten Great Victories while in exile from his throne that marked him as worthy of the Sun Throne of his father. The main text of the Divine King's cult is the *Islikinaem* – called *Timit Tes Ashvail Islik* by the Phoenix Court – which is composed of the screed *The Ten Victories of Islik* and then the appended *King Cycles*, the lists of Hemispian Dragon Kings and their Deeds that followed in the centuries immediately after Islik's ascension. According to the *Islikinaem*, these are the Ten Victories of Islik:

HIS FIRST: OVER THE LIONS OF TELESIA

After being exiled from Illia, Islik journeyed south into Hemispia, to the ancient kingdom of Telesia and its capital of Agrapios. He sought aid and allies against the Rebel and Usurper Ishraha, and petitioned King Buradis of Telesia to withhold tribute from Ishraha and sacrifice from the gods until he was restored to his throne and his father to his. But instead the lion-headed sons of King Buradis, each of whom had the strength of a dozen men, challenged his fitness as King and sought to imprison him as a prize for Ishraha, to whom they had sworn allegiance. Islik defeated them in ceremonial combat, and realizing that he had few allies amongst the traitor Kings of the south, he left Hemispia with their lion heads on the prow of his ship.

HIS SECOND: OVER THE SIRENS OF THE SILVER SCALE SEA

Islik crossed over the Silver Scale Sea with his friend and companion, Agall of the Black Sail, once King of Galia, who renounced sacrifice and became the second of the Four Kings in Exile, and a handful of vassals who were loyal to him as the True King of Illia. The sirens of the Silver Scale Sea called to them with their enchanted songs, and Agall and the others on board their ship were overcome and would have sailed their ship into danger, but Islik heard the songs of the sea-spirits and was not moved. He saved his companions from being lost forever in the mists of the Sea.

HIS THIRD: OVER THE CRUELTY OF THE DANIAN KING

Islik and Agall landed in Dania, where they were taken prisoner by the warriors of the Danian King, Myrad, lord of Therapoli. They were imprisoned in his dungeons, from which none had ever escaped, and therein met two other Kings who were in Exile, Jala the Good, Prince of distant Samarappa, and Coromat, once King of Vanimoria. Islik convinced them to renounce sacrifice, and they joined him as blood brothers. Islik solved the puzzles of King Myrad's dungeons, and led the other Kings in Exile to their freedom.

HIS FOURTH: OVER THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE DARADJ QUEEN

The Four Kings in Exile crossed over the mountains into the Highlands of Daradja, and there they were enchanted by the charms of the Daradj Queen, Aratheia. They lingered in her Court for many moons, and one by one they were seduced by her lies and honeyed words – first Jala, then Agall, and then Coromat – until she attempted to compromise Islik. He alone amongst his companions saw through her disguise and her glammers to the ugliness within her, and he exposed her to his fellow Kings, freeing them from the spells she had cast upon them.

HIS FIFTH: OVER THE TRICKERY OF CERAM

The Kings in Exile fled Daradja and its Spider Queen into the brightness of the Sun's Anvil. There they found the camps of a fifth King in Exile, Ceram the Storm King, the Thunderer. Ceram invited them to share his fire, and they sought to convince him to renounce sacrifice and join their wandering life, but in the morning Ceram revealed his base nature and set them as the sacrificial prey to his hunt. Ceram hunted them across the Sun's Anvil and into the Sea of Sands, and they despaired of his pursuit, but Islik found Ceram's Gate into the Dain Éduins, and there the Four Kings hid among his trophies in the Vale of Bones until Ceram had thundered into the distance.

HIS SIXTH: OVER THE DANGERS OF THE SEA OF SANDS

The Four Kings in Exile went back out into the Sea of Sands after Ceram departed, having failed in his hunt, and headed West, hoping to reach lands close to Jala's former home in Samarappa. But the Sea of Sands is a vast and trackless waste, full of curses and traps, and they were brought close to the brink of death. But Islik would not let the ill will of the Dead Earth overcome him, and he found great wells of strength within himself, and these he shared with his companions. He persevered and led them out of the Sea of Sands when it seemed as though they would at last perish.

HIS SEVENTH: OVER THE MAGICS OF THE KINGS OF THE WEST

When the Four Kings in Exile came out of the trackless wastes, they were set upon by the evil Warlock-Kings of the desert peoples of the West, the Rajiks and the Khaghals, who barred them from crossing the Ferras Nash, the Mountains of Iron, into the valleys of Lake Hazrat. Each of the Four Kings in Exile attempted to cross the mountain passes, but only Islik was able to lead the others to the green pastures and waters of the lake. When they saw their magics had been overcome by his purity, the Warlock-Kings of the Rajiks and the Khaghals slunk into the mountains, and the Four Kings in Exile came to rule the Lands of the Lake, outlawing sacrifice and taking wives amongst the Rajiks and Khaghals.

HIS EIGHTH: OVER THE TREACHERY OF THE BLOODED

Their peaceful reign lasted for 19 years, until some amongst their Rajik and Khaghal subjects rebelled and made sacrifice once more to the gods. The rebels, called the Blooded, strove against the Kings in Exile with sword and magic and argument. Jala was convinced by trickery to join with the Blooded, and he fell into sacrilege and fled back to his homeland, abandoning the other Kings in Exile; Coromat killed many of their attackers, but was driven insane by their magics, and fled into the wastes; great Agall lost his legendary strength and was slain by the enemy. Islik alone stood to the very end against the Blooded, and though they had ended the Four Kings in Exile, he was able to drive them from the battlefield and stand there alone, protecting the body of his friend and stalwart companion, Agall.

HIS NINTH: OVER DEATH

Standing over the body of his boon companion Agall, Islik swore an oath to not be conquered by Death, and he swore that he would save those that had been loyal to him from the cold embrace of the Underworld. Islik followed the spirit of Agall into the Underworld, pausing once past its Gates to curse the Blooded so they could not follow him, and in the depths of Hell he came to grips with the Queen of the Dead, and learned her secrets and his mind became illuminated by forbidden knowledge. While in the Underworld he saw two great Leviathans fighting, and in the belly of one he spied the spirit of his father, and he freed his father's spirit while the dark Leviathans were in combat. He found and freed Agall from the clutches of the Queen of the Dead, and brought his spirit back to the Known World.

HIS TENTH: OVER ISHRAHA THE USURPER

Having returned with the secrets of the Underworld and the spirit of Agall in his keeping, Islik returned to Illia in disguise, and came before Ishraha upon his usurped throne. Ishraha and his traitorous courtiers did not recognize him, until he threw off his disguise and burned them with the fury of his righteousness and the illumination of his spirit. Despite his hurts Ishraha assailed Islik with sword and claw, but Islik was infused with the power of Death and the strength of the spirit of Agall, and he tore Ishraha's wings from his body and hurled him into the Underworld. Those at the Court that had supported the Rebel Angel fled, but Islik and those that had remained loyal to him while he was in exile hunted many of them down.

These are the Ten Great Victories of Islik, which he performed while in exile to prove his worth to reclaim the Throne of Illia and the title of King of the Earth, and his divinity, so that he could enter the Heavens as the true heir to the Sun Throne of his father and claim the title of the King of Heaven.



THE GOLDEN REALM OF AN-ATHAIR

AFTER THE FALL OF ÜRÜNE DÜRÉ

The Known World was a tumultuous place after the fall of Ürüne Düré. Irré ruled the Heavens for a time, and the Black Sun was harsh; for many, it seemed as though the desperate and hard times that wracked the world after Geniché left the earth and imposed the First Law had returned. In a few spots civilization and wonder remained, and one of those places was in Daradja, where Queen Lanys, descended of lamented Dara, had invited Düréan exiles to settle, and though this displeased some of her subjects she foresaw the benefits the civilized Düréans could bring her Highland realm. Word of her beauty and the strengths of her realm reached the ears of the wandering Four Kings in Exile, and they visited to vie for her hand and win her aid in regaining their thrones. She saw greatness in each of them and she desired those qualities for her own realm as well, but she also saw in them jealousy and possessiveness; they were Kings, after all, and each wanted to claim her for himself. So she secretly took each of them as consorts without telling the others, and bore them each a daughter, before the Kings in Exile discovered her ploy and continued on their way.

Eventually Yhera returned from the Underworld and commanded Irré to relent his place, and Islik assumed the mantle of the Sun King, and the world, though still struggling, rejoiced, though sorrow and despair and hardship lingered. Lanys' daughters grew in power and might, but in the end the jealousy Lanys had seen in their fathers was their undoing, and Goatis, daughter of Agall, grew jealous that her sister Damara, daughter of Islik, and murdered her in a drunken rage. The bright future Lanys had sought for Daradja disintegrated in a civil war from which the land never fully recovered.

Daradjans and Düréans alike sought refuge from the bloody wars that wracked the Highlands amongst their neighbors. The Danians, who had paid tribute to Daradja since Dara's time, no longer did so after the death of Damara, and they did not wish to allow exiles in their lands, fearing they might be drawn into the wars of the mountain citadels; all of the Kings and Queens of the Danians turned the refugees away. But the Athairis, the Danians who lived in the great Erid Wold, invited those fleeing the mountain wars to settle in the spirit-filled woods of their domain.

So Daradja's plight became An-Athair's fortune, for in exchange, the Athairis learned many secrets.

THE SPRING QUEENS OF AN-ATHAIR

Amongst the Düréan refugees were priestesses descended from those who had held the Great Garden Temple of Geniché in Ürüne Düré, where the Queen of the Underworld had still been the Queen of the Earth, and they knew secrets of the natural world long since lost. They showed the Athairis how to reawaken the Earth abandoned by Geniché, where to find power in it, where to draw strength. And they showed the Athairis how they could make the land resemble the lost Paradise of Geniché once again, at least to some small degree. The Athairis built a wondrous temple out of living tree and carved rock, a Green Temple that nourished, refreshed, and healed all who entered it, and the High Priestesses of the Temple came to be called the Spring Queens. The Erid World grew green and lush, a bounty for those that lived there, and the land and the people lived in balance and in harmony, and the sheen of Paradise lay upon them both.

The neighboring Kings and Queens of the Danians marveled at the beauty and wealth of An-Athair; some made tribute, and became part of what came to be called the Golden Realm. Others, however, sought to take the wealth of the Athairis by force, but here again Daradja's plight was An-Athair's fortune, for amongst the exiled Daradjans and Düréans were many veterans of the mountain wars and the descendants of those who had fought at Ürüne Düré. They knew war well, and they taught their secrets to the Athairis. But the Athairi knights of the Golden Realm fought not only with secret war knowledge but also with magical vigor to protect the Queens of the Green Temple.

The exploits of the knights of the Golden Realm became the stuff of Danian legend: Gyfryd's single-handed defense of the castle of Hyrval, Penwyrd's rescue of Queen Tara, Dyrk's capture of the Wyvern King, the duel between Benreuth and Ferne for the still-beating heart of the Maiden of Abeuth. Just as legendary, if not more so, were the feasts and celebrations in their honor and at the Green Temple, where the fertility of the land was ensured by the ritual union of the Spring Queens of An-Athair with local heroes who wore golden Sun Masks to invoke Islik, the returned Sun King. Women came from far and wide to serve as Spring Queens, and heroes, knights, and woodsmen came too to do their duty and bless the land, and with every union the land grew greener and the Golden Realm grew brighter.

THE COMING OF THE SEA BULLS

A shadow soon fell on An-Athair, the sails of the Sea Bulls: the Aurians, the descendants of Heth the Sea King. Raiders and pillagers from the far north, they had been fought off, if barely, by the Veiled Queens of Palatia, and had found safe landing on the unpopulated eastern coast of Dania, which they called the Gift of Heth. Soon they came through the pass of Édain, and they conquered portions of the Danian lands and subjected their peoples, until they came to the borders of An-Athair. They marveled at the plenty of the Plain of Horns, and sought to make it their own, but the knights of the Golden Realm rode from the Erid Wold to disrupt their hunts and war parties, and the Aurians retreated to the east. Some amongst the Aurians became enchanted with the knights of the Golden Realm, and sent emissaries to the Green Temple, and lay with the Spring Queens and were granted domain over lands in the east.

Most of the Aurians were not enchanted, but were still instilled with the fury and rage of their ancestor and god, Heth,

who embodied the hurricane and the tidal wave. Their magicians sought ways to fight the knights of the Golden Realm, and one day a Horned Man visited one of them, and told him how to make an axe and enchant a stone that could cut down an Erid Wold tree and prevent it from growing again. The Horned Man explained that the trees were the source of the knight's power, and once they were cut down the knights would be made weak and vulnerable.

So the Aurians brought axe and fire to the Erid Wold, and began at the river Abenbrae. They burned and cut down the trees of the wood, and on the each stump they placed an enchanted stone, and as the Horned Man had promised the trees did not grow back. The knights of the Golden Realm fought valiantly, but once the Aurians knew this trick, their fate was sealed; they became weaker and weaker as the forest disappeared, and one by one the knights of the Golden Realm fell.

THE SACK OF THE GREEN TEMPLE

The Erid Wold being destroyed acre by acre, the knights of the Golden Realm falling, the fate of the Green Temple became fixed, though it took years of pillage to bring about the end. Eventually the Aurians weakened the knights' defenses enough to strike directly at the Green Temple, and the trees and stones of the Green Temple were pulled down and ruined, and the Spring Queens were raped and then drowned in the Eridbrae, and the paradise of An-Athair faded in an instant.

The Aurians' moment of triumph was short-lived, however, for the bodies of the Spring Queens floated down the Eridbrae to the sea, and there they were found by Heth; and Heth the Sea King had been a lover of Geniché's, and he knew that the Earth and the Sea were one, and that Yhera was Queen of both. Further, he saw something that his children had not: that Amaymon, the Whisperer, who forever seeks to undermine all that is fair and beautiful, had sent the Horned Man with the secret of axe and stone. Heth has always been fickle and arbitrary, for such was the Sea, and though he too destroyed without pity it enraged him that his children had done so dark a deed, and at the Whisperer's behest. So he turned his back on them, and withdrew his blessings, so that when the Aurian lords put to sea to continue on their pillaging, the waves crushed their boats and water spirits dragged them to the depths.

The end of the Golden Realm left a rent Dania and the dispirited, land-locked Aurians open to the arrival of Dauban Hess and the Thessid-Golans, who came and subjected the land with ease, bringing with him the teachings of the Sun Court, which were embraced by the Aurians in particular, as they had lost their patron and ancestor, Heth. The Erid Wold in time recovered, but is a place of dark memories and vengeful spirits; Aurian lords of the east destroyed a vast part of the forest, and the trees never returned, and that land became the Plain of Stones. To this day, Aurians are considered cursed at sea, and rarely leave the land.



GITHWAINE THE LAST WORM KING

For a time, only one known Worm King in the East escaped unseen from the questing Dragon Kings who took Hathhalla as their guiding light and sought to destroy those that survived the Catastrophe: Githwaine, a young lord of Na Caila, who joined the armies of Dauban Hess after the Golden Emperor had conquered the Danias. He was but 26 when Dauban Hess made him Lord of Tir-en-tiel in i275, a position of great honor and trust as it included guarding both the sacred fields where Dauban Hess had defeated Nymarga the Tyrant and the secrets of Nymarga's final

resting place, his cursed tomb.

Proximity to such evil has its costs; despite that trust, Githwaine later grew close to many of Nymarga's old magicians as they returned to advise the Phoenix Court, and he is thought to have become a corrupted Whisperer devoted to Amaymon and beholden to the spirit of Nymarga. His name is recorded as amongst the first lords of the Phoenix Court to embrace the foul rituals that transformed them into the undead things that would so plague the Age of Legends. He was away in Tir-en-tiel when the Catastrophe destroyed Millene, and hid in shadows while his fellows perished in the Dragon King's hunts.

GITHWAINE RETURNS TO UTHED DANIA

Githwaine appears to have returned in secret to Uthed Dania by i627, when his now-distant relations in Na Caila (he had been gone from there almost four hundred years) were all killed mysteriously. Na Caila stood vacant afterwards, and Githwaine instead used magic and fell powers to masquerade as a young lordling of nearby Arath. He used that keep's position guarding the approach to Bora Gara to make contact with the barbarian Djar Mael lords there, and cultivate them as his allies. The last Dragon King of Uthed Dania, **Heraud**, had perished in Sekeret hunting Worm Kings, but had left behind a Council of Kings from amongst his Danian and Mael subjects, and Githwaine began by whisper and intrigue to grow a secret network at their Court in Sanas Sill. He introduced the worship of corruption amongst those that followed him, and human sacrifices and unspeakable rites were performed in hidden catacombs and temples in the name of dark and forbidden gods.

Erlwulf, Dragon King of Dania, of the blood of Islik the Divine King and the last known of his kind, returned to his realm in i648. He and his entourage thought to find a peaceful rest, having completed their task of destroying their Worm King enemies, but instead he discovered to his horror the telltale signs, now lost to history, of a Worm King's presence amongst his neighbors. He raised an army of Danian, Aurian, and Daradjan knights, and with the nominal aid of the Uthed Council of Kings began searching through Uthed Dania for the source of this corruption, but the allies of Githwaine fought a war of stealth and cunning against them, never warring openly but instead through disguise and ambush and poison. This was a cruel war, with none knowing who was friend or foe, and Githwaine and his allies preyed upon the noblemen and common folk of the country alike, visiting grievous dooms upon those that aided Erlwulf against them.

Erlwulf sensed the corruption in the heart of the Council of Kings, and so never trusted them fully, instead making his chief quarters the citadels of Warwark in the south and Heth Moll in the north. It was while returning to Heth Moll through the Vale of Barrows in i657 with his closest aides that Erlwulf was fatally ambushed by a force of Djar Maelite warlords and Daradj brigands led by Githwaine himself. Through nine years of their war, Githwaine had heretofore avoided direct confrontation with Erlwulf, but he chose to strike when hard campaigning had finally exhausted the Dragon King and his entourage. From their heights the knights of Heth Moll saw the attack, and sent a strong relief party, but they arrived too late to do aught but save the body of Erlwulf from the clutches of their dark enemy. The body of the last Dragon King was brought to Heth Moll, and he was interred there as a bulwark against the evils of the Vale of Barrows.

The danger and strength of the Worm Kings had been their powers of corruption and sorcery and poison, as they struck with honeyed words and magic spells and a touch that brought disease and decay; their battles with the Dragon Kings had been fought with mortal proxies, for the powers of Islik's blood in the melee were unrivaled. But the knights of Heth Moll and the few that survived of Erlwulf's entourage reported Githwaine had sought

out Erlwulf on the field of battle and slain him undisguised, armed, and face-to-face, and this turn shocked and worried many.

GHAVAUER, DAYBRINGER & GLADRINGER

Divinations were performed, and though a veil of shadows lay about Githwaine a secret was gleaned: the Worm King had armed himself with an enchanted sword, the fell and infamous *Ghavaurer*, made by Nymarga himself to have special powers against the blood and lineage of Islik. He had wielded it against Dauban Hess at Tir-en-Tiel, and when tested against the Golden Emperor's famed *Daybringer*, that great heirloom of the Sun Court forged of sun-metal by Daedekamani, *Ghavaurer* was found to be lacking. Though perhaps the weakness had been in the hand that wielded it, for now Githwaine held it, plundered from Nymarga's tomb when he had been it's guardian, and he used it to end the known line of Islik.

In i666, after more years of this shadow war, the lords of the Middle Kingdoms called for a great council in Sanas Sill, and there many of the Kings and lords of Uthed Dania gathered. The magisters of the University of Therapoli and the priests of the Sun Court had prepared a secret ritual at the behest of the Aurian hero-knight **Fortias** of Édain, and when the Uthed Court had gathered they performed it suddenly, and Githwaine was unmasked, and he was revealed in all his horror. But his foes had underestimated the depths of corruption in Sanas Sill and did not realize they were outnumbered there, and once Githwaine was revealed, his followers in the Court drew arms against his enemies and slaughtered many of them.

Fortias was amongst those that escaped, and he rallied the last uncorrupted Uthed and Mael lords and with knights of Dania, Auria, and Daradja led them into war against the Last Worm. Githwaine took as his seat the citadel at Liss Dyved, and ruled openly and without disguise, and nine years of dark and haunted war followed as Uthed Dania was contested. Githwaine would raise his slain soldiers as Hathaz-Ghúl to fight his enemies even in death, and he called up wights and ghosts from the Barrow-Vale to stalk them in the night.

Against *Ghavaurer* and the unnatural foot soldiers of Githwaine's army Fortias sought a counter, but *Daybringer* had been lost with Dauban Hess, and for a time he despaired. But **Gobelin**, the great Daradja smith of the Bodmall clan, brought him *Gladringer*, a sword forged in the ruins of the Green Temple and quenched in the pools of the Spring Queen's blood that could still be found there, along with harnesses of bronze plate enchanted against the unquiet dead. With that the tides turned, and fire and sword were brought to all those that aided Githwaine in Uthed Dania, until Fortias sacked Liss Dyved and hunted Githwaine to his death, piercing his magics and illusions and finally his corrupted body with *Gladringer's* enchanted blade.

A full and final victory eluded Fortias even then, for loyal Djar Mael lords spirited away Githwaine's body even as the knights of Heth Moll had recovered Erlwulf's, and it is said they buried it in secret and protected it with grave glyphs, bound ghosts, and warriors who accepted the curse of undeath to guard the body of their master. Some believe it was interred beneath Holl Ari, as an icon against the body of Erlwulf at Heth Moll; others that it was returned to his birthplace at Na Caila; others that it was taken deep into Djar Mael; and still others believe that his body was buried in an unmarked barrow in the Vale, the location lost now even to the Djar Maelites.

The cursed *Ghavaurer* was never found and is believed buried with Githwaine's body. Four centuries later *Gladringer* was lost in the Black Day Battle when it fell from the hand of the High King **Darwain Urfortias**, ever afterwards called the Fumbler, the one sour note to the resounding victory of the Middle Kingdoms over the Thessid-Golan Empire. None know who recovered it from the field, or where it is today.



THE WARS OF THE THRONE THIEF

THE ISLIKLIDS APPEAR

In i1211, soon after the Peace of Tir-en-tiel, the Isliklidae crossed the Red Wastes with their Düméghal army and appeared in the southern reaches of the Dain Éduins. By i1214 they had conquered and pacified those most barbarian kings of Djar Mael and proclaimed three Kingdoms of their own: Ugeram, Boradja, and Morica. No great love existed between the Middle Kingdoms and the subjected Djar Maelites, but the Watchtower Kings of Maece roused themselves into a crusade to rid the mountains of the new arrivals. For over thirty years the armies and heroes of Maece and Dania crossed the horrors of Lost Uthedmael and the Vale of Barrows to reach the western mountains, only to be defeated time and again by the Düméghal and Djar Mael warlords commanded by the Isliklidae. In i1239 the last of the Kings of Maece, Gwyrfyr Brightstar, and his chief warlords reached the furthest into the Isliklid realms of any of their kin, but were massacred attempting to besiege the plateau tower-gate of Cir At'or. No heir to the throne of Maece survived, and the High King, Fergus, appointed no other, signaling an end to the realm of Maece and their wars against the Isliklidae.

A THRONE DISAPPEARS

The throne of the Kings of Maece, like the thrones of the other sovereign kings of the Middle Kingdoms, had been built in imitation of the Dragon Throne of Therapoli, itself based on the original Dragon Throne of Illia made by Brage himself and lost in the Catastrophe. Great power resided in it and in whoever rightfully took its seat, and some of that power was conferred into the thrones that were modeled after it and given to the petty kings of the Middle Kingdoms. Not as much, for sure, but enough for



Fergus, High King of Therapoli and Atallica

the minor thrones to be considered relics of great power and authority. With no King left in Maece, the throne of Maece was ordered returned from Angora to Therapoli in i1240, but on the West King's Road on the way to Truse it vanished from the procession in the middle of the night.

A great hue and cry was raised, and a search of the Plain of Stones begun, but no sign of the throne or who had taken it could be found. Talk of witchcraft and treachery began – how else could a throne of power disappear from within an armed camp? – but the priests of the Divine King could find no proof of either in their divinations. The disappearance of the throne was a considerable loss, but seemed destined to become a minor mystery of legend, retold over tankards of ale and wine – until the throne of Dain Dania disappeared as well.

SUSPICIONS ARISE

The throne of Dain Dania disappeared from the very throne room in the Dain King's castle at Aprenna one night; it had simply vanished by morning, though the King's Guard watched over the hall. Once again a great search was conducted, but no trace of the throne or who had taken it could be found. With two thrones now missing, the courts of the Middle Kingdoms soon abounded with rumor and innuendo and speculation about who could be taking them and why. The King of Erid Dania, who had last seen charge of the throne of Maece as it made its way to Truse, was quickly suspected, as were the witches and warlocks said to reside in the haunts of the Erid Wold. Some suggested brigands from the Highlands, or cultists of Nymarga seeking some secret power in the thrones, or a secret cult of Ishraha the Rebel seeking to undermine the Seated Kings, or the new threat from the west, the Isliklidae, sending their hidden hands forth to rob those who had so recently warred against them. Others dismissed it as coincidence, or even suggested that the Dain King had hidden his own throne to divert suspicion from his involvement in the theft of the throne of Maece, which he had long coveted. An emissary of the High King was sent to the Danias to question the Dain and Erid Kings, and while the emissary was in royal Westmark in conference with the Erid King Dyvryn, the Ivory Throne of Dainphalia disappeared.

This caused great consternation in Therapoli, for up to that point the problem was to some extent assumed to be a Danian problem; but now whoever was taking the thrones had reached past the capital to pluck the Ivory Throne, though a minor one, from the hall of Urphalia while the Phalian Duke hunted in the Marek Mole. There was no longer any question in the courts of the land but that some intelligent design was at work, an evil intent at play. A year of searching yielded no clues, however, and in i1241 the minor thrones of Huel and Édain disappeared, though the hall guards swore they saw nothing, even under torture before they were executed.

THE WARS BEGIN

The next year, the princely throne of Auria in the city of Loria disappeared; but this time, the guards caught someone in the castle who wasn't supposed to be there: an Umati merchant. The merchant forswore any knowledge of the disappearance of the throne, but died in the custody of the guards before the Divine King's priests could question him. Prince Theodric of Auria and King Cawal of Umat exchanged heated barbs, and soon Aurian knights were raiding across the Dyer Moors, though King Cawal swore oaths before the Sun Court's emissaries that he had no part in the taking of the thrones and the High King Fergus ordered an end to the attacks. Within a year full-fledged war broke out between Umat and the lords of Auria and Dainphalia,

both pressing for the return of their thrones, and soon the Dain King Chidric had moved against the Erid King Dyvryn, laying siege to Westmark. The High King's marshals took the field to stop these minor wars lest they spread like contagion, but the fear and mystery that gripped the land proved too strong.

Once started, the wars did not seem to end; nor did the theft of the thrones. The throne of Erid Dania disappeared from the royal hall of Westmark in i1246, though the Dain King accused Dyvryn of simply sneaking it off into the Erid Wold. Umat lost its war with Dainphalia and Auria by i1247, and Lysias was sacked and the Silver Throne carted off to Loria as booty; it disappeared from the throne room in Loria the next year, prompting King Cawal to renew hostilities with an army of mercenary knights from the pirate holds of the Barren Coast. The secondary throne of Umis in Caven disappeared in i1248 as well, and the chairs of the magisters of the University of Truse disappeared the same year, though some weren't sure if it wasn't just a student prank, and scholars from the University of Therapoli started turning up dead at an alarming rate. The throne of the Watchtower King of Warwark disappeared in i1249, though it was not enchanted like the thrones of the Seated and minor Kings, and on it went, until a general paranoia had become the standard way of life for the entire Middle Kingdoms, and not a chair was considered safe anywhere.

The region exploded in flame in i1250, when the heavily guarded Dragon Throne in Therapoli disappeared. The High King Fergus ordered the city turned upside down; foreigners, vagrants, and criminals were put to the sword wholesale, but no trace of the Dragon Throne was found. Soon search parties spread out from the capital, and knightly hosts hunted through city street, sleepy village, and wooded copse alike, questioning everyone from the highest noble to the lowliest peasant. Witch burnings, already on the rise, began in earnest; over a thousand were burned in An-Athair alone over the next decade. Every rumor of the secret worship of Nymarga, Amaymon, Ligrid, and Ishraha was taken as truth, and hundreds put to death by emissaries of the Sun Court. Renewed fighting broke out between Umat and the other Principalities and Kingdoms, between the Danias and the High King's host, between minor noblemen and their neighbors, and between the Middle Kingdoms and the Highlands, as search parties sought access to the Highlands citadels and the brigand camps of the mountains.

In i1253 attention shifted to Umis; alone amongst the Seated and minor Kings of the Middle Kingdoms, he had retained his original king's throne, because it was carved from the very rock of his hall in Caven More in what was called the Daradhan style; the throne in Caven, stolen years before, was not the true seat of his power, as Caven More was the true King's hold in Umis. The Umis were well known as a strange and barbaric people who held themselves aloof and separate from the rest of the Middle Kingdoms, and the High King formally accused the Stone King Golgosyn of orchestrating the throne thefts, though he presented no proof, and he led a great host against him. But this was Fergus' undoing, for though they sacked Caven, the wild territory of the Umis Mole proved beyond their control, and each campaign to take Caven More or the other hill towers proved disastrous. The High King Fergus was killed besieging Hardagh in i1266 on his sixth campaign in Umis; his oldest son and heir Fairal was killed attempting Rhodia from the sea only six months later, and his second son Fergrain was slain by Golgosyn himself in hillside ambush.

THE WARS END AND NEW KINGDOMS APPEAR

Fergus' third son, Forwain, called the Wise, became High King next and sealed off the borders of Umis, but made no

further attempt on its interior. Instead he began the painstaking task of bringing the various wars and general mayhem in the Middle Kingdoms to a halt. Thirty years, it took him, before the last armed conflicts and purges of the Wars of the Throne Thief came to an end in exhaustion and futility.

With the blessing of the Sun Court he elevated the Watchtower King of Angora to become the Seated King of Angowrie, and elevated the minor kings and nobles of Umat, Umis, Huel and Dainphalia to be Seated Kings as well. The Sun Court pardoned King Golgosyn of Umis for his part in the deaths of three High Kings, as he swore his innocence in the throne thefts before the Sun Court's emissaries, and so was held to be acting in defense of his rightful Kingship. A general amnesty was issued for crimes, war deaths, and murders during the Wars of the Throne Thief by both the High King and the Sun Court, and a reward posted for the thrones' return in the hope that the Throne Thief would come forward, but no evidence was ever found of the identity of the Throne Thief and the stolen thrones were never recovered.

Several theories have persisted to this day as to the identity of the Throne Thief. The first and most prevalent continues to be King Golgosyn of Umis, despite the Sun Court's vindication of his defense; the relative isolation of the Kings of Umis only emboldens the talk that the halls of Caven More hold a secret room with a circle of stolen thrones. The second popular theory blames witch powers in the Erid Wold, who reportedly buried the stolen thrones in a magical pattern to increase the enchanted powers of the wood. The third popular theory blames the Isliklids, who have come to be seen as bogeymen in the eyes of the Middle Kingdoms, though like theories of the Erid witches this seems more to result from popular prejudice than any suggestive evidence. A fourth theory now increasingly popular is that the thrones were stolen by agents of the High King Fergus himself, seeking to diminish the powers of his subject Kings, and that the theft of the Dragon Throne was orchestrated to justify the invasion of Umis and the destruction of the Stone Throne in Caven More, the last great throne outside his possession. Proponents of this theory claim that the thrones are held in the catacombs beneath the High King's Hall in Therapoli. The reward for the return of the stolen thrones stands to this day.



Golgosyn, King of Umis

THE KNOWN WORLD

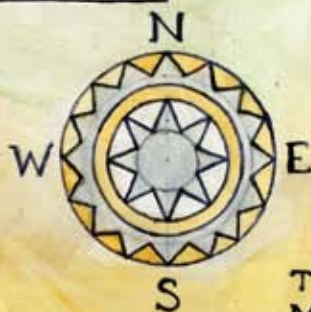
AS HELD BY THE GREAT MAGISTERS OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF THERAPOLI
1470 ia

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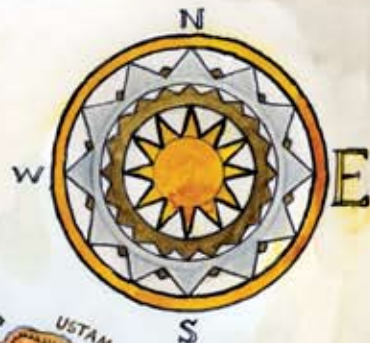
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THE
BAY
OF
HERSOG

CAPE OF FANGS

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SEA
OF
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MERA
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THE MIDDLE
KINGDOMS
& THE HIGHLANDS OF
DARADJA



-  Port
-  Highland Glass Hoid
-  Citadel, Castle, Fort
-  Alexander King
-  Mesa

THE SUN'S ANVIL



This map prepared in the year 1471 i.e. by Idrisi ben Abdallah, cartographer to the Emir of Sicily, is the earliest map of the world known to us.



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