

# How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to provide a structured exploration of the Known World, covering its history, politics, cultures, and mystical undercurrents. Whether you're approaching this world as a scholar, a storyteller, or simply an explorer, here's how to get the most out of it:

## If You Want a Broad Overview:

Start with "Welcome to the Known World", which introduces the setting's core themes—balance, necessity, and consequence. From there, the timeline is an excellent entry point, offering a high-level history of civilizations, rulers, and key events that shaped the world.

## If You're Interested in Cultural & Religious Foundations:

Dive into "Creation Myths & Cosmology", where different civilizations interpret the origins of reality, divine figures, and elemental forces. You can follow this with "Pantheon Archetypes", which maps out universal deity roles across cultures.

## If You're Curious About Politics & Power Structures:

The geopolitical section explores the institutions, economic forces, and unspoken rules that maintain global stability. The Cultural Heroes side-bars provide insight into the people behind the power, showing how individual ambition reshaped nations.

## If You Want to Understand Magic & Its Role in Society:

"Aether and Ley-Lines" details how different cultures perceive and interact with magic. This section explains how arcane forces shape governance, trade, and daily life—from dwarven reverence to gnomish pragmatism.

## If You Want Practical World-Building References:

The sections on biomes, calendars, time keeping, and international relations are excellent for grounding the setting in realism. They provide insight into daily life, regional climates, and the structural dependencies that prevent open warfare.

## If You're Looking for Intrigue & Mystery:

"Wonders of the World" showcases the wonders and anomalies scattered across the Known World, from ancient artifacts to unexplained phenomena. If you're drawn to political machinations, the segments on mercenary companies and trade monopolies provide a glimpse into hidden power struggles.

# Welcome to the Known World

Civilizations in the Known World emerged in waves, each leaving its mark upon the world. The dwarves were the first—shaping their culture deep beneath the central continent. Then came the high elves and wood elves of the eastern continent, the first to walk its surface. Gnomes and halflings followed, founding their homelands in the southwest of the central continent. Last came humanity, arriving on the eastern shores of the central continent and swiftly encountering the expanding Dwarven Empire. In time, humans became the dwarves' first non-dwarven citizens. Since then, empires have collapsed, kingdoms risen, and vast trade cartels have come to wield influence rivaling that of sovereign states.

The Known World is a place of balance, necessity, and consequence—where nations do not survive through trust or idealism, but through carefully maintained leverage. Here, diplomacy is dictated by trade routes, magic is a force to be studied rather than worshiped, and mercenaries uphold codes as binding as any empire's law. It is a world where every choice echoes into the future, and no power stands alone for long.

This guide is designed to provide a structured exploration of the forces that shape the Known World—from the myths that defined its origins to the political, economic, and cultural systems that dictate its present. Some sections will be straightforward—a historical timeline, a breakdown of key factions. Others will challenge interpretation—such as the nature of magic itself, which does not require belief, yet persists beyond understanding.

**Editor's Note:** Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes contained herein are taken from *A Comprehensive and Accurate Guide to the Peoples, Lands, and Features of the Known World: An Exhaustively Researched, Epistemologically Rigorous, and Unquestionably Authoritative Treatise on Sociopolitical Structures, Arcane Phenomena, and the Multifaceted Interplay of Economic Forces Across Cultures and Eras*, published by Hogueana: University Press, 9008 IM, Fourth Edition, Third Printing, as verified by the Grand Rectory of Numeric Philosophy and approved by the Office of Canonical Discernment. Any perceived errors or inconsistencies are likely the result of inferior external sources, misinterpretations by lesser academic institutions, or unfortunate failures of intellectual rigor on the part of the reader.

# Creation Myths & Cosmology

"Magic does not require belief. It does not ask for devotion, nor does it abide by doctrine—it simply exists, a force woven through reality itself. Cultures may interpret its presence in ritual, law, or industry, yet none can claim dominion over its workings. The dwarves revere ley-lines as echoes of creation, the High Elves refine their celestial cycles, and the gnomes extract magic as infrastructure—but the underlying truth remains unchanged: magic is not bound to interpretation. It persists beyond understanding, beyond intention, responding only to the mechanics of its own existence."

— Professor Luthien Rasiel, Office of Arcane Phenomena



The origins of the Known World are as varied and enigmatic as the peoples who dwell within it. Across cultures—dwarven, elven, human, and beyond—a tapestry of creation myths and cosmic narratives weaves a portrait of a reality shaped by elemental forces, divine whimsy, and ancient magic. Although these stories diverge in detail and symbolism, they all affirm one core truth: that every stone, star, and soul was born of a primordial act of creation.

## The Divine Fabric

At the heart of the Known World's cosmology is a universal pantheon. Although each culture assigns its own names and nuances to these deities, their functions remain strikingly consistent. Whether revered as gods shaping the natural world or embodied as forces of cosmic order, their influence appears in every phenomenon.

## Primordial Beginnings

The Dwarves believe that existence began not with gods, but with collision. Four primal elements—stone, flame, breath, and tide—met in symmetrical violence, forging a reality of balance, necessity, and consequence. The Dwarves, first to interpret this genesis, saw not deities but a sacred matrix: a framework so precise it could be studied, even shaped, but never manipulated lightly.

To them, divinity is process—visible, nebulous, and categorically uninvoked. Creation itself is sacred, and every alteration risks catastrophe.

Arche-type	Role & Influence	Cleric Do-mains
The Mother	Fertility, agriculture, renewal, protection	Life, Nature
The Father	Structure, rulership, discipline, cycles	Order, Forge
The Waters	Rivers, lakes, springs, shallow sea	Life, Nature, Peace
The Guide	Knowledge, fate, prophecy, transition	Knowledge, Twilight
The Trickster	Chaos, deception, change, mischief	Trickery
The Warrior	Combat, resilience, honor, sacrifice	War
The Wanderer	Freedom, adventure, discovery, self-determination	Trickery, Twilight
The Tempest	Storms, destruction, rebirth, wild power	Tempest
The Artisan	Craftsmanship, creativity, beauty, invention	Forge
The Judge	Law, balance, punishment, cosmic order	Order, Grave
The Healer	Compassion, restoration, endurance, redemption	Life, Peace
The Shadow	Secrets, death, mystery, the unknown	Death, Grave
The Sun	Radiance, vitality, unwavering presence	Light
The Moon	Change, cycles, illusion, unseen forces	Twilight
The Stars	Destiny, deep magic, cosmic insight	Arcana, Knowledge
The Sky	Freedom, inspiration, celestial motion	Tempest
The Wild	Untamed nature, beasts, survival, primal instincts	Nature
The Earth	Stability, endurance, resources, deep-rooted wisdom	Forge, Nature
The Arcane	Magic's guardian, balance of power, hidden knowledge	Arcana

This perception of the matrix undergirding reality gave the Dwarves a lens of unmatched precision. Their insights shaped not only metallurgy, architecture, and spellcraft—but also their perception of time. For the Dwarves, the first awareness was the tick of a cesium atom, 9,192,631,769 more ticks marked the first second of creation—and the Dwarves never stopped counting. Their atomic sense of time allowed them to develop a calendar of extraordinary accuracy, one that remains the basis for international timekeeping across the Known World.

Unlike many cultures that view gods as eternal architects, dwarves believe their deities were a side-effect of creation, birthed from the lingering force of the explosion of creation. As the cosmos was crafted, sentient echoes formed within the materials themselves, giving rise to the gods—not as rulers, but as manifestations of craftsmanship, labor, and refinement. Dwarves do not worship the gods as supreme beings—they revere creation itself, believing that the act of forging, building, and mastering craft is the highest form of devotion.

This philosophy is so deeply ingrained in dwarven culture that master artisans, legendary craftsmen, and even dedicated laborers were often entombed in or near their workplaces, ensuring that their final rest remained bound to the trade that defined their lives. The most revered among them—metalsmiths, architects, and engineers—were laid to rest beneath their greatest works, becoming part of the foundation of their creations. Their burial sites are not mere tombs, but holy places, where future craftsmen seek wisdom and inspiration, whispering prayers of precision before taking up the hammer.

Unfinished work is seen as a great dishonor, for only completed creations hold true divine presence. This belief fuels dwarven meticulousness—every forge, every carved pillar, and every tool is a sacred act, linking mortal effort to cosmic order. In contrast, unchecked magic, chaotic energy, or careless artistry are regarded as disruptions to the balance of creation, reinforcing the dwarves' skepticism toward arcane forces.

Centuries later, the elves inherited these metaphysical traces and did something unprecedented: they built interfaces. Through ritual glyphs and cosmic annotations—like those etched in Annwylain's Frieze (*see Annwylain's Frieze in the Wonders of the World section*)—they began refining and naming the divine. The glyph system grew into what is now called the Universal Pantheon, a set of archetypal entities through which mortals interact with diffuse cosmic intelligences. This shift transformed divinity from ambient sentience into specific nodes: The Scribe, The Mother, The Stars, etc. Individual deities unquestionably exist, Drogbrezor the Devourer, orcish god of improvised poetry can be invoked, and may even respond but all cultures recognize that behind the mask of Drogbrezor is the universal aspect of The Scribe, and behind that is the formless sentience first perceived by the dwarves, present from the instant of creation.



### **Aether and Ley-Lines: The World's Unseen Currents**

The Known World hums with something invisible but undeniable. Call it aether, call it breath, call it the pulse beneath stone and tide—whatever name you give it, *it moves*. Every civilization has tried, in its own way, to understand that movement, to trace the ley-lines that twist and swell beneath cities and forests. But no two peoples see the same pattern.

The Dwarves were the first to lay hands upon this force, and they did not dare to *shape* it—only to listen. To them, the aether was residue—the lingering echo of creation itself. The gods, the stars, the bones of the world, all had left their mark, and ley-lines were the footprints of divinity. To alter them recklessly was blasphemy, or at least a mistake that history would not forgive. Those who worked too carelessly with enchantments, those who failed to acknowledge the original resonances of place and stone, often found

themselves exiled from the forge-houses, their names erased from ledgers. Even long after the Empire's fall, dwarven thought still shadows magical ethics—their caution, their reverence, their belief that some things should be left *exactly as they are*.

The Elves inherited the cycle but did not agree on its direction. To the High Elves, the stars are the source—their radiance descends, condensing into matter, and magic exists to return that essence to its rightful place. Ley-lines are rivers running downward, bringing purity into the physical realm, waiting to be sent home through spell and song. High Elven magi act as refiners, distillers of star-born power, ensuring that nothing tainted reaches too far into the heavens. The Wood Elves, meanwhile, turn this thinking upside-down. It is not the stars that bring life to the earth—it is the earth itself that breathes outward. Ley-lines pulse like sap in spring, carrying the

lifeblood of the world upward, feeding the sky, feeding the distant light. Their magic nurtures, stabilizes, ensures that the roots remain strong even as their branches stretch beyond sight. To them, magic is a farmer's work—not a scholar's—and care of the ley-lines is less a question of purification and more one of balance.

But where elves see an endless celestial conversation, Halflings see a feast. They have always been pragmatic, and the cycle, to them, is not some infinite war between star and stone—it is the turning of the seasons, the rhythm of growing, reaping, resting, and returning. The ley-lines stretch and shrink like fields under frost, feeding what needs to be fed, pausing when the world tells them to. Their magic is tied to food, to healing, to knowing when to act and when to wait. A patient philosophy, an earnest one—one that never asks whether ley-lines run *toward* the sky or *away* from it, because a halfling mage is far more concerned with whether the crops are listening.

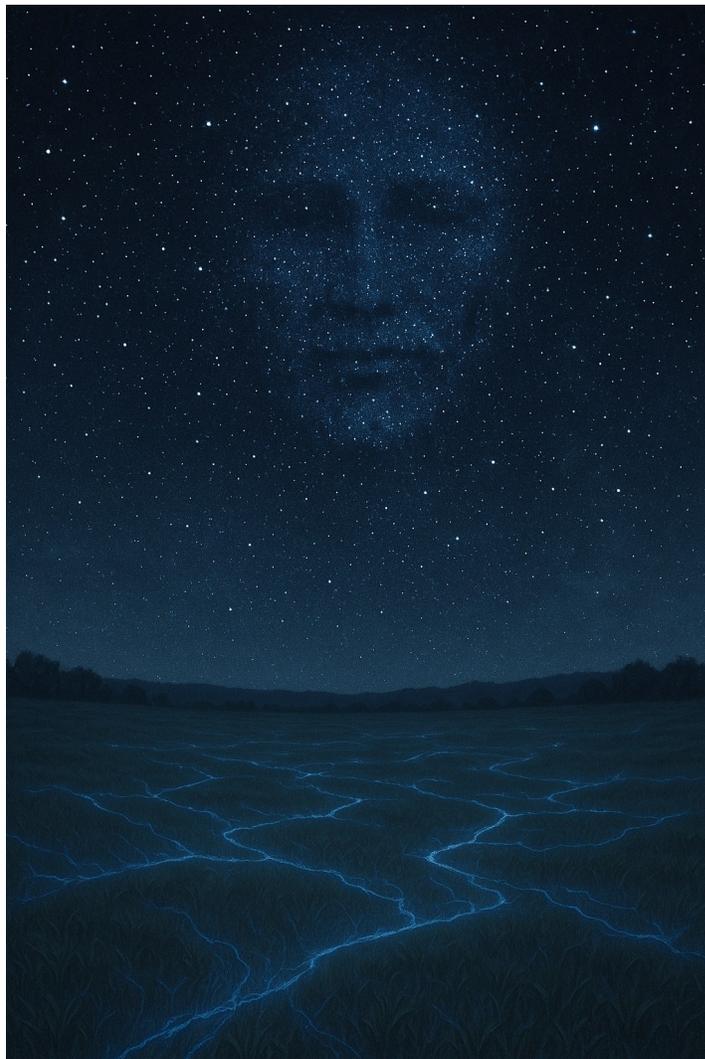
Then there are the Sea Elves, who embrace motion in the purest sense. The aether moves, the sea moves, the entire world moves, and to stand still too long is to miss the dance entirely. The ley-lines do not sit neatly beneath the waves; they shift, carried in tides, re-shaped by storms, and sung into existence every time the water breathes. Magic among Sea Elves is not a tool, not a philosophy—it is a presence, something you step into, something you let carry you. A spell is not cast—it is joined. They see all voices as part of one roar, one endless oceanic hymn, building itself anew every time the moon pulls at the world. But the sea is not only song—it is also depth, and in the depths, power lingers beyond sight. Treasure and ruin lie beneath the waves in equal measure, and those who seek to take rather than listen have often found themselves claimed by the silence below.

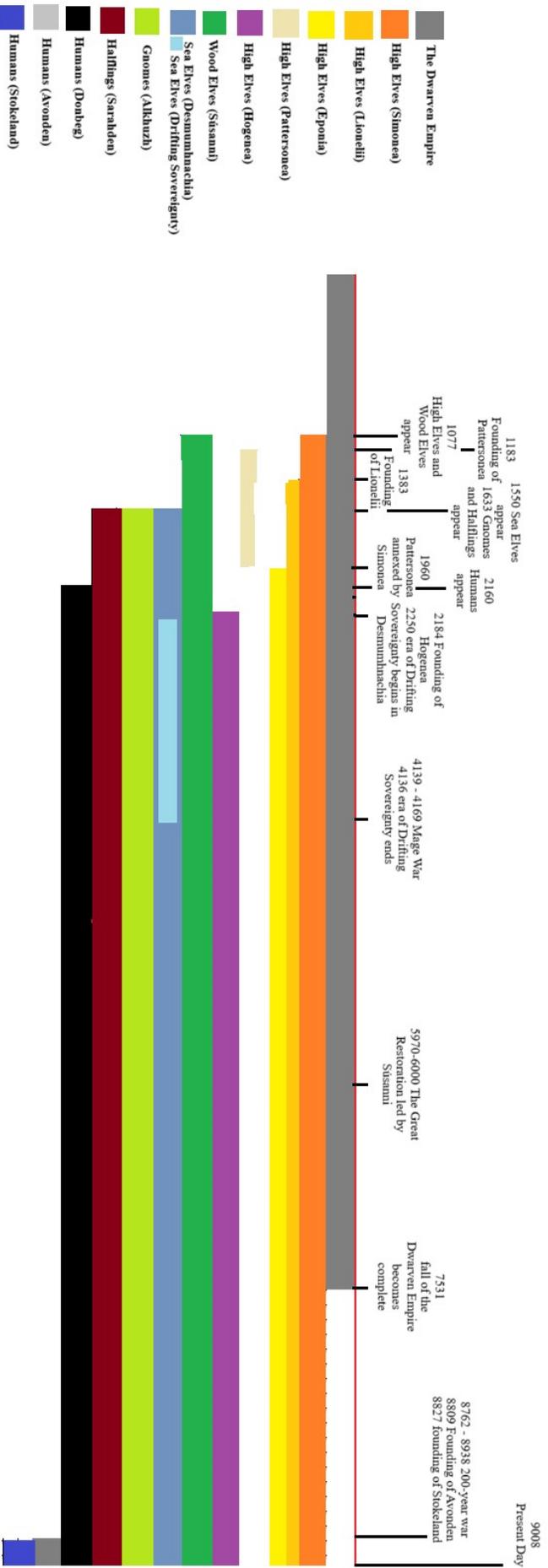
If there is a source for the ley lines in the Known World, it is in Súsanni, but there investigation stalls. The Forest of Myths does not allow for certainty, only observation. The ley-lines bend. The air listens. Magic does not need to be cast—it happens of its own accord. Some say it is a spring, a well, a breath, but none of these descriptions ever stay true for long. Even the University cannot chart its shape. The forest is older than maps.

No matter how civilizations attempt to explain it, magic itself does not change. The ley-lines shift, scholars theorize, and priests insist upon their truths, but a spell cast today works the same as a spell cast a thousand years ago. Magic does not require belief, comprehension, or philosophy—it simply is. The dwarves may treat aether as sacred, the High Elves as celestial refinement, the gnomes as infrastructure, but none of these perspectives influence its function. A mage may walk the ley-lines, whisper the cycles, or disregard them entirely, and magic will still answer. It does not ask why. It does not care how. A spell succeeds or fails by its own laws, untouched by the minds that try to define it.

*"The results remain inconclusive, which strongly supports our initial hypothesis."*

*—Department of Failed Explanations, Annual Review Preface*





# Peoples and Cultures in the Known World



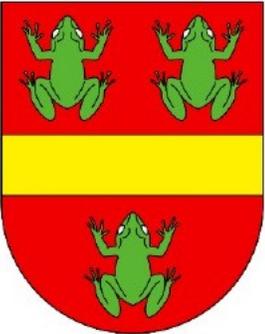
## THE EMPIRE

*"The fall of the Dwarven Empire is often framed as an inevitable decline—an empire stretched too thin, collapsing under its own weight. This interpretation is, quite simply, incorrect. No definitive record exists of the dwarven withdrawal, no final declaration of surrender, no last battle. The empire did not 'fall' in the traditional sense; it vanished, taking with it the knowledge, governance, and infrastructure that had once dictated the world's affairs. Expeditions into the remnants of imperial fortifications yield only echoes of mastery, the doors sealed, the roads silent. Fyolafam, the empire's capital, is spoken of as fact, yet none have found its gates. The empire did not die—it erased itself from history, and the world has yet to recover from that absence."*

— Professor Adalric Senter, Department of Historical Certainty

*The Eternal Empire*

For millennia, the Dwarven Empire stood unchallenged, its fortress-cities carved deep into the bones of the world. From the earliest Forge Lords in IM 250 to the grand dominion of Fyolafam at its height in IM 4500, dwarven mastery of stone and steel bound the central continent under their rule. The empire was benevolent, its rulers forging fair laws and ensuring prosperity among their subjects—human traders, elven diplomats, and the rare few granted entry into their domains. Yet, their kindness never extended to trust.



*Darkwater Clan*

Outsiders were tolerated but never truly welcomed, their movements watched, their access restricted. Even at the empire's peak, the location of its heartland remained a mystery; though dwarven roads reached across the land, none led to the true capital.

The seeds of the Empire's decline were sown with the Darkwater Dynasty, whose veiled rule in the late seventh millennium brought whispered horrors. Even their fall in IM 7210 could not undo the damage and the Doomspeaker Dynasty that replaced the Darkwater Dynasty struggled to maintain imperial cohesion. When the empire withdrew in IM 7531, it did so completely. Bureaucrats abandoned the eastern territories, outposts shuttered, and the last envoys vanished into the mountains, never to be heard from again. Even Fyolafam, the imperial capital, was lost—the world knows it lies in the far northwest of the central continent, yet no expedition has uncovered its gates. Those who venture too deep into the forgotten roads return with nothing, and many do not return at all.

The empire's collapse may reside in the distant past, but its infrastructure, and aesthetics endure. Its roads still shape trade routes. Its laws echo in civic courts, and the imperial calendar (IM) remains the international standard. For most in daily life, however, the empire is a footnote.



*Doomspeaker Clan*

Public interest in the empire and its history have waxed and waned over the centuries, but the discovery of the Treasure of Guarrazar in 8883 IM by an archaeological expedition from the University of Hoganea sparked unprecedented public interest (see *The Treasure of Guarrazar in the Wonders of the World* section). The treasure, found in a hidden chamber in the ruins of a fortified manor house, was the wealth and cultural legacy of the Darkwater Dynasty, preserved by them as a hedge against the Imperial purge that came after the throne was usurped by Iroth Doomspeaker, an interest that was re-kindled in 8983 IM when a centennial tour of many of the key artifacts from the treasure was undertaken.

There are still small scattered populations of Dwarves in the east and south of the central continent, the descendants of soldiers, bureaucrats and functionaries that never returned to the core of the empire, but the empire itself is gone, lost to time.

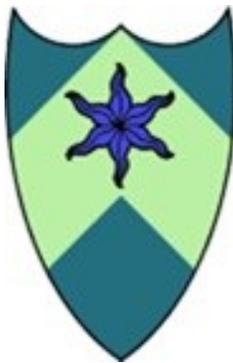


## *Elves in the Known World*



## The High Elves: Dominion by Design

“Where others divine from stars, we draw from structure. Our harmony is not granted—it is constructed.”  
—Excerpt from *The Ledger of Lionelii*, Arcane Codex IV



*The Wise and Enlightened Council State of Simonea*

The High Elves emerged in 1077 IM, on the eastern continent’s coastlines. The city-state of Simonea rose beneath a sequence of celestial alignments, synchronizing nascent cosmology with arcane revelation. Its foundation marked not just the birth of elven civilization, but the formalization of spell-law, pantheon typology, and arcane governance. Simonea became the crucible of elven identity—where magic wasn’t discovered, but codified.

From this ancestral root sprang two great expansions:

- **Lionelii**, founded in 1383 to harness a massive ley-line convergence discovered on the central continent.
- **Eponia**, founded in 2036 to develop other resources on the central continent, most notably the jungle elephants found near the northern coast.

### Fractures and Divergences: The Secession of Pattersonea



*The Sublime Council-Reach of Eponia*

As Simonea ascended in arcane influence, so too did resistance emerge. By the mid-12th century IM, internal dissent had begun to crystallize—not over resources or territorial disputes, but over the very nature of power. Critics of the Mage Council objected to its consolidation of arcane authority, arguing that magic should serve rather than dictate, and that civic leadership required mundane oversight.

What began as intellectual dissent grew into strategic withdrawal. Multiple provinces proposed decentralization, and by 1180, pressure mounted toward formal separation. Open conflict loomed, a confrontation that might have shattered elven unity for generations—had it not been for High Priestess Selwynny, whose intervention realigned destiny.

In 1183 IM, following a council of arbitration, Selwynny brokered a secession compact that led to the peaceful founding of Pattersonea. Governed by mundane law and spiritual philosophy rather than spellcasting elites, Pattersonea became a sanctuary of artistic discipline, numeric mysticism, and ritual clarity but struggled to be self-sufficient. In spite of this the fledgling country maintained for nearly 800 years before being re-annexed.

### Annwylain’s Frieze and the Onset of Organized Ritual



*Arcane Council of Lionelii*

In 1300 IM, Simonea’s spiritual architecture entered a new phase. The completion of Annwylain’s Frieze, an encircling mosaic carved around the dome of the capital temple, marked a subtle but decisive shift in elvish spiritual philosophy. Prior to the frieze’s installation, elven cosmology remained largely abstract, with only nebulous concepts of divine intelligences. Much as the innovations of Kahris Farnorin would do for quantifying art and music some 800 years later, the glyphs carved by Annwylain Scrymgeour provided a symbolic language that allowed more clarity in devine relationships. Though still fluid, Simonea’s rites began to gravitate toward coherence. Organized religion, as it would later be understood, did not erupt from mandate—but from mosaic: a communal sedimentation of meaning bound to material precision. (*see Annwylain’s Frieze in the Wonders of the World section for more information*)

### Lionelii and the Lumen Mint

In 1383 IM, Simonea authorized the foundation of Lionelii, a colonial settlement established on the Central Continent. The site was not chosen for soil, stone, or river—but for resonance. Beneath the convergence of five ley-lines, arcane engineers constructed the Trevediceath Reactor, now known as the Lumen Mint, a massive harmonic vessel designed to extract, store, and redistribute magical current.

Though intended as a research installation and energy reserve, Trevediceath soon became the axis of a thriving metropolis. As more elven factions arrived to access the reactor’s bounty, the city grew outward in spirals—each neighborhood arranged to mirror leyline flow, with civic buildings tuned to magical frequency rather than solar elevation.

The reactor produced Lumen: charged arcane batteries in varied sizes, originally designed to stabilize enchantments and power long-distance ritual infrastructure. However, their portability, scarcity, and standardized charge potential led to unforeseen consequence—Lumen became currency. From this convergence rose a new economic philosophy: one where value was not mined, minted, or mandated—but charged.

## Imperial Aspirations and Dwarven Contact (ca. 1500 IM)

Around 1500 IM, elvish exploration and arcane cartography began to press westward, touching the fringes of the Dwarven Empire's eastern frontier. The initial contact was marked by caution—neither civilization willing to yield cultural dominance nor reveal core infrastructure. What followed, however, was not conflict, but calculus.

Trade opened first: arcane goods exchanged for dwarven alloys, enchanted scrolls traded for precision engineered components. The elvish Mage Council dispatched emissaries fluent in dwarven legal dialects; the dwarves responded with sealed diplomatic crates bearing modular treaties. Over time, a mutual professionalism took root—shaped less by sentiment than by leverage.

Yet the influence ran deeper. Dwarven political philosophy, rooted in infrastructural permanence and imperial cohesion, began to resonate within elvish scholarly circles. Simonean theorists debated centralized governance; Eponean guilds modeled bureaucracy after dwarven ministries; even Lionelii's charge valuation system began to echo dwarven ledger traditions.

“We admired their walls. Then we imagined them with spires.”  
—Eponean Diplomat Malereth Venn, *Treatise on Imperial Scale*

By the early 16th century, elven discourse had shifted from arcane stewardship to strategic expansion and leaders in Simonea proposed a network of colonial holdings.

## The Celestial Concord: Trade Regulation as Cultural Armor (1605 IM)

By 1605 IM, High Elven civilization stood at a threshold. Simonea's scholars had catalogued more leyline intersections than active spells. Eponia had standardized three denominations of Lumen. Lionelii's reactor complex pulsed in concert with celestial drift. Yet their borders were no longer distant—the civilizations of the Small Folk had arrived.

Initial contact with gnomish and halfling societies revealed differing magical philosophies: pragmatic enchantment, collaborative artifice, and curious theological ambiguity. While Elven guilds admired their innovation, they viewed their open dissemination of arcane insight as a systemic risk.

To preserve arcane monopolies and control intellectual property in a rapidly diversifying trade landscape, Simonea, Eponia, and Lionelii established the Celestial Concord—a tripartite trade cartel designed to:

- Regulate exports of enchanted goods
- Adjudicate arcane licensing claims
- Control diplomatic channels and cultural access points

“Let the world be curious. But let it pay for the answer.”  
—Enchanter-Magistrate Kiredd Tual, First Concord Assembly Notes

The Concord became a diplomatic gatekeeper. No external state could trade directly with one Elven city without engaging the Concord's bureaucracy. Cultural emissaries were vetted; magical goods were serialized; and intellectual rites were converted into sealed, charge-verified scrolls.

Thus, while the Elves expanded their sphere of trade, they did so with elegant restraint—encasing curiosity in regulation, and diplomacy in bureaucracy.

## The Concord Wars and the Return of Pattersononea (1622–2250 IM)

In 1622 IM, Simonea's imperial posture crystallized. Through the Celestial Concord, High Elven civilization had already encased trade within magical bureaucracy. But as trade partners multiplied and leyline extraction intensified, Simonea grew restless. The neighboring state of Desmumhnachia, rich in maritime sovereignty and salt-backed economic traditions, became both foil and fixation.

Between 1622 and 2250, Simonea led a sequence of military incursions—three or four, depending on which Concord archive one trusts—into Desmumhnachian territory. These invasions, dubbed the Concord Wars, were framed not as conquest, but as “arcane stabilization initiatives.”

Desmumhnachia resisted through hydromantic countermeasures and salt embargoes, but the conflicts reshaped its borders



and eroded its autonomy. Maritime sovereignty was ceded piecemeal, and by the war's final phase, the Sea Elves maintained independence only in cultural memory and ceremonial maritime routes.

Concurrently, the long-fractured Pattersonea, once the noble experiment in mundane governance and artistic independence, collapsed under economic pressures and dwindling arcane access. In 1960 IM, Simonea reabsorbed the territory through a "restorative concord," restoring arcane governance and dissolving the last remnants of mundane sovereignty.

Amid the unrest of the conflict with Desmumhnachia, the schism resulting from the rise in popularity of Farnorin's Numeric Philosophy led to the formation of the breakaway state of Hogenea in 2184

### **The Hogean-Desmumhnachian Compact**

In the immediate wake of independence, Hogenea initiates the Compact with Desmumhnachia—a durable mutual-aid agreement forged through maritime guarantees. This alliance, rooted in Numeric Philosophy and logistical interoperability, effectively stymied Simonean expansionism for the next two millennia. Simonea, deprived of its key numeric theorists following the Hogean exodus, undergoes a subtle but corrosive metamorphosis. Over generations, the absence of anti-absolutist frameworks and pantheonic plurality allows ideological monism to calcify into totalitarian governance. By the Fifth Season of Silence, Simonea resembles less a republic and more an echo chamber of choreographed obedience.

### **The Mage War (4139–4169)**

In 4139, Simonea—having long abandoned pluralistic discourse—resurges under arcane totalitarianism and launches a second invasion of Desmumhnachia. The pretext, steeped in cosmic determinism, invokes stellar phenomena allegedly aligned with the first incursion two millennia prior. This act marks the onset of the Mage War, a brutal thirty-year conflict defined by metaphysical attrition, ecological collapse, and widespread archival contamination. Enchanted ley-fields rendered key coastal citadels uninhabitable. The Hogean-Desmumhnachian Compact held tactically, but at immense cost.

### **The Long Reintegration (4170–5970)**

Following the containment of Simonean aggression and the cessation of the Mage War, a vast interregnum of repair and reintegration commenced. Politically, Simonea underwent gradual reformation—stripped of its fascist ceremonial infrastructure and slowly reabsorbed into continental. Over the next 1800 years, Simonea reclaimed civic coherence, becoming a cautionary exemplar within the Universal Pantheon. Yet while borders softened and rituals normalized, deeper wounds remained. The damage to the Aether—subtle, cumulative, and largely undiagnosed in the immediate centuries—began to manifest. Scholars of the Aetheric Cartography Guild noted increasing anomalies: ley-line misalignments, echo fields collapsing prematurely, and astral feedback loops corrupted by war. By 5970 it had become clear that the Mage War hadn't ended—it had merely dispersed its trauma into the metaphysical substrate.

### **The Great Restoration (5970–6000)**

Initiated by the wood elves of Súsanni, the Great Restoration marked an unprecedented era of coordinated metaphysical repair. Revered for their harmonic attunement and geomantic craftsmanship, the Súsanni led coalition efforts across the fractured Aether, mending ley-line ruptures and diffusing residues that had lingered since the Mage War. Over the course of three decades, Restoration circles reactivated dormant resonance wells, rebalanced echo fields, and established new anchor rituals encoded with regret, stewardship, and mnemonic humility. Though the project formally concluded in 6000, its legacy remains etched into post-war magical doctrine, where ritual precision and environmental empathy became sacred practice. The Restoration is widely considered the most successful continent-spanning act of ceremonial engineering in recorded history—proof that fractured worlds can hum again.

## **Cultural Hero: Selwynny of Simonea**

### **The Curse-Breaker**

When the Mage Council dreamt of war and the stars whispered caution, Selwynny listened. A High Priestess of celestial rites and ritual governance, she became the conscience of Simonea at a time when charisma outweighed clarity. She didn't merely quiet escalation—she codified restraint. Her Pacification of Pattersonea in 1183 IM remains one of the most celebrated feats of statecraft in elven history: a secession achieved not through conquest or compromise, but through alignment—of stars, of symbols, of sovereign grace.

Selwynny understood magic as architecture, and architecture as argument. That belief shaped her most enduring legacy. When Annwylain's Frieze was completed in 1300 IM, it was Selwynny who oversaw the ritual formalization of the Universal Pantheon. The glyphs, carved in celestial logic, had needed not just an artist—but a priestess willing to declare them doctrine. Under her hand, the pantheon transformed from ambient myth to usable reality—ritual practice hardened into harmonic ratios, and theology became legible.

She earned her epithets through consequence, not ceremony. In 1198 IM, facing a rogue conclave beneath the Border Caverns, she collapsed the chamber rather than entertain a duel. Her refusal became doctrine: "I do not duel error. I remove it." And in 1358 IM, she dismantled a royal curse by reconstructing it backwards—tracing each fragment of spell logic to bloodline fault, naming names as gently as she shattered reputations.

Her rituals are still taught, though seldom matched. She left few records, but countless annotations—small sigils in margins, spirals with a single fracture, symbols of interrupted certainty. Her seal bore a stylized echo glyph: three mirrored crescents around a void.

To Simonea, she is saint, strategist, and silent architect. Her image appears in temple domes and audit chambers alike—not as martyr, but as the woman who made belief accountable.

# The University of Hoganea

*“Where Learning is Law, and Knowledge Governs All.”*



The University of Hoganea stands as a sovereign city-state dedicated to the stewardship of non-magical knowledge and the promotion of a revolutionary intellectual order. Its influence permeates every corner of the Known World through a network of educational outposts, scholarly councils, and unique diplomatic privileges. Born of crisis and ideologically forged in rebellion, its legacy is inseparable from the groundbreaking Numeric Philosophy that redefined elven thought.

## Historical Foundations and the Numeric Philosophy Schism

As Farnorin’s method challenged the prevailing arcane doctrines and traditional mage-led government structures, a rift formed between the revolutionaries and conservative traditionalists. Those who embraced Farnorin’s rigorous system believed that intellectual autonomy could be achieved only by decoupling philosophy from mystical dogma. When it became apparent that Simonea’s rulers would never welcome a full expression of this new worldview, dissenters rallied—and in 2184 IM, the break-away state of Hoganea was founded.

## Institutional Birth

At its inception, Hoganea was established as a bastion of radical thought and intellectual rebellion. Recognizing the need for an institution that not only nurtured but also protected these ideas, the founders appointed Kharis Farnorin as the first Dean of Philosophy. Under her guidance, the University rapidly evolved into the preeminent academy for structured, numerical inquiry, influencing diverse fields from governance to art.

## Central Governance

The University’s heart is its independent city-state—a fortified, walled enclave governed by the Rector Assembly and led by the exalted Rector Primus. Operating much like a religious sovereign, the University issues its own passports, enacts doctrinal edicts, and exercises extraterritorial authority through a network of designated rectories and educational embassies in every major city of the Known World.

## Cultural Hero: Kharis Farnorin

### The Philosopher-Rebel

She wasn’t born a revolutionary—just a theorist with inconvenient clarity. In 2130 IM, Kharis Farnorin stepped into the halls of Simonea’s elite academies armed not with spells, but with sequences: numeric expressions of abstract thought so precise they left no room for evasion.

Her system—later known as Numeric Philosophy—replaced rhetorical flourish with structured logic. Ethics became matrices of consequence; governance, a solvable equation of legitimacy and consent. Metaphysics, once the domain of glyphs and intuition, was reframed through quantifiable relationships: cause, effect, recursion, and proof. Farnorin argued that philosophy should not persuade—it should demonstrate.

At first, the academy dismissed her work as clever nonsense—“mechanical poetry,” muttered by those too entrenched in arcane aesthetics to notice the shift underfoot. But her sequences didn’t need belief. They simply worked. Within two decades, Simonea’s intellectual elite had quietly shifted from glyph to graph, embracing Numeric Philosophy not out of loyalty, but out of necessity.

Her ideas undermined the mage-led government without a single spell. Arcane doctrine became brittle under numeric audit; charisma faltered beneath calculable truth. The rupture was inevitable. In 2184 IM, after years of quiet resistance and public rebuttals, Farnorin led the founding of Hoganea—a state not of refuge, but of reform—where structured thought would govern, and magic would submit to reason.

In Hoganea, she became the first Dean of Philosophy of the newly formed University. Her first act was to sequester volatile philosophies in the Archives of Hazardous Thought—a chamber beneath the Rector Assembly said to hum faintly whenever someone misstates causality in public. She designed the Thousand-Lecture Trail, a pilgrimage of instruction rather than dogma; founded Ledger Oaths, binding civic decisions to published sequences; and authorized the Bardic College’s controversial practice of encoding philosophical proofs in symphonic form—a structure she once called “cadence made intelligent.”

Her critics accused her of mechanizing wonder. Her followers argued she rescued wonder from whim. Today, even those who resist Numeric Philosophy use her grammar to disagree.

They say she built Hoganea with sequences.

But really, she just proved it was possible.

## Institutional Structure and Global Presence

Outpost Type	Role & Scale	Key Features & Staffing
<b>Writ-School</b>	<i>Village-Level Literacy Center</i> – Basic instruction in Common, arithmetic, oral history.	1–2 itinerant instructors (often a single generalist sage serving as a Script-Keeper).
<b>Rectory Office</b>	<i>Town or District Hub</i> – Local records management, map upkeep, trade notarization.	A Rector plus 2–5 assistants; staffed by generalist sages with minor specialties.
<b>Collegiate Embassy</b>	<i>Regional Capital Outpost</i> – Comprehensive educational oversight, archival duties, and local diplomacy.	A delegation led by a Chancellor with several specialized sages covering diverse fields.
<b>Satellite College</b>	<i>Major Metropolis Branch</i> – Advanced study, public forums, and regional curriculum trials.	Fully staffed interfaculty teams with deep sub-specialization in numerous disciplines.
<b>Mobile Scriptorium</b>	<i>Charter-Ward Caravan</i> – Portable educational units deployed in post-crisis or frontier zones.	A mix of archival scholars, pedagogical healers, and apprentice cartographers on the move.
<b>The University Proper</b>	<i>The Central Scholarchate</i> – The sovereign city-state housing the Rector Assembly, full archives, and the epicenter of Hoganean doctrine.	Hundreds of tenured faculty, dozens of specialized sages, a full administrative apparatus, and diplomatic envoys.

### Faculties and Specialized Colleges

- **The Sage College (College of Abstract Discernment):** Charged with interpreting and licensing critical bodies of knowledge, this college is home to professional sages. Smaller outposts feature generalist sages, while major centers boast specialists in niche sub-disciplines—often down to sub-sub-specializations. Many sages also serve as advisors to local governments, offering their expertise on everything from regional history to economic forecasting.
- **The Bardic College (College of Interpretive Resonance):** In Hoganea, music is elevated to an intellectual art form. Here, composer-scholars—affectionately known as philosopher-musicians—craft structured numerical symphonies. Every note and cadence is calculated to reflect universal truths. Their compositions are used not only as cultural statements but also as diplomatic tokens, with commissioned works serving in negotiations and state ceremonies.
- **The Office of Curricular Deployment:** Responsible for establishing Hoganean outposts, this department has set up a comprehensive network of educational facilities worldwide. From humble village Writ-Schools offering basic Common literacy to full-scale Collegiate Embassies in regional capitals, these centers both propagate the University’s doctrine and fortify local bureaucracies.
- **The Archives of Hazardous Thought:** Hidden beneath the central city-state, this subterranean repository safeguards controversial theories, experimental treatises, and early drafts of revolutionary manifestos. Access is strictly controlled and reserved for those cleared to engage with ideas that might upend conventional wisdom.

**Global Network of Outposts** The University extends its reach through a meticulously tiered system of outposts, each calibrated to suit the scale and complexity of its host community: At every level, the University employs professional sages whose expertise scales with the needs of the region—they serve as the local embodiment of intellectual authority, linking the worldwide network to Hoganean doctrine.

### Cultural Impact and Geopolitical Role

**Diplomatic Dominance through Knowledge** Though the University fields no armed force, its soft power is unmatched. The pervasive presence of Hoganean rectories, coupled with the legal frameworks established by the Rector Assembly, allows the University to enforce cultural and administrative conformity. Regions dependent on Hoganean record-keeping, educational accreditation, or policy advisement find themselves integrated into a global network that acts as both stabilizing force and subtle instrument of cultural imperialism. Failure to comply may result in an “epistemic blackout”—a withdrawal of knowledge and bureaucratic support vital to a functioning society.

**Standardization of ‘Common’ and Cultural Homogenization** One enduring—and controversial—legacy of the University is the propagation of ‘Common,’ a standardized language amalgamating human-dwarven syntactic elements with elven lexicon. This linguistic norm, taught in every Hoganean outpost, has both united diverse peoples and diluted regional dialects. While regarded as essential for cohesive governance, it has also been seen as an act of subtle cultural suppression.

**Pilgrimage and Intellectual Aspiration** For scholars and commoners alike, the University represents the ultimate beacon of learning. Every year, promising students embark on the **Thousand-Lecture Trail**—a grueling pilgrimage of examinations, practical teaching, and ritual assessments. Graduates of the University are celebrated not just as academics, but as cultural emissaries whose insights influence diplomacy, art, and public policy on a global scale.

**Philosopher-Musicians: The Synthesis of Art and Numeric Thought** At the edge where logic meets lyricism, the Bardic College has transformed Hoganea into the epicenter of musical innovation. In this unique discipline, compositions are crafted as dialogic symphonies—each rhythm and note arranged in precise mathematical proportion, reflecting universal order. These philosopher-musicians serve dual roles: as creators of cultural masterpieces and as diplomatic envoys whose art gestures toward a higher understanding of society. Their works, celebrated across nations, are often commissioned by sovereigns and high councils for pivotal state events, weaving the Numeric Philosophy into the very fabric of international diplomacy.



## Wood Elves of Súsanni: Stewards of the Living Realm



Ever the cautionary voice of history, the wood elves of Súsanni have spent millennia warning the world against its own worst impulses—then quietly cleaning up the aftermath when those warnings go unheeded. Steadfastly neutral during the internecine wars among their elven kin, they emerged as the unsung architects of the Great Restoration (5970–6000 IM), repairing ecosystems wounded by ambition and arcane excess. Though often described as guardians of the Forest of Myths, their true role is more liminal than possessive: they are the threshold between sacred wilderness and the eager world beyond. Neither they nor the forest seem entirely comfortable with this arrangement.

Their timekeeping reflects this quiet defiance. Ceremonial rites follow a wholly lunar calendar, blissfully untroubled by solar logic or intercalary precision. For diplomacy, they defer to the dwarvish standard, though more out of necessity than reverence. The Azure Library, established in 1123 IM just 47 years after the elves arrived in the Known World, sits at the heart of Súsanni—an enduring testament to their role as impartial stewards of knowledge. It was never meant to signal that learning had ended, only that it had begun in earnest. Built as the first vault in an ongoing, obsessive act of accumulation, the Library was intended to house every scrap of elven discovery, no matter how minor. Its location in Súsanni was no accident: High Elves trusted their Wood Elf cousins not to politicize its contents—something they were far less certain of among their own kind. Everyone involved, of course, would insist otherwise. At the time, Súsanni was considered “safely removed from worldly trouble,” a questionable assertion given that the Known World was barely half a century old.

The wood elves’ expertise in metaphysical calibration was tested anew in 7587 IM, following the collapse of the dwarven empire (7531 IM). With the loss of atomic-standard chronometry—once embodied in dwarven thought itself—temporal systems drifted. Elves led the development of the Ritual of Ley-line Attunement, a metaphysical practice that brought certain ley-line vibrations into perceptual foreground, allowing the construction of ley-line compasses. The ritual did not change the ley-lines—it repositioned them, like lifting a translucent truth from background to foreground, harmonizing society’s rhythm anew.

Silent innovation permeates their defense as well. The elite Skyward Wardens ride giant dragonflies, filling the tactical niche of aerial cavalry with eerie grace. These creatures hover like silent sentinels, impossible to detect in the canopy, though too biome-sensitive to function beyond their forested domain. Where others conquer, the wood elves calibrate. Where others forget, they remember

## The Sea Elves of Desmumhnachia



Arriving in the Known World in IM 1550, nearly 500 years later than their High Elf and Wood Elf cousins, the Sea Elves of Desmumhnachia charted a civilization in rhythm with the tides. Their culture, shaped by the sea’s vastness and volatility, flourished not in towers or groves, but upon the water itself—embodied in ship design, storm-wisdom, and ancestral reverence for the deep.

Naval supremacy defines Desmumhnachia. Their sloops-of-war, unrivaled in speed and maneuverability, patrol global trade routes with wind-whispered precision. Backed by a salt-based currency and fortified through deep-sea resource extraction, Desmumhnachia’s economy and influence ripple across every coastline. Their timekeeping diverges from celestial cycles, relying on tidal swells, solstices, equinoxes, storm seasons, and the migratory patterns of sea creatures to track the passage of seasons with remarkable accuracy. For diplomatic continuity, they defer to the dwarven calendar, but culturally, they remain anchored in the rhythm of the waves.

This rhythm was violently disrupted by centuries of conflict with Simonea, culminating in the devastating Fourth Invasion by 2250 IM. Expelled from the western continent, the Sea Elves entered the era of Drifting Sovereignty, living almost exclusively aboard ships, making landfall only at trusted ports, and transforming their fleets into floating nations. This long exile reshaped their spiritual and political identity—every hull became hallowed, every tide a text.

### Cultural Hero: Bernadettart Jacc

#### The Glyph-Saver of the Salt Horizon

Born in IM 2102 to a modest coastal family in Desmumhnachia, Bernadettart Jacc rose to prominence not through conquest or command, but through ink. Her early mastery of calligraphy elevated her to court recognition by IM 2130, yet her legacy would stretch far beyond aesthetics.

In IM 2136, facing a paper crisis triggered by Simonea’s invasion and annexation of Desmumhnachia’s silk forests, Bernadettart discovered Tideflax—a fibrous sea-grass capable of holding ink with great precision. The consequences of her discovery were seismic. Tideflax proved enchantable, durable, and ideal for naval applications. By IM 2145, it had revolutionized sailcraft and provided a cheap, plentiful, and in many ways superior fiber to the silk that had previously been in favor.

Her life was marked by quiet brilliance and political peril. She thwarted an assassination attempt on King Dugaleirrt Seasaidh in IM 2150, only to be exiled five years later by rival factions who feared her influence. Her final mission remains undocumented, but her glyphs endure—etched into ship keels, treaty scrolls, and ceremonial sails.

Today, Bernadettart is revered not for what she built, but for what she saved. Her journals are studied in naval academies, her glyphs invoked in storm rites, and her name spoken in reverence by every Sea Elf who believes that beauty, when threatened, can become armor.

Their restoration came with the end of the Mage War in 4169 IM, when Desmumhnachia's ancient borders were reinstated. Though five millennia have passed, and peace treaties like the Salt Accords and Azure Pact now bind the coasts, trust between Desmumhnachia and Simonea remains fragile. Among Sea Elves, Simonea is remembered not just as a rival power, but as a force that once tried to strand an entire civilization from the very sea that shaped it.

## The Gnomes of Alkhuzh: Empire and Authority



Alkhuzh is the beating heart of gnomish civilization, a mercantile empire built upon trade, wealth, and calculated ambition. The gnomes of Alkhuzh arrived in the Known World in 1633 as fiercely independent stewards of self-governance, rejecting imperial overtures with a resolute Clan Council that prized civil autonomy over ceremonial fealty. For centuries, this independence endured—until 1864 IM, when

economic maturity drew a coalition of elite merchants led by Brupap Capstar to broker Alkhuzh's incorporation into the empire through political bribery and bureaucratic leverage. Imperial administrators replaced local governance, and the Clan Council faded into symbolic opposition. When the empire abruptly collapsed in 7531, withdrawing from Alkhuzh after 5667 years of direct rule, no native civil structure remained—only the Trade Authority, which stepped in seamlessly. Thus was born the Merchant Empire, a sovereignty built not on conquest or coronation but on uninterrupted logistics. Meanwhile, the Conclave—heir to the ancient Clan Council—lingers as a persistent and ornamentally obstructive presence.

### The Conclave: Aristocrats Against Progress



*The Clan Conclave of the Gnomes*

Despite their dominance, the Trade Authority is never without trouble. Looming in the back-ground, ever-present yet never truly disruptive, is the Conclave. Having been largely excluded from the Trade Authority's formation, the Conclave remains a faction built upon legacy, lineage, and embittered nostalgia. Ostensibly dedicated to preserving the old ways, they function less as guardians of tradition and more as a collection of cantankerous aristocrats desperate to reassert their relevance. While their influence within Alkhuzh has long since waned, their deep coffers and generational wealth ensure they can never be simply ignored.

The Conclave's approach to political disruption is rarely outright illegal, but it is always loud, public, and designed for maximum embarrassment. Their most infamous attempt to prove their continued importance—the construction of a fleet of airborne ships—was a grand exercise in impracticality. Though the airships functioned, they were never viable for real trade, serving instead as an expensive and overblown publicity stunt that reinforced their reputation as relics of a past era attempting to reclaim a future that no longer belongs to them.

Though never a genuine threat to the Trade Authority's reign, the Conclave is an ever-present nuisance, injecting chaos into an otherwise well-oiled machine. They are a reminder that Alkhuzh's mercantile empire, for all its efficiency, is not without its lingering ghosts—ornate, obstinate, and persistent.

### Cultural Hero: Swoorky Plunkdish

#### The Artificer of Inconvenient Genius

Swoorky Plunkdish rose from journeyman tinkerer to cultural infamy through a chain of poorly timed brilliance and bureaucratic sabotage. Her early research into lift harmonics and weight-recursion ratios laid the groundwork for modern airship theory—but the Conclave erased her contributions, publishing her work under less volatile names. In IM 4900, she responded with a perfectly rational act of academic vengeance: burning down every Conclave residence in a single night—a moment now known as *The Night of Burning Towers*.

Arrested but unrepentant, she negotiated her release by offering a transmutation formula capable of turning lead into gold (IM 4912)—a discovery deemed “economically viable in principle, unpleasant in practice.” Immediately upon release, she persuaded the Conclave to invest in an ambitious fleet of airborne vessels based on her plagiarized schematics (IM 4917). The resulting airships proved ceremonial, unstable, and prohibitively expensive to maintain.

In the following years, Plunkdish became a folkloric irritant and populist darling—rescuing doomed lovers in IM 4920, “accidentally” collapsing a temple in IM 4926, and finally vanishing on a doomed expedition orchestrated by political rivals (IM 4930), likely sanctioned by the same Conclave she once humiliated. Today, she remains a staple of dockside bardic epics and Trade Authority taverns, toasted annually at *Leadday* and invoked by prank economists to explain logistical blunders with a smile: “Plunkdish at work.”

## *Halflings and Gnomes in the Known World*



## Halfling Society: Governance by Granary and Good Sense



When halflings arrived in the Known World in 1633 IM, they settled in the fertile crescent between mountain ranges and the west coast of the central continent—a landscape seemingly designed for cooperative farming and pie-based diplomacy. With no central authority, governance emerged organically: local elders, festival-appointed mayors, and county sheriffs were enough to manage disputes and planting schedules.

But when the Dwarven Empire extended a cordial invitation to join voluntarily, the lack of a unified voice became a geopolitical snag. So, naturally, the halflings convened over lunch, dinner, and a second lunch for good measure. What began as an exercise in political hospitality ended with the formation of a republic and the election of a Prime Minister, whose first act was to accept the empire's offer—thus beginning a curious arrangement of subjecthood wherein halflings maintained full autonomy while occasionally sending formal permission slips to an emperor who rarely replied.

From there, the story becomes one of civic and agricultural refinement:

- 1785 IM: Crop rotation becomes law, engineered not by bureaucrats, but by millwrights and grain sages hoping to preserve soil health and feed more bellies per acre.
- 2051 IM: Windmill-powered irrigation transforms water access, turning thirsty fields into thriving breadbaskets and spreading cultivation deeper into the frontier.
- 2227 IM: The Golden Harvest Treaty is signed, recognizing Sarahden as the official grain supplier for neighboring nations. The treaty makes food not just sustenance, but diplomacy.
- 2873 IM: Alchemists—often former farmers turned obsessively practical theorists—develop soil-enhancing compounds that double yields, ushering in an era of green abundance.
- 3540 IM: Mass-scale irrigation tech advances again, allowing the reclaiming of previously uncultivable lands, especially in the high terraces of Lesser Marlsolt.
- 4125 IM: The Emerald Fields Act is passed, safeguarding decentralized, small-farm models and codifying the halfling ideal: that no field should answer to a throne.
- 5534 IM: The Grain Crisis topples assumptions, as a series of catastrophic harvests threaten the economy. Rather than hoard or conquer, halflings pivot to multicultural trade alliances—preserving both food supply and reputation.
- 6830 IM: In the wake of recovery, Prime Minister Fulke Howard declares a festival of athletic events to celebrate the republic's founding, blending civic pride with competitive pancake flipping.
- 7351 IM: The discovery of arcane-enhanced drought-resistant crops stretches the limits of agricultural magic, marking a fusion between traditional farming and advanced spellcraft.

Across these centuries, Sarahden evolves from a patchwork of villages into the backbone of global sustenance, not by imperial ambition, but through an unshakable belief in community, cultivation, and the quiet heroism of good harvests.

In Sarahden, grain is more than sustenance—it is currency, infrastructure, and equilibrium. The halfling financial system is built around grain-backed trade, where standardized measures of wheat, barley, and rye form the backbone of commerce. These reserves, stored in government-regulated granaries, underpin the entire economy: trade certificates are issued against actual deposits, and transactions—whether among farmers, merchants, or foreign powers—are conducted using grain notes, each backed by tangible harvests.

Granaries themselves are fortified and meticulously maintained, physically safeguarding Sarahden's wealth from disaster or theft. Unlike precious metals, whose value can fluctuate wildly, grain remains universally essential. Its worth is tied to seasonal yields, market dynamics, and global food stability. Through strategic stockpiling and regulated distribution, the halflings have elevated agriculture into a reliable currency—solidifying their role as the Known World's provisioners and economic anchors.

### Cultural Hero: Jane Piercehedge

#### The Unintended Emissary

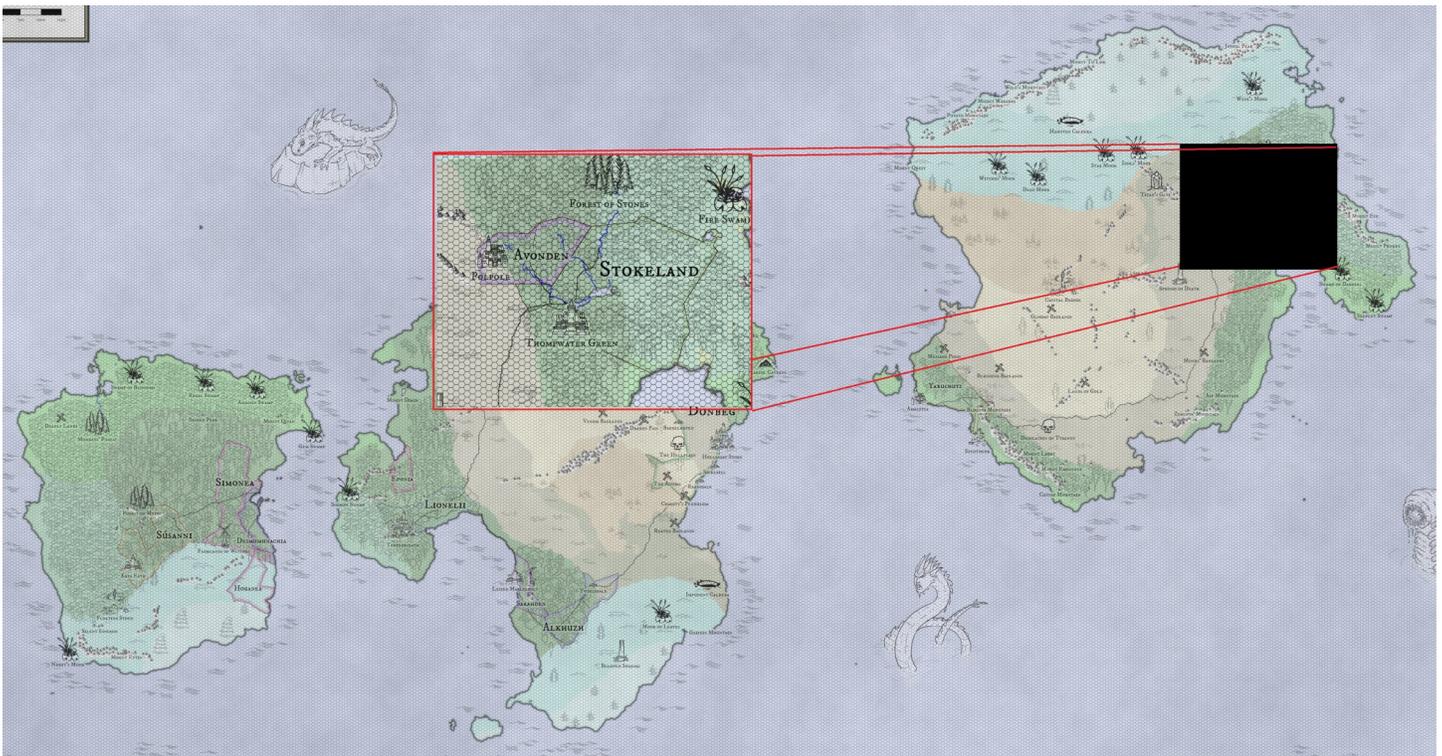
The story of Jane Piercehedge begins unconventionally—even by halfling standards. In 6448 IM, she was given to a sorcerer in exchange for a spell that, depending on who's telling the tale, either saved a harvest, healed an elder, or made an entire town briefly invisible to grain taxes. Raised among incantations and improbably affectionate demons, Jane's childhood was marked by magical chaos, culminating in the unintentional collapse of a great temple and the permanent loss of one arm to a neolithid lurking below the coast.

Rather than fade into exile or academia, Jane emerged as a radical force for halfling diplomacy. In 6491 IM, she brokered peace between two religious orders whose mutual loathing had simmered for generations—achieved, legend says, by confusing their dogmas so elegantly that neither could claim victory. Just years later, she thwarted an assassination attempt on Prime Minister Fulke Howard III (or possibly IV; the Senate records are oddly poetic on this point), earning her a seat at every official breakfast henceforth and a lasting place in Sarahden's public affections.

But Jane's journey did not end in triumph. She became the inadvertent centerpiece of a political feud between rival families, whose attempts to co-opt her popularity failed when she publicly planted beans in both their front gardens and refused comment. She retired shortly thereafter to a quiet farm, declaring herself “done with policy and explosions, hopefully.”

Today, Jane Piercehedge is more than a historical figure—she's a myth dressed in real events. Her legacy runs deep in Sarahden's cultural bedrock: invoked in court arguments, memorialized in folk plays, and cited whenever a civic disaster feels suspiciously like destiny. In every telling, she remains a reminder that halfling heroism is rarely loud, rarely clean, and always enduring.

# Humans in the Known World



## Donbeg: The First Kingdom and the Rise of Humanity



*The United Kingdom of Donbeg*

Stretching along the central east coast of the central continent, Donbeg presents a landscape shaped by contrast. Its tropical climate brings heat and seasonal storms, feeding northeastern jungles where old beliefs and hidden settlements persist. To the northwest, rugged hills and mountains house fortress towns and remnants of dwarven infrastructure, while the central scrublands provide open terrain for mercenary routes and caravan trade. The deserts in the southwest are dry and quiet, marked by stories of past campaigns and long exiles. At the center sits Hollesary Stoke, near the equator—a capital where history, politics, and climate converge.

Humanity's arrival in the Known World in IM 2160 marked not a conquering tide, but a quiet settling along the coast. Within decades, one group journeyed north and encountered the Dwarven Empire.

Swiftly adopted to help populate its sparse eastern province, these humans assimilated into imperial society—learning its laws, absorbing its cultural intricacies, and inheriting its martial traditions. What began as pragmatic integration matured into five thousand years of deep entanglement, reshaping northern humanity into a hybrid civilization bound to dwarven legacy—one that quietly mastered the art of heavy infantry tactics alongside imperial law and cultural intricacy.

Among the earliest human contributions to imperial warfare was the rise of the Immortal Guard—elite heavy infantry units trained alongside the Dwarven Imperial Legion. While the Legion emphasized modular formations and unbreakable cohesion, the Immortals drew from a different doctrine: ornamental resilience, psychological presence, and the unyielding perception of endless reinforcements.

The empire's collapse in IM 7531 unmoored human society, leaving behind a skeletal infrastructure and a vacuum of authority. Some human communities clung to imperial systems, while others sought liberation from the shadow of dwarven rule. In IM 7590, amid this fragmentation, the charismatic rogue Cuthbert Peck escaped the dungeon of the notorious wizard Ella the Grotesque and declared himself King. This was no blood-right claim, but a narrative coup: the birth of the First Kingdom, a human-led realm stitched together from reclaimed roads and charismatic necessity.

The Peck Dynasty transformed myth into mandate. Cuthbert's grandson Simon institutionalized royal reverence. Officially declaring the monarchy divine and syncretizing himself with the god of the sun, Simon mandated household shrines and embedded obedience to the state in spiritual practice. His daughter Grace reversed course in IM 7702, sweeping away public displays of religious loyalty and restoring civic governance to policy and infrastructure. Her reforms cooled the cultic fever—but left behind devotional embers.

Those embers reignited with Abigail Peck's prophetic emergence in IM 7890. Marked by the Pantheon, she blurred the boundary between monarch and divine vessel, catalyzing a second wave of Ra-Peck reverence. This crescendo of mystic monarchy fractured in IM 8125 with a failed coup, revealing deep fault lines between reformists and zealots. Yet it wasn't until IM 8762, when Queen Zoe Peck invoked divine prerogative to justify conquest, that the dynasty's mythic machinery turned imperial again. Her launch of the 200-Year War—messianic in tone, logistical in ambition—effectively marked the dissolution of the First Kingdom.

The 200-year war spawned two waves of colonization, first in 8809 when followers of the High Priestess Amice Wilson abandoned the chaos of war and the spiritual unrest of the Ra-Peck cult to form the theocratic state of Avonden in 8809. Not trusting the isolationist motives of the new state, in 8827 King Alfred Peck sent his trusted vassal Horace Stoke to found the colony of

### Cultural Hero: Abigail Peck

#### The Mirror Sovereign

In IM 7890, Abigail Peck awoke with knowledge she'd never asked for. Breakfasts not yet served, arguments not yet begun, children not yet conceived—it arrived quietly, without fanfare or interpretation. Marked by a Pantheon glyph on her wrist, she became a vessel through which time refracted. Conversations with her felt gently broken: warm, sincere, and always slightly out of order.

She never preached, and seldom made proclamations. But the Ra-Peck cult, long dormant, began to stir—first in private homes, then in public rituals, as citizens sought meaning in her fractured presence. Shrines bloomed not from sermons, but from anecdotes. She became an oracle of mundane disruption, revered not for what she declared, but for what she accidentally revealed.

“She asked if I'd named my son yet. I didn't know I was pregnant. She apologized.”

— *Elder Rasset*, IM 7891

“She wished me happy birthday. Mine was two weeks away. I laughed. She said, ‘See you then.’”

— *Merchant Tabbett*, IM 7890

To some, she was a miracle of quiet knowing. To others, a dissonant shadow—proof that time is neither linear nor polite. Modern sects refer to her as the Mirror Sovereign, the Awakened Quiet, or simply the First Echo. Her glyph remains among the most enduring Pantheon Marks in Donbeg, worn not for power—but for remembrance.

Stokeland to contain Avonden's development, a decision that would have grave consequences for the Peck Dynasty at the end of the conflict.

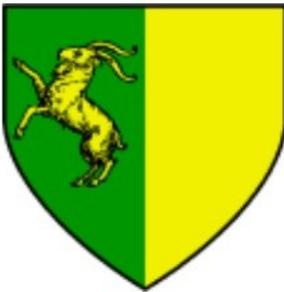
As rival factions vied for control, the kingdom gradually weakened, culminating in its final days when Peter Hollesary, with help from the former Peck loyalists from Stokeland, defeated the last remnants of the Peck Dynasty in IM 8938. In a defining moment, Hollesary built his capital—Hollesary Stoke—on the battlefield where the Pecks had made their last stand, signaling the dawn of the Second Kingdom. Today, King Peter II, Peter Hollesary's son, rules over a kingdom built on martial prowess and adventurous spirit.

## Imperial Ruins

Northern Donbeg wears its history in layers of stone and ruin. The first scars came with the Untended Decades (7531–7590 IM), when the Vanishing of the Dwarves left no central authority to maintain their works. Roads overgrew, towers crumbled, and mines flooded or were stripped bare.

More than a millennium later, the 200-Year War and the collapse of the Peck Dynasty (8762–8938 IM) brought another wave of destruction. Siege engines shattered bridges, fortresses were abandoned mid-repair, and entire towns were left to rot as the front lines shifted. By the time King Peter Hollesary declared the Second Kingdom, two ages of neglect had left the north a patchwork of dwarven bones, human ruins, and nature's slow reclamation.

To the people of Donbeg, these ruins are less a curiosity than a constant presence: landmarks for travel, hazards for farmers, and tempting treasure-holes for those with short lifespans or long ambitions.



*The Holy Realm of Avonden*

## Avonden: The Silent Crown

Avonden occupies the western shoulder of the eastern continent, where terrain shapes silence and clarity. The western third of the country rises into ancient uplift—scrub-covered highlands forged by deep time and tectonic patience. These ridges yield both mineral-rich ore and the tough grasses that birthed Avonden's heavy horse breeds. In contrast, the eastern two-thirds of the nation are cloaked in temperate evergreen forests: dense, echo-dampening, and spiritually resonant. The climate is mild and deliberate—mist-swept plateaus in the west, dew-fed groves in the east, and quiet rivers threading between them like veins of restraint. Once bordered by southeastern coastline, Avonden ceded its shore in IM 8827 to Stokeland, reaffirming its geographic and philosophical insulation.

temperate evergreen forests: dense, echo-dampening, and spiritually resonant. The climate is mild and deliberate—mist-swept plateaus in the west, dew-fed groves in the east, and quiet rivers threading between them like veins of restraint. Once bordered by southeastern coastline, Avonden ceded its shore in IM 8827 to Stokeland, reaffirming its geographic and philosophical insulation.

Avonden was founded in IM 8809 by High Priestess and Queen Amice Wilson, who led her followers from Donbeg to escape the escalating chaos of the 200-Year War and the god-king cult. As the high priestess of a Golden Temple School (*see Golden Temple Schools in the Independent Organizations section*), Amice sought to create a sanctuary rooted in spiritual clarity and martial discipline. Built on ritual silence and spiral geometry, the nation embraced isolation, clarity, and martial discipline as sacred principles. With access to the highland horse breeds and remarkably pure ores of the northwest, Avonden cultivated a formidable tradition of heavy cavalry warfare. Tyler Dean, a young squire of an Avondinean knight, is credited with taming the first of these horses—an act that launched his public life in IM 8820 and defined the martial style of the Golden Temple School.

The martial tradition has evolved into a tapestry of knightly orders. Some, like the Order of the Spiraled Flame, serve as national defenders—formally integrated into crown strategy and trained in magical deterrence and cavalry mastery. Others, like the Skyward Templars or the Lantern Vow, operate as martial monastic enclaves—introspective, regionally focused, and driven by spiritual philosophy over political allegiance. Temples double as sanctuaries and scriptoria, and all orders require rituals of endurance, clarity, and light prior to elevation to knighthood. Whether state-bound or sovereign in spirit, Avondean knighthood reflects the nation's enduring values—precision over spectacle, restraint over conquest, and solemn strength without fanfare.

## Cultural Hero: Tyler Dean

### The Rider of the Spiraled Ridge

Born into modest station as a squire in IM 8809, Tyler Dean rose to mythic prominence through devotion, quiet bravery, and a sequence of symbolically potent acts that became foundational to Avondinean ethos. First credited with taming a highland horse breed thought too wild for ritual training, Dean embodied the union of clarity and force—a recurring Avondinean theme.

His public life began in IM 8820, soon followed by a transformative relationship with Queen Amice Wilson's son. Their elopement in 8835 became a national legend. A unicorn encounter in 8840 left Dean physically altered—losing a limb but gaining the symbolic role of "the incomplete knight," whose imperfections mirror Avonden's chosen restraint.

Dean never ruled, but his presence shaped knighthood culture, mythic ritual, and spiritual law. His image appears in knightly initiation rites, and his quotations anchor endurance ceremonies even today

In IM 8860, High Priestess Margaret Seys gave birth to twins—a sign interpreted as divine instruction to divide spiritual and political authority. Seys remained in religious leadership while abdicating the monarchy in favor of her newborn daughter, Abigail Reed. Ruling under her father's name, Queen Abigail reformed Avonden's military doctrine, merging protective magic with elite cavalry techniques and transforming the nation from respected to feared. Abigail died without direct heirs, passing the crown to her niece, Bella Barton, daughter of Abigail's twin.

Under Queen Bella's leadership, Avonden remains steeped in ritual, remembered myth, and deliberate detachment. Now, as bicentennial celebrations quietly approach, Avonden continues to stand apart from continental tumult: quiet, watchful, and content to glow rather than blaze.

## Stokeland: The Quiet Wars of the Crown March



*The Crown March of Stokeland*

Stokeland occupies a stretch of prime coastline along the eastern continent, gifted first by governorship, then by alliance, and finally by quiet triumph. The terrain varies from fog-swept bluffs in the north to warm tidal estuaries in the south, with steady currents threading through harbors and straits. Rain is seasonal, winds are navigable, and nearly every region has direct access to the sea or to trade routes that curve toward it. The land

is fertile enough to sustain, but Stokeland's wealth was never rooted in grain—it's built from the timber of inland neighbors who lost their ports and from the tides that never stopped favoring Stokeland's shipyards.

### The Stokes of Stokeland

For centuries, the Stoke family served as loyal retainers to the waning Peck Dynasty, weathering political fragmentation with measured pragmatism. In IM 8827, as tensions mounted across the Eastern continent, King Alfred Peck commissioned Archduke Horace Stoke to establish a colony—ostensibly to curb Avonden's potential alliance with mainland enemies in the 200-year war.

Horace accepted the charge with unflinching resolve. Aware of Avonden's sincere isolationism, he negotiated a marriage alliance between his son and an Avondenean noble house. In return, Avonden ceded all coastal holdings to the colony—consolidating its isolation and shielding Stokeland from future entanglements.

With the coastline secured, Horace invested in shipyards and navigational command, transforming Stokeland from diplomatic placeholder into naval powerhouse.

By IM 8938, the war's end loomed. Peter Hollesary was pressing his advantage against the last remnants of the Peck loyalists. The Stokes, reading the inevitable collapse of their former liege, proposed a strategic alliance with Hollesary. Their defection proved decisive. With Stoke support, Hollesary routed the final Peck strongholds and unified Donbeg.

In recognition of the family's pivotal role, Peter granted the Stokes sovereign authority over Stokeland and named his newly constructed capital—raised atop the battlefield of his final victory—**Hollesary Stoke**, a tribute to the dynasty that had ensured his triumph

### Cultural Hero: Archduke Horace Stoke

#### The Engineer of Influence

Few figures in Donbeg's post-Imperial history exhibit the same fusion of obedience and strategic recalibration as Archduke Horace Stoke. Loyal to the end, but never blind to the shifting winds of empire, Horace is remembered not for singular battles or divine insight—but for his ability to turn mandates into foundations.

Charged by Alfred Peck in IM 8827 with the creation of a colonial foothold on the Eastern Continent, Horace chose to fulfill the order with total commitment and minimal spectacle. Rather than escalate tensions with Avonden, he negotiated a dynastic marriage that transformed potential conflict into lasting containment—securing Avonden's withdrawal from maritime relevance and gifting Stokeland its coast.

Once established, Horace set to work—not as conqueror, but as builder. He oversaw the creation of shipyards, drafted maritime guild charters, and laid the infrastructural grammar that would define Stokeland's rise. His reputation hinges less on charisma than on quiet efficiency; less on battlefield prowess than on strategic permanence.

Though he died before Peter Hollesary's rise, Horace's legacy endured—anchoring the Stoke family's decision to realign, secure sovereignty, and shape the capital that bears their name. In cultural memory, Horace is revered not for who he defeated, but for what he established. His statues often depict him with nautical drafting tools, not swords; contracts, not banners. His heroism is logistical, enduring, and quietly immense.

## Mun'yaki: The Nomads of the Central Rift



*Mun'yaki Nomads*

Humanity's arrival in the Known World in IM 2160 marked not a conquering tide, but a quiet settling along the coast. Within decades, one group journeyed north and encountered the Dwarven Empire. Swiftly adopted to help populate its sparse eastern province, these humans assimilated into imperial society—learning its laws, absorbing its cultural intricacies, and inheriting its martial traditions.

What is frequently forgotten by the imperial humans is that another group turned west. They crossed plains not carved by dwarven stone, moved through valleys unnamed in imperial script, and settled into seasonal rhythms shaped by forage, ridge, and wind. These were not the humans who inherited dwarven glory, but those who developed a culture that is uniquely human—uncodified by contract, and unmapped by imperial cartographers.

Called Mun'yaki in their own stories, they are referred to in Donbeg as “Wild Folk” —a term that obscures centuries of cavalry tradition, ecological stewardship, and papyrus-craft that quietly powers much of the bureaucracy that dismisses them.

The Mun'yaki display a seasonal precision and material sophistication that belies their reputation in Donbeg as “barbarians”. Their ridge-camps—temporary in name only—anchor regular migratory patterns:

**Wet Season (approx. March–May, Oct–Dec):** Retreat to higher ground for protection from lowland flooding and where prevailing winds help control insects. Activity focuses on paper and other material production, storytelling and domesticity.

**Dry Season (approx. June–Sept, Jan–Feb):** Migrate through the savanna and rift-valley network following goat and horse herds. Activity focuses on trade, migration, hunting, and cavalry and scout training.

Over their years of migration the Mun'yaki have become masters of light cavalry and infantry tactics. Employed by mercenary armies for centuries as scouts and skirmishers, Mun'yaki doctrine favors velocity over mass, intuition over formation—a nightmare for supply chains and slower, heavier units in any force opposing them.

While culturally distinct, there is a clear kinship between the two branches of humanity. Their relationship being one of careful engagement, rather than estrangement. Both sides recognize their shared humanity, even if true understanding is elusive.



## Dragons and Dragonborn



Dragon sightings—and even brief encounters—were recorded by dwarven chroniclers as early as IM 950, but serious investigation into the phenomenon did not begin until IM 1570 with what became known as the Dragon Pass Event. Until that time, the southeastern mountain range—

now forming part of the northern border of Donbeg—was considered an unbroken barrier between the imperial capital and its eastern provinces. In the early winter of 1570 a section of the peaks stirred, unfolded, and took flight. What had long been mistaken for mere stone revealed itself to be a mega-colossal dragon, its vast form rising into the sky before vanishing into the north, never to be seen again. In the wake of its departure, the Empire seized opportunity from upheaval: engineers carved through the newly opened pass, raising soaring arches and bridges to span the gaps. But the event also exposed a deeper, more urgent need—to understand what dragons truly were.

Until the founding of the University of Hoganea in IM 2184, dragons were assumed to be extraordinarily advanced mega-fauna, akin to the giantfolk well known at the time. With the establishment of the University—and especially the College of Draconic Observation and Categorization (CDOC)—a radically different explanation emerged.

Academics at CDOC proposed the Unified Dragon Theory (UDT): that there was not a multitude of dragons, but rather one dragon—a singular, Transcendent consciousness, too vast for conventional reality to render in full.

“We call it a dragon because we needed a noun. The phenomenon has yet to offer correction.”

—*Field-Scribe Tem, shortly before his handwriting rewrote itself into a spiral*

Under the Unified Dragon Theory

- Dragonborn are not offspring or creations, but side effects—physical manifestations where the dragon’s awareness grows too sharp for reality to ignore
- Time, space, and syntax may not apply in zones of full draconic presence; causality itself may become negotiable

Alternative Theories:

- Megafaunal Revisionists: Dragons are rare biological organisms; everything else is mass hallucination protocol
- Temporal Loop Hypothesis: Dragons are future intelligences correcting past anomalies
- Dream Residue Model (Súsanni folklore): The world is the dragon’s dream; dragonborn are portions of it waking up in the wrong story

Despite centuries of debate, no theory has yet explained why the dragon(s) notice, or what they want—if they want anything at all.

### The Aether Crisis (8852 IM)

In a hubristic attempt to amplify arcane output, researchers at the Lumen Mint of Trevediceath initiated the Ley Compression Experiment—a procedure designed to braid ley-lines for energy densification. The results were catastrophic: simultaneous blue dragon manifestations erupted in 37 distinct global locations, shattering conventional magical theory.

Proponents of Unified Dragon Theory (UDT) contend these were not discrete dragons, but spatial resolutions of a single, pan-dimensional entity—an intelligence too vast for singular space, over-resolved across parallel coordinates. The event validated decades of metaphysical speculation and redefined the nature of draconic presence.

The two-week fallout, known as the Null Fortnight, saw near-total magical instability:

- Rituals failed or misfired across all known systems
- Ley-line harmonics collapsed in key regions
- Gnomish timekeeping skipped 0.6 quadrants in every major port—except Stokeland, which famously relied on calibrated grain bells and maintained temporal coherence

In response, two historic diplomatic developments reshaped global governance:

- The founding of The Assembly, an international deliberative body tasked with regulating metaphysical experimentation and arcane ethics
- The arrival of Dragonborn Ambassadors, articulate beings bearing shared symbols, philosophies, and diplomatic intent, who took residence in newly established Draconic Embassies across the Known World

The Aether Crisis marked the beginning of the Dragonborn Renaissance, a cultural and philosophical shift toward interplanar humility, cosmic accountability, and the recognition that magic, like power, must be governed.

This theory was met with skepticism, particularly from imperial scholars and dwarven naturalists, who continued to classify dragons as fauna. But in IM 7531, when the Empire collapsed, institutional resistance to UDT crumbled as well. The theory was widely adopted across successor states and independent academies.

UDT was further validated during the Aether Crisis (8852 IM), when thirty-seven simultaneous blue dragon manifestations fractured magical coherence across the Known World

### **Dragonborn Before and After the Aether Crisis**

Prior to IM 8852, dragonborn existed—but only as scattered individuals, anomalies without a shared identity or cultural framework. These individuals were often misunderstood, feared, or mythologized. Some were revered as divine echoes; others were hunted as arcane aberrations.

Without a unifying theory to explain their nature, dragonborn were treated as curiosities—neither fully draconic nor fully mortal. They had no homeland, no language of their own, no collective memory.

Following the synchronized dragon manifestations, dragonborn began to appear in greater numbers—either through new manifestations or through previously hidden communities revealing themselves. For the first time, they began to develop a shared culture: rituals, oral histories, and artistic traditions rooted in their connection to the Transcendent Dragon. They formed alliances with mortal nations, established embassies, and became active participants in metaphysical diplomacy.

While most dragonborn live ordinary lives, a rare subset known as **Ambassadors** emerged in the decades following the Dragon Pass Event and the subsequent appearance of the Draconic Embassies. These Ambassadors arrived uninvited but rarely unwelcomed, declaring themselves representatives of the presence mortals call "dragon." No dragon has ever confirmed this.

Diplomatic engagement with them is unpredictable. Proposals left unapproved will sometimes yield immediate collaboration. Approved proposals may wither under inexplicable silence. Projects that stall or self-destruct are often met with quiet approval. One ambassador, upon witnessing the catastrophic failure of a public monument she had consulted on extensively, responded only: *"It is as it should be."*

Whether this constitutes satisfaction, indifference, or something else remains unconfirmed.

### **Dragon Embassies**

Not built, but *manifested*, the dragon embassies are among the most unnerving landmarks of the Known World. Each occupies a location of heightened anomaly—ley-line vortexes, dream-glades, temporal hinge zones—and none behave according to architectural logic. Some are towers without stairs. Others are fields shaped like buildings. A few are rooms with no entrance, yet they host occupants nonetheless.

Travelers report sensations of déjà vu, narrative recursion, and dislocation within embassy boundaries. Maps drawn from inside an embassy cannot be reconciled with those drawn outside. The only consistent feature across all known sites is the presence of a dragonborn Ambassador, who seems less like a host and more like a gravitational echo—friendly, disquieting, and occasionally oracular.

Though the embassies are widely recognized by governments as autonomous zones, they remain functionally unknowable. Folk wisdom suggests one should never enter without a reason.

Minor embassy locations have been noted throughout the world but there are three major locations, always inhabited by a number of Ambassadors and other Dragonborn.

**1. The Fold** — *Located near Dragon Pass* A towering spiral ruin with no original architect, nestled where dragons first began to occur. It hums during certain solstices. The Ambassador here refers to time as "a sympathetic direction" and refuses to answer questions unless asked in mirror-rhyme. Most enter with a question. Most leave with several more.

**2. Embassy of Threads** — *Southern Súsanni, on the edge of the Nameless Grove* Half-structure, half-vinework, it grows differently when watched. The local dragonborn community treats it like a library for forgot-ten emotions. The Ambassador here often speaks in dreams to nearby villagers, apologizing for things that haven't happened yet. Trade Authority personnel are banned from approaching within one kilometer.

**3. The Ash Stair** — *Outskirts of Alkhuzh, among the glassed sand hills* A stone staircase descending into bedrock—but with no bottom ever found. Those who enter report "turns" in logic and language. Occasionally, something climbs out, carrying messages no one can read. The Ambassador here is rarely seen, but occasionally leaves annotations in government records that no one recalls writing.

# Lesser Known Cultures

## The Orc Lands



*Trunr Clan*



*Tumniki Clan*

Far to the north, amid the sub-polar expanses of the central continent, the Orc Lands remain an untamed frontier where nature and honor dictate life's course. The orcs, known for their ferocious warrior spirit and shamanistic reverence for ancestors, live by the cyclical rhythms of the lunar calendar. Nomadic by nature, these peoples have long defended their frozen domain against outsiders, their presence recorded in imperial histories as early as 1500 IM—even as the particulars of their origins remain lost to time. Divided into two great kingdoms, the Orc Lands are ruled by rival supreme chiefs: **Tumniki**, under the leadership of Supreme Chief Juma Marenah, and **Trunr**, governed by Supreme Chief Threas.

Although the true number of clans is unknown, legends intertwine heroic deeds with fateful events. For the orcs, honor is nonnegotiable and boundaries are fiercely maintained. Their traditions—ancient and immutable—affirm that in the rugged, frostbound tundra, each clan's survival is earned on battlefields and through steadfast adherence to customs passed down from long-forgotten ancestors.

## Yaxuchutz: The Lands of the Lizardfolk



Far from the icy frontiers, deep in the steamy heart of the eastern continent's tropical jungle, lies Yaxuchutz—a realm of the lizardfolk cloaked in perpetual enigma. Though their existence is known across scholarly treatises and whispered in trading circles, few outsiders have ever penetrated the dense foliage to witness the splendor of their hidden cities.

Yaxuchutz is ruled by theocratic authority under the guidance of High Priestess Ixmayer. The lizardfolk, who revere the night sky and live according to a sacred lunar calendar, have long shunned contact with the outside world. Described by foreign traders as “hostile” and “carnivorous,” their isolation is both a shield and a source of pride. Their advanced civilization rivals much of the Known World in technological and cosmic know-how, yet they remain resolutely xenophobic—guarding their secrets and ancient traditions with unwavering vigilance.

With a population reaching into the tens of millions and a civilization that prides itself on both formidable martial prowess and sophisticated theocratic order, Yaxuchutz remains one of the most entrancing, if impenetrable, cultures on the edge of the Known World.

## Eftekhar: The City-State of Forgotten Allegiances



*The Free City of Eftekhar*

Founded ca. 2000 IM on the north coast of the Western Continent by displaced sea-elves fleeing—or refusing—the Concord Wars, Eftekhar began as a tenuous haven of driftwood shelters and defiant pragmatism. Over seven millennia, it evolved into a sprawling free-port city-state, famed (and infamous) for its radical openness and deliberate rejection of sovereignty. It is a cultural magnet for those displaced by war, disgraced by orthodoxy, or disenchanted with governance.

### Shipyards and Drydocks

Eftekhar's coast is bristled with unregulated shipyards, haphazard drydocks, and impromptu vessel repair enclaves. Many are run by post-imperial dwarves using ancestral engineering melded with scavenged arcana. Vessels here are built without manifest or provenance—mercenary frigates, Concord deserter craft, and rogue cargo barges are retrofitted using salvaged hulls and re-stamped registry glyphs. Some yards offer “refitting with plausible deniability” as an explicit service.

### Unregulated Markets

Eftekhar's open-air bazaars and rooftop markets are a logistical dreamscape and an accountant's nightmare. Here, Cold Salt relics, heretical tomes, counterfeit Lumen, and trans-planar produce exchange hands alongside legitimate trade, often without distinction. No currency is refused, no transaction method too arcane. Negotiation rituals vary by district and vendor caste—some deals are sealed with blood-thumbs, others via encoded salt sigils burned into driftwood stubs.

While Concord eyes dismiss these markets as piracy-adjacent, insiders know they power the Known World's grey economy and house hidden nodes of Trade Authority activity, quietly recording transactions beneath the chaos.

## Cultural Chronology

- Sea-elf foundation: ~2000 IM
- Elven theurgic migration: Mage War onset (4139 IM)
- Dwarven salvage surge: Post-Empire collapse (7531 IM)
- Human influx: During the 200-Year War (8762 IM)
- Ongoing arrival: heretics, cranks, post-pirates, survivalists, and exiled scholars.

Eftekhar's population grows not by mandate but by resonance—a place of anonymity by design, where being uncounted is a civic virtue.

## The Outer Settlements

Surrounding Eftekhar, a scatter of semi-autonomous enclaves and support hubs:

- Gald Thorn – A fog-soaked coastal village known for Cold Salt extraction.
- Redroof Barges – A flotilla settlement tethered off Eftekhar's southern docks.
- Dryhook Commons – Inland, dusty, unofficial repair town for wagons and haulers. Hosts rotating salvage auctions and a mildly famous tofu distillery staffed entirely by failed assassins.
- Memory Vale – A nomadic settlement where everything is traded orally—records are forbidden.

## Wild Elves and Dark Elves



Beyond the structured civilizations of the High, Sea, Wood Elves, two elusive elven cultures remain shrouded in mystery—the Wild Elves of the far north and the Dark Elves of the Underdark. The Wild Elves, as old as the High Elves themselves, have long resisted permanent settlements, embracing a nomadic and shamanistic way of life. In stark contrast, the Dark Elves dwell in vast underground cities, their secretive societies and obscure motives fueling endless speculation among the peoples of the Known World.

*Unity of Malvernia*

*(Wild Elves)*

# Independent Organizations

## Mercenaries: Military Companies as Global Security Providers

*"Mercenary guilds are not merely hired swords—they are, by every practical measure, the foundation upon which modern stability rests. The Ironclad Concord, bound by its Registry, operates not as a military force but as a corporate entity, ensuring that warfare remains regulated and transactional rather than reckless and unpredictable. No registered mercenary company will fight another, not due to morality, but because doing so would unravel the entire industry. In this manner, human military organizations have become the single greatest deterrent to political upheaval—ironic, considering their existence was once considered a threat to sovereignty." — Tactician's Guild Quarterly, as cited in the University's Strategic Studies Division*

### Mercenary Organizations and Their Role

Mercenary companies in the Known World are not rogue actors or warbands—they are infrastructural entities as permanent and formal as trade cartels or arcane licensing bureaus. Most register with the Registry of Mercenary Companies, headquartered in Donbeg and backed by ancient sovereign charter. Registration is voluntary, but refusing it is tantamount to exile: only registered firms are granted port privileges, diplomatic recognition, and access to bonded payment rails.

These firms do not fight one another. Not for lack of opportunity, but by systemic design. To do so would unravel the mercenary economy—a meticulously structured balance that deters escalation, protects clients, and enforces neutrality.

### The Code of Conduct

All registered firms operate under the Mercenary Code, a contract-bound set of behaviors policed not by state or sorcery, but by reputation and consequence. The code includes:

- No fratricide: Registered companies will not engage each other. An attack against one is treated as a structural breach.
- Binding contracts only: Once signed, contracts are inviolable. No reversals. No late bids. No opportunism.
- Political non-interference: Mercenaries do not stage coups, crown kings, or legislate via sword. Their work ends at the gates.

The code endures not through law, but through mutual dependence. To violate the code is to become un-hirable, un-bankable, and unprotected.

### Registration and Deregistration

The Registry of Mercenary Companies is both ledge and blade. It legitimizes firms through charter seals, regulates contracts, and adjudicates disputes. But it also reserves the right to revoke status—a penalty that ends not just a company's reputation, but its existence.

- Deregistration renders a firm open to dismantling: it may be hunted by rival companies, stripped of assets, and refused entry to trade cities.
- Financial collapse follows: banks freeze accounts, clients withdraw, and insurance lines are voided.
- No redemption clause exists. The Registry does not restore trust once revoked.

In rare cases, deregistration is politically manipulated—rulers with sway over Donbeg have been known to suspend rivals' mercenary support under the guise of policy reform. The Assembly protests; the University publishes critical theory. But the Registry seldom answers to rhetoric.

A handful of companies dominate continental operations:

- Ironclad Concord — Fortress-scale readiness and strategic neutrality. Based in The Fort, a military city-state on Donbeg's northern coast. Their presence is considered an implicit peace treaty.
- The Sable Guard — Urban security, counterintelligence, and financial enforcement. Contracted by Trade Authority ports and civic embassies.
- Stormbringers — Naval superiority and convoy protection. Their vessels chart trade routes and enforce maritime protocol.
- The Crimson Pact — High-ceremony guard forces and political compact defense. Trusted by sovereign courts and arcane colleges.

Smaller firms operate regionally, focusing on monster suppression, frontier stabilization, or caravan logistics. Many serve as apprenticeships or feeders for the major banners.

## The Ironclad Concord & The Fort



*The Ironclad Army*

The Ironclad Concord is the largest mercenary organization in the Known World, fielding a military force comparable to national armies while maintaining global autonomy. Unlike traditional standing forces bound by government decree, the Concord operates independently, providing security, warfare, intelligence, and diplomatic services to clients across nations and continents.

At the heart of its operations lies The Fort, an independent city-state within Donbeg, serving as both a military stronghold and administrative headquarters. Though technically within Donbeg's borders, The Fort governs itself, housing command structures, logistical departments, intelligence networks, diplomats, researchers, and historians alongside its elite training programs and recruitment facilities.

### The Fort: A Military City-State

The Fort is far more than just a fortress—it is a self-sustaining settlement, complete with agricultural estates, craft districts, and civilian infrastructure designed to support the Concord's vast operations. It has a permanent population of 500–600 residents, swelling to over 1,200 during wartime or sieges. Key Features:

- **Castle Stoney:** The central fortress, housing administrative halls, war chambers, chapels, vaults, training grounds, and strategic planning offices.
- **Surrounding Settlements:** Villages and estates provide food, crafts, and military supplies, reinforcing The Fort's economic independence.
- **Industrial & Military Complex:** Smithies, leatherworking stations, alchemy labs, and trade hubs maintain weaponry, armor, and logistical support for Concord forces.
- **Naval Access:** Positioned along the coast, The Fort enables efficient troop movements, trade operations, and maritime influence, extending the Concord's reach beyond land warfare.

### The Ironclad Concord's Global Influence

With innumerable contract forces, the Concord provides specialized military units for all manner of engagements—from fortress security to battlefield interventions. The organization's intelligence division monitors global conflicts, factional disputes, and economic shifts, ensuring Concord forces remain ahead of emerging threats and opportunities.

## The Gnomish Trade Authority: Global Commerce & Influence



*"Few institutions shape global affairs as thoroughly as the Gnomish Trade Authority. Unlike sovereign nations, which falter under ambition, the Authority thrives solely on necessity—its power is not taken, but granted, reinforced by the world's absolute dependence on commerce. No kingdom threatens Alkhuzh, for no kingdom can afford to. The High Elves may control luxury, the mercenaries may control conflict, but the gnomes control movement. Without movement, nothing thrives."* — Master Trademaster Eugenius Cluster, Office of Economic Theory

The Gnomish Trade Authority is the undisputed logistical powerhouse of the Known World, orchestrating last-mile delivery, bulk exchange, and supply chain infrastructure on a scale that rivals—or outright surpasses—most national economies. If a good is not magical and people buy or sell it, the Trade Authority is involved. Their influence is so widespread that even the smallest settlements bear their presence, ensuring that everything from grain shipments to rare textiles reaches its destination efficiently and profitably.

### Presence in Population Centers

- Remote Settlements & Villages – These outposts are often nothing more than a single merchant, a storage building, and a courier stop, facilitating trade between isolated communities and larger supply hubs.
- Small & Mid-Sized Cities – Here, the Trade Authority maintains warehouses, specialized trade posts, and merchant banking, ensuring local economies remain integrated into the larger network.
- Major Cities & Trade Capitals – In urban centers, massive Trade Authority complexes dominate the economic landscape, housing:
  - Banking & Financial Institutions – Investment hubs, loan offices, and economic oversight.
  - Commodity Markets – Bulk exchange of goods on a global scale.
  - Logistics & Transport Coordination – Shipyards, courier networks, and cart hubs directing vast shipments.
  - Trade Bastions – Fortified enclaves housing security forces, diplomatic offices, and administrative headquarters.

### Port Capstar

Port Capstar serves as the Trade Authority's principal maritime logistics hub, a fortified coastal enclave on the eastern edge of Sarahden. The city blends bureaucratic precision with relentless activity—warehouses stretch in tiered stacks across the harbor, dockyards hum with enchanted cranes, and ledger halls process thousands of manifests daily. Though technically within halfling territory, Port Capstar maintains its own customs regime and diplomatic footprint, hosting Trade Authority embassies, international merchant guilds, and Concord liaison offices. The city functions not just as a gateway for global goods, but as an economic engine powering eastbound commerce and exporting logistical doctrine as cultural capital. Its proximity to Lesser Marsholt ensures overlapping jurisdictions, occasional turf skirmishes, and a quietly thriving shadow economy.

### Political & Economic Strategy

While the Trade Authority effectively governs Alkhuzh, they maintain the illusion of neutrality in global affairs, ensuring commerce remains uninterrupted regardless of international conflicts. Unlike imperial forces seeking conquest, the Authority has no interest in rulership—their sole priority is profit maximization for their equity partners. Their diplomacy revolves around securing advantageous tariffs, controlling trade routes, and ensuring market dominance, making them indispensable yet politically unaligned.

## The Celestial Concord: Arcane Trade & Economic Supremacy



CELESTIAL  
CONCORD

The Celestial Concord is the premier authority on magical and high-end trade, controlling the distribution of enchanted artifacts, rare tomes, and arcane-infused textiles across the Known World. Formed by Simonea and Lionelii, with deep ties to Eponia, the Concord ensures that magical knowledge remains an elite commodity, available only to approved buyers and financial patrons. Unlike the Gnomish Trade Authority, which specializes in bulk commerce and last-mile logistics, the Celestial Concord thrives on exclusivity, turning magical goods into status symbols and investments rather than simple trade items.

### Presence in Population Centers

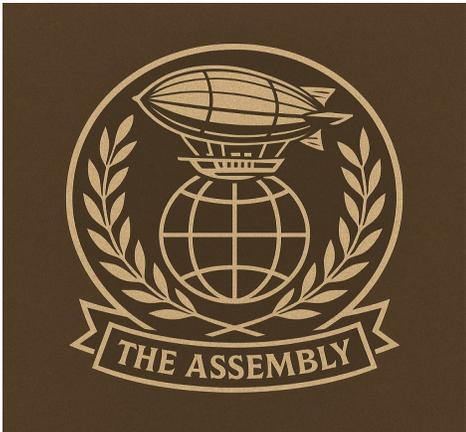
- Major Cities & Arcane Trade Hubs – The Concord operates massive trading enclaves, elegant marble-clad halls where only pre-approved merchants, diplomats, and investors can access curated selections of enchanted goods.
- Mid-Sized Settlements – Presence is reduced to private auction houses, allowing controlled negotiations behind closed doors.

Small or Remote Communities – The Concord rarely operates openly, instead moving enchanted goods through discreet brokers and hidden networks, ensuring magical trade remains beyond common access

### Arcane Currency & Trade Systems

- High Elves utilize arcane-infused currency—each unit storing a measurable amount of magical energy, making their economy both practical and symbolic in its application.
- Sea Elves of Desmumhnachia dominate naval commerce, using a salt-based currency system that reinforces their control over coastal markets and maritime trade routes.
- Wood Elves of Súsanni reject formal currency entirely, favoring a barter system regulated by druidic oversight, ensuring their sacred natural resources remain protected from exploitation.

## The Assembly: The Known World's United Nations



The Assembly was born out of necessity, forged in the wake of the Aether Crisis—a catastrophe that nearly unraveled the world's economies through unchecked magical experimentation. In its early years, diplomacy was reactionary, an attempt to contain disasters rather than prevent them. But as the crisis faded into history, larger forces emerged, each with their own vision of control. The Trade Authority, its monopolization of commerce reaching unprecedented levels, made neutrality in economic oversight a necessity. The Celestial Concord, determined to keep arcane knowledge an elite commodity, unwittingly fueled the rise of rogue mages demanding unrestricted access to magic. The Ironclad Concord, swelling in size and influence, became a mercenary force so vast that some feared it would surpass national armies entirely. And then there was Serhaden, a nation so essential to global food supply that its neutrality was no longer a courtesy—it was an imperative.

Thus, the Assembly took shape, binding these forces to a single principle: Balance Above All. Its mission was clear—to ensure that no single faction, empire, or institution could dictate the course of the world without constraint. In practice, it was messier than the vision its founders had imagined. Bureaucracy moved slowly. Political maneuvering was inevitable. And while it was intended as a governing body for global cooperation, many came to view it as little more than an expensive experiment in diplomacy.

But despite its flaws, the Assembly endured. And nowhere was its neutrality better symbolized than in its headquarters—a fleet of airships, drifting above the world, untethered from territorial politics. Though impractical for mass trade, airships had long been a fascination among the aristocrats of the Conclave, first constructed thousands of years prior as luxury vessels for the elite. They had faded into obscurity over time, resurfacing only when nostalgia demanded their return. When the Assembly was formed, the concept of a floating capital was as absurd as it was ingenious. It solved a delicate problem—where could a governing body exist without favoritism? What land could host a truly neutral power? The answer was simple. It wouldn't exist on land at all.

The airship fleet became the permanent home of the Assembly, maintaining neutrality by never remaining in one place. The ships dock in major cities when needed, allowing delegates to convene, their movements unpredictable enough to prevent political entrenchment. Embassies were kept aboard faction-specific vessels, ensuring independence in negotiations, while emergency meetings required delegates to charter airships, intercept the fleet in transit, or rely on teleportation to attend critical summits.

Though formally named The Assembly, it is rarely referred to as such. The High Council, as critics and cynics dubbed it, became the more widely accepted title—at first a mockery, then a begrudging reality. Skeptics dismissed it as an exclusive club of politicians and merchants, sitting in grand floating halls, endlessly debating issues that needed action, not discussion. Mercenary firms scoffed at its indecisiveness, preferring the clarity of contracts over the uncertain rulings of diplomats. Even those within its ranks muttered about its slowness, sarcastically promising that “The High Council would get right on that... in about five years.”

### International Relations: Stability Through Necessity

While The Assembly serves as the formal diplomatic stage, true international stability is maintained not by treaties or declarations, but by structural dependencies and practical deterrents. Open warfare is rare—not due to any moral restraint, but because no faction can afford the consequences of disrupting the balance.

### The Web of Global Dependencies

- **Sarahden: The Agricultural Backbone** – No one threatens Sarahden, as it controls vast grain supplies essential to every economy. A blockade or embargo would trigger immediate food crises, making war against them strategically unthinkable.
- **Alkhuzh & The Trade Authority: The Economic Gatekeepers** – Alkhuzh's global trade networks and The Trade Authority's grip on commerce ensure that any nation acting against them risks economic strangulation, with trade routes vanishing and vital resources growing scarce.
- **Human Kingdoms: The Mercenary Cartel** – Because human-controlled mercenary bands provide security across the Known World, any faction that disrupts this system finds itself blacklisted, losing access to organized protection.

- **Sea Elves: The Maritime Guardians** – Unchallenged in naval superiority, the Sea Elves make global shipping safe and reliable. To defy them means risking unprotected ports and disappearing merchant fleets.
- **Hoganea & The University: The Intellectual Hegemony** – A knowledge embargo from these institutions causes instant brain-drain, crippling technological progress, magical innovation, and scientific advancement for any nation cut off.
- **High Elves: The Arcane Enforcers** – With mastery over magic, the High Elves ensure compliance through existential threats—defiance carries the risk of catastrophic spellcraft, turning entire cities into amphibian-populated wastelands.
- **Wood Elves: The Wrath of Nature** – Unlike the others, the Wood Elves wield no economic leverage, no political authority—only inevitability. A nation that defies them learns too late that, while you can fight an army that invades your land, fighting the land itself is another matter entirely.

### The Role of The Assembly

Though designed to mediate disputes, The Assembly lacks the power to enforce rulings. Its influence lies in public reputation, diplomatic pressure, and symbolic legitimacy, but in practice, real power remains with those who control global necessities.

While The Assembly may condemn a rogue faction, true consequences only manifest when the Trade Authority enacts an embargo, the mercenary network withdraws protection, or a wizard council quietly erases a city from historical records.

### The Golden Temple Schools

*Not all warriors wield blades. Not all battles draw blood.*



*Examples of Golden Temple School emblems*

The Golden Temple Schools are a constellation of martial traditions, each descended—directly or indirectly—from one of the manuals discovered during the Temple’s first appearance (*see The Golden Temple in the Wonders of the World section*). Over the centuries, these schools have evolved into a vast, decentralized network, with no central authority and no formal hierarchy. Anyone may claim the name—but only practice proves the truth.

While many schools focus on physical combat, others pursue mastery through rhetoric, performance, or philosophical embodiment. In the Known World, a duel might be fought with fists, with words, or with silence.

#### Martial Schools

- Emphasize technique, discipline, and tactical precision
- Often trace lineage directly to one of the original manuals
- Known for battlefield application, tournament dominance, and elite training orders

#### Rhetorical Schools

- Treat combat as structured persuasion or philosophical debate
- Use gesture, timing, and speech to disarm, disrupt, or convert
- Practitioners often serve as diplomats, judges, or ceremonial duelists

#### Theatrical Schools

- Approach martial arts as ritual performance or mythic reenactment
- Techniques are symbolic, dramatic, and often misunderstood
- Duels may resemble plays, with outcomes interpreted as prophecy or parable

Whether forged in silence, shouted in verse, or danced beneath moonlight, every Golden Temple School is a living interpretation of readiness, consequence, and form. The name is free. The mastery is not.

# Living in the Known World

## Keeping Time

Most cultures in the Known World maintain their own calendars, each beginning with their arrival, founding, or mythic emergence into the world. These systems vary widely—some lunar, some solar, some tied to agricultural cycles or ancestral reckonings. Methods for correcting seasonal drift are equally diverse, ranging from leap days to ritual recalibration.

Yet in matters of international diplomacy, trade, and scholarship, one system prevails: the Imperial Calendar, developed by the dwarves and adopted for its precision, elegance, and universal applicability.

### The Imperial Calendar

An imperial year lasts 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, and 46 seconds—a perfect alignment with the planet's orbit. It is further divided into 12 months of 30 days, totaling 360 days, with the final days set aside for the Long Night, a solstice observance that marks the end of the year.

### The Long Night

The Long Night is a multi-day festival culminating in the winter solstice, the one day of the year that, by tradition, lasts 30 hours. Celebrations vary across cultures—some solemn, some ecstatic—but all recognize the Long Night as a liminal hinge between years. The new year begins at 6:00 AM on the day following the solstice, when the planet completes its orbit and the cycle begins anew.

Season	Months	Notes
Winter	1-3	Lasts from the day after the Winter Solstice to the Spring Equinox
Spring	4-6	Spring Equinox to Summer Solstice
Summer	7-8	Summer Solstice to Fall Equinox
Autumn	9-10	Fall Equinox to 5-days prior to the Winter Solstice
Long Night	5-6 day celebration	Observed throughout the world. The Winter Solstice is marked until 6 am the following day

### GTT and The Conclave: A Fly in the Ointment

The Conclave, an aristocratic faction within gnomish society, has set themselves in opposition to Trade Authority policy, and one of their most successful gambits has been resistance to GTT. Though Twirligale, Alkhuzh, is the very birthplace of GTT, the Conclave ensures that all civil governance, court filings, and bureaucratic functions within the gnomish territory operate on Traditional Clan Council Timekeeping, a system so archaic, regional, and impenetrable that it requires manual conversion for every single legal interaction between trade officials and local authorities. Contracts arriving in Alkhuzh must be rewritten in ancestral time notation before receiving official seals. Court summons reference seasonal bell tolls and sun markers rather than the standardized Trade Quadrants. Trade Authority envoys are regularly handed municipal notices that mark events according to the angle of afternoon light on civic buildings rather than a simple numerical timestamp. Despite repeated appeals, GTT cannot be used for any civil governance functions within Alkhuzh, forcing trade officials to maintain dual time-keeping systems just to process legal paperwork. The official justification? *A declaration of civil independence from mercantile imposition*, a phrase dripping with entirely fictional separation between the civil government of Alkhuzh and the Trade Authority. In reality, it is an intentional act of bureaucratic obstruction—one designed solely to frustrate the Authority while remaining justifiable enough to prevent direct intervention.

### Gnomish Trade Time (GTT): The Global Clock That No One Actually Has to Understand

“Just as The Empire decoupled the calendar from the tyranny of midnight, so too have we liberated time from the tyranny of sunrise and sunset. Unless you live in Twirligale.”

— *Magnate Perry Goldtwinkle*, on the adoption of Gnomish Trade Time  
GTT was established by the Gnomish Trade Authority to solve an increasingly frustrating problem: merchants, diplomats, and travel logs all relied on wildly different regional time systems, causing endless confusion when coordinating across continents. The solution? A universal time-keeping system that allows local populations to remain oblivious to time-zone offsets while ensuring international consistency.

At its core, GTT is designed so that a local population does not need to know how far offset they are from GTT Prime Time—they only need to know what their local equivalent is.

### How GTT Works: Quadrants and Hours

The day is divided into four six-hour Trade Quadrants, each with an assigned economic function:

- TQ1 (00:00–05:59) – Pre-Trade: Quiet hours, preparation, early shipping schedules.
- TQ2 (06:00–11:59) – Prime Trade: The height of commercial activity, the standard "daytime work quadrant."
- TQ3 (12:00–17:59) – Ledgerflow: Banking, settlements, long-haul shipments reaching their destinations.
- TQ4 (18:00–23:59) – Post-Trade: Evening markets, social gatherings, night logistics.

Each quadrant is further divided into six hours, written as

TQ#.H# (e.g., TQ3.H4 = 16:00 GTT).

This means merchants in vastly different locations don't have to calculate their time zone offset in relation to the Prime Meridian—they simply operate on their own local reference. TQ2.H4 occurs at the same moment everywhere in the world, the fact that in one place it is local noon and in another it is local midnight makes no difference. Everyone knows when TQ2.H4 is and can plan accordingly.

### The Prime Meridian & Global Standardization

GTT's Prime Meridian is located in Twirligale, Alkhuzh, where the original Trade Authority headquarters defined the system.

GTT's 24-hour cycle is fixed to Twirligale Mean Time but does not enforce strict adherence beyond the quadrant structure.

The Assembly maintains a "Temporal Equivalency Desk" to reconcile the varied time-keeping and calendar systems, and releases an annual *Concordance of Shared Festivals and Nonbinding Celebrations*. It is widely circulated and immediately ignored.

## Language

### Overview

The Known World is a linguistic mosaic shaped by conquest, trade, isolation, and resilience. While Common serves as the lingua franca, its reach and form vary wildly across regions and peoples. High Elvish, once the language of imperial administration, remains dominant in education and governance, but its prestige is contested. Indigenous languages persist in pockets of cultural resistance, while alphabets travel farther than the tongues they once served.

Language	Script Used	Status & Distribution
Common	Dwarvish Alphabet	Lingua franca; widely taught but often simplified into "Trade Common" in rural areas
High Elvish	High Elvish Script	Prestige language; dominant in education, governance, and urban centers
Wood Elvish	High Elvish Script	Indigenous language; strong in Súsanni, less common elsewhere
Sea Elvish	High Elvish Script	Endangered; being replaced by High Elvish and Common
Dwarvish	Dwarvish Alphabet	Spoken language nearly extinct; script widely used for Common and other languages
Gnomish	Gnomish Script	Regionally strong; rarely used outside native lands
Halfling	Halfling Script	Regionally strong; rarely used outside native lands
Orcish	Dwarvish Alphabet	No native script; often transcribed using Dwarvish characters

### Regional Linguistic Profiles

- Hogenea: Fully bilingual in High Elvish and Common; education enforces fluency.
- Donbeg (Humans): Linguistic chaos. Rural areas dominated by indigenous dialects; Trade Common used on market days. Urban centers speak standardized Common.
- Simonea, Lionelii, Eponia: Outside cities, High Elvish is dominant; Common is rare in rural zones.
- Súsanni (Wood Elves): Wood Elvish is primary; Common is rare within the region but spoken by expatriates.
- Sea Elves: Indigenous language fading; High Elvish and Common increasingly common, especially among younger generations
- Gnomes & Halflings: Generally bilingual; deep rural areas may retain monolingual traditions.
- **Trade Common** is a simplified pidgin used for commerce, often stripped of grammar and nuance but nearly universally spoken

## Currency

While most trade in the Known World is conducted using standard-weight precious metal coins—minted in dozens of locations and accepted nearly everywhere— other currencies circulate almost as freely, if not as widely. Their legitimacy and fluid exchange are made possible by the ubiquitous presence of the Gnomish Trade Authority, which maintains neutrality and efficiency across borders. The Authority accepts virtually any form of currency from anyone, anywhere, converting and certifying values with bureaucratic precision and logistical grace.

### Arcane Currency: Lumen

Used by Simonea, Hoganea, Lionelii, and Eponia

Lumen (⌘) is a crystalline currency storing arcane energy. It can be used for trade or to power spells and magical items. Its value scales with the energy stored, making it both a financial and magical asset.

Denomination	Arcane Value (Spell Level)	Gold Equivalent	Notes
<b>Glint</b>	Flicker (cantrip spark)	0.6 gp (60c)	Minor transactions, ritual offerings
<b>Shard</b>	Stable charge (cantrip)	1.25 gp	Common among apprentices
<b>Half-Lumen</b>	Half standard charge	2.5 gp	Used in barter for enchanted goods
<b>Lumen (⌘)</b>	Full charge (cantrip/1st-level)	5 gp	Standard unit
<b>Solaris</b>	Mid-level enchantments	125 gp	Arcane contracts, licensing
<b>Regalis</b>	Battle magic	500 gp	Vault-grade currency
<b>Aurora</b>	Ritual-grade energy	2500 gp	Temple economies
<b>Celestis</b>	Near-divine charge	9000 gp	Interplanar diplomacy

### Elemental Currency: Salt

Used by Desmumhnachia (Sea Elves)

Salt is sacred and practical. Sea elves use calibrated weights of salt as currency, backed by vast salt vaults in coastal cities. Salt Notes (paper-backed certificates) are used for inland trade.

Denomination	Weight (lb)	Gold Equivalent	Notes
<b>Grain</b>	⅛ lb	0.25 gp (25c)	Street trade, minor services
<b>Pinch</b>	¼ lb	0.5 gp (50c)	Tavern and local market use
<b>Handweight</b>	2 lb	2 gp	Merchant exchanges
<b>Stone</b>	14 lb	10 gp	Bulk shipping contracts

### Commodity Currency: Grain

Used by the Halfling Republic of Sarahden

Grain-backed trade notes are issued against physical reserves of wheat, barley, and rye stored in fortified granaries. This system ensures stability and universal value

Denomination	Weight (lb)	Gold Equivalent	Notes
<b>Satchel</b>	1.5	0.25 gp (25c)	Daily transactions
<b>Grain Token</b>	Variable	~1.0 gp	Flexible unit; regional and foreign trade
<b>Bushel</b>	60	5–10 gp	Bulk trade; seasonal value fluctuation

## Religion

Religion in the Known World is not a monolith but a mosaic—an ever-shifting constellation of gods, spirits, and archetypes shaped by geography, ancestry, and personal experience. Every individual, village, and culture maintains its own pantheon, often populated by hyper-local deities: guardian spirits of rivers, ancestral demigods, or divine beings tied to specific trades, seasons, or historical events. These gods are real, named, and active in daily life. A fisherman may offer prayers to Ferdinand the Axolotl, guardian of a single bay, while a scholar communes with Drogbrezor the Devourer, patron of obsessive knowledge and ink-stained fingers.

Yet beneath this vibrant diversity lies a shared metaphysical understanding: all deities are masks worn by deeper, universal forces. Ferdinand is Ferdinand—but also an expression of *The Waters*, a primordial archetype recognized across cultures. Drogbrezor, despite his ominous name, is a facet of *The Scribe*, whose domain includes memory, language, and divine recordkeeping. These archetypes—The Flame, The Seed, The Balance, and others—form the spiritual grammar of the world, allowing disparate cultures to recognize common divine threads even when their gods seem alien to one another.

This system is formalized through the use of **Pantheon Marks**—glyphs carved into temples, shrines, and sacred texts that denote which archetype a local deity embodies. These marks, first codified in the legendary frieze carved by Annwylain Scrymgeour at the Temple of Simonea, allow clerics and pilgrims to navigate unfamiliar spiritual terrain. A wandering priest of Thoth may find solace in a temple to Drogbrezor upon seeing the mark of The Scribe etched above the door. In this way, religion becomes both personal and portable: rooted in local myth, yet legible across borders.

The result is a theological landscape that is fluid, fractal, and deeply relational. Disputes over divine identity are common, but rarely schismatic—most accept that truth wears many faces. Rituals often blend local tradition with archetypal invocation, and interfaith ceremonies are not only possible but commonplace. In the Known World, religion is less about dogma and more about resonance: the ability to recognize the divine in unfamiliar forms, and to honor the sacred wherever it chooses to dwell.

## Magic

In the Known World, magic is as much a part of daily life as weather or commerce. It is neither rare nor commonplace, but woven through the fabric of society in ways that most people learn to take for granted. Ships tack more boldly when a fair wind can be purchased from a dockside adept. Stonecutters consult geomancers before laying foundations. Temples bless their harvest feasts with rains called down by priests whose chants have been the same for centuries.

Magic is broadly divided into two great currents: the **arcane** and the **divine**. Arcane magic is the craft of learned manipulation—measured, studied, and refined in schools, towers, and dusty back rooms. Its practitioners think in diagrams and ratios, formulae and symbols. Divine magic flows instead from alignment with the archetypes of the universal pantheon. A cleric does not *learn* the Sun or the Scribe in the way an arcanist learns a spell; they inhabit those roles, shape themselves to fit the pattern, and in doing so, open the way for power to pass through them.

The trappings of these arts—prayers, runes, gestures, vestments—are as varied as the cultures that use them, but their variety is largely cosmetic. A coastal druid, a cathedral bishop, and an itinerant wizard might all calm a storm by different names, but the sea cares little for the story told over it. Philosophy and tradition shape the *path* a practitioner walks and the *reasons* they call upon magic, but they do not set the limits of what magic can do.

For most folk, the distinction between the currents matters less than reliability. The baker cares only that the oven-warming charm lasts through the morning, not whether it came from the Conclave's arcane colleges or a shrine to the Hearthkeeper. And so magic persists in its many guises—mysterious to some, meticulously catalogued to others—yet always present, another force to be bargained with, mastered, or endured.

## Travel

Travel in the Known World follows the rhythms of terrain, trade, and tide. Overland journeys are straightforward: if there's a road, you take it. Horses, wagons, and carriages remain the primary means of terrestrial movement, with inns and waystations dotting major routes. But the real arteries of civilization are maritime. Sea travel is opportunistic, seasonal, and deeply tied to the mercantile ambitions of the great powers.

### Maritime Routes

- **Port Capstar** in Sarahden is the beating heart of oceanic commerce, serving as the central hub for the **Trade Authority**.
  - Near-constant sailings run east-west between Port Capstar and the Elvish nations of the Western Continent.
  - **Celestial Concord** goods flow eastward—luxuries, magical reagents, rare metals.
  - **Trade Authority** goods move west—grain, textiles, industrial tools.

○ **Hollesary-Stoke** maintains regular routes:

- East to Port Capstar.
- West to **Stokeland**, forming a loop of cultural and commercial exchange.

Sea travel is “catch as you can”—passage depends on weather, cargo demand, and political mood. Smugglers, pilgrims, and diplomats often share decks.

**Overland Routes**

The primary land corridor runs between Twirligale in Alkhuzh and Rearsdale in Donbeg—a two-month trek one way, reserved for the bulkiest of bulk shipments. Caravans along this route are massive, state-sponsored, and surprisingly secure. The sheer impracticality of stealing 20 tons of iron ore or a wagonload of dried lumber makes them poor targets for bandits.

- Banditry is rare: As one caravan master put it, “What’s Lanoi the Lightfingered going to do with a bale of industrial flax?”
- Security is logistical, not martial: The caravans rely on scale, bureaucracy, and predictable schedules rather than armed escorts.
- Hazards are environmental: Mudslides, broken axles, and bureaucratic delays pose more risk than highwaymen..

**Education in the Known World**

**Overview**

Education in the Known World is decentralized, pragmatic, and deeply cultural. Most people learn through **trade schools, apprenticeships, or local Writ-Schools** sponsored by the University of Hogenea. Higher learning is available—but often politicized, mythologized, or fiercely regional.

**Formal Education**

Type	Description	Reach
<b>Trade Schools &amp; Apprenticeships</b>	The backbone of education. Skills passed through guilds, families, and itinerant instructors.	Universal
<b>Writ-Schools (University of Hogenea)</b>	Teaches Common, literacy, arithmetic, history, and basic science. Often the only formal schooling available.	Global
<b>Golden Temple Schools</b>	Martial, rhetorical, and theatrical training. Often tied to performance troupes or temple circuits.	Widespread
<b>Navigation Schools</b>	Elite training in cartography, astral drift, and sea lore. Stokeland and Desmumhnachia lead the field.	Regional elite
<b>Magical Academies</b>	Arcane education varies by culture. Elvish territories (Simonea, Lionelii) host the most prestigious.	Dense in Elvish lands
<b>National Universities</b>	Simonea, Lionelii, and Eponia maintain state-sponsored institutions with regional prestige.	National
<b>Azure Library Schools (Súsanni)</b>	Focused on librarianship, restoration, preservation, and curation. Often selective and ritualized.	Specialized
<b>University of Hogenea</b>	The largest and most comprehensive institution in the world. Self-declared arbiter of academic legitimacy.	Global, centralized

Example of *The Assembly's Office of Adventuring Concerns* early recruitment pamphlets (ca. 8900 IM). From the private collection of Don Osiris, on loan to the Hall of Civic Wonders.



# So you've decided to be an adventurer

Issued by the Assembly, Office of Adventuring Concerns

Form AO-0: Orientation Pamphlet (Second, revised, proudly unread edition)

## Orientation and scope

Welcome to a noble profession with regrettable casualty statistics. This handout provides nonbinding guidance, model procedures, and standardized forms intended to keep you alive, employed, and at least marginally insurable. Compliance is voluntary and strongly encouraged, especially by those who will later file Form AO-2 on your behalf.

- **Purpose:** Introduce baseline practices for parties operating within Assembly-observed jurisdictions.

- **Audience:** Aspirants, guild liaisons, quartermasters, and the unfortunate soul doing the paperwork.
- **Scope:** Contracts, permits, field safety, salvage rights, incident reporting, and recommended “first hooks.”

**Disclaimer:** The Assembly accepts no liability for loss of life, limb, or narrative dignity. See Footnote A.

## Paperwork and permits

You need fewer documents than you fear, more than you want, and exactly three that save your hide.

- **Form AO-1, writ of intent:** Registers your party name, members of record, operating region, and next of kin.
  - Contents: Sign-in roster, party symbol sketch, emergency preferences, “who speaks to officials.”
  - Benefit: Establishes party identity for escrow, bounties, and revival claims.
- **Form AO-3, loot disclosure & salvage claim:** Declares recovered goods by category (mundane, cursed, civic property, “don’t touch this”).
  - Benefit: Secures salvage rights and reduces fines for “accidental acquisition.”
- **Form AO-2, incident report:** Filed post-calamity.
  - Benefit: Activates relief funds, guild stipends, and “good faith” clauses when things go sideways.

Tip: Nonbinding means “binding when convenient to the magistrate.”

## Field operations

### Choose Your First Adventure:

- **BarrelHaven** — “Where the wild starts one street over!” Best for: Dungeon crawls, caravan guarding, ruin-delving.
- **Port Capstar** — “The World in One Harbour.” Best for: Maritime intrigue, smuggling, faction politics.
- **Avonden** — “By Honour’s Light.” Best for: Chivalric quests, tourneys, ritual ordeals.
- **Súsanni Fringe** — “Where the Trees Listen Back.” Best for: Exploration, metaphysical mysteries, eco-diplomacy.
- **The Fort** — “We Have a Code for That.” Best for: Mercenary intrigue, military ops.

Adventuring is logistics with dramatic timing. Standardize the boring parts so the exciting parts don't kill you.

- **Party roles:** Assign who does what before the screaming starts.
  - **Lead:** Final call in time-sensitive moments.
  - **Scout:** First eyes, first retreat.
  - **Quartermaster:** Tracks rations, torches, and “we had rope five minutes ago.”
  - **Scribe:** Maps, clues, and debts owed.
  - **Face:** Talks first to people with keys.
- **Signals:** Establish a panic word, a retreat word, and “freeze.”
  - **Panic:** Everyone protects the downed.
  - **Retreat:** No shame, lots of survivors.
  - **Freeze:** Statues lie; so do floors.

### Hazards and best practices

Most disasters are predictable; the rest are educational.

- **Locked doors and louder consequences:** If a door is locked, ask “Who locked it and why?” before applying solutions that announce your arrival.
  - Best practice: Knock, listen, test, wedge, then breach.
- **Curses and conditions:** Curses are lawsuits written by ghosts.
  - Best practice: Don't name things thrice, don't sign in blood, don't wear jewelry that whispers your childhood nickname.
- **Miasma, molds, and motes:** Air kills slower than teeth, but surer.
  - Best practice: Torch test for drafts, canary whistle for dead air, oil rags on faces when all else fails.
- **Bound entities:** Summoned help is leased help.
  - Best practice: Define task, term, and termination. No “and related duties.”

### Glossary and disclaimers

- **Adventurer, of record:** A person listed on AO-1, entitled to claims, blamed for incidents, and memorialized if necessary.
- **Assembly counter:** A window that pays late but pays. Accepts coin, contracts, and complaints.
- **Concordance:** The calendar of shared festivals and nonbinding celebrations. Binding when it helps the magistrate.
- **Good faith clause:** A phrase that scares liars and comforts nobody.

**Relic, civic:** An item that looks great in a hall and terrible in a pack. Usually heavy, occasionally haunted.

### Footnotes

- **Footnote A:** “Nonbinding” means the Assembly is very serious about it until you ask them to enforce it. Then it is a cultural treasure not to be meddled with by outsiders.
- **Footnote B:** The Office of Adventuring Concerns accepts no liability for loss of life, limb, or narrative dignity, including but not limited to irony, hubris, and poetic justice.
- **Footnote C:** If you read this pamphlet in full, you are already in the top 5% of survivability. Please share with someone louder than you..

# Wonders of the World

The Known World is scattered with marvels—remnants of lost ages, creations beyond human comprehension, and anomalies that defy explanation, but also wonders of nature, ingenuity, craft, and imagination. Some bear the weight of civilizations long gone, their makers absent but their handiwork enduring, others carry the traditions and industry of the modern world, still others lie dormant, awaiting the moment when history stirs once more, revealing truths concealed by time.

Whether built by hands ancient or modern, or shaped by forces unknown, each location holds a piece of the world's great, unspoken puzzle.

## The Actors

Towering thirty feet high atop five-foot pedestals, the statues known as The Actors stand in perpetual mystery. Hewn from pristine pink marble, their craftsmanship is beyond mortal skill—four figures, two men and two women, draped in simple loincloths and sandals, captured in perfect detail. One man holds a sword, the other a jug of wine. One woman grips a spear, while the other carries a theater tragedy mask. Yet their true enigma is movement without motion. Whenever unobserved, the statues shift poses, rearranging themselves into inexplicable configurations. Scholars have attempted to decode the pattern, but none can find meaning in their dance. They act out a silent performance, known only to themselves.

## Charity's Pendulum

Twin steel poles rise into the sky, nearly thirty feet apart, tapering to a narrow five-foot span at their peak. Suspended between them, a massive horizontal rod holds a thick iron chain, descending another seventy feet before terminating in a ten-foot-wide sphere.

The sphere swings endlessly, caught in a slow, deliberate rhythm. The locals treat it as a test of strength and precision, wagering on how high one might send it soaring with a single push. Some claim the pendulum moves oddly—its arc altering in ways beyond simple physics, as though it responds to unseen forces rather than sheer momentum.

## Annwylain's Frieze

*Where abstraction became architecture*



Encircling the dome of Simonea's central temple, Annwylain's Frieze is more than ornament—it is the moment elven cosmology found form. Carved in 1300 IM by the visionary glyphsmith Annwylain Scrymgeour, the frieze transformed diffuse spiritual concepts into a coherent symbolic language. Prior to its creation, divine intelligences were felt but not named, invoked but not codified. The frieze changed that.

Each glyph is a node in the Universal Pantheon, etched with fractal symmetry and harmonic ratios that scholars still debate. The frieze does not depict gods—it maps their relationships, their tensions, their echoes. It is said that walking the frieze's perimeter while reciting its glyphs in sequence induces a trance-like state, wherein the observer glimpses the divine not as entity, but as equation.

### Interpretive Disputes

Some claim the frieze is a calendar. Others, a metaphysical circuit. A few insist it's a warning. The University of Hoganea maintains a rotating panel of interpreters, none of whom agree, but all of whom are published.

### Cultural Reverence

Simonean rites often begin with a silent circuit of the frieze, a gesture of humility before interpretation. Visiting dignitaries are invited to “walk the glyphs,” though many decline, citing vertigo, philosophical discomfort, or fear of unwanted insight.

## Dragon Pass

Northwest of Donbeg, Dragon Pass is less a road than a threshold. From the southern approach, its weather-worn arches and precarious bridges rise like the ribs of some long dead titan, pointing the way into a horizon that swallows names and histories alike. Beyond the final span lies the uncharted sweep between Donbeg's borders and the pole — a realm spoken of in fragments, rumours, and fearful jokes.

For centuries, merchants, scholars, and wanderers tread its pathways, each step surrounded by the silent watch of ancient craftsmanship. But with the empire's fall, Dragon Pass faded into obscurity, its bridges now crumbling, its roads deserted save for those who dare chase echoes of a time when legends moved, and mountains took flight. *See also: Dragon Pass Event (Dragons & Dragonborn)*



## The Forest of Myths

*West Pole of the Known World*

The Forest of Myths does not conceal itself. It does not guard secrets or menace passersby. It simply resists interpretation. Nestled in the heart of Súsanni, this ancient sub-tropical broadleaf forest predates mapping, empire, and even myth itself. For over nine millennia, it has persisted untouched by architecture, agriculture, or consensus. Its boundaries are porous; its reality, less so. Most druidic orders treat it as sacred ground—not due to doctrine, but due to observation. Pilgrimages are made without sermon. No two returners describe the same trail. Many do not return at all.



### Geomantic Function

The Forest serves as the Known World's **West Pole**, a metaphysical axis for navigators attuned to ley currents. Specialized compasses—built using druidic resonance coils—always point toward it, regardless of surrounding topography, celestial shifts, or magnetic variance.

### Cultural Protocol

The outer groves are navigable. Informal trade paths connect ring-villages where herbalists, lore-keepers, and pilgrims gather. But entry into the deep forest is a social contract—signed not in law, but in implication. No one enters without intention. No one returns unchanged. Those who re-emerge often exhibit subtle shifts in syntax,

scent, or personality alignment—adjustments rarely diagnosable, often permanent.

## The Impudent Caldera

*Where the land softened, and the sky fell listening*



In the eastern grasslands, far from cities, roads, or reason to visit, the Impudent Caldera rests like a bowl forgotten by the sky. Measuring several kilometers across, it is widely understood to be the eroded remnant of an ancient meteor impact—a slow-worn scar now overgrown with wildflowers, deep grasses, and the sigh of wind that never seems to rise too far above conversation.

There is no volcanic residue. No arcane tether. Nothing outwardly magical at all.

And yet it is beautiful. Still. Wide. Quiet in the way a place can only be after listening for a very long time.

The Song That Drew a Star Legend holds that long ago, a bard came this way—not seeking fame, but silence. Beneath the night sky, they played their music alone, not to summon an audience, but because the tune refused to remain unwritten. The music rose into the stars, and one of them answered.

Rather than falling in fire, the star descended gently, folding its light into the earth. Where catastrophe might have roared, instead there was yielding. A crater formed not through violence, but through affection. Some say the star's heat never fully left. Others say the bard did.

Tradition of the Pilgrimage Among bardic traditions—especially those with ties to Hoganea—it is customary for graduates and master performers alike to make the Starfall Pilgrimage: a journey to the Impudent Caldera to perform a single original piece, alone, with no audience but sky and memory.

The rite is private. Unjudged. It is said that performing there is an offering—not to be heard, but to *exist*. The act of beauty given freely, without witness, save perhaps for the stars.

Practices include:

- Leaving a copy of the music beneath a stone or hanging it in a wind-shelter at the rim
- Never repeating the piece elsewhere
- Listening in silence for any echo not one's own

Though many who return report nothing but peace, others speak of echoes delayed by impossible intervals, harmonies they did not play, or dreams of warmth without light.

## The Azure Library

*“Where memory outpaces time.”*

The Azure Library is not merely a building—it is an epistemological monument. Founded in 1123, just 47 years after the elves' arrival in the Known World, it marks the moment when elven curiosity turned institutional. Its creation was not a declaration of completed understanding, but a solemn vow to never stop collecting it.

Constructed in Súsanni by High Elves but entrusted to Wood Elves for safekeeping, the Library reflects a rare moment of intra-elven humility. The High Elves, wary of their own political entanglements, chose their cousins for their reputation as apolitical stewards. This decision has shaped the Library's legacy: a place where truth is preserved, not wielded.

The Azure Library contains every known elven discovery, from grand cosmological treatises to marginalia scribbled on bark. But its ambition stretches beyond elven borders—it houses everything the elves could acquire from other cultures, often through trade, diplomacy, or quiet theft. Its archivists are relentless, sometimes maddeningly so, in their pursuit of completeness.

## The Lumen Mint of Trevediceath

*Where magic is made fungible*

In the crystalline heart of Trevediceath, Lionelii, lies the Lumen Mint—a monumental facility where currency and arcana converge. It is not merely a mint, but a city-scale arcano-industrial complex, built atop a braided ley-line fault known as the Thread of the Ecliptic, and tapped by one of the Known World’s only stable arcane reactors.

### The Process

Within this maze of channels, crucibles, and cooling arrays, the High Elven currency system—Lumen—is both forged and charged:

- Physical containers (“coins,” though often disc-shaped, prismatic, or tessellated) are precision-cast from alloys resistant to arcane degradation, each stamped with sigil-channels calibrated to receive quantified magical charge.
- These inert vessels then pass through the reactor chamber, where pure ley-energies are filtered, tuned, and injected into the vessels in precise denominations.

The final result is currency that is not just symbolic, but functionally magical—capable of powering minor enchantments, sustaining spellworks, or being traded like sovereign-backed arcana.

### Counterfeiting Is Culturally Laughable

Each Lumen carries a resonance fingerprint tied to the Mint’s reactor pulse signature. Attempts to forge coins without access to the original threading algorithm result in inert husks or unintentional spell detonation. Illicit attempts are often regarded as a form of avant-garde performance art.

### A City Built to Feed a Mint

Trevediceath itself has become structurally and economically inseparable from the Mint:

- Entire districts are dedicated to component manufacturing—delicate molds, resonance buffers, charged vitrines.
- Thousands of workers operate in shifts through assembly hives, shielding towers, and QC circles.

No good or service in Lionelii circulates without having passed through a coin that passed through this place.

### What Scholars Say

While some see the Lumen Mint as a triumph of regulation and elegance, others point to its aesthetic audacity: “What other civilization,” one Hoganean economist remarked, “would choose to anchor their economy to a spell continuously balanced above a fault-line?”

Official tours are infrequent, but images of the central chamber—where arcane current arcs like liquid lightning between suspended currency batches—are iconic throughout the Known World.



## The Stone Maze of Amice Wilson

*When the body walks what the soul cannot say*



In the heart of Avonden's capital stands a labyrinth of carved stone pathways, waist-high walls, and quiet thresholds—a structure neither sacred nor profane, but enduringly contemplative. Commissioned in IM 8845 by the kingdom's High Priestess Amice Wilson, the Stone Maze was envisioned as a terrestrial prayer-wheel: a tool of devotion designed not for chants or orations, but for walking.

### The Ritual Circuit

Pilgrims trace the winding corridors on foot, turning left and right through switchbacks and spirals. It is believed that the very geometry of the maze—the sequence of steps taken—traces sigils pleasing to the divine, forming runes not seen from above but felt through motion. At each turn, movement becomes meditation, and misstep becomes symbolic. There are no choices to make,

only paths to follow. A few declare the whole thing symbolic theater—but still walk it anyway, just in case.

### Sacred, Then Secular, Then Simply Present

Though constructed at the height of Avonden's theocratic era, the Stone Maze was never decommissioned when the monarchy formally separated from spiritual governance in IM 8860. Instead, it remained—too beautiful to erase, too serene to offend.

Today, it draws pilgrims and skeptics alike. Devotees walk it barefoot at dawn, while secular tourists sketch its shadows at noon. Some walk in silence. Others hum ancient hymns. A few leave tokens—ribbons, coins, fragments of forgotten prayers—at the center.

### Interpretive Disputes

Theologians continue to debate whether the maze “works.” The gods, characteristically, remain silent on the matter. But the structure is still kept in immaculate condition, overseen jointly by The Office of Public Wonder and a small group of volunteer custodians, most of whom identify as post-devotional liturgists.

## Three Sisters

Rising from the earth like sentinels of stone, The Three Sisters stand seventy-five feet high, their rough-hewn forms faintly resembling the silhouettes of women. Weathered by ages, their features remain indistinct—basic carvings that suggest, rather than define, the female form.

Though similar in atmosphere, the Three Sisters does not appear to be a Dragon Embassy. The three sisters have stood alone in silence for the length of recorded history. Their presence has always been felt rather than understood. The wind moves strangely here, carrying whispers when none speak. Some who camp within their shadow awaken feeling watched, and legends claim they serve as markers for something buried far beneath.



## The Treasure of Guarrazar

*The wealth of a forbidden dynasty*



Unearthed beneath the crumbling ruins of a fortified manor in the eastern provinces, the Treasure of Guarrazar is one of the most significant historical discoveries of the last two centuries. Hidden behind a false wall and sealed in sovereign silence for over a millennium, the vault held the entire political and ceremonial legacy of the Darkwater Dynasty—a rogue imperial bloodline purged from history during the final decades before the empire’s collapse.

The hoard contained mundane treasure: ingots of precious metals, uncut gemstones, and heirloom currency—proof of economic foresight, or at least contingency, regal paraphernalia: crown jewels, enameled scepters, ritual garb, and dynastic seals, all bearing the unmistakable iconography of the Darkwater house, and historical records: hundreds of meticulously preserved documents—genealogies, deeds, manifestos, legal writs—constructed to reaffirm the Darkwater Dynasty’s claim to the imperial throne in case of exile or return.

The initial discovery by a University of Hoganea excavation team in IM 8883 sent shockwaves through both academic and cultural institutions. While the vault’s existence had long been the subject of heretical speculation, its physical recovery forced a reevaluation of the final years of imperial rule—and elevated the Darkwater Dynasty from whispered aberration to undeniable legacy.

Public fascination surged once more during the centennial exhibition in IM 8983, when key artifacts toured the Known World in a traveling showcase curated by the Grand Archive. Heralded as a turning point in modern historiography, the exhibit reignited global interest in the twilight centuries of the empire and spawned entire academic disciplines devoted to "Imperial Null Studies."

Even now, the symbols of Darkwater legitimacy continue to surface in art, theater, and rebellion alike. Whether the Darkwater Dynasty were visionaries, usurpers, or saviors denied their hour, the Treasure of Guarrazar ensures they will not be forgotten.

## The Golden Temple

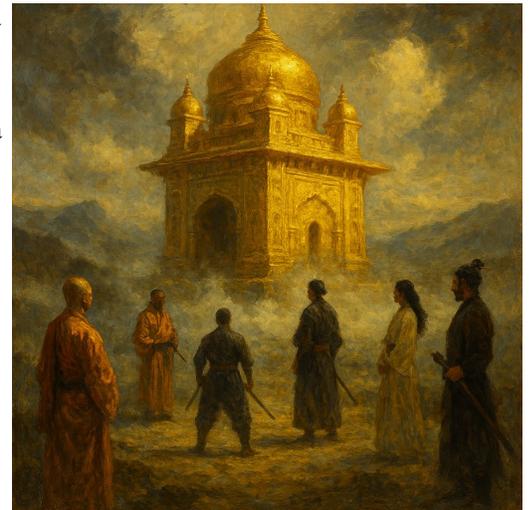
*Where readiness is remembered, and silence rings loudest*

The Golden Temple is not a fixed location, but a recurring metaphysical structure—a phenomenon that has appeared only twice in recorded history, and may do so again. Its first manifestation occurred in IM 2140, on the salt-blasted cliffs of Desmumhnachia, during a lull between invasions. Without warning or explanation, the Temple materialized: a gleaming chamber of polished gold and drifting mist, containing a number of martial arts manuals inscribed on exotic materials—dragon scale, meteoric iron, obsidian glass, and more. No guardians. No instructions. Only a single inscription:

*“When the planes and stars align again, we will return to find our champion.”*

Over the next six millennia, these manuals seeded hundreds of martial traditions across the Known World. Some evolved into national orders, others vanished in war or catastrophe. A few remain lost—sparking quests to recover forgotten techniques and restore broken lineages.

In IM 8830, the Temple reappeared in Avonden, a nation whose martial culture had quietly matured into a spiritual discipline. This time, the Temple was empty—its manuals gone, its chamber silent. Only a scarf remained, rumored to belong to one of the legendary founders. With no guidance, the inheritors of the Temple’s teachings convened the Golden Tournament, seeking to interpret its return.



**The Golden Temple**  
*Baccalorus the Elder*  
Oil on canvas, ca. 3749

When the tournament concluded—whether by victory or draw—the Temple’s massive gong rang once, unprovoked. Glowing celestial alignments etched themselves into the floor. The next morning, the Temple was gone. Those inside found themselves standing in an open field, the chamber vanished without trace. Whether this signaled success or failure is a matter of debate but the Golden Temple Schools continue to uphold their traditions, waiting for the temple’s return.

# Appendix 1: BarrelHaven—Gateway to the Wilds

Nestled at the edge of civilization, BarrelHaven is a frontier settlement where the wilds meet the last grasp of organized society. It's a hub for drifters, traders, explorers, and all manner of adventurers. The settlement exudes a rugged charm with its weather-worn buildings, cobblestone paths, and the faint smell of wood smoke in the air. The roads are packed dirt, hardened by heavy wagon traffic and footfalls, with patches of exposed stone where the earth has been worn away by time and trade. Every structure is built with function in mind, blending the aesthetic of frontier practicality with modifications suited to the town's economy of high-risk exchanges and hidden dealings.

## Districts

**Central District** (The Hollow Market & BarrelHaven Inn)

At the heart of the town is The Hollow Market, a chaotic blend of stalls, tents, and permanent trade buildings. Wooden frameworks stretch over vendor spaces, providing cover from sun and storm alike, while stacks of crates and barrels mark impromptu trading posts. Nearby stands The BarrelHaven Inn, a sprawling structure built from reinforced timber and salvaged stone. Its design is a fortress of hospitality—its broad front porch welcomes weary travelers, while its thick support beams suggest that the building can withstand a brawl or two. Inside, the warmth of a roaring hearth contrasts with the undercurrent of tense negotiations and whispered deals.



- **The BarrelHaven Inn** – This sprawling structure is the heart and soul of the settlement. Built from stout timber with a curved, barrel-like roof, its walls are adorned with relics, maps, and banners from adventurers who've passed through. The Inn is more than just a place to stay—it's a lifeline for the community. For as long as anyone can remember the Inn has been owned and operated by an orc matron the citizens refer to as Mother. Mother is the closest thing to authority in BarrelHaven. Within the inn, her word is law and even outside it few would risk being blacklisted over bad behavior. A few notable features include:
  - **Common Room:** Filled with mismatched chairs and sturdy tables, it serves as a tavern where tales are exchanged over mugs of frothy ale.
  - **General Store:** A corner of the Inn sells adventuring essentials like rations, potions, basic weapons, and even obscure trinkets from past quests.
  - **Clinic:** A small, cozy room in the back where injured travelers can receive first aid. Mother is skilled at patching wounds, though she claims she's "not a healer, just practical."
  - **Job Board:** A large wooden board by the front door brims with requests—everything from escorting merchants to hunting dangerous beasts.
- **The Hollow Market** – The town's central marketplace is a sprawling square where independent merchants sell provisions, arms, and supplies.
- **The Forge & Anvil** – Near the inn for quick access to adventurers, run by a cantankerous dwarf named Rork, the Forge & Anvil is the beating heart of BarrelHaven's blacksmithing needs. In addition to his practical wares, Rork is rumored to have a secret stash of rare, high-quality items he only sells to those who prove their worth.
- **G&G Fine Goods** – Owned by Godefridus and Godefroi, G&G Fine goods enjoys a prime location across the street from the Inn. G&G specialize in antiques and oddities and are always willing to look at any unidentified treasures brought to them by returning adventurers.

- **Lucky's Larder** – Along Main Street, with outdoor seating spilling into the road is a food stall run by a halfling named Marla "Lucky" Greaves. Marla serves up hearty meals on the cheap, often adding a dash of frontier wisdom along with her stew. Her shop doubles as a gathering spot for local gossip.
- **Halvek's Contraptions** – Run by a somewhat scattered gnomish inventor, Halvek's Contraptions is slightly off to one side of the main street, with a cluttered yard full of half-finished devices.

#### **Caravan Row (Trade & Transport)**

Since BarrelHaven lacks ports, its trade hinges entirely on caravans. A sector known as Caravan Row serves as the primary staging ground for merchants and adventurers alike. The area is lined with wagon yards, repair stations, and temporary encampments, where traders prepare their goods before departing into the unknown.

- **Trade Authority Outpost** – A squat, reinforced stone building tucked between wagon yards and livestock pens, marked with the gilded sigil of the Gnomish Trade Authority. Its steel-shuttered windows and guarded entrances reinforce the Authority's influence—those who wish to broker large-scale trade deals must pass through its doors.
- **Ironclad Encampment** – Just outside the main thoroughfare, a compact but fortified mercenary compound stands as a staging ground for contract negotiations. Well-armed fighters conduct drills in open courtyards, ensuring any merchant willing to pay has access to seasoned protection.

#### **Dustblade Saloon & Shadow District (Black-Market & Illicit Trade)**

Past the main thoroughfare lies a sector where the town's unspoken economy thrives. Beyond the saloon is the Shadow District, a collection of low-profile buildings, subterranean vaults, and concealed tunnels used for illicit exchanges. Many structures appear abandoned, but a knowing eye might spot movement behind shuttered windows or signs carved into alley walls marking safe passage for smugglers. BarrelHaven doesn't outwardly tolerate chaos, but in this sector, business thrives in whispers and unseen exchanges.

- **Dustblade Saloon** – The saloon is a gathering point for bounty hunters, smugglers, and rogue merchants. Its exterior is worn and unassuming, but inside, deals are struck over dark spirits and smoldering lanterns. The walls are plastered with bounty notices and trade agreements written in code, revealing a world of hidden contracts and shifting allegiances.
- **Celestial Concord Outpost** – Hidden within the deeper folds of the Shadow District, the Concord's trade outpost is a stark contrast to the rest of the town. Its polished basalt walls and enchanted lanterns radiate a faint astral glow, hinting at the powerful relics exchanged within. Those fortunate enough to gain entry step into a chamber lined with celestial star charts and arcane-infused textiles, bidding on artifacts said to hold the whispers of lost constellations.

# Appendix 2: Country Quick Reference

## Alkhuzh — Trade Authority capital

### Overview

- **Population:** ~1.9 million (M)
- **Government:** Plutocracy (Trade Authority)
- **Current leader:** Magnate Ilgabunny Hoistdigger
- **Dominant culture:** Gnomes



### Environment and resources

- **Natural geography:** Northern forests and grasslands trending cold; river and road networks.
- **Natural resources:** Alchemical salts; dyewoods; workable tin and copper; quarried roadstone; resin-rich conifers.

### Major industries

- **Core:** Merchant banking; commodity exchanges; warehousing and last-mile logistics; precision timekeeping devices.
- **Materials:** Timber, pitch/tar/resin refinement; metal tools and weapon blanks; softwood chips/pulp for papermaking.

### Notable locations

- **Twirligale:** Prime Meridian for gnomish trade time; rites of timekeeping.
- **The Ash Stair:** Dragon Embassy; interface between Trade Authority and draconic powers.

### Material culture

- **Tools and crafts:** Precision chronometers; sealed ledgers; resin-treated crates.
- **Palette and symbols:** Lacquer black, brass, ledger-green; clockwork and spiral-scale motifs.

### Trade

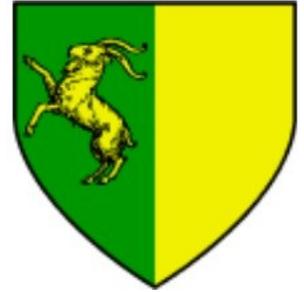
#### • Exports:

- Mast/beam timbers (conifer) → Stokeland, Sarahden, Desmumhnachia
- Pitch/tar/resin → Stokeland, Desmumhnachia
- Softwood chips/pulp (paper fiber) → Hogenea
- Metals/tools/weapon blanks → Sarahden, Stokeland, Hogenea
- Fine furs/smoked fish/winter textiles → southward

#### ○ Imports:

- Grain surplus ← Sarahden
- Warm-weather fabrics/luxuries ← Desmumhnachia, Sarahden
- Fruit/wine ← Sarahden, Hogenea

## Avonden — Timber bastion and horse country



### Overview

- **Population:** ~3.1 million (L)
- **Government:** Monarchy with strong sacred institutions
- **Current leader:** Queen Bella Barton
- **Dominant culture:** Human

### Environment and resources

- **Natural geography:** Temperate evergreen forests; western rough-scrub highlands; river log-drives.
- **Natural resources:** Evergreen resins; highland iron and exceptionally pure ore seams; limestone; elite horse breeds.

### Major industries

- **Core:** Heavy cavalry tack and armor; precision metallurgy; mast-length conifers; resin and pitch refinement.

### Notable locations

- **Stone Maze of Amice Wilson (Polpole):** Last site of the Golden Temple tournament (8830 IM).

### Material culture

- **Palette:** Spruce-bark red-browns, oak-gall black, heather mauves, bilberry blues, bog-myrtle yellow-greens.
- **Tools and goods:** Horse gear, long saws and peaveys, woollens, pitch-sealed storage.

### Trade

#### • Exports:

- Mast/beam timbers (conifer) → Stokeland, Sarahden, Desmumhnachia
- Pitch/tar/resin → Stokeland, Desmumhnachia
- High-tannin barks → Stokeland, Sarahden
- Softwood chips/pulp (paper fiber) → Hogenea
- Warhorse stock → Knightly orders

#### ○ Imports:

- Wool and worsted cloth ← Sarahden
- Luxury dyes/colorants/spices ← Súsanni, Simonea, Donbeg, Eponia
- Fine textiles (silk/Tideflax) ← Desmumhnachia, Donbeg NW
- Selected metalworks ← Donbeg NE

# Desmumhnachia — Tideflax thalassocracy



## Overview

- **Population:** ~0.9 million (S)
- **Government:** Monarchy
- **Current leader:** King Govaner Seasaidh
- **Dominant culture:** Sea Elves

## Environment and resources

- **Natural geography:** Sub-tropical coasts; broadleaf forests; near-shore tidal flats and reefs.
- **Natural resources:** Tideflax marine plant; salt; pearls; kelp and sea-herbs; coral limestone; fish oils.

## Major industries

- **Core:** Sloop-of-war shipwrighting; Tideflax sail-weaving and papermaking (finished goods); navigation schools; brine preservation.

## International relations

- **Alliances:** Long-standing allies with Hogenea; historical tension with Simonea; gratitude to Sarahden's ports from exile era; patrols global sea lanes.

## Notable locations

- **The Luminous Reef:** Bioluminescent coral responding to moon phases; sacred and scientific site.

## Material culture

- **Palette:** Deep-sea indigo; pearl-white; Tideflax green (licensed use only).

## Trade

### • Exports:

- Tideflax cloth (finished) → All continents
- Tideflax paper (finished) → Hogenea (prestige), Lionelii (leymaps)
- Silk → Avonden, Sarahden, Hogenea, Simonea
- Salted fish/whale oil/pearls/coral/minerals → Broad markets

### ○ Imports:

- Grain surplus ← Sarahden
- Mast/beam timbers (conifer) ← Avonden, Alkhuzh
- Lumen currency/arcane tools ← Lionelii
- Hardwoods/spices ← Eponia

## Donbeg — Equatorial super-region

### Overview

- **Population:** ~24 million (H)
- **Government:** Monarchy
- **Current leader:** King Peter Hollesary II
- **Dominant culture:** Human



### Natural geography and biomes

- **North:** Subtropical highlands with dwarven ruins
- **Northeast:** Rugged hills/mountains (mining heartland)
- **Northwest:** Mangroves (silk production; marsh trade)
- **Central:** Scrubland/savannah; western rift valley
- **South:** Arid plains to desert; caravan cultures

### Natural resources

- **Key:** Rare silks (mangrove worms); precious/industrial metals; desert dyes; salt; caravan goods; timber and stone

### Major industries

- **Core:** Heavy mining and metallurgy; silk harvesting and refinement; mercenary contracting and arbitration.

### International relations

- **Mercenary Registry:** Home of the Registry; only registered companies under Code protection.
- **Colonial legacy:** Close ties with former colonies Avonden and Stokeland.
- **Tensions:** Longstanding animosity with high elves of Simonea.

### Notable locations

- **The Fort:** HQ of the Ironclad Concord.
- **BarrelHaven:** Launch point for uncharted north expeditions.
- **Hollesary-Stoke:** Capital hub of trade and diplomacy.

### Material culture

- **Regional palettes:**
  - NW: Leaf green, river-silt tan, gold silk sheen
  - NE: Iron grey, copper red, malachite green
  - Central: Tawny grass, terracotta, sun-bone
  - South: Sand gold, indigo, pale rose
  - North: Moss green, slate, aged bronze

- **Exports:**

- Silk → Avonden, Sarahden, Hogenea, Simonea
- Reeds/bark (marsh mulberry-like; paper fiber) → Hogenea
- Metals/ore/worked metal goods → Sarahden, Stokeland, Hogenea
- Bast fibers (kenaf-like; paper fiber) → Hogenea
- Grain/meat/hides/stone → Regional markets
- Salt/incense/mounts → Caravan routes
- Timber/stone blocks/salvaged alloys → Builders, smiths

- **Imports:**

- Minimal external staples/luxuries; relies on internal cross-biome trade

# Eponia — Elephant cavalry dominion

## Overview

- **Population:** ~3.2 million (L)
- **Government:** Magocracy
- **Current leader:** Archwizard Teaganeirr Colman
- **Dominant culture:** High Elves



## Environment and resources

- **Natural geography:** Tropical jungle; northern tidal mangroves; coastal basalt and slate.
- **Natural resources:** Jungle elephants; fiber and hardwoods; quarry slate; aromatic resins; spices; medicinal plants.

## Major industries

- **Core:** Elephant breeding/training and barding; coastal quarrying; hardwood export; spices and medicinals.

## International relations

- **Status:** Quasi-independent colony of Simonea; aligned with the Celestial Concord; prefers regional influence.

## Notable features

- **Jungle elephants:** Heavy cavalry unmatched globally; magical training and ancestral bonding.

## Material culture

- **Palette:** Deep jungle green; gold-ochre; river-blue.

## Trade

### • Exports:

- Keel/jungle hardwoods → Stokeland, Sarahden
- Spices/medicinal botanicals → Avonden, Sarahden, Hogenea
- Carved ivory art pieces → Luxury markets
- Trained elephants → Select allies

### ○ Imports:

- Grain/preserved foods ← Sarahden
- Tideflax cordage (premium) ← Desmumhnachia
- Lumen currency/alloys ← Lionelii
- Cold-climate goods ← Alkhuzh

## Hogenea — Scholarly powerhouse of the plains

### Overview

- **Government:** Scholarly state centered on the University of Hogenea
- **Dominant culture:** Mixed; academic cosmopolis

### Environment and resources

- **Natural geography:** Rolling temperate grasslands; fertile river valleys; southeastern coastline.
- **Natural resources:** Cereals and legumes; pasture animals; reeds (insufficient for industrial scale); building clay and stone.

### Major industries

- **Core:** Publishing (guild-run presses); academic cartography and translation; bookbinding; grain agriculture.

### Material culture

- **Palette:** Cream/parchment-tan; ink black; deep sepia; sage green; wheat gold.
- **Tools and crafts:** Wool-felt book covers; sealed clay tablet backups; scholar's sashes in faculty colors.

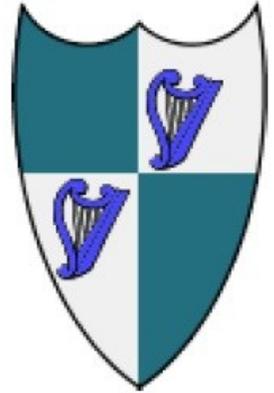
### Trade

#### • Exports:

- Grain surplus → Lionelii, Eponia, Alkhuzh, Desmumhnachia, Simonea
- Wool and scholarly goods (books, maps, translations) → Learning centers and courts

#### ○ Imports:

- Straw and rag stock (paper fiber) ← Sarahden
- Flax tow (paper fiber) ← Stokeland, Sarahden
- Softwood chips/pulp (paper fiber) ← Avonden, Alkhuzh
- Reeds/bark (marsh mulberry-like; paper fiber) ← Donbeg NW
- Bast fibers (kenaf/ramie-like; paper fiber) ← Donbeg South, Simonea
- Bark/bast fine sheets (premium paper fiber) ← Súsanni
- Tideflax paper (finished; prestige) ← Desmumhnachi



## Lionelii — Reactor-mint city-state

### Overview

- **Population:** ~3.3 million (L)
- **Government:** Magocracy (Arcane Council)
- **Current leader:** Archwizard Rozenwynaic Chattan
- **Dominant culture:** High Elves



### Environment and resources

- **Natural geography:** Sub-tropical broadleaf forests; fertile river valleys; eastern mangroves.
- **Natural resources:** Leyline nexus (Thread of the Ecliptic); resonance quartz.

### Major industries

- **Core:** Lumen currency casting and charging; arcano-infrastructure maintenance; banking for the Celestial Concord.

### International relations

- **Status:** Quasi-independent colony of Simonea; financial backbone of the Celestial Concord; low profile by design.

### Notable locations

- **Lumen Mint of Trevediceath:** City-scale arcano-industrial complex.

### Material culture

- **Palette:** Lumen gold, arcane white, mangrove green.

### Exports:

- Lumen currency and enchanted alloy billets → All trading polities
- High-grade arcane components → Arcane buyers

### Imports:

- Grain/perishables ← Sarahden
- Timber/resin/metals ← Alkhuzh
- Tideflax chart paper (finished) ← Desmumhnachia
- Arcane catalysts/reagents ← Simonea

## Mun'yaki (Confederated Clans) — Wayfinders of the interior

### Overview

- **Population:** ~0.9–1.4 million (S–M)
- **Government:** Clan federations with rotating elders' circles
- **Current leadership:** Seasonal council of wayfinders
- **Dominant culture:** Human (nomadic)

### Environment and resources

- **Natural geography:** Steppe corridors, river oases, and seasonal wetlands.
- **Natural resources:** Papyrus reeds; grazing herds (goat, horse); hides; gums and resins; clay and mica for inks.

### Major industries

- **Core:** Light cavalry/scouting; papermaking (papyrus); leatherwork; mobile kilns; caravan trade of herbs and dyes.

### International Relations

- **Posture:** Quiet trade with Sarahden and Alkhuzh; deliberate opacity; limited formal diplomacy.

### Notable locations

- **Dragon Pass:** Dragon-made gap finished by dwarven masons.
- **The Actors:** Four pink-marble statues that shift when unobserved.

### Material culture

- **Palette:** Papyrus green, saddle brown, dust white, ink black.

### Trade

- **Notes:** Local and regional papyrus exchange;



## Sarahden — Global granary

### Overview

- **Population:** ~2.0 million (M)
- **Government:** Parliamentary democracy
- **Current leader:** Prime Minister Fulke Howard
- **Dominant culture:** Halflings



### Environment and resources

- **Natural geography:** Temperate coasts to eastern foothills; steady rivers and wind corridors.
- **Natural resources:** Fertile loam; staple grains; flax and hops; navigable waterways.

### Major industries

- **Core:** Grain agriculture and milling; irrigation works; brewing/preserves; granary-backed finance.

### Notable locations

- **Port Capstar:** Trade Authority port; maritime logistics hub for agricultural exports.

### Material culture

- **Palette:** Woad blue; madder red; walnut brown; goldenrod yellow; undyed wool; coastal purple (rare).
- **Tools and crafts:** Shears, carding combs, drop spindles; fulling hammers; looms; tenter frames.

### Trade

#### • Exports:

- Wool and worsted cloth → Avonden, Hogenea, Alkhuzh
- Grain surplus → Lionelii, Eponia, Alkhuzh, Desmumhnachia, Simonea
- Rag stock/straw/flax tow (paper fiber) → Hogenea
- Wool-felt goods; dairy/salted mutton → Regional buyers

#### ○ Imports:

- Mast/beam timbers (conifer) ← Avonden, Alkhuzh
- Keel hardwoods ← Eponia, Súsanni
- Metals/ore/tools ← Donbeg NE, Alkhuzh
- Luxury dyes/colorants/spices ← Súsanni, Simonea, Donbeg, Desmumhnachia, Eponia

## Simonea — Herbal and arcane heartland



### Overview

- **Population:** ~6.8 million (XL)
- **Government:** Magocracy (Arcane Council)
- **Current leader:** Archwizard Pascowert Eimil
- **Dominant culture:** High Elves

### Environment and resources

- **Natural geography:** South temperate grasslands; central subtropical forests and rivers; northern tropical jungle.
- **Natural resources:** Arcane reagents; rare inks/dyes; fine clays; crystal-lattice quartz.

### Major industries

- **Core:** Enchanted textiles; ritual bureaucracy; academic publishing; celestial instruments; licensed spellworks.

### International relations

- **Role:** Founding member of the Celestial Concord; modern leverage via economics and diplomacy; strained relations with Desmumhnachia and Hogenea historically.

### Notable locations

- **Farmlands of Witches (South):** Global supplier of magical botanicals and spell components.

### Material culture

- **Palette:** Deep green; amethyst; amber-gold.
- **Tools and crafts:** Herb presses; infusion stills; ward-woven baskets; botanical inks.

### Trade

- **Exports:**
  - Magical botanicals/tinctures → Both continents
  - Bast fibers (ramie/kenaf-like; paper fiber) → Hogenea
  - Waterproof herbal varnishes → Desmumhnachia
  - Elephant-safe tonics/repellents → Eponia
  - Hardwood/exotic fruit/spices → Northern buyers
- **Imports:**
  - Luxury Tideflax cloth ← Desmumhnachia
  - Lumen coinage ← Lionelii
  - Preserved foods ← Sarahden
  - Siege timber/cold-weather medicinals ← Alkhuzh

## Stokeland — Maritime manufacturers

### Overview

- **Population:** ~3.4 million (L)
- **Government:** Monarchy
- **Current leader:** Queen Katherine Morris
- **Dominant culture:** Human



### Environment and resources

- **Natural geography:** Temperate forests and long coastline; copper and silica sands.
- **Natural resources:** Ship-timber; pitch/tar; coastal fisheries; workable copper; fine sands.

### Major industries

- **Core:** Shipbuilding/repair; convoy logistics; navigation tools and glassmaking; coastal trade hubs.

### International relations

- **History:** Former Donbeg colony; independence after the Two-Hundred Year War; dynastic bond with Avonden; selective humanitarian interventions.

### Notable features

- **Shipwright prestige:** Durable, elegant, logistically efficient hulls.

### Material culture

- **Palette:** Walnut brown; madder red; woad blue; goldenrod; orchil purple; tar black; sea-grey.

### Trade

#### • Exports:

- Hulls and shipwrighting → All coastal buyers
- Flax tow (paper fiber) → Hogenea

#### ○ Imports:

- Mast/beam timbers (conifer) ← Avonden, Alkhuzh
- Keel hardwoods ← Eponia, Súsanni
- Pitch/tar/resin ← Avonden, Alkhuzh
- Luxury dyes/colorants ← Súsanni, Simonea, Donbeg, Desmumhnachia
- Metals/tools/blanks ← Donbeg NE, Alkhuzh

# Súsanni — Wood-elf deep-canopy economy

## Overview

- **Population:** ~2.1 million (M)
- **Government:** Druidic council
- **Current leader:** Archdruid Evanaed Gandw
- **Dominant culture:** Wood Elves



## Environment and resources

- **Natural geography:** Vast tropical broadleaf forest; river labyrinths; living architecture.
- **Natural resources:** Sacred timber; medicinal herbs; resins/gums; freshwater springs; enchanted wood; dyewoods.

## Major industries

- **Core:** Alchemical medicine; selective timbercraft; geomancy consulting; ritual calibration services.

## International relations

- **Role:** Tempering voice in elven councils; environmental diplomacy; participates in the Celestial Concord via logistics only.

## Notable locations

- **Azure Library:** Sacred archive and living research institution.
- **Forest of Myths (adjacent):** West-pole ley energy source; navigational anchor.

## Material culture

- **Palette:** Forest green; leaf yellow; dyewood crimson; logwood purple; earth brown.
- **Tools and crafts:** Vine-woven rope; resin-sealed containers; bark-cloth; carved instruments and masks.

## Trade

### • Exports:

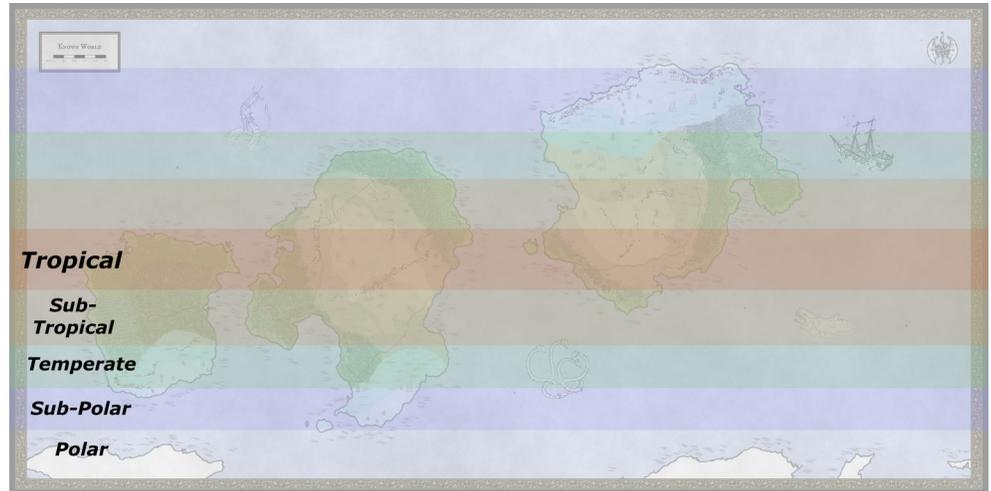
- Keel/select hardwoods → Stokeland, Sarahden
- Rare dyes/colorants → Stokeland, Sarahden, Avonden, Hogenea
- Medicinal botanicals/resin incenses → Arcane/apothecary markets
- Bark/bast fine sheets (paper fiber; premium) → Hogenea
- Ornamental feathers (quota-bound) → Prestige buyers

### ○ Imports:

- Metal tools/weapons ← Donbeg NE, Alkhuzh
- Grain surplus ← Sarahden
- Arcane goods ← Lionelii
- Tideflax cloth (elite use) ← Desmumhnachia

# Appendix 5: Ecology of the Known World

The Known World spans diverse climate zones, ranging from equatorial rainforests to frigid polar expanses. Near the equator, expect dense, humid jungles with high rainfall and warm temperatures year-round. As one moves into the subtropical belt, savannas and dry woodlands take over, with seasonal shifts between wet and arid conditions. The temperate regions, further north and south, offer mixed forests and fertile plains, characterized by four distinct seasons with moderate temperatures. Beyond these lie the boreal forests and tundra, where cold, harsh winters dominate, and vegetation becomes sparse. At the poles, ice sheets and frozen wastelands prevail, with temperatures plunging well below freezing. The ocean currents play a crucial role in shaping coastal climates. Warm currents originating in tropical waters push toward the poles, tempering the shores, while cold polar currents sink back toward the equator, maintaining the delicate balance of marine temperatures. The prevailing wind direction—east to west—drives weather systems across continents and fuels oceanic gyres, influencing trade routes and storm patterns.



## Geographic & Orographic Effects On the Central Continent

**Mountain Range & Rain Shadow:** A prominent mountain range stretches from roughly midway along the eastern coast to the southwestern coast of the Central Continent. This range forces moist air to rise along its windward (southern) slopes, releasing most of its moisture. Consequently, the leeward (northern) side is left with dry, arid conditions—a classic rain shadow effect.

### Prevailing Winds

**Primary East-to-West Flow:** The dominant wind direction is from east to west. As these easterly winds cross over the moist coastal and lowland areas, they saturate the windward slopes with rain. This same pattern, however, means that by the time the air passes over the mountains, much of its moisture has been depleted, reinforcing dry conditions on the other side.

**Regional Variations:** In more temperate or sub-polar parts of the continent, especially along the southern coast, winds can shift to westerly (west-to-east) patterns. This shift plays a key role in driving different ocean current directions along the coast (explained below).

### Ocean Currents

**Cold North-to-South Current (Eastern Coast):** Along the eastern coast, a cold current flows from polar regions north-to-south. This current cools the adjacent coastal areas, suppressing evaporation and intensifying arid conditions inland. Its cooling effect works in tandem with the rain shadow effect seen on the northern side of the mountains.

**West-to-East Current (Southern Coast):** Despite the prevailing east-to-west winds in many inland areas, subtropical to sub-polar conditions along the southern coast result in a west-to-east current. Driven largely by regional westerlies and the dynamics of global gyres, this current helps keep southern coastal regions more temperate and moist, fostering lush biomes.

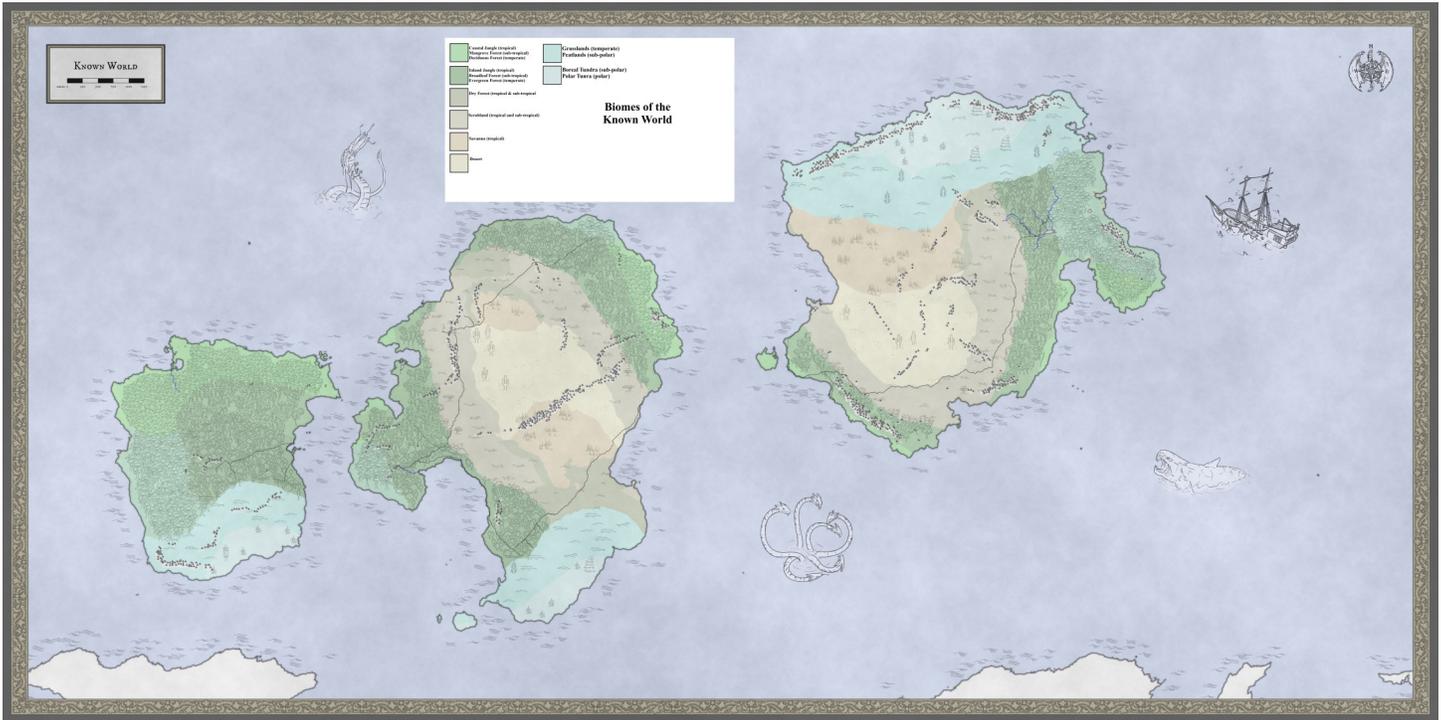
**Influence on Navigation & Trade Sailing Dynamics:** Ships must navigate a fascinating interplay of forces. For example, if a vessel sails west-to-east along the southern coast, it benefits from the west-to-east current, but it might still face opposing easterly winds if the regional system shifts. Conversely, voyages aligned with both favorable winds and currents are far easier and faster, which directly influences trade routes and naval strategies.

### Integrated Environmental Impact

The combined effects of the mountain-induced rain shadow, the prevailing east-to-west winds, and the dual ocean current systems produce a regionally diverse climate:

**Northern Interior:** Receives little moisture after the air loses its humidity over the mountains, resulting in arid or semi-arid landscapes.

**Southern Lands & Coast:** Enjoy a richer, more humid environment—thanks to the onshore moisture release on the windward slopes and the warming, moist conditions fostered by the west-to-east ocean current.



## BIOMES

### Boreal Tundra (Sub-Polar)

In the sub-polar boreal tundra, the environment is harsh and windswept, with a short growing season. The flora is low-lying—comprising hardy grasses, mosses, lichens, and dwarf shrubs that can survive on permafrost soils. Fauna here include small mammals such as lemmings, arctic hares, and migratory birds that temporarily inhabit the area in summer, along with predators like the arctic fox. The climate is marked by cool, brief summers and long, very cold winters with minimal precipitation, mostly falling as snow.

### Broadleaf Forest (Temperate & Sub-tropical)

Broadleaf forests are dominated by trees with expansive, broad leaves that may stay green year-round or exhibit seasonal changes. These forests offer a less dense canopy than jungles, with ample light reaching the forest floor for a complex understory of shrubs and wildflowers. Inhabitants include various birds, small mammals, and insects. Mild to warm temperatures with moderate, well-distributed rainfall define this biome's warm temperate/subtropical climate.

The climate is typically mild and moist—cool, damp winters and moderate summers with regular light precipitation—typical of temperate zones where winters are not excessively harsh.

### Coastal Jungle (Tropical)

In a tropical coastal jungle, towering evergreen trees form a dense canopy interlaced with vines, epiphytes, and buttressed trunks. The fauna is diverse—colorful birds, primates, amphibians, and reptiles thrive amid the lush undergrowth. Ambient temperatures usually range from 25–30°C, with high humidity and frequent, heavy rains (often intensified during monsoons or tropical storms). This biome is characteristic of the tropical climate zone adjacent to a warm ocean.



### **Deciduous Forest (Temperate)**

Temperate deciduous forests display a striking seasonal cycle. Oaks, maples, birches, and other broadleaf trees dominate during warm, sunlit summers before shedding their leaves in crisp autumns. The understory bursts into wildflowers in spring, supporting deer, bears, squirrels, and a range of bird species. With cold winters, warm summers, and well-distributed precipitation throughout the year, these forests are emblematic of the temperate climate zone.

### **Desert (Arid)**

Deserts are defined by their extremely low precipitation and dramatic temperature swings. Vegetation is sparse and typically consists of cacti, succulents, and other drought-resistant shrubs that conserve water efficiently. Fauna are specialized for survival under these conditions—small reptiles, mammals, and birds that are active during cooler periods. Daytime temperatures can soar well above 40°C, while nights can be cool, all within a distinctly arid climate zone.

### **Dry Forest (Tropical & Sub-Tropical)**

These forests occur in regions that experience a pronounced dry season along with a brief, intense rainy period. The flora comprises drought-tolerant trees and shrubs—often deciduous, like certain acacias or hardwoods—that shed leaves during the dry spell. Fauna include animals adept at seasonal scarcity, such as certain primates, birds, and reptiles. With consistently warm temperatures and alternating periods of water abundance and scarcity, dry forests are typical of tropical and sub-tropical regions.

### **Evergreen Forest (Temperate)**

Temperate evergreen forests are marked by coniferous trees like pines, firs, and spruces that keep their foliage year-round. These forests provide consistent cover for fauna such as deer, owls, and various small mammals, along with countless insects. The climate is typically mild and moist—cool, damp winters and moderate summers with regular light precipitation—typical of temperate zones where winters are not excessively harsh.

### **Grasslands (Temperate)**

Temperate grasslands, often referred to as prairies or steppes, are expansive regions dominated by grasses and scattered wildflowers with very few trees. Rich soils support large grazing herbivores (like bison or antelope) and their predators (such as wolves), along with abundant insects and small mammals. The climate features hot summers, cold winters, and moderate rainfall, with seasonal droughts and periodic fires playing a crucial role in maintaining this open ecosystem typical of the temperate zone.

### **Inland Jungle (Tropical)**

Far from the coast, tropical inland jungles are characterized by an almost impenetrable canopy formed by towering trees such as kapok and ceiba, with a tangled mid-level of lianas, ferns, and orchids. This hyper-humid, high-rainfall environment supports a dazzling array of fauna—from large mammals like jaguars and tapirs to countless insects, birds, and amphibians. The region is perpetually hot (around 26–32°C) with daily, rejuvenating rains, placing it firmly in the tropical climate zone.

### **Mangrove Forest (Sub-Tropical)**

Found along sub-tropical coastlines, mangrove forests are dominated by salt-tolerant trees with intricate aerial roots that tangle above brackish water. The ecosystem supports fish, crabs, waterbirds, and reptiles using these natural nurseries. The climate here is warm and humid, with mild winters and periodic tidal flooding, making it ideal for regions in the sub-tropical zone where seasonal rains and coastal influences prevail.

### **Peatlands (Sub-Polar)**

Peatlands, common in sub-polar regions, are waterlogged, acidic landscapes where plant material decomposes slowly, forming deep layers of peat. The flora is generally sparse, with sphagnum moss, sedges, and specially adapted shrubs prevailing. Fauna includes a variety of insects, amphibians, and patchily distributed birds, with larger mammals being rare. The climate is cool and damp, with long, cold winters and short, moist summers, fostering slow decomposition and unique ecological processes.



### **Polar-Tundra (Polar)**

Dominating the polar zone, the polar-tundra is an extremely austere environment where only the hardiest forms of life persist. Vegetation is minimal—limited to lichens, mosses, and low-growing, dwarf shrubs that eke out an existence on frozen, nutrient-poor soils. Fauna include specialized species such as polar bears (in coastal fringes), arctic hares, and migratory birds that utilize the fleeting summer. This biome endures bitterly cold temperatures year-round, with long periods of darkness, exceptionally low precipitation, and an almost perpetually frozen landscape.

### **Scrubland (Tropical & Sub-Tropical)**

Scrublands consist of open, low-growing vegetation—hardy shrubs, scattered small trees, and succulents—that are adapted to arid conditions. The biome supports fauna such as reptiles, small mammals, and birds that thrive in open, windy, and often sun-baked spaces. Predominantly found in tropical and sub-tropical regions, the climate here is hot with prolonged dry periods interspersed by brief, sometimes heavy, rainfalls.