

ATLAS OF MYTHIKA

THE THREE CITIES

GLORIOUS BASTIONS OF CIVILIZATION



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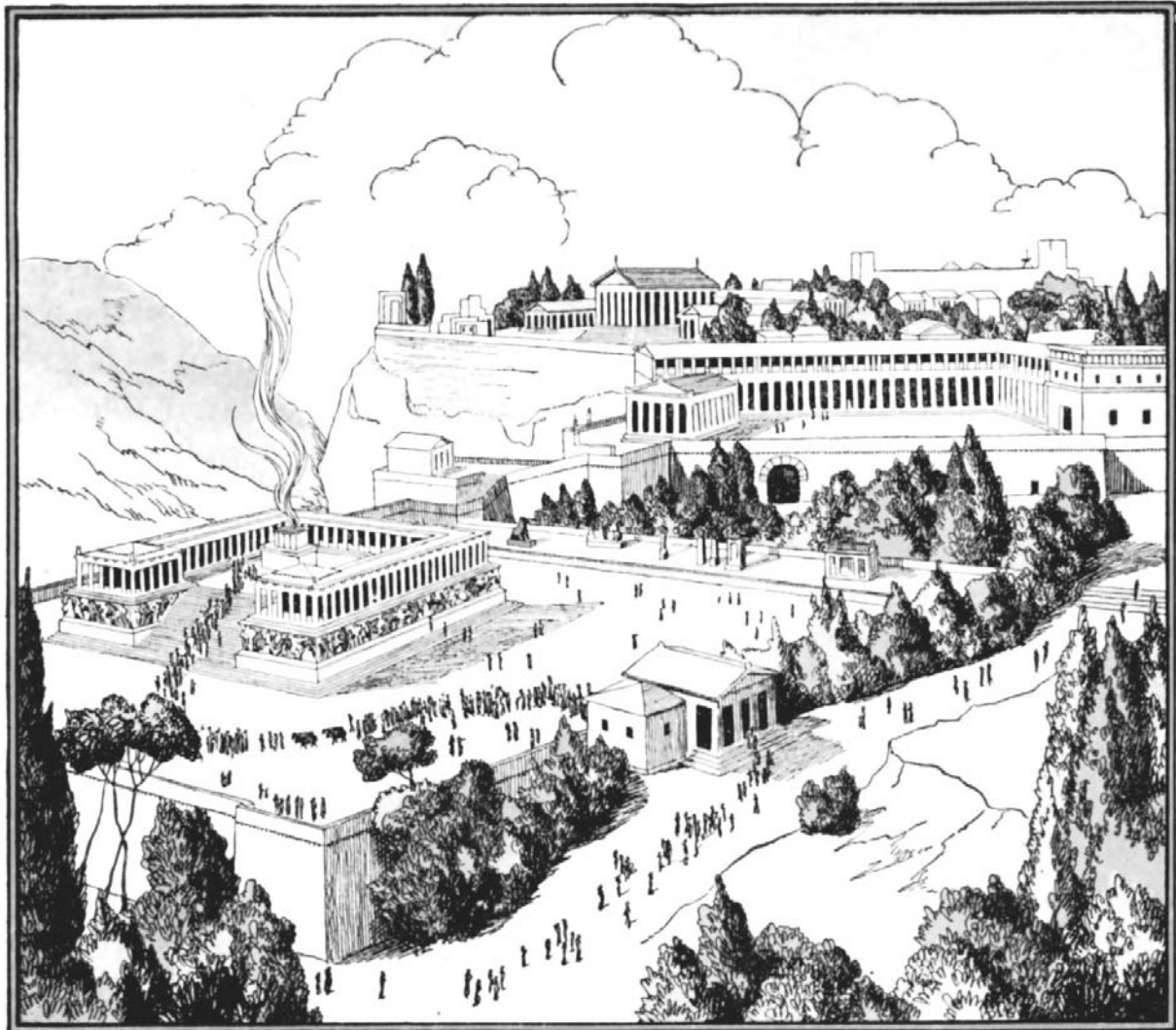
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ATLAS OF MYTHIKA

THE THREE CITIES

Glorious Bastions of Civilization in a Perilous World



“ (...) this rich and civilized coastal country is divided into three independent (and rival) city-states: Thena, Heraklia and Argos. Each of these city-states is a major political power with its own culture, economy and armed forces. In the past, the strong rivalry of the Three Cities has caused several wars but they have been in peace for more than 100 years now, thanks to the efforts of the Thenan monarchs...”

Maze Masters Guide (p 8)

The Three Cities

This issue, we take a closer look at the glorious Three Cities: Argos, Heraklia and Thena, homes of many *Mazes & Minotaurs* heroes (well, at least the civilized ones). But fear not, gentle reader! We shall not inflict on you lengthy, pseudo-scholarly exposés full of superfluous facts, this article presents each city-state in a practical, no-nonsense, player-friendly manner, using the following format:

Cultural Overview

A short presentation of the city's cultural identity, including its patron deities.

Current Affairs

The present-day political situation (including, of course, the current monarch) ; for the purposes of this article, *'present-day'* means *circa* the year 340 of the Age of Heroes.

Founding Myth

How the city came to be.

Places of Interest

The city's most famous sites.

Notable Personages

The local celebrities.

Before we detail each city's specific profile, let us examine a few common, basic facts about the culture and society of the Three Cities:

Rulership

Each of the Three Cities is an independent state, ruled by its own king.

The Nobles of each City belong to extended families known as the Great Houses, which assist the king in the rulership, administration and defense of the state. Note that the city of Thena has recently become an exception to this long-standing political tradition, as detailed in its description below.

The successor of a king is usually his eldest son – unless the monarch selects another heir to the throne in his family or among the local aristocracy. When a king dies without a designated heir, the successor is usually elected by (and chosen from) the local Nobles (which may, of course, cause all sorts of power struggles and family feuds).

Population

The city-state as a whole includes the City itself as well as many smaller towns, villages etc. The inhabitants of a City are known as its citizens, a broad denomination which encompasses common citizens as well as local nobles but obviously excludes slaves, transients etc.

Each City is a major political, commercial and cultural center, with an intra muros population of approximately 50,000 citizens (counting women, but excluding children and slaves). As an element of comparison, fourth century BC Athens had a population of around 30.000 male citizens.

Over the centuries, each of the Three Cities has also established various colonies outside its original territory. Most of these colonies are located on small islands of the Middle Sea ; the farthest ones can be found on the northern Charybdian shores. Such settlements (which are beyond the scope of this article) are a testimony of the Cities' cultural, economic and military vigor.

Culture & Religion

The Three Cities share a common language (Minean) and cultural heritage, which is very similar to that of legendary Greece as shown in movies like *Jason and the Argonauts* and *Clash of the Titans* (as if you didn't know that...).

While all Olympian deities are worshipped and honored in the Three Cities, each city-state has two or three divine protectors, who are especially revered by the local population and nobility.

These gods or goddesses usually played an important part in the ancient history of the city, or even in its foundation. The high priests of these deities usually wield great political influence, often acting as the king's advisors. In the Three Cities, temples are places of spiritual *and* temporal power.

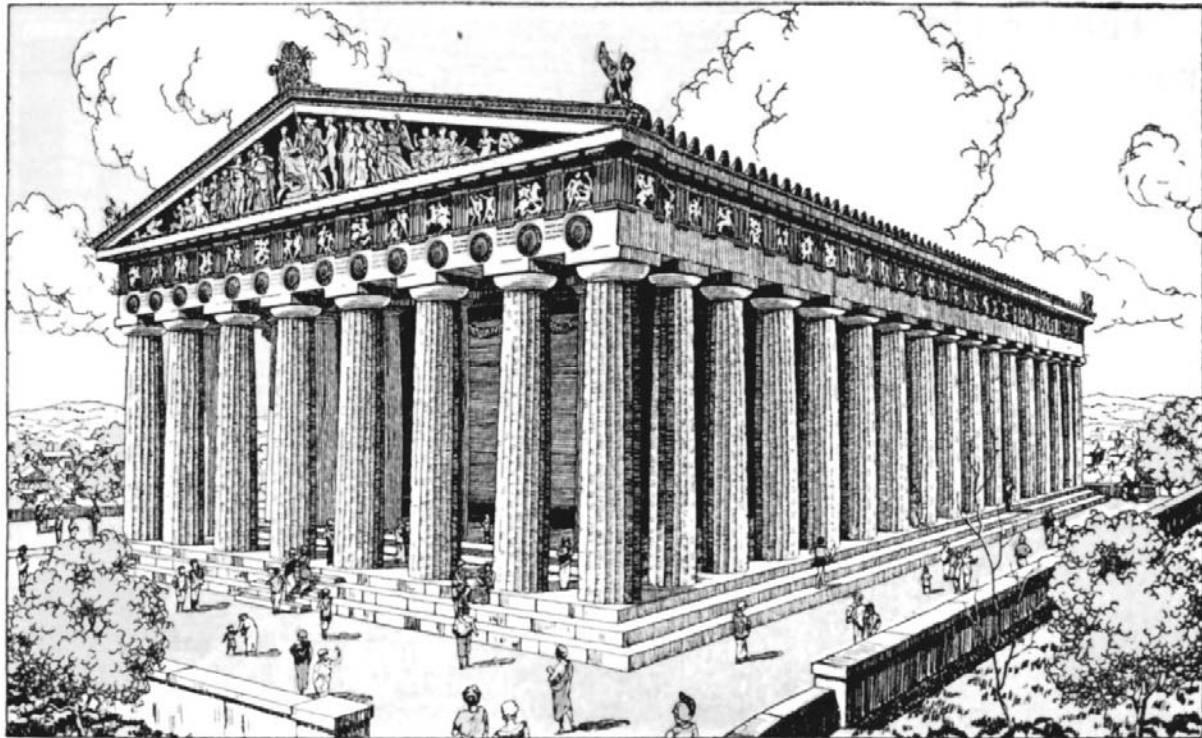
Laws & Customs

Warning: before you read the next two paragraphs, please keep in mind that there is NO such thing as *Political Correctness in the world of Mythika* – no, even the *Philosophers haven't invented that yet*.

While each of the Three Cities has its own set of laws, all their institutions are based on the same set of ancestral laws, known as the Minean Law.

Under Minean Law, male citizens are known as « free men » ; as far as law is concerned, women and children are not considered « free » and are placed under the authority of their father (or his heirs) or husband (for married women), unless they become Priestesses. This, of course, does not apply to foreign women – such as the dauntless Amazons, who tend to see Minean Law as just another typical example of blatant phallocracy.

Slavery is perfectly legal in the Three Cities – it is an accepted and essential component of their social system, cultural ethics and economic prosperity. That being said, slaves in the Three Cities (and in Seriphos) are treated with much more humanity than anywhere else in Mythika. Speaking of this, the only people in Mythika who do not practice slavery are Centaurs, to whom personal freedom is sacred.



The Athenon, the greatest temple ever built for Athena, on the Thenan Akropolis

Thena the Golden

Cultural Overview

As befits to a city dedicated to the goddess Athena, Thena is a true center of civilization, learning and art. It is also a very well-defended city-state, with one of the finest armies in all Mythika. The favorite color of Thenan Nobles is gold – the color of light and grandeur. Their favorite patron deities are Zeus, Athena, and Apollo.

Current Affairs

For the last fifteen years, Thena has been living an unprecedented political experience, at the initiative (and under the protection) of its current monarch, **King Theseos**, a hero of legendary stature... and a very atypical ruler.

During his early years of adventuring, Theseos had a reputation as a very ambitious and merciless warrior. Yet, when he was crowned after the death of his father King Aegeus, Theseos soon made himself known as a very liberal and bold ruler often favoring the interests of the common people over those of the local aristocracy.

Three years after his coronation, Theseos did the unthinkable: he abdicated most of his royal charges (except for the leadership of Thena's army) and withdrew most of the authority of the local Nobles, leaving the reins of political power to the free citizens of Thena...

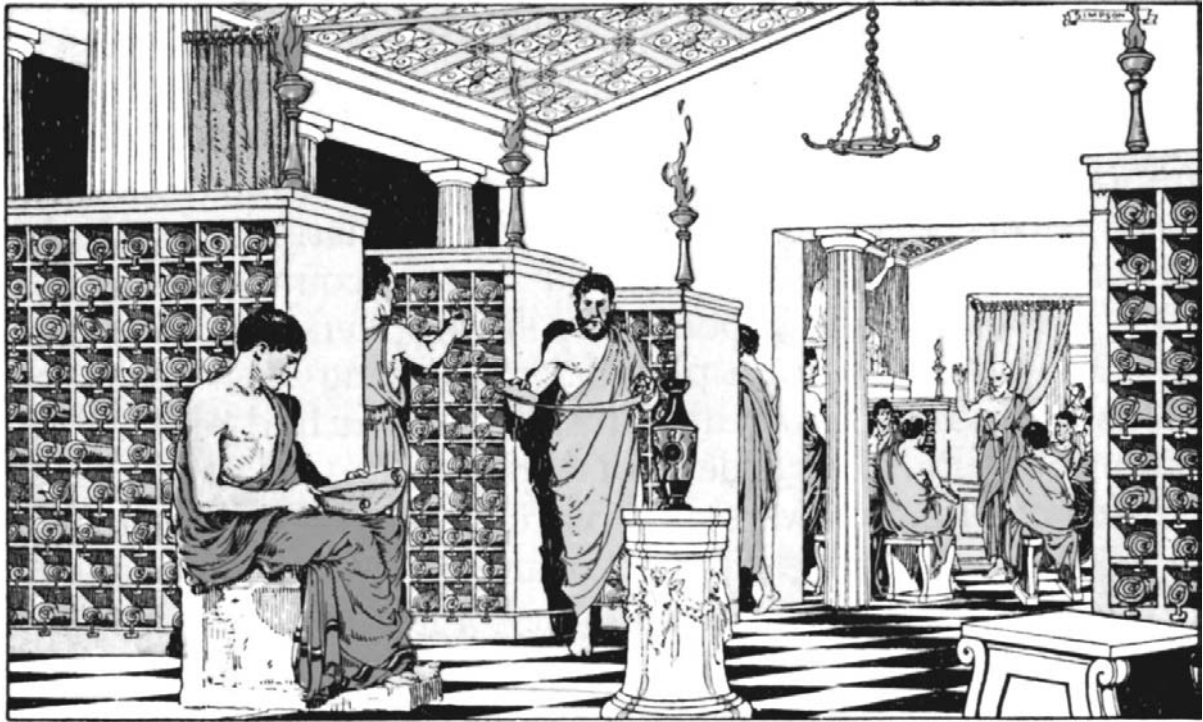
For fifteen years, the Assembly of the People (farmers, craftsmen, merchants...) have been deciding of the politics of Thena, as well as of the use of an important part of the treasury... and for fifteen years, many local Nobles have been plotting against Theseos, to stop once and for all this « democratic nonsense ».

So far, thanks to the vigilance of Theseos and his plebeian supporters - including the entire army of Thena, whose soldiers have always shown a complete and unwavering loyalty toward their king - these plots have always been foiled before they came to fruition. So far...

Founding Myth

According to its historians, the city of Thena was founded more than three centuries ago, at the dawn of the Age of Heroes, by the great hero **Letos**, who became its first king. At that time, Letos was in his late fifties, with a lifetime of heroic exploits, quests and adventures behind him. His greatest deeds were recorded by his friend **Cleos**, himself a Lyrist of extraordinary talent, in his epic poem the Letiad, one of the most famous works of Minean literature.

According to the city's oldest records, the first citizens of Thena were refugees from an older city known as Thuria. The great city of Thuria had been destroyed during the Age of Magic and whose ruins had become infested with Lamiae, Sons of Cecrops, Serpent Folk and other evil ophidian creatures under the rule of a very powerful Serpent Sorcerer known as Thulsos.



The Akademia of Thena, probably the greatest library and place of learning in all Mythika

Under the protection and command of Letos, the Thurian survivors eventually managed to defeat and exterminate Thulsos' reptilian minions and build a new city on the ruins of Old Thuria.

Letos named the new city Thena in homage to his patron deity, the goddess Athena, whose divine intervention had played a decisive part in the final defeat of Thulsos. In return, Athena placed a special blessing upon the city, granting « *wisdom in peace and war* » to all its future rulers.

So far, all Thenan kings have lived up to the reputation of this divine prophecy... but King Theseos' bold political reforms have given a new, controversial dimension to this old story: while Theseos' fervent supporters take Athena's blessing as a guarantee and proof of their king's wisdom (some of them even think that the goddess herself inspired Theseos' decisions as a way of testing the possibility of a "new society", built on wisdom and freedom), some of his detractors are using Athena's prophecy as a propaganda tool, implying that Theseos' "unwise" rulership will soon attract Athena's divine anger on the city... unless someone stops this nonsense *right now*.

But let's get back to the distant, legendary past. During his reign, King Letos the Just was often advised by Cleos the Lyrist, who proved to be the wisest of counselors and helped to make Apollo one of the three tutelary deities of Thena.

King Letos died at the very venerable age of 110, after more than half a century of peace. It is said that Athena herself descended from the heavens to escort his soul not to the Elysian Fields but to

Olympus itself, where the great king joined the goddess' personal honor guard. His old friend Cleos the Lyrist composed his last song, the Eulogy for Letos, which he performed at the King's funeral and died peacefully the following day, just before dawn.

Places of Interest

The **Akropolis** is the name of the hill where the most important buildings of the city are located, including the palace and the temples of Athena, Apollo and Zeus. This majestic site is one of the great architectural wonders of the Three Cities.

The two most impressive buildings on the Akropolis are the **Royal Palace**, with its magnificent statues, mosaics and frescoes, and the temple of Athena, called the **Athenon**, the greatest (in every sense of the term) temple ever dedicated to this goddess.

The **Poets' Plaza** is a special agora located near the temple of Apollo, on the Akropolis: here, Lyrists and poets from the Three Cities congregate to swap stories, recite their latest compositions or even take part in oratory jousts, musical contests and poetic duels – before one of the most attentive and demanding audience of the known world.

The **Akademia** is a unique place of learning and knowledge where young men study literature, law, philosophy and other liberal arts under the tuition of some of Mythika's wisest scholars. In other words, it is the University of Thena – as well as the only university in Mythika. Its great white buildings are located at the foot of the Akropolis, overlooked by the majestic temples of Athena and Apollo.



Bilitis, the greatest female Lyrist of Mythika

Notable Personages

King Theseos is the current ruler of Thena – a great hero, a superb warrior...and a somewhat controversial ruler (see above for more details about Theseos' democratic reforms and next page for his full description and game stats, plus a summary of his adventuring career).

Thena is also home to many illustrious personages, such as **General Periklos**, military commander and strategist extraordinaire (as well as Theseos' most loyal supporter), the venerable philosopher **Zenon**, whose bold theories about the true nature of the Universe have caused much agitation within the Akademia, or the divinely-inspired **Bilitis**, Mythika's greatest female Lyrist and poetess, famous for her melancholic elegies and erotic poetry.

Queen Phaedra, Theseos' second wife, is in her early thirties. Born on the island of Seriphos, Phaedra has never felt at home in Thena and rarely appears in public; her distant and haughty ways have not made her very popular with commoners, who often see her as a cold, aloof queen. Phaedra has been married to Theseos for more than 10 years but has never given birth to a child; according to some rumors, the queen's sterility has poisoned her marriage with Theseos and there is now little love left between them. Those who are better informed know that, back in his adventuring days, Theseos had a crush on Phaedra's sister, princess Ariadne of Seriphos, but nobody talks about these things anymore (at least not in the royal palace).

King Theseos does have a legitimate heir: his son **Prince Hippolytos** (now in his mid-teens), born to his first wife, the Amazon princess Antiope, who died giving him birth a few years before Theseos met Phaedra (and Ariadne!) on Seriphos.

Those who have known Theseos in his childhood say the young prince looks exactly like him. He also seems to have inherited his father's bravery and prowess, along with his Amazon mother's reckless and bellious temper.

His relationship with his stepmother is stormy (to say the least, especially since Queen Phaedra has begun to develop an (unwilling) crush on her stepson (who looks *so much* like his father when he was young...), a guilty, shameful feeling which she tries to conceal behind a mask of cold contempt for Hippolytos. Since Theseos himself has little time to devote to his son, Hippolytos spends most of his time in the outdoor, riding and charioteering.

Prince Hippolytos



Level 1 Noble, age 16, Royal Heir of Thena

Personality: Proud, dynamic, reckless; eager to prove his valor on the battlefield or on some heroic quest; wishes his father would show him more attention.

Attributes: Might 12, Skill 18, Luck 17, Wits 14, Will 16, Grace 15.

Combat: Initiative 17, Melee +6, Missile +7, Basic Defense Class 15, Hits Total 12.

Weapon of Choice: Bow.

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +6, Danger Evasion +7, Mystic Fort +6, Physical Vigor +5.

Personal Charisma: +7 (+8 to Thenans).

Background Talents: Equestrian, Tactician.

Mythic Items: Bow of Artemis (a gift from his Amazon mother Antiope).



Theseos slaying the Minotaur of Minea

Theseos of Thena

The present king of Thena, Theseos is a tall, athletic, handsome man in his late thirties, with curly blond hair and a short beard. His career as monarch of Thena is detailed in this issue's *Mythika Gazetteer*, which also contains information about his wife, Queen Phaedra and his son Prince Hippolytos.

The son of King Aegeus of Thena and princess Aethra (daughter of Pittheus, lord of Sphaeros), Theseos was rumored to be the child of Poseidon himself – something which his mother has always refused to discuss with anybody. To this day, the true identity of the hero's father remains uncertain, even to Theseos himself.

During the course of his adventures, Theseos has defeated an impressive number of enemies, including hordes of beastmen, evil lords, giants, dark sorceresses, giant boars, magical bulls and many others. He also waged war against the Amazons and abducted one of their princesses, the proud Antiope... whom he married shortly afterwards. Antiope then died in childbirth (perhaps as a result of some terrible curse bestowed upon her for having forsaken her Amazon heritage), giving the hero his only son, Hippolytos.

But his most famous adventure remains his journey to Minea on the island of Seriphos, where he defeated the huge minotaur Asterion (also rumored to be a child of Poseidon) and managed to come out alive of the gigantic Maze of Minea. This he could accomplish only with the help of Ariadne (and her famous ball of twine), princess of Minea and priestess of Demeter, whom he later abandoned on an island during his flight from Minea (since then, she has reportedly been taken as a bride by Dionisos, but this may be just another wild rumor). He later married Ariadne's younger sister, princess Phaedra of Minea, now queen of Thena.

Recently, King Theseos, along with mighty Tharsus of Heraklia, has led a difficult yet victorious battle in the mountains against a savage tribe of Centaurs. To this day, both Amazons and Centaurs still feel a bitter grudge toward Theseos, whom they tend to see as an enemy of their respective kins.

Theseos has a weakness for women and wagers and seems to have a really hard time resisting one or the other. These days, the love of strong wines seems to have become another problem of his. With all these Nobles in the surroundings plotting against him and Phaedra looking so much like her older sister, beautiful Ariadne, whom he stupidly and cruelly abandoned so long ago, the hero nowadays indulges in drinking more and more often (which may eventually lead to many problems, like, say, accepting the wager of entering Hell to abduct Persephone herself because "*she's a smasher*"...

King Theseos

Level 5 Noble, age 38, King of Thena

Personality: Fearless and self-assured (to the point of overconfidence); loves to take risks and accept crazy wagers; loves beautiful women and strong wines; may have an unconscious death wish; truly heroic and immensely popular.

Attributes: Might 19, Skill 21, Luck 20, Wits 15, Will 15, Grace 15.

Combat: Initiative 21, Melee +13, Missile +11, Basic Defense Class 16, Hits Total 32.

Weapon of Choice: Sword.

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +13, Danger Evasion +11 (+13 with Aegis shield), Mystic Fort +8 (+10 with Aegis shield), Phys Vigor +10.

Personal Charisma: +8 (+13 to Thenans).

Background Talents: Tactician, Wrestler.

Mythic Items: Aegis, Sword of Aegeus (Sword of Ruse with a hilt wrought like a serpent), Spear of the Pallantides (Spear of Athena), Crown of the Nereids (same powers as the Amulet of the same name, worn as a diadem-like headband), Ariadne's ball of twine, Spear of Conquest, pair of Magical Horses (see *Creature Compendium*, p 58). Theseos also owns the Mace of Perphestes, a non-magical, enormous bronze mace (see *Players Manual*, p 22).

His breastplate, helmet and Aegis shield give Theseos a total EDC of 24. His Sword of Ruse gives him a total Melee mod of +15, while his Spear of Athena adds +4 to his damage rolls.

During his training years, Theseos developed two unique unarmed combat styles: the Crane, a patient, fast strike-to vital-spots technique, and the Dancer, a swirling and unbalancing sweeps-and-throws technique. They work like Pugilism, with the same restrictions but with different effects: a Crane attack does 1d6+Might mod subdual Hits instead of the usual d3+Might mod, while a Dancer attack works like a Bashing attack (*M&M Companion*). As their inventor, Theseos is *advantaged* when using these techniques. They can only be learned by Wrestlers with 13+ in Skill, Will and Grace under the tuition of someone who already masters them (and Theseos is unlikely to share such secrets).



Heraklia the Red

Cultural Overview

According to Heraklians, Heraklia is the mightiest of the Three Cities. It is certainly the most martial.

The favorite color of Heraklian Nobles is crimson, the color of blood and strength. Their favorite patron deities are Zeus and Ares, the god of war.

Current Affairs

The current king of Heraklia is **Thalos the Strong**, (see the next pages for more details about this character, including his complete stats).

As most of his predecessors, King Thalos dreams of uniting the Land of the Three Cities into a single nation, but that nation would (of course) be Heraklia, with his own dynasty as the only royal family. These dreams will probably remain just that, since King Thalos lacks the political shrewdness and diplomatic patience that such a formidable endeavour would require... unless Heraklia decides to go to war (once again) with Argos, but this would shatter the Thenan Peace which has guaranteed economic prosperity and political stability in the Land of the Three Cities for more than 60 years - see the *Maze Masters Guide*, p 13, for more details about the diplomatic tensions between Argos and Heraklia.

For the last six decades (ie since the end of the war against Argos and the establishment of the Thenan Peace, see *Maze Masters Guide* p 13), Heraklian

aristocracy has been the theatre of a constant political struggle between two rival factions, respectively known as the Sword and the Shield. Members of the Sword faction are Hegemonists, who think that Heraklia should conquer Argos, Thena and unite the whole Land of the Three Cities into a single Heraklian monarchy, while members of the Shield faction think that the Three Cities should stay united against outside enemies (such as warlike Umbria) but that the Thenan Peace should be replaced by a more militant coalition. Each faction is (more or less officially) supported by one of the two great cults of Heraklia: the cult of Ares for the Sword and the cult of Zeus for the Shield.

Both sides are now turning a very curious eye towards the unprecedented political changes that have recently occurred in Thena – a situation which could well be used by the more warlike Heraklian nobles to persuade their King of taking military action against the current Thenan monarchy “for the greater good” of the Three Cities. Even in times of peace, Heraklia is always preparing for war...

Founding Myth

The founding myth of Heraklia is quite simple and reflects the no-nonsense, martial culture of its proud nobility. According to this tale, Heraklia was founded at the dawn of the Age of Heroes – just like Thena and Argos, but (of course) before them – by a great warrior hero called Heraklion. Blessed with superhuman strength of body and mind, Heraklion was a champion of Ares as well as the general of an invincible army who had won many victories against the sorcerous Autarchs and their monstrous hordes.

When Heraklion saw that he had defeated and conquered all his foes and there were no enemies left to fight, he decided to settle down with his army and build a great fortress in the honor of Ares... but Heraklion proved (quite unsurprisingly) a very warlike ruler, as befits to all true devotees of Ares, and found himself unable (or unwilling) to maintain a lasting peace with his neighbors - including the fledgling cities of Thena and Argos. This greatly upset Athena (patron goddess of Thena) and Hermes (patron god of Argos), who eventually called for the arbitration of Zeus himself. After hearing their pleas, Zeus admonished Ares for his constant warmongering and ordered Heraklion and his followers to take a solemn oath.

Under this oath (known in Heraklian lore as the Oath of Zeus), the king of Heraklia and his warriors promised that they would only ever take up arms to defend their lands and that they would devote the rest of their lives to build a great city around their fortress: thus was the city of Heraklia founded, under the joint tutelage of its two major patron deities: Ares, lord of war and Zeus, god of rulership. As every Heraklian boy is taught from the earliest age, the Oath of Zeus only bound Heraklion and his men - but not their sons and other descendants, for Zeus, in his divine wisdom, knew full well that *"the arts of war and the love of battle run in the very blood of all Heraklians"*.

Places of Interest

The **Colossus of Heraklia** is an impressive, 100-foot tall bronze statue of an Heraklian warrior, complete with helmet, breastplate, shield and sword. He stands guard near the Hexagon (see below), as a solid symbol of Heraklia's unconquered military might. Some legends say that the Colossus is actually a Titanic Statue (*Creature Compendium*, p 117) who will animate itself to defend Heraklia should the city be in direct danger of being captured by enemy forces - something which, according to all Heraklian warriors, will never happen.

The **Heraklium** is the name of the royal palace, a massive, fortified building which looks more like a citadel than a palace - but this is the way the Kings of Heraklia like it. Indeed, the Heraklium is the original fortress of King Heraklion (see *Founding Myth* above), around which the city itself was established.

The **House of Thunder** is the name of the local temple of Zeus, while the equally magnificent temple of Ares is known as the **House of War**. Both buildings face the Heraklium - a pretty impressive sight, all in all.

The **Hexagon** is the name of a large, vaguely six-sided plaza bordered by the Heraklium, the House of Thunder and the House of War. It acts as the city's agora and is filled with huge statues of Heraklian kings and heroes of the past. Hexagons are often used by Heraklian artists and architects as abstract representations of might and power.



The legendary Heraklion after one of his many victories

Notable Personages

King Thalos the Strong is a worldly warrior-king whose might in battle is as legendary as his fiery temper. He is also known for his largesse; Heraklian poets and courtiers often say their king is as generous with war and anger as he is with gifts and rewards. Despite being in his mid-fifties, King Thalos is still one of the strongest men (Might 19) of his kingdom. He is usually very hospitable with adventurers (especially warriors) and takes great delight in hearing a good tale of Minotaur-slaying or Manticore-hunting while drinking the finest vintage from his royal vineyards.

Prince Herion is King Thalos' eldest son and heir apparent. Despite being fanatically loyal to his father and monarch, Herion has a very different temper: while Thalos is a proud, short-tempered, larger-than-life king, Herion is a very dignified and austere warrior, believing in military discipline above all things. Unlike his father (who has somehow always managed to maintain a form of political balance within the local aristocracy), Herion is a staunch supporter of the Shield faction. He is in his mid-thirties and already has several sons. He also has six younger brothers, stalwart warriors all; together, the sons of Thalos are often known as the Magnificent Seven of Heraklia.

King Thalos is also the uncle of **Tharsus of Heraklia**, one of Mythika's greatest living heroes. Rumored to be the son of Zeus himself, Tharsus is even stronger than his uncle (Might 21!); he has been described by various Lyrists of Heraklia as "the epitome of might", "the living embodiment of strength" or "the Lion of Heraklia". Argosean Lyrists and Nobles also often refer to him as "the boar of Heraklia", an ironic allusion to his brutish demeanor, uncouth manners and hairy body. See this issue's *Maze Master's Lore* for more about Tharsus.

King Thalos the Strong



Level 5 Noble, age 57, Monarch of Heraklia

Personality: Proud, fearless, generous and short-tempered; Thalos is a worldly warrior-king with a larger-than-life personality, quick to anger but easy to amuse. Loves battles, songs and stories (especially those about his own exploits and victories or those of his ancestors).

Attributes: Might 19, Skill 17, Luck 19, Wits 13, Will 19, Grace 10.

Combat: Initiative 18, Melee +11, Missile +8, Basic Defense Class 16, Hits Total 32.

Weapon of Choice: Sword.

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +11, Danger Evasion +8, Mystic Fort +9, Physical Vigor +12.

Personal Charisma: +8 (+13 to Heraklians).

Background Talents: Tactician, Wrestler.

Mythic Items: Sword of Hephaestus, Spear of Conquest, Aegis, Breastplate & Helmet of Ares.

When fully clad for war, wearing his Breastplate of Ares, Helmet of Ares and Aegis, Thalos has an EDC of 29, making him virtually invulnerable.

These items also raise his Danger Evasion to +10, his Mystic Fortitude to +13 and his Melee attack to +14.

When using his Spear of Conquest, his Melee is raised by a further +2, while his huge Sword of Hephaestus gives him a +4 bonus to damage.

King Thalos is a formidable foe and often fights without any magical armament "for sport".

Prince Herion of Heraklia



Level 3 Noble, age 35, Royal Heir of Heraklia

Personality: Stern and resolute; fearless in battle and rigorous in peace; Herion leads a very austere, almost ascetic life, devoting all his time to martial exercises and political duties.

Attributes: Might 15, Skill 20, Luck 18, Wits 11, Will 17, Grace 12.

Combat: Initiative 17, Melee +9, Missile +7, Basic Defense Class 15, Hits Total 22.

Weapon of Choice: Sword.

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +9, Danger Evasion +7, Mystic Fort +6, Physical Vigor +8.

Personal Charisma: +5 (+8 to Heraklians).

Background Talents: Equestrian, Tactician.

Mythic Items: Aegis, Sword of Ares.

When wearing his helmet, breastplate and Aegis, Herion has an EDC of 23.

His Aegis also raises his Danger Evasion to +9 and his Mystic Fortitude to +8.

His Sword of Ares allows him to add his Skill bonus (+4) to his damage rolls.

Prince Herion of Heraklia is the eldest of seven brothers. Next in line are his two brothers Alios and Orios, 2nd level Nobles who often act as Herion's lieutenants on the battlefield. The other four, younger brothers are all 1st level Nobles and could well include a player-character (a great way to have a connection with the Royal House of Heraklia).

Tharsus of Heraklia

One of the mightiest living heroes (perhaps THE mightiest living hero) of Mythika, Tharsus of Heraklia is also known as “*Herakleos*”, a nickname which can directly be translated as “*the Lion of Heraklia*”.

Birth & Origins

Believed by many to be the son of Zeus himself, Tharsus was born to Princess Alcidia, daughter to King Leos of Heraklia. The unmarried, young and beautiful Alcidia had been impregnated in her sleep by the King of the Gods and became extremely nervous when she found out that she was with child; more than anything, the princess feared the wrath of her father King Leos, who at that time was away from Heraklia with Alcidia’s brother, Prince Thalos the Strong, waging war against an allied horde of beastmen in the Helicon Mountains.

How would her father and brother react when they’d return victorious, only to discover her unexplainable pregnancy? Blinded by shame, fear and despair, Alcidia ordered a trusty servant to take the baby to the wilderness and leave him to die there...

But the newborn child, who was incredibly vigorous, did not die (he even strangled two serpents all by himself!) and managed to survive before being found by a Centauride named Tharsa, who, having lost her own child, decided to keep and raise this strange, hairy “man-cub” as her own son. The boy was named Tharsus and was quickly adopted by the Centauride’s tribe.

Family Ties

Meanwhile, back in Heraklia, a true tragedy was unfolding. Mad with grief and guilt, Princess Alcidia took her own life by plunging a knife into her breast.

The day after Alcidia’s suicide, her father’s army came back, carrying their dying leader. King Leos, who had been treacherously hit by a beastman’s poisoned arrow, only had the time to hear the sorrowful tale of his daughter’s death before succumbing to his wounds. The crown passed to his only son, Prince Thalos.

A few days after his coronation, the young king was visited by Zeus in person, who told him that he was the true father of his sister’s son... and that the child has survived. Thalos then took a solemn oath to find his sister’s child, no matter how long this quest would keep him away from his throne.

The young monarch took five of his most valorous companions with him and went in search of his lost nephew; thus began seven long years of travels, adventures and perils...

Then, one day, King Thalos and his men eventually stumbled upon the Centaurs who had adopted the young boy as one of their own, teaching him the arts of combat and archery.



Big, mighty Tharsus of Heraklia

Heroic Career

A new life now awaited the boy Tharsus as a royal prince of Heraklia – a new life full of weird things like palaces, clothes and baths... but his feral education had shaped him forever and Tharsus always remained a Centaur at heart – as reckless, proud, short-tempered, turbulent and, well, feral as any self-respecting man-horse.

At the age of 15, the restless Tharsus left Heraklia to lead a heroic life full of adventures, dangerous journeys and fights with monstrous creatures. Over the following years, he completed various quests (including the famous Ten Tasks of Tharsus), many of which were given to him by Zeus to test his might.

Tharsus is especially renowned as a monster slayer, having slain various Monsters of Large or Gigantic size during his long adventuring career – as well as an impressive quantity of magical beasts, beastmen and creatures of all sorts. The Heraklian hero also maintains a deep friendship with Centaurs (in fact, some Thenan Lyrists have even hinted at his carnal knowledge of at least two Centaurides).

On more than one occasion, his friendship for Centaurs (as well as his short temper and loud mouth) has caused Tharsus to publicly express his brutish contempt for King Theseos of Thena, who has led several campaigns against some Centaur tribes during the last few years... In return, King Theseos himself has expressed his own disdain for “the Boar of Heraklia”. Surely the two great heroes will square it out one day or another...

Tharsus of Heraklia



Level 6 Noble, age 38, Mythic Hero, nephew of King Thalos, “the Lion of Heraklia”

Personality: Immensely proud and utterly fearless; brutish and uncouth, Tharsus behaves more like an uneducated Barbarian than a royal-blooded Noble; his personal hygiene could also be improved.

Attributes: Might 21, Skill 16, Luck 20, Wits 9, Will 21, Grace 8.

Combat: Initiative 17*, Melee +14*, Missile +7*, Basic Defense Class 17*, Hits Total 39*.

Weapon of Choice: Club.

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +14*, Danger Evasion +7*, Mystic Fort +10*, Phys Vigor +17*.

** Include the effects of Tharsus' Tunic of Fortune (which he never takes off) and Girdle of Strength (+2 to Melee, Athletic Prowess, Phys. Vigor and Hits Total).*

Personal Charisma: +9* (+15* to Heraklians).

Background Talents: Sailor, Wrestler.

Mythic Items: Big Club, Nemean Lion Pelt, Bow of Herakles, Girdle of Strength, Tunic of Fortune.

Tharsus' Nemean Lion Pelt (which he usually wears as a cloak / headdress, encumbrance 1) allows him to add his Might mod to his Defense Class, for an EDC of 22. Tharsus never uses shields or breastplates because “it's no fun”.

Tharsus' Big Club looks like a huge, crude wooden club better suited for a Large being than for a man. It is actually a mythic item, which Tharsus gained during an early quest. It is indestructible and allows Tharsus to add his Might mod of +7 (+5 from his natural Might and +2 from his Girdle of Strength) to his damage rolls when he wields it single-handed. Using his Club as a two-handed weapon gets him an extra damage die, for a monstrous damage roll of 2d6+7 but striking at half-normal Initiative (8).

That being said, Tharsus can also be very dangerous in missile combat, using his Bow of Herakles (who he?) with a Missile mod of +12 and for a damage roll of 1d6+7.

The Ten Tasks of Tharsus

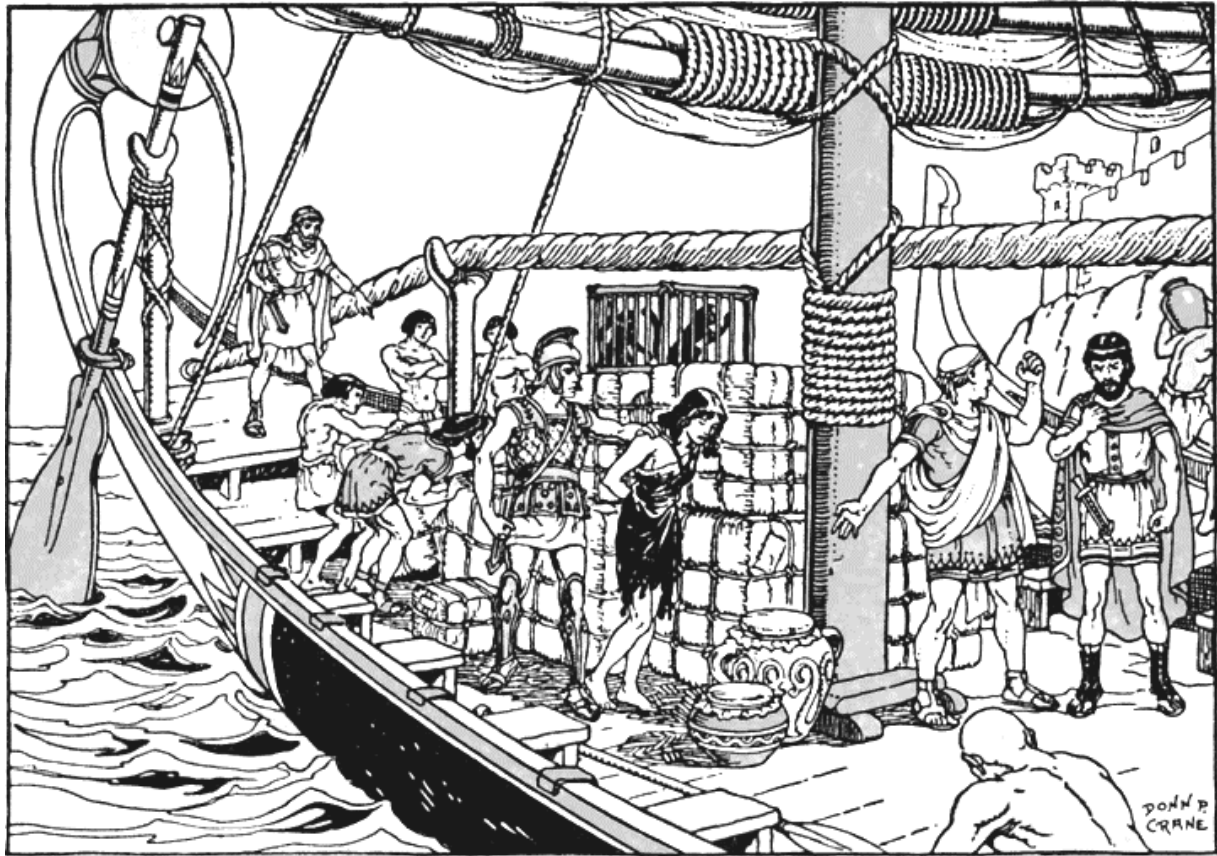
The most glorious episodes of Tharsus' impressive heroic career are known collectively as “the Ten Tasks of Tharsus”. Even though Tharsus is still alive and his heroic career seems to be far from over, many Heraklian Lyrists are already celebrating their national champion's Ten Tasks as the most glorious and spectacular deeds ever accomplished during the entire Age of Heroes – an assertion which is, of course, regularly refuted by Thenan Lyrists and scholars (who like to point out that, like Tharsus' own career, the Age of Heroes is far from over – and will probably last longer anyway).

Here is the list of the Ten Tasks of Tharsus, known in Heraklia as the *Dekathlon*. Each of these heroic feats was accomplished single-handedly by Tharsus and Tharsus alone.

- 1) Slaying a magical, reputedly invincible lion known as the **Nemean Lion**.
- 2) Slaying the dreaded **nine-headed Hydra of the Helicon Mountains**.
- 3) Capturing a magical, reputedly uncatchable stag known as the **Artemisian Stag**.
- 4) Slaying a giant, magical and reputedly unkillable boar known as the **Boar of Doom**.
- 5) Capturing a magical, reputedly indomitable bull known as the **Bull of Death**.
- 6) Slaying the entire **Minotaur Clan of Brutos**.
- 7) Slaying of the **Twin Chimeras of Traxos**.
- 8) Uprooting all the Stichios trees of the **Forest of Terror** (which was subsequently known as the Vale of Tranquility or “the Big Clearing”).
- 9) Slaying the **Great Royal Manticore of the Thanatari Mountain** (and some of its offspring).
- 10) Slaying the two **Two-Headed Gigantic Cyclops of Magon** (for a total of four heads).

Some Thenan satirists have found nothing better to do than coining cheap, offensive parodies of the Dekathlon, which include highly ludicrous Tasks like wooing the Queen of the Amazons, stealing some apples in a garden, killing non-magical livestock, honoring twenty Centauride brides in a single night, carrying the whole world of Mythika on his shoulders for a whole day or single-handedly cleaning the royal stables of his uncle King Thalos of Heraklia.

According to some rumors, Tharsus would currently be contemplating the completion of two more titanic tasks, feeling that twelve would make a more iconic (and impressive) total. Who knows what mighty deeds still await the Heraklian living legend?



Argos has two great loves: commerce (which, as shown above, does include slave trade) and, of course, the Sea

Argos the Blue

Cultural Overview

It is often said that every Argosean has two mistresses: the sea and commerce. Argos is the wealthiest of the Three Cities and takes great pride in her material riches. It also has the best navy of the Middle Sea ; every noble or soldier from Argos is a seasoned sailor. The favorite color of Argosean Nobles is blue – the color of the sea and the open sky ; their favorite patron deities are Hermes, god of trade, and (of course) Poseidon, king of the sea.

Current Affairs

The current king of Argos is **Argon the Proud**, a very old (and slightly senile) monarch who has sired more than twenty daughters in his life – but only two sons: the reckless and romantic Prince Argan and the more practically-minded Prince Kyros.

King Argon's rulership is now purely symbolic ; the affairs of the realm are firmly in the hands of his various advisers and ministers. Argon's eldest son and heir apparent, **Prince Argan** became an adventurer some ten years ago, gaining glory in various heroic quests and ventures. Nobody has heard from Prince Argan since he sailed away two years ago, on yet another heroic expedition to the faraway shores of Charybdis ...

Since then, Argon's other son, the (very) ambitious **Prince Kyros** has been playing the part of the heir apparent and has gained growing political support from some of the most prominent members of the Argosean aristocracy.

Yet, despite his absence and his obvious lack of interest for rulership, the valorous Prince Argan still has staunch supporters among the local nobles and has always been immensely popular with the common people of Argos...

Given his ambition and love of power, Kyros could well persuade his declining father that Argan is dead, which would logically make him the legitimate heir to the crown of Argos. But what would happen if Argan *did* return to Argos to find his dear brother sitting on the throne?

In the meantime, Argos continues to busy itself with its two great passions: trade and the sea. Under Argon's long reign, Argos has established several overseas colonies on the shores of Midia and has become the first commercial power of the Middle Sea. Under the joint protection of Hermes and Poseidon, Argosean merchants even manage to trade with the isolationist Sea Princes of Tritonis and have become a common sight in the fabled city of Kandaria, cosmopolitan gateway to the Land of the Sun... Meanwhile, bold Argosean explorers venture into the Typhon Sea and the great Western Ocean in search of glory, wonder and gold.



A typical scene on the streets of Argos the Blue

Founding Myth

Unlike the “us first!” primacy of the other two cities, Argoseans are happy in the belief that Argos was the last of the Three Cities to be founded. Legend has it that Argos it came into being the day that a philosopher from Thena and a warrior from Heraklia happened to meet one morning at the seashore.

The two entered into a discussion about which city was superior and argued for hours. It was well into the afternoon, with no end in sight, when a merchant named Argo happened by the pair. By then both the philosopher and the warrior were thirsty and hungry, and each offered to buy wine and food from the merchant. Seeing that he had two enemies who wanted the same goods, Argo played the two against each other and turned a tidy profit while managing to tweak the egos of both.

Argo used a portion of these profits to establish a small trading centre at the site of his “victory” over Thena and Heraklia. As word of his triumph spread, more and more merchants who sought a neutral place to conduct their business came to Argo’s to trade. In time, many of these merchants opened their own businesses and soon the city grew to include the surrounding farms and fields.

Yet always was the sea the focus of Argos, as every merchant worth his salt knows that goods from distant lands bring the most return on investment.

The grandson of Argo, **Avatos the Blue**, was the first King of Argos. He made it his primary goal to form a strong navy to defend the sea trade that had led to the success of his grandfather’s little village. The blue-sailed ships of the Argosean imperial fleet first appeared during his reign and continue to plow the waters to this day, blessed by Poseidon himself.

Places of Interest

The soul of the city, the **Great Market of Argos** is found on the city’s southern edge, just inland from the docks. It is here that business reigns, and anything that can be bought or sold can be found in at least three of the market stalls.

The **House of Athena**, located on a hill high above Argos, is an unexpected facet of the city. Though Athena’s influence is relatively weak in Argos, her priests maintain this temple and university here at the vanguard of Minean commerce so that new ideas and discoveries may be added to the general wisdom as soon as they become available.

The **Temple of Asclepius**, the most advanced “hospital” in all of Minea is located on the city’s eastern edge. Priests of Asclepius, the true doctors of the Age of Heroes, tend to the diseased and dispossessed within the temple walls and house those unfortunates in fine marble dormitories located through the spacious and well-tended grounds. A hero can find no better hope for recovery than in the care of these healers.

Argos is home to the **Vineyards of Ione**, whose wines are renowned throughout all of Mythika. The grand estate of Lady Ione and her three sons is found on the hill that dominates the city’s centre. Untold wealth lies in these halls, but the grounds are guarded by a pair of trained Griffins, a fabulous gift from Emperor Baraxis of the Land of the Sun.

Notable Personages

Princess Niobe is the first woman to be named the Admiral of the Argosean Fleet. An excellent warrior and sailor, she is the « widow » of Prince Argan. Rather than adventure with him as normal, she remained in Argos when the prince began his apparently ill-fated expedition due to the illness of her father, Lord Syagros. When the previous Admiral was killed in battle under somewhat mysterious circumstances, Niobe was elevated to the position at the behest of Prince Kyros, who desires her both for her beauty and, perhaps, as a way to lend legitimacy to his own ambitions.

Heirax the Churgeon is a disgraced priest of Asclepius who now maintains a private « hospital » in the city’s warehouse district. Heirax caters to the shadier individuals who might require the attention of a healer with less than entirely sound scruples.

Bacchios the Vintner, is the fourth son of Lady Ione. Unlike his three elder brothers, he has struck out on his own and is determined to create a wine that is superior even to the best vintages produced by his family’s label (the 294 being considered the finest, due to a perfect mix of warm, sunny days and light rain during the growing season). Bacchios can often be found in the Great Market, seeking barrels of unique foreign woods to use for experimental ageing processes.

Prince Kyros of Argos



Level 3 Noble, age 29, would-be Royal Heir

Personality: Ambitious and cunning ; thinks he is “destined for greatness” (ie become King of Argos). Despises adventurers, so-called heroes and other “romantic fools”. Hides a deep hatred for his elder brother Argan, who has always eclipsed him in the eyes of their father (who, like most Argoseans, think there is only “friendly brotherly rivalry” between the two princes).

Attributes: Might 12, Skill 15, Luck 18, Wits 18, Will 16, Grace 13.

Combat: Initiative 14, Melee +7*, Missile +8, Basic Defense Class 15, Hits Total 18*.

Weapon of Choice: Sword.

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +7*, Danger Evasion +8, Mystic Fort +8, Physical Vigor +7*.

Personal Charisma: +6 (+9 to Argoseans).

Background Talents: Orator, Tactician.

Mythic Items: Girdle of Strength (see below).

** Includes the +2 bonus granted by Kyros' Girdle of Strength. Nobody in Argos knows that Kyros' Might is boosted by this item, which he obtained some 9 years ago during his first (and only) adventure with his brother Argan, on a Mysterious Island.*

Kyros has recently grown impatient and has begun to move his pieces across the board of Argosean politics to seize his father's throne. As part of his cunning (and complex) plans, Kyros arranged the previous Admiral's murder, killing two birds with a single stone: this ridded him of one of Argan's most influential political supporters in the local nobility and allowed him to appoint his sister-in-law Niobe as the new commander of the Fleet, much to everyone's surprise since Niobe had never shown much love for Argan's brother. This brilliant move also created confusion and dissent among Argan's loyal supporters. Niobe herself has begun to think she might have misjudged Kyros, who intends to use her as a useful political pawn in his bid for power (and perhaps even marry her when the death of Argan becomes a certainty).

Princess Niobe



Level 2 Noble, age 26, Captain of the Argosean Fleet and “widow” of Prince Argan

Personality: Resolute and clever; has a deep love for Argos, the Sea and Argan; dislikes toadying courtiers as well as reckless hotheads.

Attributes: Might 12, Skill 17, Luck 17, Wits 16, Will 16, Grace 14.

Combat: Initiative 18, Melee +6, Missile +8, Basic Defense Class 16*, Hits Total 16.

Weapon of Choice: Sword.

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +6, Danger Evasion +9*, Mystic Fort +8*, Physical Vigor +5.

Personal Charisma: +6 (+8 to Argoseans).

** Includes the bonus from her Amulet of Protection.*

Background Talents: Sailor, Tactician.

Mythic Items: Sword of Ruse, Amulet of Protection (a gift from Argan).

Afterword for Maze Masters

The information presented in this *Gazetteer* can be used either as a simple collection of background elements to add a breath of life to your *Mazes & Minotaurs* campaign or as a more direct way to send your players on the paths of adventure. The quest for the absent Prince Argan, for instance, could be a great way to send a party of adventurers on a perilous sea voyage, full of wonders and dangers...

Or perhaps Prince Hippolytos, the only son and heir of King Theseos, could actually be a 1st level Noble player-character (and why not?).

And, of course, the power struggles of Heraklian lords could form the basis of a great series of scenarios to save the fragile Thenan Peace, complete with diplomatic incidents, secret plots, rumors of war... and, perhaps, a few games of intrigue between the Gods.

The only limit is, as usual, your imagination.