

Guide to Phaemorea



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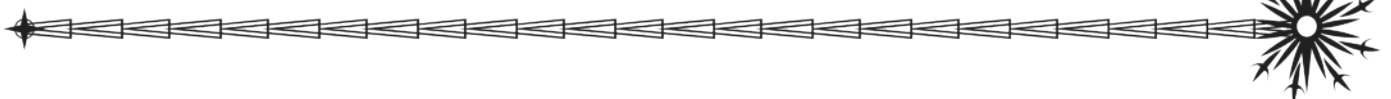
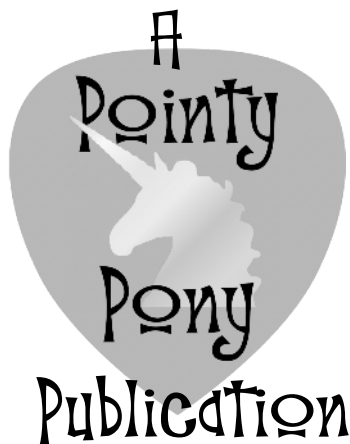
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Empire of Getica

Mast
Breaker
Straight

FORECASTLE

Black Shield Mountains

Elven

Protectorates

Bungara

Woodsman's River

Garter
States

Worlds Edge River

White Hart
Protectorate

Manakata

HIGH SHIELD

White Andler River

MANAKATA

Kingdom
of
Solmani

SEA
OF
TEARS

SALURIA

Saluria

Plains	Jhan Settlement
Grasslands	Capital
Desert	City
Light Forest	Town
Heavy Forest	Castle
Hills	Tower
Mountains	Ruins
Alpine	Oasis
Volcano	Ocean
Swamp	Jungle

1 hex = 24 miles



Races

HUMANS

THERE are four main human variants native to the local area. The first and by far the most plentiful are so widespread they are not known by any cultural identifiers. They are pale skinned Caucasian, of smallish build, averaging a height of around 170-175 cm tall.

The Bungara, known more commonly as the Painted People, seem to be a distant variant of the common human. Their skin is darker, most likely because they live in a harsh region where a more ruddy complexion increases the chance of survival. They also have a slightly different eye shape not entirely dissimilar to the elven eye. The similarities indicate a shared racial heritage with the common human, but with strong indications their genetics are moulded by some other shared ancestor as well.

Deep in the south are the Salurians. They are a large, heavy set people. Caucasian, with a more tanned natural skin tone. Their faces, with strong jaw lines and broader features, have a more masculine look than the waif like thin faces of the common men. They average 185-190 cm tall and have a wide variation in hair and eye colour.

In the south west of the main continent are the people of Manakata. They are a tall people, similar in height to the Salurians, but they have dark skin, hair and eyes. They have pronounced features, such as high cheek bones and an aquiline nose. They have long limbs and dextrous hands. Muscular development tends to be lean but healthy.

DEMI-HUMANS

ALL demi-humans have an inherit distrust of humans, a distrust learnt from past events, but they are of a mind to work with humanity rather than against it, preferring the path of peace over a war they cannot hope to win. The breeding rate of humans is simply too great, which has forced the Demi-humans to cut out a niche for themselves to hold. What they do have, they guard most vehemently.

THE BEAST RACES

AMONG themselves they call themselves the First Races, claiming they were among the first people of the world. The title applies to a wide range of races who choose to defy most forms of civilisation in preference to their natural savage roots. The races include orcs, goblins, ogres, gnolls, kobolds, lizardmen and many more sentient peoples who now hide away in lairs or live day to day raiding each other or the human nations.

Only in the Garter States do these misfit people find any welcome, and even then only in places. Some took part in the Age of Jackals as invited bandits. While they chose not to settle Forecastle in any great numbers, they are still welcome within that city, though prejudices both ways do persist.

While the Beast Races might seem like savages they each have a rich culture of their own, many following the same gods the humans follow. Simply put, the cultural differences mean that even those bound under a common god are so different in mental outlook and practises that little lasting common ground seems to be found.







History

PREHISTORY

IN times now largely forgotten, the world was ruled by an ancient race of beings known as the Phaemoreans. Little is known about these people today, other than that left in shattered ruins which indicate a once thriving civilisation. Scholars believe the original Phaemoreans tore the world apart in some form of cataclysm, reshaping it into the world known today. Whatever happened, the Phaemoreans have ceased to be, except (as some believe) among the oldest of the Immortals.

In the wake of that great cataclysm, the current races began to repopulate the world. Great tribes roamed the lands, finding niches among the wilds and among the other peoples of the land. As humans grew in population, battles over limited resources began to take place among the various sentient races. Not just between the beast races such as orcs, but between humans and demi-humans as well.

The human tribes then found a new tactic in the war for resources, they settled. Learning the arts of agriculture and herding from the jhan, they turned the knowledge into the creation of grand towns and prosperous villages. Once established, humans began to learn ways to protect what they had. Walls of wood and then stone were raised.

As the cost of war grew higher, it gave way to peace, and various realms clearly defined borders to defend. Dwarves took ownership of the mountains, while the elves were happy to stay in the deepest parts of the wilderness. As for the jhan, the kind forgiving nature of the folk forgave the past misdeeds of the humans, providing they held to their own lands.

Those races unwilling to make room for the humans were pushed away and forced to flee ancestral homes. People like the orcs grew to hate the humans with a deep passion, a passion they extended to the human allies. Yet the orcs, goblins, ogres and other beast races were disorganised, and in time they learnt not to assault the humans and their allies directly, turning instead to raiding and pillaging outlying places. The age of human civilisation had come.

RISE OF THE GETICA EMPIRE

WHILE the humans of the south remained fractured, those who went to the north had fewer opponents. A great warlord rose among them, a man called Getica. Getica unified the fractured states and established the Getica Empire.

The Empire had the gift of time, where it was able to build and develop. Under the firm hand of Getica, resources were invested to equip mighty armies, and the army passed through the dark narrow valley now called the Black Corridor. There they established a great city called Thundercliff. From here they led a campaign of unification against the people of the south.

At first it was conventional armies on the march, but as soldiers died faster than they could be trained, the expansion halted for a time. However, driven by a lust to rule over everything, Getica called upon unknown powers to raise the dead, adding to his troops both with his own dead, and the dead of his enemies. The army was on the march again.

Getica himself was a fearsome warrior who led from the front and claimed his invulnerability as proof of his godhood and divine right to rule. His was a message of peace, promising that those who served him well would be granted eternal life. To some people the promise seemed genuine, until the truth was determined. Servitude meant slavery, and eternal life meant that even in death, Getica would continue to use your body as one of his undead minions. The future looked dark as the borders of Getica expanded each day.

RETREAT OF THE DEMI-HUMANS

GETICA was mostly interested in the lands already claimed by human folk, but it didn't take him long to recognise the potential threat posed by other races, as well as the rich resources they held. Soon the forces of Getica began to seek out the elves and the dwarves. As for the jhan, they had well established farm lands rich with resources needed to feed hungry armies. The jhan



were forced to either live under the rule of Getica or flee. Most chose to flee.

The elves sank deeper into the wilds and defended the best they could. With the promise of great glory many elven heroes made their name in the war against Getica, but it came at a terrible cost. Many elven courts perished while others fought desperately, protected and sustained only by the difficulty of waging war against such remote locations.

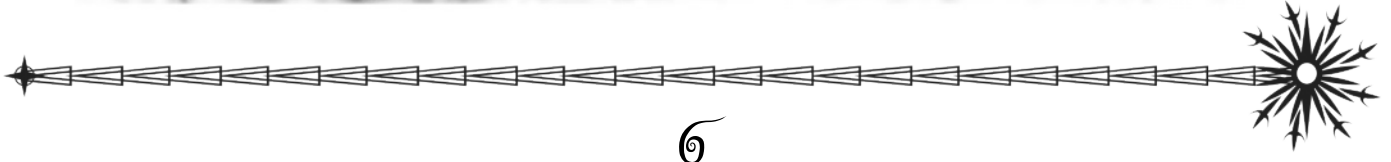
The Dwarves suffered most of all. Taking joy in a good fight the Dwarves met the Getica Empire head on. It was a terrible error born of hubris, for while the dwarves were the better fighters, the humans and undead had weight of numbers. For the first time in recorded history the dwarves sealed their tunnels and hid.

Yet Getica lusted after the metal of the dwarven mines, wanting it for arms and armour for his massive war engine. Directing tireless zombies and incorporeal undead, Getica tunnelled down to the lower halls of the dwarves. Yet he could not dislodge dwarves in a war of tunnel fighting, even with weight of numbers. So Getica displayed the true depth of his evil, and disease proliferated in the stale dead air. As people died of disease, they would rise again as undead to fight their own kin.

The dwarves turned to their gods and asked for help in laying their dead to rest for good. They prayed for an end to the disease so they might remain strong. Yet it was a vile time for everyone, and if the gods heard the prayers of the dwarves, they did not answer. Dwarves, who live by trust and honour, had had the greatest of crimes committed against them. The bargains they had made in worship to their gods were not honoured. In disgust, the dwarves turned from the gods forever and did the only thing they could do; they fought a breakout action and fled at a massive cost of life.

The civilised races of elf, dwarf and jhan were facing an extinction event. jhan were fleeing lands that had been their home since the dawn of time, elves were fighting to the last, cornered in dark and remote places. The Dwarves were also fleeing, but only after losing the greater portion of their people.

To this day there is a deep mistrust between the demi-human people and humans, a mistrust only partially repaired by deeds done later in the wars.



BATTLE AT WORLD'S EDGE

THE spread of the Getica Empire had reached the borders of the Kingdom of Solmani. Solmani was already beset by refugees from a great many realms, and the Kingdom was already on its knees with famine as it tried desperately to feed the people flooding in.

However, many armies had fought a retreating action as they fled the Getica advance. This meant those warriors left were all fierce fighters, veterans of many battles and filled with a rage and desperate need for revenge. On those borders the Kingdom of Solmani and its new allies drew a line and rallied for a last desperate defence against Getica.

With the influx of labour it was easy to fortify the broad deep river that marked the northeast border of the kingdom. There the two armies met, one each side of the river. Getica himself led the Empire. The king of Solmani readied the other side with the aid of a council made from the heroes of the war who had come to him for aid.

The Solmani made one vital error in their planning; they fortified the broad stone trade bridges but trusted in the deep water of the river to funnel the enemy forces. During the night under a veil of magic, Getica concealed an army of undead beneath the water. The Solmani forces were taken completely off guard by the undead, who swept up like a great sodden wave and swiftly subdued the bridges, opening it to the higher skilled living troops on the other side.

Getica himself rode across the bridge, leading an elite force of his most devout warriors. The routing of the Solmani seemed to be ensured. By the time night fell, Getica had crossed the river and was mustering in preparation to sweep deeper into the Solmani lands the next day.

As the day dawned, the warriors of Solmani were already retreating, stripping the villages of resources between the Getica front and the walls of the Solmani capital. They fell back to the safety of their walls and prepared for the attack that would inevitably spell the end of any resistance against Getica until the armies met the Manakata to the far west.

Yet the armies of Getica never came. Scouts reported the armies of Getica had fallen back, leaving many of their undead behind, once again returned to rest. Tentatively the forces of Solmani struck out and cleaned up the dead, burning them in a great magical conflagration so the corpses could not be reanimated again.

The Empire had not departed entirely though, they still held firm to the keeps and holdings they had already captured. Yet Getica himself was nowhere to be found. Rumours later say the

battle was the crowning achievement that opened the way for his rise as a true immortal. The halting of the army was only going to be temporary, until he was again ready to lead his people forward.

Attempts were made to push Getica back, but the kingdoms were still terribly wounded and the cost in life was more than could be afforded. Years passed and the river remained the border between Getica and the rest of the world. The River was renamed World's Edge, because to most of the world, there was nothing of worth on the other side of that river.

THE AGE OF JACKALS

WAR does not stop commerce, and where there is commerce, there are pirates and brigands. Getica at this time was sending great barges south to the lands of Saluria, where they would capture slaves to take back for use as labourers and for the entertainment of the cruel nobles of Getica.

Thundercliff remained the heart of the southern half of the Getica Empire. Near the Black Corridor, it was a natural staging point for organising the movement of resources between the Getica capital and the stolen wealth of the south.

Thundercliff was an unassailable fortress. Perched atop a rise at the edge of the sea it is guarded on three sides by high cliffs and rough seas. On the western side it is guarded by a thick high wall, pierced only by two well defended gatehouses. It would take an army to push up the slopes to assault one gate, leaving the other gate for Empire troops to sally out from. So any attack would require a force large enough to push on both gates at once. Great siege engines upon the walls would easily obliterate any attacking siege machines well before they could threaten the walls.

While masters of war, the forces of Getica were not sailors. As such, they failed to see the one flaw in their near impervious defence. Though only someone insane would seek to try using that one weakness. Unfortunately for Getica, brigands are known for having a shaky grasp on sanity.

As Getica expanded, the only real trade on the seas came in the form of the large slave barges that would wallow up the coast to a landing point south of Thundercliff. The ships were easy pickings, but slaves were of little value to Zangov.

Zangov was a notorious and cruel pirate who led one of the largest fleets on the ocean. Zangov wanted more wealth than could be found on slave ships. Behind the closed doors of a tavern in the distant lands of Saluria, Zangov met with sixteen other captains, each with their own fleet in need of good booty. What took place behind those doors would change history in a way that the bright banners and shining armour of the lands greatest knights could not accomplish.



As the southern hub of Getica, Thundercliff had the only real concentration of wealth left on the continent. Thundercliff had no watch towers pointing out to the ocean. They had little concept of shipping and trusted in the high cliff walls that prevented easy access. Cliff walls that proved a simple enough climb for the strong nimble hands and feet of a pirate crew.

Seventeen captains took ships to those walls, plus one more ship filled with freed slaves calling themselves Freemen. Each captain had the same mission; enter the city and open the gates. Meanwhile, excess pirates had banded with local brigands and lay in wait out of sight from the walls. There they waited for the signal.

The assault on the cliffs was revealed first on the northern side. The soldiers of the Empire were quick to rally, easily forcing back the climbers and cutting the ropes they had tied for their companions. It was enough of a distraction for those ships to the south to get men in numbers into the city. There they quickly made their way to the western wall. With the majority of the guard already called to the north side, the invaders swiftly took the gate and turned the siege weapons to face inside the city. With the siege equipment on their side and more warriors streaming in, the pirates kept the gate open long enough for their other waiting troops to sweep into the city.

Thundercliff fell in a single night, though it took weeks to root out the nobles and the horrors they kept as pets. The pirates ransacked the city, much of it being put to the torch.

The revelry carried on for weeks, which rolled into months. The number of captains still left alive had been reduced to nine, and they divided the city up among themselves, each taking a section as their own. They readied ships in case Getica became

serious about reclaiming their city, but the counter attack never came.

COLLAPSE OF THE OLD EMPIRE

THE pirate fleets worked to consolidate what they had, renaming Thundercliff to Forecastle. Power structures within the city were in a regular state of flux, but it was stable enough to form a safe base of operations from which to spread out to the rest of the Empire, seeking other treasures still being held within the keeps of Getica nobles.

Warriors were paid for and assigned to watch the Black Corridor for the return of the Empire's armies, but all remained silent, the southern empire left paralysed and easy pickings. One by one keeps fell and heroes took the lands as their own, raising new realms under their own rules.

Slavery was abolished, partly because it was anathema to the free thinking brigands and partly because ex-slaves freed from Getica were willing to fight to keep the freedom they had regained.

Eventually the last few holdings of southern Getica fell. The many realms each had their own rules and laws, but taking ownership of any lands liberated from Getica came with one condition. If you lay claim to a realm you signed the confederation pact of mutual defence against Getica.

The Garter States were born, and a new age of peace returned. Getica remained to the north of the Black Corridor, and as far as the Garter States were concerned, they are happy enough to leave that sleeping bear lie.



MODERN HISTORY

OVER the last century and a bit the world has been in a state of recovery. The Garter States are still in flux, as leaders rise and fall and lands change hands. In many places the wilds must be pushed back again, as civilisation was lost in some of the more remote places.

In even more remote places, the wilds were always present, and contained within are secrets and mysteries still being unveiled by adventurers and explorers. Such as evidence that there may have been cultures predating the world as it is known now, and that at some time in the past the world had a different face entirely.

Getica itself left many horrors hidden away in crumbling temples or in deep underground labyrinths. In addition to the undead, Getica was also involved in many magical experimentations, leaving behind a legacy of abominations. Other people, desperate to answer the might of Getica, fell into darkness in their own grasp for power. Entire towns were consumed when their own magic backfired, leaving haunted ruins as testament to the folly spawned by desperation.

It is very much a time of politics. With the Getica Empire in an apparent state of decline, new rulers want to ensure they can maintain their power by not letting another empire rise. This makes issues of borders of utmost importance, and any actual war is always watched with keen interest by the other nations.

There have been attempts at birthing new empires. Zangov himself attempted to rule Forecastle only to be overthrown by Liliana Thriceborn. Getica nobles have tried to raise armies to strike back, only to be crushed by combined resistance. Other leaders have arisen, but while they might combine a nation or two under their banner, they find nervous neighbours are swift to bolster their forces and guard their borders.

If another empire were to rise now, it would not be done by the sword like the warring tribes of ancient Getica, it would have to be a political rise to power.



THE GUILDS

WITH many lands returned to a frontier state there was a rise in dedicated groups of elite individuals who were called upon to troubleshoot the woes facing the land. At first they were called mercenaries, then as their fame grew people called them adventurers, and heroes.

The wealth they retrieved and the safety they brought the lands were noted by the ruling bodies. It was the Kingdom of Solmani that first termed the concept of an Adventuring Guild, recognising these elite groups as valued assets and encouraging their proliferation by granting tax breaks, organised support and by promoting them as people of virtue.

Many guilds rose to recognition, becoming public names from the songs and tales of their deeds. Solmani swiftly became a safe and peaceful place again. The guilds however had grown to like the notice, and they spread to other areas. Chief among those areas are the Garter States and the mysterious southern lands of Saluria where the opportunity for adventure abounds.

The Garter States were quick to embrace the adventuring spirit, and there was no shortage of work for them. There were



so many tasks that guilds started allowing public postings on their boards and even the common man with a little coin could hire genuine adventurers to solve problems they could not face themselves.

A culture of Adventurers began to form. As new recruits into the guilds sought fame by hunting rats in the cellars of tavern owners, more highly trained individuals took on the greater tasks that threatened realms.

Adventurers often found themselves being used as political tools, much to the detriment of their profession. This leads to the establishment of the League of Adventurers, which invited guilds in good standing to join and adhere to a set of rules and guidelines. Chief among these guidelines was the treatment of recruits and the limiting of guild involvement in political affairs.

Most guilds joined, making adventuring a respectable occupation. Those that did not join formed renegade guilds of their own, such as various Thieves Guilds, Assassin Guilds, and countless bands of brigands that still use their old guild titles.

THE PRESENT DAY

JHAN and dwarves have begun to reclaim ancestral homes, but before they can do that they will need help clearing the legacy of Getica. Elves are being spotted emerging from their hidden refuges, but they seem highly mistrustful of others.

The Kingdom of Solmani have returned to their former glory, stronger than ever before due to the benefits gained from harbouring the grateful refugees who fled Getica. Now Solmani is a rising star, their resources well organised and people of exceptional skill find a welcome home where they can pass their skills and wisdom onto others.

Saluria has been freed from the slavery of Getica, and its people have been exposed to a much larger world. They are a resource rich wonderland and the people of the land are curious to share with others.

The Garter States are settling into an eclectic array of realms. Built on a strong foundation of freedom and respect for individuality, they are a proud and unpredictable people with a strong fighting spirit. They will need that spirit as they live under the dappled shadows of Getica. There are pockets of darkness remaining in the land, while the empire itself lies on their border, slumbering but

alive. The land itself was not entirely tamed, so where Getica never touched, as yet undiscovered mysteries await.

As for the Bungara and Manakata, they have witnessed things from afar and have been able learn from everyone in the manner only a spectator can. People unwilling to return to the eastern lands have instead sought out a home among these distant people, sharing their wisdom while learning new skills themselves. It has made both cultures stronger in the exchange. With their numbers on the rise, will they be willing to keep to the old borders?

All of this leaves the land rich in potentials for those daring enough to risk their life in the delving. All that is needed is a handful of people heroic and strong enough to reshape the world.





Cultures

DWARF

DWARVES are a serious, hard working people with a long memory and respect for tradition. They put trust in little, preferring honest steel over magic as a way to create a lasting future.

Names

Dwarves maintain a use name and a clan name. The clan name is usually a traditional one that reflects some deed or trade. So the Bloodaxe clan might hold a warrior tradition while the Bucklesmiths might come from more humble crafting roots. There is always a history to a clan name and it most often reflects a past glory. Clan names can change, but only if there has been an event which has fundamentally changed the entire direction of the clan. Near extinction or prolonged war can be such times where, in dwarven terms, 'Names are made.'

Some dwarves also take titles as part of their name, such as Barrack Doomshaper or Trollbane of the Blackened Hills. Such titles sometimes develop into new clan names, but only under exceptional circumstances.

First names tend to be early Germanic in nature, with harsh consonant sounds prevailing. Names like Okter, Gerald, Drogo and Grimald for men. Female names follow the same tradition, such as Gisela and Hildegarde.

Appearance

As per Dungeons & Dragons Rules Cyclopedia.

Contrary to some rumour, dwarven women do not have beards. The rumour stems from the fact that most dwarves seen outside the halls are male, and those women who do venture out tend to wear a Berkin and full helm. The Berkin is a fake beard, used to hide the gender (see Lifestyle).

Lifestyle

Dwarves live in communities called 'Halls'. Each Hall is a self-sustaining community consisting of multiple clans who live by hunting, underground agriculture and trade. As skilled miners,

crafters and warriors, they possess many skills and resources that have rightfully given dwarves a reputation as wealthy people.

Dwarves are also frugal people. There is an old joke that wire was invented by two dwarves fighting over a copper coin. When dwarves do spend coin, they prefer to buy quality, happily spending well for arms and armour of the highest calibre. As a practical people, they understand that wealth is pointless unless you're alive to admire it.

The one other indulgence dwarves allow for is revelry. While dwarves work hard, they also like to play hard. This involves a lot of good food and drink, as well as song, tales and on rare occasion, dance. While they have a reputation as drunks, they don't tend to drink to excess a great deal, taking their time to enjoy quality alcohol over quantity.

Since the dwarves abandoned the gods (see religion) the birth rate of females has dropped to only one in five. This makes every



woman extremely valuable. As a result, women are less likely to leave the Halls than males. They often form a well-trained Homeguard and are usually the last line of defence if the Halls are invaded.

Those women who do venture out tend to hide their gender and affect a deeper male voice, so they do not become the target of people seeking to harm the dwarven lineage. They wear a fake beard called a Berkin, which hides the face and gender, especially when combined with a full face helm and breastplate.

Dwarves are short on trust but high on honour. Trust within the Halls is paramount, and violating your word to another dwarf is a serious offence. This carries into the work lives of dwarves, who maintain that everyone within the community must work hard towards any common goals. Therefore, everyone does their part and laziness is considered vile.

Education

With the lack of females, the dwarves are well aware this puts their people in danger of extinction. As a result, they are less likely to raid and wage wars than they once were. However, every dwarf is expected to study the martial arts in order to aid in the defence of the Halls.

Other trades are learnt through the family or under apprenticeships. The eldest child is usually expected to carry on the family business, and if they wish to move onto another trade then they should make that known so the second born can be made ready to take their place, and so forth. Thus the first born shoulders responsibility early, but free choice is still allowed.

Women have always been the equal to men in the society, and that hasn't changed. Women are free to choose any career path just like the males. However, they are encouraged to stay within the Halls. As a result, there is a growing tradition to allow a first born female to step down from a family career path that puts them outside the Halls. Preference or not, a female is still free to do as she pleases, though duty to her people is creating bindings that are changing old ways.

Government

Dwarves operate under an elective monarchy. Each Hall is led by a King or Queen who is elected by a council of elders. Once elected, the monarch maintains power until killed or overthrown. Most often, the elders will elect a predecessor from the family of the previous monarch, thus allowing the eldest to maintain the tradition of upholding the family business, in this case the business of rulership. In massive communities consisting of multiple Halls, a High King or Queen will be elected out of the individual Hall Kings.

The Elected monarch does not automatically pass their title onto their married partner. The individual is the one elected, not

the family. So while the partner will often rule in the absence of the elected monarch, they retain no rights upon the removal of their partner.

The monarch has full power to make all decisions for their Hall. However, they rely on the council of elders for advice. Monarchs who repeatedly refuse to heed the advice of the elders risk the loss of their power. It is the job of the elders to argue, but the right of the monarch to decide. Therefore any government decisions can take as long or as short a time as the monarch allows. This means certain controversial topics can remain unresolved for generations, but in desperate times the dwarves can be faster to react than other peoples.

Law

Dwarves do maintain a system of law which is focused primarily on the safety and maintenance of the Hall. Theft and murder within the Halls are very rare, but are usually punishable by heavy debt. No family, no matter how wealthy, can bear many transgressions before becoming bankrupt. Once bankrupt the dwarf either becomes an indentured servant of those they owe, or they are cast out of the community. It's not uncommon for a family to cast out a disruptive member who seems incapable of maintaining the laws and who consistently brings the family name into disrepute.

Dwarves do not maintain a police force, however family elders and the crown periodically deputise people to maintain the law as required. Most cases are sorted out by individual elders, however especially serious crimes that effect many families might be brought before the entire council and/or the monarch.

As well as theft and murder, lies and matters of honour are also matters of law. If you swear by your family name and break your vow then your lie taints the entire family. Few dwarves would ever risk such a taint, especially as being known as a dishonourable lineage will hinder courtship potentials.

Execution is extremely rare, and only ever carried out to end something that might pose a continued threat to the Halls.

Economy

As devout miners, dwarves are skilled with all forms of working stone and metal. Their practical dedication to craftsmanship means dwarven arms are often favoured by warriors across the world.

They also export raw minerals, though these practical people tend to prefer to work the materials into finished products in order to maximise profits.

Dwarves are also known as key suppliers of oil, tar and alcohol. Dwarven distilleries produce some of the purest alcohol in the known world. The alcohol itself is often brewed from waste matter, such as vegetable and fruit peelings.



Dwarves import fruit, sugar and wood. They usually hunt for themselves and use the leather for the creation of clothes and armour, but they often must supplement what they hunt with additional meat and hides.

Military

Dwarves maintain a continual roster of martial training and military service. As such, the entire population is ready to mobilise for war if needed.

Dwarves once provided some of the most fearsome mercenaries in the world, however lower numbers of births has forced that trade to drop off. Now, dwarves taking a tour of duty generally just act as patrollers, guards and scouts, ensuring the Hall is kept safe.

Religion/Philosophy

Only a few centuries ago the dwarves were devout worshippers of the Immortals. However, as a part of the advance of the Empire of Getica, powerful undead forces erupted from beneath the great Halls. Trapped, with undead armies both above and below, the dwarves turned to the Gods for help.

No miracles came. Instead, the dwarven people were beset by disease with their dying people rising from the dead to create even more chaos deep within the Halls. Eventually the dwarves were forced to flee their halls and break through enemy lines to run like rabbits away from the Empire forces.

Dwarves felt that the trust they put in their gods was violated; a serious crime to the dwarves. As a result the dwarves decided that the only people worthy of trust were themselves. They abandoned their gods and dismantled all shrines. While they do not oppose the Immortals or their servants, they remain respectfully detached from them. Some dwarves still hold onto old practices, but no crown recognises religion as a worthy contribution to society.

Into this void left by the abolishment of religion the dwarves poured more thought into other philosophies. What has arisen are two principle divisions referred to as the Rock and the Cog.

Followers of the Rock believe that firm traditions help maintain a stable and structured society. Followers of the Cog believe that mechanisation allows the work output of each dwarf to be multiplied through the development of technical machinery. Followers of the Rock suggest that such advancements lead to the loss of quality work and the proliferation of laziness, while the Followers of the Cog counter, that with fading populations, it's vital that each person is equipped for maximum efficiency.

At this stage the debate between the two philosophies is heated but has not lead to any form of violence. However, the debates are gaining in ferocity.

ELF

ELVES are deeply mysterious people who hide their communities in the most remote environs in the world. While primarily tree dwellers, they can be found anywhere the natural surroundings provides them with a way to keep their society isolated and protected.

Appearance

As per Dungeons & Dragons Rules Cyclopedia.

Lifestyle

Elves strive to meld their life and their society as seamlessly as possible into the natural surroundings. When in forests their houses are built high in tree branches, where each tree is gently coaxed to grow in a way that supports the house, while the elves in turn care for the tree. So it is that wherever the elves are, be it in the depths of a swamp or upon the icy peak of a high mountain, the housing is as unique as the environment.

Elves have little concept of ownership among each other, so if an elf admires the work of another, the item is often gifted as the work itself is purely done for the art of it. This isn't to say the work isn't also practical, as good craftsmanship is an art all of its own.

This lax sense of ownership does not extend to other people, or when outside the community. The Elves learnt long ago that other people do not hold the same admiration for artistic pursuits and will lie for personal gain and profit.

Enjoyment is central to elven society, with any pursuit being done not for the welfare of others, but for the simple pleasure of it. Fortunately, supporting the community at large falls under the general heading of enjoyable pursuits.

Unfortunately, trends and fads can result in certain trades being abandoned in favour of others. This can lead to serious shortages of goods and services. In these cases, magic is often employed to make up for the lack. If magic will not suffice, then trade or even the hiring of outside help might be required. Any such trends usually give way to practicality eventually, as the abandoned art suddenly comes back into vogue for the simple reason that it seems new again.

This lack of focus means elves are wonderful creators, but not great empire builders. Settlements generally consist of many small villages spread over a large area, with each household trying to find the most picturesque place they can to live.

Outsiders often misread the laid back attitude of the Elves, but it would be a misnomer to call elves lazy. They are simply creatures of passion, but they admire all aspects of life and thus



trades are often followed for years. So while lacking in focus, the elves make up for it with sheer diversity of knowledge.

The family structure is never really held much past adulthood, with younger elves usually leaving home early to find their own place to express themselves. So while family connections are valued, they are not binding in the same way most other races interpret such connections.

Likewise marriages do not last long and the marriage ceremony is simply a declaration of companionship which can be dissolved at will. Marriages might be between multiple partners, and any such arrangement is usually open, allowing sexual relationships to be held outside the marriage without any hurt feelings; though tales of deeper passions fuel many elven songs and tales.

When travelling outside their communities the elves usually wear face masks and voluminous clothing. As they are so rarely outside their communes, the masks help them feel safer, much like a good luck talisman. The masks also serve to conceal their beauty which, especially among human lands, can incite inappropriate and potentially dangerous behaviour.

Education

Within their own community an elf will freely trade knowledge with their own kind. Their natural curiosity will mean that even without structured schooling, the elf child will soon pick up many languages and skills just by following their desires. Having such a long natural lifespan helps this process as it gives time to flit from trade to trade and learn all they want.

Fighting and magic skills are a staple among the elven arts. Their combat styles tend to be fluid and graceful, while their spells often have little flourishes that display personal tweaks and styles.

Government

Each larger community is led by a king and queen. Despite the title, it is in fact a Meritocracy, with the role of King and Queen taken by whoever seems to be best qualified for it at the time. There may be little to no relationship between the king and queen, they are simply political positions which allow for important decisions to be arbitrated. The actual titles seem to hail from the distant past, but in the modern day they are simply titles of convenience.

The Elven community itself is largely ungoverned. No taxes are charged and there are no demands for special services. Elven Courts are really nothing more than open discussion forums, where people work out any issues that arise. They also serve as pomp and ceremony for

outsiders. Courts are held on the new and the full moon, and are usually attended by the monarchs and anyone else from the community who wants to attend.

Law

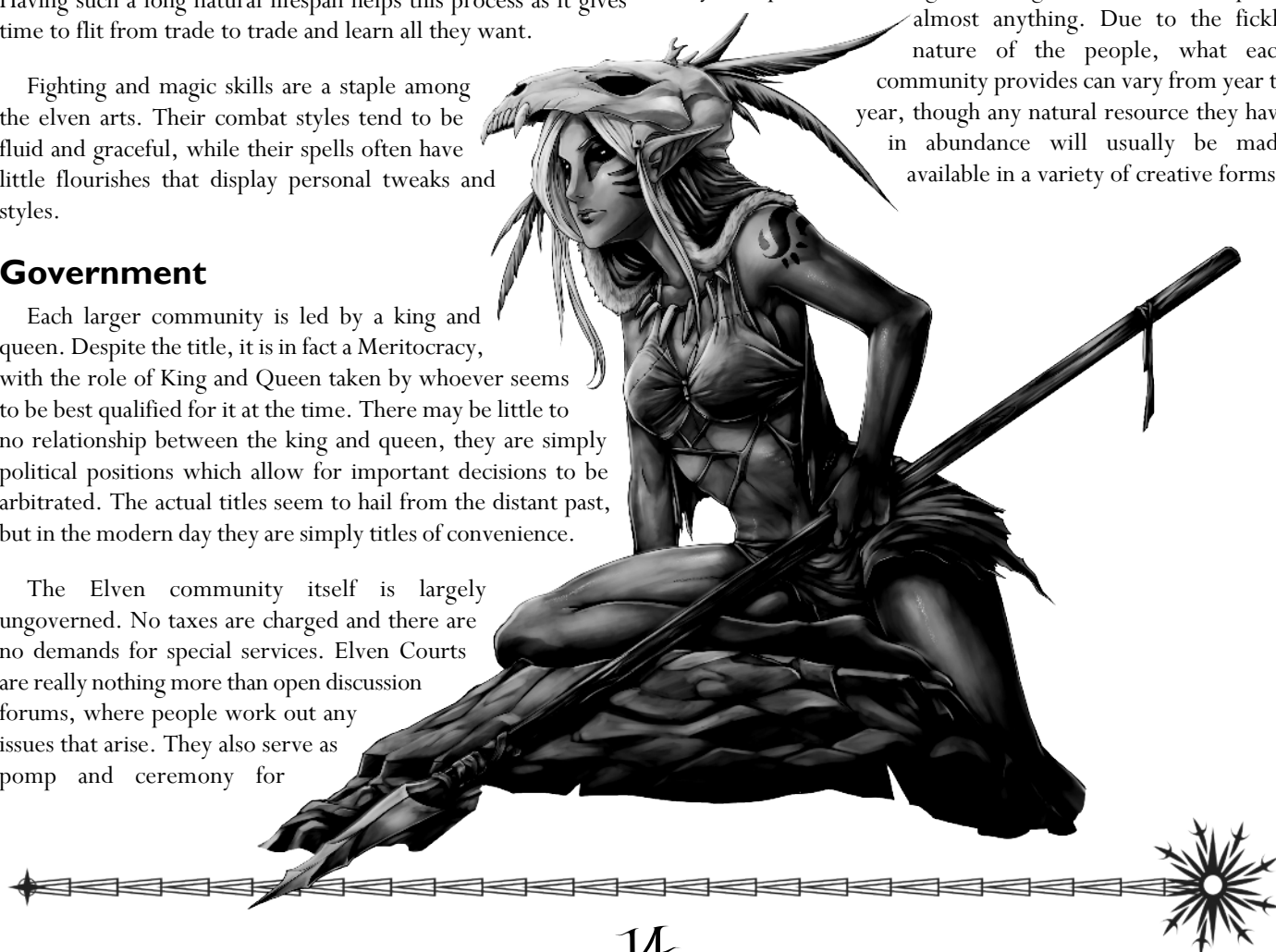
Elven law is as loose and unstructured as their society, with few established taboos. In fact, outsiders can often end up on the wrong side of laws made up just for their benefit, if their presence is no longer desired.

Law is enforced by individuals, who band together as needed if an offender might pose special danger. It is very much a 'natural' law, with the penalty usually matching the crime. So, kill an elf and you will probably face death yourself. Your only real court of appeal is the king and queen. If you appeal to the king and queen, they may rule on your behalf, overturning the decisions made by their subjects.

Economy

Elves are skilled in many things, and with little attachment to anything they will often trade away their possessions for a new interest. Most common among their products are artistic creations, such as carvings, music and clothing.

Elven silk is highly prized, and made from spider silk. They also produce a wide range of dyes and scents, supplying colourful clothing and richly perfumed oil to the highest courts in the world. They also produce clothing, leather goods, armour, weapons, almost anything. Due to the fickle nature of the people, what each community provides can vary from year to year, though any natural resource they have in abundance will usually be made available in a variety of creative forms.



Elves most often demand raw resources in trade, such as ore and exotic foods, while precious and semi-precious stones and metal are often in demand for a variety of purposes. Elven tastes can vary, so what each community demands can fluctuate. A clever merchant is always looking for something new and interesting to trade to the elven folk to create the next fad.

Military

The elven nations do not have a consistent military force, however they do maintain many individual orders of knights. These orders are usually created from some history or need, such as the defence of the valley or for a charismatic leader.

The Orders train warriors and serve as a repository of martial and magical knowledge. Individuals are free to leave an order or even join other orders, though entry usually requires some sort of entrance test. The nature of the test varies greatly, from a simple hunt or the telling of a stirring tale, through to lengthy trials that might take decades.

Fortunately for elvenkind, glory is highly regarded. Just the promise that their name might appear in a ballad or epic will often be enough to fire the imagination of an elf and stir him into action. Therefore even in the fickle environment of the elven way of life, Knightly Orders have histories that can be measured in centuries.

Religion/Philosophy

As with all other aspects of life, religion is a fairly laid back affair with the elves. Many elves follow one immortal or another for a time, often inviting their influence at key life events, but any such practices are rarely maintained. As such, there are no lasting priesthoods.

Elves do tend to believe in the Immortals, and they do believe they are beings worthy of respect. Yet the long life of the elven people means they are not as concerned about matters of life after death in the same way other races are. Instead, the Immortals are viewed simply as beings of great power, but as being distant and little involved in daily life. Therefore elves have little fear of the Immortals, but don't seek to cause them insult either.

HUMAN, BUNGARA AKA THE PAINTED PEOPLE

AMONG the striated plateaus of Bungara, live tribes of noble horsemen. The land is harsh, but these people have made survival an art. Despite initial appearances though, they are far from being savages.

Appearance

With weather tanned skin and slightly almond shaped eyes, they tend towards darker shades of hair with a full variety of normal human eye colours.

Many races know them as the Painted People, due to the tendency for the warriors to paint their skin with coloured clays. The painting serves not only as a form of artistic expression and as a way of identification, but also as sunscreen against the harsh plains sunlight. Horses are also decorated in like manner.

Clothing tends to be light and simple, made with softened hides and reinforced with bone. They decorate clothing, with feathers, fangs, furs and claws serving to display the prowess or wealth of the person.

Lifestyle

Living in self-sustaining tribal societies, the Bungara shelter from the harsh climate by digging into the softer layers of sedimentary rock to create low flat caves. In the shadow of the cliff faces, canopies are constructed and the people gather and work on the valley floors.

The Bungara live the simple life of hunters, living on the herds that graze the tough saltbushes and wiry grasses of the plains. They share this life with their tough little plains ponies, which they treat as members of their own family.

While life is tough, the people are happy and pragmatic. They accept death as a natural part of the cycle of life. They celebrate life in many ways, and the harsh struggle for survival bonds the people of a tribe as a close knit family.

Hunting and other fighting skills are highly prized, but so too is the wisdom of the elders; the guile of rogues; the magic of wizards; and the guidance of the gods and their clerics.

Education

Each member of the tribe contributes to the education of the young, imparting what wisdom they have gained. The young learn to be discerning when listening to the wisdom of the elders but they are also taught to be respectful and value any wisdom, even that which is wrong, as sometimes you cannot know what is right without first learning what is wrong.



There is a strong oral tradition among the Bungara, with fact and fiction becoming blurred for the sake of education. This adds a mythic element to the tales, where heroes are granted powers beyond the norm to meet equally inflated threats. This imagination has given the Bungara a rich lore and the ability to view life potential without limitations.

Government

Each tribe is led by a Chieftain. The Chieftain can be of either gender, receiving the role usually through election by the elders. The actual balance of power is shared fairly equally among the tribe, with fireside discussions being the way the direction of the tribe is usually determined. As such, the Chieftain's role is most often that of arbitrator or chairman. In the end though, the chieftain makes the final decision.

In times of war the chieftain's role changes; he takes direct command of the tribe and is expected to make snap decisions, often with little to no consultation with others. The nature of this shift in role means that in war time a different chieftain might be elected for the duration of the strife, returning to someone else when the trouble has passed.

Law

Law and government are one and the same. Acts which threaten the stability of the tribe are judged and punished by the tribe. Acts of physical ordeal are usually carried out in addition to the payment of restitution, the willingness to perform the ordeal indicating that the accused is truly sorry for their misdeed.

Economy

Trade is uncommon, usually only taking place between tribes during set times in the year, where one tribe will meet another on neutral ground to share news, trade goods and tell stories. It is also a good time to find potential mates outside the tribe.

Those outside the Bungara who trade with the Painted People usually trade for clay pigments and simple handcrafts. Bungara make high quality leather and bone goods and their beading is highly sought by some, particularly the elves who like to include elements of Bungara beading into their masks.

The Bungara prefer weapons of wood, stone and bone. While they see the value of metal weaponry, lacking forges of their own they find the maintenance difficult and impractical.

Military

All members of a tribe are expected to contribute what they can to defence, though only hunters and warriors tend to engage in actual battle. With no standing army, and the desperate need for hunters to return to the hunt, any battles are usually resolved as swiftly as possible.

Bungara are taught to shoot from horseback and are among the best archers in the world. They use long spears as lances, and an array of axes, spears, stone maces and flint or obsidian knives. They can always count on the magical support of their shaman who tend to be clerics, though arcane magic is practiced by some.

Religion/Philosophy

The Bungara respect all life and all Immortals. Even Immortals considered to be evil or anti-life are respected as valid aspects of the cycle of life and thus worthy of respect.

However, the Bungara are most strongly drawn to nature gods, such as the Lady of Seasons and Sharm, the Master of Flowers. They view all of life as aspects of a great whole, so their religious practices also involve giving thanks to the spirits of their prey and the many animals they share their lands with.

HUMAN, GARTER STATES

THE Garter States are a loose band of minor political divisions. They are confederated by a mutual protection pact against the Empire of Getica. This thin pact is actually where the Garter States gain the name, because like a garter, it's a small thing upon which are pinned the hopes of many.

They were established first in Forecastle when it was overthrown as the first act of the Age of Jackals. Since that initial foothold, pieces of the old empire have been carved out and individual states have sprung up in the wake.

Appearance

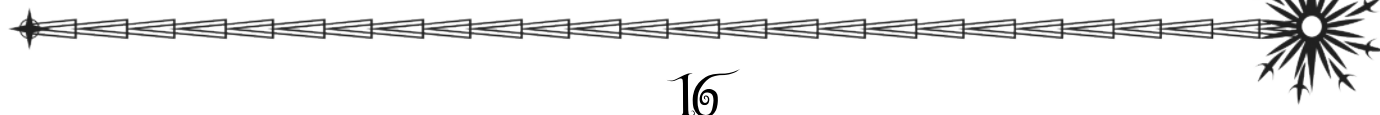
As the Garter States are a random collection of people there is no set appearance. In fact, the Garter States are perhaps the most diverse peoples of the known world. Even orcs and goblins have found cracks within the Garter States to call home.

Lifestyle

Every state has its own laws and rules which means that the lifestyle and living conditions also varies by state. However, as a country founded by rogues, there is a strong drive to maintain personal freedom and expression. Given the ease of hopping borders, most realms offer incentives to stay, rather than binding laws to hold people.

Education

Different realms have different levels of education, however in the desire to create infrastructure, many realms offer a variety of organised schools. Whatever formal education is on offer, almost every member of the Garter States will pick up a certain degree of streetwise as an essential survival skill.



Government

The Garter States are bound only by the mutual defence pact, helping each other defend the realm from any incursion from the old Empire of Getica. Other than that one binding principal, it's every realm for themselves.

This ability for anyone with sufficient power to create their own realm has led to a chaotic collection of titles and methods of government. Some people have declared themselves kings, others as robber barons, the realms are as diverse as the people who create them.

Machiavellian politics abound, but prolonged political issues that threaten to undermine the confederacy are discouraged. Rumour has it that there are political roots still buried in Forecastle which were established and maintained by the initial captains and heroes of the Pirate War. If this shadow council does exist, then it is likely the key factor in maintaining the power structure with enough flux for freedom and growth, but ordered enough to maintain strength.

Law

Laws are highly varied with each realm entitled to maintain their own laws and law enforcement. Due to the expense of such a structure, many realms elect to use the Adventurer Guilds to troubleshoot problematic issues. In fact, this tendency for open mindedness and frontier attitude has led to a proliferation of Adventurer Guilds among the Garter States.

Economy

Many realms have different demands and supplies, dependant on natural resources and trades.

The most common exports are adventurers and mercenaries, both of which are in ready supply having honed their skills along the frontier of the Garter States.

Military

Each realm maintains whatever army they see fit. The only required responsibility is for each state to have something to support defence should the old empire attack. One responsibility shared by all is the defence of the Black Corridor, a narrow mountain pass that is the only realistic access point for an invasion from the old empire. Most realms simply pay a tax to fund mercenaries, the rates for which are set down in the original charter based solely upon the land value of the realm. With no centralised government, many argue that the rates assigned to some realms are grossly out of date, but the confederation demands they are paid. Some realms contribute to the Corridor directly with troops and supplies, treating the zone as a training and testing ground for their troops.

Religion/Philosophy

While most realms have their patron deities, the range of choice is legion. The only religion universally condemned is any worship of Getica, as the Garter States do not recognise him as a true Immortal. Any attempt to create a shrine in the open has been ripped down, not by any governing body, but by the people.

Doubtless there are hidden shines to Getica out there, any worshippers of the deathless god had best keep their prayers to themselves.

Notable Realms

With the wide diversity of realms within the Garter States, almost anything is possible. Here are some examples of particularly influential or notable realms.

Order of the Briar Rose

A holy order of knights known as the Briar Rose have taken this realm as their base of operations. Initially beginning as an Adventurer Guild, the Order became a fully-fledged order of knights under the paladin Aenor, who established the order in the name of the goddesses he calls the three sisters, consisting of Liliana Thrice-born, Chitenae, and Shae.

To honour Shae, the knights often take solo tours where they act alone or with other adventurers to right wrongs and protect the innocent; all the usual hero stuff.

Swamps of Garm

To the hot southern side of the realm is a dark swamp filled with insects, prehistoric beasts and hydra. It was once the home of a native people, but the land was hunted to extinction by the old empire who converted the population into slaves. The land is still filled with the dark taint of ancient suffering.

The land has since become home to the Riverside Inn, a tavern and travellers lodge which has made a fortune as a staging point for various Adventurer Guilds. The Inn now has other businesses dotted around it, forming a small village offering the types of services demanded by adventurers. Prices are high, and the bulk of the proceeds goes directly back to the inn.

Tower of Lassitude

Established by the wizard Luitgard the Laconic, the Tower of Lassitude is a single great tower devoted to the hedonism of Luitgard. The wizard charges people a high fee to step into his tower of wonders where he offers all manner of delights not offered anywhere else. He maintains an array of servants who are all kept blindfolded. The servants provide the most exotic of delicacies as well as catering to all manner of dark desires.

The laws are simple. No guest is to interfere with another guest, and all bills must be paid on exit. Failure to pay your bill



in full results in joining the servants until you pay off your debt. The servants are paid premium prices for their services, thus attracting people from many levels of society looking for a fast way to fund an easier life.

The Black Corridor

Bordering the Garter States and the Old Empire is a formidable mountain range. The only viable way for a large force to cross that border is via a deep valley called The Black Corridor.

Rather than being held by any one person, the Corridor is the shared responsibility of all realms to protect. Guard towers bristle with siege machines and on the Garter side are grand training grounds where weapon masters teach their trade.

Yellow Bee Hill

A jhan settlement not far from Forecastle. It was resettled by the original land owners once Getica was driven out, and is now one of the primary providers of alcohol in the area. Rumour has it that their operation is actually managed by a dwarven ex-adventurer and master distiller. This would explain the high degree of disciplined organisation the jhan of Yellow Bee Hill seem to have. While mead is their primary export, they also make many potent spirits.

HUMAN, GETICA EMPIRE

ONCE an empire that spanned the bulk of the continent, the Getica Empire has fallen into decline. Emperor Getica has sat the throne for centuries and by all reports he is undying. In fact, eternal life is the gift offered for devout worship of the Undying God. To outside eyes it is not immortality that is granted, but undeath.

Appearance

Natives of the empire are Caucasian, with an average height of around 5'6" with dark hair and green or brown eyes. However, many other cultures have been absorbed into the empire mixing their blood into the gene pool.

Clothing tends to be very conservative, with high collars, lace and ruffles for the wealthy, and simple coarse cloth and leather for the commoners.

Lifestyle

The empire is sustained by slavery and crushing feudalism. Common folk are either legal slaves or live as slaves, forced to pay high taxes for their meagre lands. Commoners live in fear of the authorities, knowing full well that a bad season can land them in slave collars, or worse.

The nobles enjoy all the opulence that exploitation of a lesser class can provide. Locked behind firm gates and guarded by soldiers made devout by fear, the nobles live a life of bliss. The only demand made upon them is to keep their people under control and to pay the taxes due.

The great spires of the City of Getica form a dark citadel into which only the favoured of the emperor are allowed. Rumour suggests that within those walls are the true horrors of Getica; the hordes of undead which were created as favour for their service to the crown.

Women are second class citizens and are never put into trusted positions nor allowed as members of the clergy. Noble women maintain their position of opulence only while they have a husband. While their husbands live, they may rule on his behalf, but may never contradict his choices.

Education

Nobles are trained by the finest of tutors, carefully conditioned to carry on the tyrannical rule of their parents. They are taught that undeath is eternal life, and that Getica is a god.

For the common folk, there is nothing but that which they can learn from those around them. Orphans learn to live on the streets or die. Those lucky enough to be born into a functional family might be able to continue the family trade, and hopefully learn to avoid the notice of the upper class.

Government

There was once a time when Emperor Getica led at the very forefront of battle. These days he remains upon his throne where it is said by the nobles that he tends court daily.

The Emperor conducts business outside the capital through one of his six Senses; The Hand, The Eyes, The Nose, The Ears, The Voice and The Spirit. Each sense is represented by a cowed figure who has had all other sense destroyed so they can focus only upon the one sense from which they take their name. They are hideous and fearsome to behold, with lips sewn shut, eye sockets empty, ears or hands cut off.

Each Sense is responsible for a different aspect of governing. The Hand directs the military, the Ears controls the network of spies and informants, The Eyes scout etc.

Each realm is controlled by a noble and his family, and as in any feudal system, they in turn have lesser nobles beneath them and so forth.

Law

Magic is illegal, including clerical magic of any type other than that used by the official clerics of Getica. There is an active and

brutal Inquisition which upholds the laws. The punishment for unsanctioned magic use is death, often without trial.

Lesser crimes are largely ignored unless the crime is against the nobles or the functioning of the empire. Most crimes against the crown are punishable by death. Very minor crimes are sometimes punished by forced slavery. Not uncommonly, the offender for a simple crime might be put to death and his entire family, even his entire village, might be put into slavery. All law is carried out either by the nobles, their military, or by the Inquisitors.

Economy

The Empire looks after its own, mostly because no other political bodies will trade with them. There is however a thriving market in slaves brought in from outside the realm. The only export is in coin and at times dark magic.

The nobles are sustained by the people, and the people starve. It is not a healthy economy. Life is cheap and death cheaper, so for the common person, real value is found only in practical needs like food and safety.

Military

The Empire still maintains a strong standing military. Not only does every realm have its own standing army to keep the peace, the emperor himself has legions of 'Immortals' under his command. These immortals are hordes of undead, led by even more powerful undead such as Lich and Vampires.

While the military might of the Empire is still strong, the most potent weapon it has always wielded is fear and corruption. They will often employ clandestine means to sow disease into a place, then simply use dark magic to raise the dead right there within the city walls to fight from within. This proved a very successful practice until other nations started to burn their dead. The practice of burning the dead is still the principle way to dispose of bodies in most lands near the Empire borders.

Religion/Philosophy

There is only one accepted religion, that of Getica the Undying. Having an actual Immortal sitting upon the throne tends to breed a certain devotion among the people that serve him. Many common folk try to find favour with the temples of Getica in the hope that one of their children might be accepted for training, thus offering the child a better life. With so many willing applicants to the temples, the religion is rich in manpower.



HUMAN, MANAKATA

THE dark skinned Manakata are masters of magic. The history of many spells in popular use today can be traced to the these ancient learned people.

Appearance

They are tall and dark skinned with aquiline features. Beards are popular among men who maintain themselves with perfumed oils. Women are small breasted with long shapely legs. Hair is universally black and greys with age.

Preferred clothing is light, flowing and often revealing for both men and women. Tattoos are common, usually depicting decorative shapes and patterns.

Lifestyle

There are two classes of people in Manakata; those with magic and those without. Clerical magic is acceptable enough to be included among those with magic, but it is the arcane mages who run the country.

If you do not have magic then you either serve one of the mage households or you don't work. Of course there is an active underground of thieves and free people, but they know better than to steal anything important from the great households for fear of bringing down the wrath of a people with near limitless magical resources.

If you are a spell caster, you are a part of one of the mage households, or serving there for a time as a student. Mages are essentially the noble caste, and their word is always worth more than the word of someone who is not 'gifted'. This prejudice against those without magic is not concealed in any way.

While the class division is wide, life for those within the realm is fairly good. People tend to be well fed with good housing and ready access to quality services. Magic is used to harness beasts to handle the most unpleasant tasks, from the Black Pudding in the sewer systems to the Wyvern riding cavalry.

This quality of life means that despite the prejudice, the people of Manakata tend to be fairly happy with the way things are run.

Education

Every major household maintains their own school, though attendance is strictly for the gifted and only on approval. Fees tend to be high, and the prestige of each school is regularly in the spotlight, especially during many of the inter-school magical competitions held throughout the year.

People of any land can apply to join a school, providing they are able to pay the fees and live by the rules. Most of the best trained wizards in the world have spent at least some time in the hallowed towers of Manakata training houses. Being a student of magic is a full time pursuit, and training is not without its risks.

For the common folk without magic, or for the hedge wizards without coin enough for training, there is public schooling available. Public schools are open to all as a service to the people, where a variety of subjects are taught. A school day will usually be around four hours, with three to four lessons a week. Subjects are mostly geared toward equipping students with the skills needed to better serve the mages, including basic literacy and numeracy, as well as lessons on etiquette and house cleaning. People are free to attend or not as they desire, but attendance is high because a servant who has attracted great favour from one of the wizards can expect a life of luxury.

There is a handful of barracks and attached fighter schools available. These schools primarily train the standing military in the art of Wyvern handling, lancing, horsemanship and of course many styles of combat. It's a diverse range of skills as different wizards have different preferences. Students have the option of either paying for their training in coin or in service. Those who pay in service spend some time employed by one or more of the houses as part of the standing army, while those who pay coin are free to do as they please with their free time.

Government

Manakata is a Mageocracy, ruled by a council of eleven from the Great Houses. This number has changed over time as houses have risen and fallen. In order to be included (or excluded) it takes the vote of all the established members. Some Houses have purchased their way in, some have earned it through deed and merit, but all standing members must agree for the House to be included.

There are also many minor Houses which rule their own little demesnes. They are expected to lend aid if asked to by the Great Houses, and in turn can expect aid should they be under threat. The Great Houses tend to be slow to respond though, preferring to stay out of contentious disputes between minor Houses.

Law

There is a standing police force known as Ravens. Ravens wear distinctive long cotton coats and act as judge, jury and executioner throughout the realm. Each acts independently but can count on the full resources of the local 'Nest' (the local police station) if they need support. Ravens are almost always mages or clerics, however they have access to other commoner men-at-arms from the Nest.

Ravens are appointed by the Great Houses and their actions are rarely questioned when dealing with commoners, with no

trial needed. However, if that commoner is the member of a household, then the Raven can be called upon to issue a report to the household regarding the circumstances of their actions. Most Ravens file this report without being asked for it. The report can be taken and presented to the Great Houses for further action if a House thinks they have been wronged in some way.

Ravens must show considerable caution when dealing with other mages, who are always entitled to a full trial. These trials can be unusual in nature given they often involve weird magical experimentation and other oddities. As the court cases are open to the public, they offer a spectacle for the common folk and mages alike. Of course the mages are entitled to the better seats while the commoners watch from the 'pit'. Most mages accused of a crime will usually seek to make restitution outside the courts to prevent becoming a public spectacle and risk losing reputation. Each case is assigned a judge and due to the public interest in the proceedings, many of the judges have created entertaining personalities for the amusement of the crowd.

Most crimes are paid for in service, either directly to the household wronged or as a public service. This service is negotiated during the court case, but for mages of sufficient experience, it usually involves the creation of magical items for use by the household or the state. If a criminal has special skills, then those skills might be called upon instead. So a Monster Hunter might be tasked with obtaining a new Carrion Crawler for the janitors or to obtain Wyvern eggs for the air cavalry.

The law is harder on the common folk, especially if they transgress against a mage. An instant death sentence is not uncommon, and as the sentence can be enacted on the spot, a criminal had better be ready to either flee or to plead a quick case as to what skills of value they can offer in exchange.

Economy

Manakata is relatively rich in natural resources, and the use of magic makes the extraction of many of those resources relatively easy. They also have a well-educated population with a wide range of skills, meaning manufacture of goods is easy to arrange within the realm.

The focus on magical studies and innovative use of creatures does put a high demand on unusual herbs and monsters. Manakata is exactly the place you might take something like a Dragon egg, or venom from the Medusa. Such unusual trade has made Manakata a gathering point for all manner of hunters and adventurer guilds.

Knowledge is the principle export, and most of the Houses are funded by training and by the production of magical items. It is one of the few places in the world where you will find shops where you can purchase a magical sword right off the rack, or buy a six pack of Potions of Healing being marketed as "The Adventurer's Lunch Pack."

Military

As well as their formidable magical might, Manakata also maintains a highly trained military force. Each House maintains their own army which is hired from one of the fighter barracks. While usually just a training and mustering ground, each barrack also functions as an unaligned standing army which the Great Houses can call upon at any time.

All manner of soldiers can be found in service. Most notable is the Wyvern air cavalry, which has benefited from a centuries old breeding program and skilled monster handlers. Most houses will also seed their standing army with their own students and lesser house members during times of need, so any conventional force will usually include a little magical help.

The might of the Manakata has meant the lands were never taken by the old empire, nor ransacked by any invasions. Even bandits know to stay well clear of Manakata, thus allowing the place to prosper.

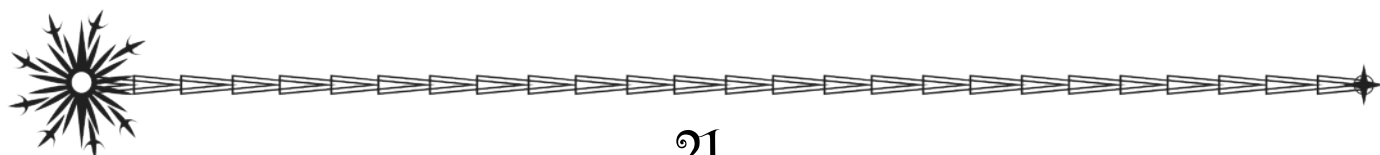
The military might be used for anything from the subdual of a drunken mage through to rounding up Owl Bears for an eccentric musical performance. This diverse range of threat management Manakata soldiers are rarely frazzled by the unusual.

Religion/Philosophy

Religion is largely viewed as the poor man's path to magic. There is no law against the practice of any religion, so long as your practices do not violate other laws. It's just that religion is considered a peasant's pursuit. Churches of many types have gained permission to operate on the lands of the various houses, and becoming a member of the clergy is one way a poor commoner might find a measure of acceptance among the magic user elite.

However, clerics will only ever play second fiddle to arcane magic wielders. They are seen as offering valuable services, but are not worthy of real respect. The clergy are the heroes of the common man, but the poor cousin to a true mage.

There is no denying the power of the Immortals though, so the mages of Manakata give them their space and their due, and it is considered poor form to take actions that might draw the ire of the gods.





HUMAN, SALURIAN

DEEP within the rain forest and swamp lands of Saluria resides a proud warrior people. Once valued for their strength as slaves by Getica, they are now a free people brought out of barbarity by the empire and are trying to find their place in the larger world. They are a proud and noble people, but still prone to bouts of savagery.

Appearance

They are large built Caucasians who usually decorate their bodies with tattoos. Most are muscular and healthy folk with hair

that ranges from brown to blonde and eyes in the usual human spectrum.

Men often shave their heads but rarely ever their beards. Hair is usually braided and then sealed with coloured clay which serves to ward off lice and keep the hair in place. They often have an acrid smell which comes from a native herbal blend used to ward off biting insects. The smell is not natural and will wash off over time, but it can give away how long a Salurian has been away from their homeland.

Lifestyle

Traditionally the Salurian people are hunters and fishers, living off the land in simple tribal societies. These days contact with the other cultures has led to the growth of larger share settlements which are forming trade hubs for the outlying villages.



Life is not easy. While food is in abundance, other services are not. Therefore people are equipped with whatever their small community can provide. Better equipment can be sourced from the larger towns, but the Salurian people have not yet adjusted their life to the process of supply and demand.

Not only are the fauna and flora of the lands a hazard, there is a fair degree of predation among the Salurians themselves. There are also long running feuds between the Salurians and the other forest and swamp people, such as the Lizardmen, Troglydtes and even Elves. The regular threat of battle means most Salurians follow a warrior path.

Education

There is no formal system of education, with each family taking care of the instruction of their members. The closest thing to formal schooling occurs when parents take turns in sharing the care and education of children.

Natural lore is taught from an early age. Children are told which plants and animals pose the greatest risk, and how to mitigate those risks. Most are trained in how to look after themselves in a fight, learning not just weapon skills, but the arts of stealth and how to flee a fight.

Many villages have witches and shaman who maintain a family tradition as magic users or clerics. They might be coerced to take on members from another family for training, especially if they do not have an heir of their own.

Government

Each village governs itself, traditionally following the wishes of the elders. During times of special difficulty, those with applicable skills are respected for their knowledge and usually take command until the threat has passed.

Some tribes prefer to have a single chief lead the tribe. This shift in power usually takes place when a

particularly charismatic leader arises and pushes the people toward a set purpose. When such leaders die, leadership tends to return to the elders.

Law

There are no formal laws, nor any formal police force, the village looks after its own, and those who threaten that peace will usually face the whole village. Acts such as murder, rape and theft are all universally considered punishable offences. The method of punishment has no set guidelines, but death, dismemberment and expulsion are not uncommon.

One common way to deal with serious transgressors is to wound them and leave them near the lair of an apex predator. If they survive, then the gods have deemed them forgiven. This also has a tendency to give local apex predators a taste for human flesh and an unrealistic evaluation of the human place on the food chain.

Economy

Being food rich but product poor, the Salurians only really have one major export; manpower. They regularly trade away their services as mercenaries or labourers, hoping to return home rich enough to raise a family.

Salurians are well accustomed to living with few tools and resources other people take for granted, so they are not prone to trade high for such 'luxuries'. However, a good trader will take time to determine what a particular tribe can supply, and what that tribe wants in return. Salurians appreciate people willing to operate openly and fairly with them.

Military

There is no standing military. Tribes are expected to band together to take care of themselves. If a threat is great enough, those tribes under threat might band together for a time against the common foe.

One thing all Salurians have in common is a love for a good fight. They believe that death in battle, especially in defence of their people, grants a person favour in the afterlife. They also love the simple competition, relishing the physical struggle as the purest form of personal expression. This attitude makes the Salurians tough fighters who are constantly looking for ways to improve their skills.

Religion/Philosophy

Salurian religion is a complex affair, with villages maintaining their own small gods which are seen as representations of the local Spirits; however, many of the Immortals have found followings in the lands of Saluria.

The most popular established religion is Sharm, which appeals to the competitive nature of the Salurians and their belief in



natural law. Sharm boasts at least one shrine in each of the larger towns.

Salurians are well accustomed to every village having its own small god, proving they are a very tolerate people towards all religions. This has led to a flourishing growth of missionaries and representatives from many faiths setting up shines in hopes of gaining new followers. This universal respect for all religions has waned in places where followers and gods alike have indicated intolerance of others.

HUMAN, SHAE

THE Shae are named after their goddess Shae, Lady of the Roads. They are a gypsy-like people who are almost constantly on the move, taking in other travellers and providing assistance to those in need.

Appearance

There is no native appearance to the Shae, they will take in anyone, even demi-humans, providing they are willing to live by the teachings of Shae. The Shae lifestyle means they tend to be healthy.

Lifestyle

The Shae live on the road, travelling from place to place, trading their services for land to camp, and for food and other supplies. Under the teachings of Shae, they may not remain in any one place for longer than a moon, no matter how severe the weather.

As they are constantly travelling, life is difficult at times, but it is also a life the Shae work hard at filling with joy and excitement. Evenings are filled with dance, song and all manner of performance, both for their own enjoyment and as practice for performances when they reach the next settlement. They are a very free spirited people with a genuine love of life.

As people who value life, the Shae are happy to lend aid to those in need. They will tend the sick and protect the harried. Many people join the Shae by first having been the recipient of their aid. Providing the person is of good character and their inclusion will not bring insurmountable harm upon the Shae, they are welcome.

This tendency to welcome strangers, many of whom might have shady pasts, has led to many Shae taking to wearing veils. The Shae will work hard to protect people from the authorities, but never if the person is of unrepentant questionable morals. Such people might still be rendered some aid, but will swiftly be turned away.

When in camp, the Shae offer many services, much like a circus or faire. The most popular services are healing and dancing. The Dervishes of Shae are renowned for their energetic and acrobatic performances.

The Shae are not welcome everywhere, as there will always be some people who are afraid of travellers and strangers. The Shae pass through those lands as swiftly as they can, establishing touring routes to places known to welcome them.

Education

Once you join the Shae you are asked to find a talent you can offer the troupe. Guests are not rushed into this, instead they are asked to take their time to be sure the life of the road suits them. No matter how ardent the applicant, newcomers are generally not accepted as full members until they have been with a troupe for at least a full year, suffering the many tribulations changing seasons can bring to the road. In that year, they have time to find their place in the troupe and receive any additional training they might want.

The most notable factions are the Seers of Shae, and the Dervishes of Shae. They represent Clerics and Mystics respectively, receiving appropriate training in those classes. Those born on the road, and therefore Shae from birth, tend to follow one of these two paths.

Government

The Shae are a theocracy, ruled by the Seers. Chief among the Seers is the Grandmother, a female cleric of venerable age. It is her wisdom that guides the course of the caravans and chooses which trails are taken.

Actual decisions are made as a whole people, gathering around the fire and discussing what needs attention. New people are usually not welcome to the most important discussions, but every full member has a right to be heard. Ultimately, the Grandmother is the final arbitrator, although she will usually leave most choices to the others to help her determine who has the skills to be her replacement. The Grandmother will make a successor known before her death and the Shae will respect her choice. It is not always the eldest who will lead, though it often is.

Law

The Shae do have a set of laws, most of which only apply among their own people. Crimes against their own are punished by paying restitution equal to thrice the loss caused by the crime. For serious crimes like rape and murder, the person is cast out of the troupe. If the crime is especially vile, they will have their cheek branded so they can never be accepted into another troupe.

There is no personal ownership among the Shae, as all things are technically owned by the troupe. However, taking from another is still a crime. It's an odd grey area which allows the



Seers to redistribute wealth for the betterment of the troupe while making it possible to hold your own possessions earned fairly.

Economy

The Shae must trade for almost everything. Being constantly on the move, they rarely have enough time to gather and produce resources. While many own waggons, storage is limited, so tools like a forge or loom are unlikely, if not impossible to maintain. Therefore the Shae are in constant need of regular supplies.

Performance is their main form of trade, earning them enough coin to pay for essentials before moving on. They also trade smaller handcrafts and surplus resources from hunting and gathering on the road. Colourfully decorated crocheted shawls are one of their most highly prized commodities. These same shawls, often hemmed with jingling disks and bells, are used by the Dervishes.

Military

The Shae have no army. They are defended by their members who come from many backgrounds and professions. The Seers and the Dervishes are especially valued in matters of defence, though a ragtag collection of thugs and thieves are scattered through every troupe.

Religion/Philosophy

There is only one religion among the Shae, that is Shae herself, the Lady of the Road. Her practices form the very basis of the society.

Shae teaches respect to all unless that respect is not returned. Therefore the Shae often give thanks if they see the workings of other Immortals in their life. In fact, members of the troupe are permitted to freely worship other gods, providing they hold Shae's teachings highest among their practices.

Due to portfolios that often cross or are complementary, there is a great respect between the followers of Shae and the followers of Liliana the Thrice-born.

HUMAN, KINGDOM OF SOLMANI

DURING the expansion of Getica, the Kingdom of Solmani became a rally point for those fleeing the advance of the empire. When the war threatened the Solmani borders, the realm was filled to bursting with those already well hardened by the ravages of war and familiar with the way Getica operated.

However those borders were never truly tested, because on the verge of sweeping the Solmani Kingdom aside, the armies of Getica suddenly stopped and settled. Almost a century later, during the Age of Jackals, those armies were eventually uprooted and driven out. Solmani contributed considerable aid at that time on the understanding that its borders remain untouched.

Appearance

The Solmani are of the same racial stock as Getica, being small of stature and pale skinned. The influx of other races has generated many variations from the standard.

Lifestyle

Solmani principles hold that each individual should strive to live a good and honourable life. In so doing, you can protect yourself from the inherit corruption and decay Getica represents.

The current monarchy strive to be paragons of virtue, and as such the people of Solmani enjoy firm but fair taxes, which pay for firm but fair laws and protection.

Common folk are also invited to air any grievances at court, where even the actions of the nobles can be called into question without prejudice. While there have been attempts to use this process for personal gain, such accusations are usually struck down by careful follow up investigation.

Everyone in Solmani has the opportunity to earn a good day's pay for a good day's work. For those unwilling or unable to work, there are welfare opportunities available. These opportunities are usually maintained by the various temples, and care is taken to only give the minimum required to allow a person to get by.

No place is without some measure of crime, and in Solmani that criminal element can be found in the usual places, in dark alleys at the back of particular seedy taverns. Yet even the criminal organisations have a certain honour, and tend to only commit crimes against those who can afford it. In fact the vilest crimes like rape and murder rarely make it to the courts because the Thieves guilds quickly take matters into their own hands to protect the common folk.



Education

Children can expect formal schooling of a decent quality. There they will learn to read, write and do basic mathematics. From there they can enter into arranged apprenticeships to learn a full trade.

Many specialist schools, such as those run by magic users and fighters, offer special lessons for those with the coin to pay.

Government

Solmani is an Hereditary Monarchy. The king and queen rule over the normal array of counts, viscounts, barons, dukes etc. The nobles are responsible for the management of their lands, the collection of taxes and the defence of the citizens and the crown.

Nobles who act contrary to what is considered right and proper can be stripped of titles and have their land repossessed by the crown. This land will then be redistributed, sometimes being granted to a newly created noble in exchange for good service to the crown.

Law

As a branch of the military, Solmani maintain a police force, complete with trained investigators. People brought before the courts are also given fair representation to ensure they understand the charges and what their duties and responsibilities are. The cases are brought before the royal courts, where nobles are expected to reside over their people and pass sentence. For lesser crimes a magistrate can be appointed to preside in the place of the noble.

Crimes are usually punished by the payment of a fine or in severe cases, imprisonment. While nobles are entitled to order a death sentence, it is a last resort used for especially callous and vile acts.

Economy

Solmani enjoys a wealth of natural resources and skilled labour. They maintain fertile fields and good herds, providing food and hides for trade.

They import a range of goods, mostly luxury goods like spices and rare herbs. Being a larger realm, there is always a need for additional raw resources, such as timber, ore and new stock.

Military

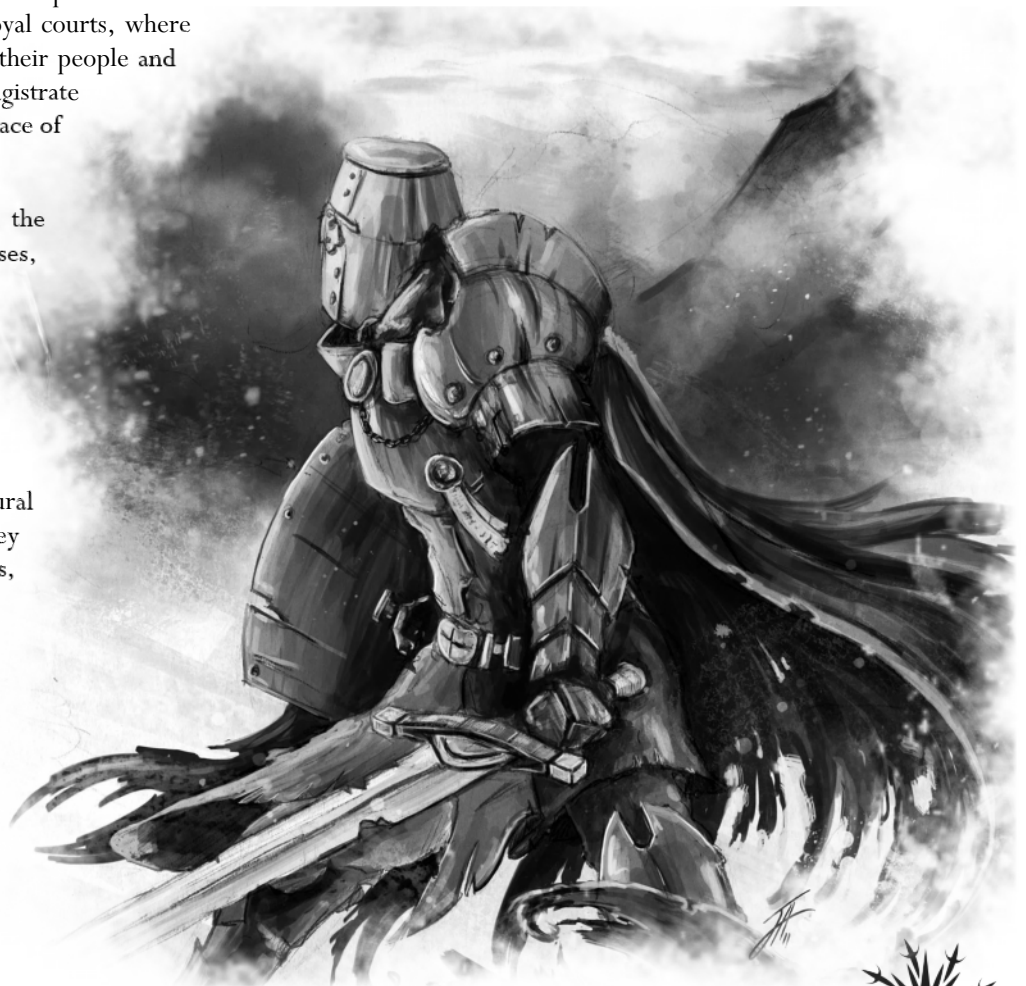
The Solmani maintain a well trained and equipped conventional military, including pikes, cavalry, and magical support. The barracks are also home to a multi-denominational temple servicing the military and offering additional magical healing and support.

Solmani also maintain an elite order of knights who embody all of the key principles of Solmani morality and chivalry. The Knights of Solmani are renowned both for their fighting prowess, as well as their gracious manner.

Religion/Philosophy

Providing the practice of your religion does not violate the laws of the land, it is deemed permitted. Even Immortals who encourage otherwise illegal acts are allowed, providing those illegal practices are excluded from the rituals and observances.

The only outlawed religion is Getica. Getica is considered a rot without cure, and allowing it to fester in any way within Solmani is not permitted.



JHAN AKA HALFLINGS

JHAN are highly family oriented, with each clan consisting of three to six distinct family linages. While commonly called Halflings by humans, the term is at least mildly derogatory to the Jhan who don't consider themselves 'half' of anything.

Names

Jhan have a first name and a family name. The family name will be one held by tradition and usually describes their point of origin in some way. Names like Onetree and Willowbottom might describe a physical location, while family names like Cherrybloom and Ramsworthy could reference professions.

First names tend to have French, or Anglo-Saxon sound, such as Clarence, Theodore or Cherise.

Some Jhan will become better known by nicknames, particularly heroes who might be named after a notable deed. This nickname might be used in a variety of ways, either as a whole name or incorporated into their normal name. So Sheriff Trollbane might be a reference to a sheriff known for casting back a troll invasion, while Corry Two-toes might be a name given to differentiate one Corry from another, in this case the one who lost two toes in a farming accident. Many Jhan also take assumed names during Yewmer as a way to distance themselves from their old selves.

Appearance

As per Dungeons & Dragons Rules Cyclopedia.

Lifestyle

Each clan consists of anywhere from two to eight distinct family linages. Devotion to family is absolute and most of the day is spent working hard to support the family units. Taking pleasure in life is equally important to hard work, so celebrations and feasts are common. Jhan will use almost anything as an excuse to hold a festival, celebrating with food, song, dance and play. They have no time for loafers, although special dispensation is given to the play of children who are expected to be easily distracted and curious. Elders are respected for their wisdom and their toil generally involves smoking pipe-weed and making themselves available for advice.

Each house is usually dug into the side of a hill. The construction of a house is a community event followed by a house warming festival. Each newlywed couple can expect to have a simple house made for them or to inherit a vacated house. This house is later added to and modified over time, sometimes by being dug deeper and at other times with surface extensions added. Children remain in the house until they marry and establish a house of their own. This can often result in adult children

remaining in the family home their entire lives, becoming the new owners when their parents die.

Outsiders are treated with the utmost suspicion, generally being viewed as trouble makers. Most travellers are met on the outskirts by the local sheriff and their motives are determined. If they seem harmless they are treated hospitably but encouraged to move on swiftly. If they pose a threat to the community, the Sheriff will round up a posse of other Jhan to eject the intruder. Every member of the community is expected to contribute, and that includes contributing to the defence of the community if needed. Many a brigand has suffered for assuming the little folk are an easy mark.

Jhan are naturally inquisitive folk, which can run counter to the normally tight knit community. Upon reaching adulthood, every Jhan is required to take part in an event called Yewmer, where young adults are expected to travel out into the world and experience what life is like outside the community. Young adults are encouraged to spend at least six months on Yewmer, but rarely ever longer than two years, although there is no technically required duration. The one requirement is that during Yewmer the young one must not have contact with the community, and if they return, they return to stay for life.

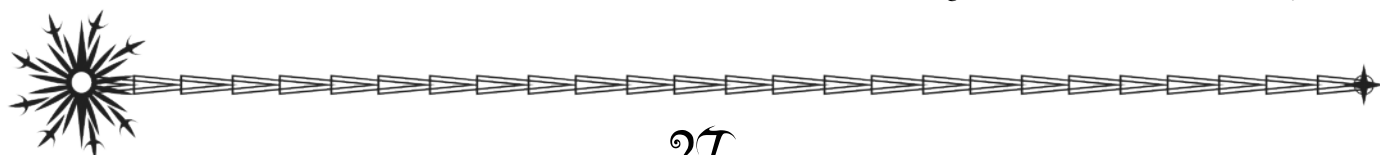
During Yewmer they are encouraged to experience as much as they can of life, which leads many to become adventurers for a period of time. Jhan have also gained a bit of a reputation as rogues based on the behaviour of Jhan during Yewmer. Most return after Yewmer and happily re-join the community. A few remain in the world, forever separated from their kin. Of those who stay away, many become traders, serving other Jhan communities by providing a liaison between Jhan and non-Jhan communities. This allows the Jhan to maintain some contact with his people while retaining the independence of being outside the community. They also provide a valuable service because most Jhan communities produce a surplus of fresh produce, which they exchange for novelties and treats.

Education

Jhan are regularly schooled, both in organised classes as well as by working side by side with their parents. Each family generally has a particular trade craft they are known for, however everyone is expected to lend a hand during key times like harvest and planting. In fact, any large project is often accomplished swiftly as a well organised community event, finishing in a celebration.

Because of their drive to serve the community in many ways, Jhan are trained in the use of weapons, reading and writing, and a wealth of practical skills. They also learn the art of stealth from an early age, being taught to avoid trouble where possible.

A lot of support is given to improving the way things are done. Elders are often sought for their wisdom, and they in turn



regularly accumulate new knowledge to share. Long hours spent smoking pipe-weed with other elders is time also spent discussing planting methods, the movement of bees and other key wisdoms. This propagation of wisdom maintains firm respect for the elders and avoids the generational gaps present in many other cultures.

Jhan maintain a strong oral tradition, but one prone to subtle exaggeration. Tales describe historical events and are often used to educate people on proper and improper reactions in certain situations. Among the elders there is also a tradition of Tall Tales, which are tales that are made intentionally elaborate. Elders will sometimes while away an afternoon on the veranda, each seeking to outdo the other by telling a tale more preposterous than the one before. Such idle silliness is exclusively the pastime of elders and woe be to the naive young'un who overhears such fanciful tales and mistakes them for true.

Government

The community is led by common consensus, with deference given to the elders and anyone with specialist knowledge. The whole community is not involved in every choice, each problem is handled at the lowest level possible, with issues gradually being escalated until resolved. So the location of a barn might be decided by a single family, but the location of a community storehouse might involve discussion by the whole community. Of course any such grand discussion would have to include a festival.

In military matters the local sheriff, or sheriffs are first to evaluate the threat. If there is a call to action they will order the deployment of the community, who will do as they're told, trusting in the specialist knowledge of the sheriff. It's common for each community to have one head sheriff, with secondary sheriffs for each family. Thus, in a larger scale engagements, there is one overall commander and a selection of trusted sub-commanders.

Law

The Sheriff and anyone they call into service are responsible for bringing people to justice. They will also be responsible for the collection of any evidence relating to a case. Given the strong ties within the community, crimes among community members are extremely rare, with serious trouble almost exclusively coming from outsiders. Therefore, there is not really a full legal structure. The ultimate punishment in most places is banishment from the community. The sheriff is responsible for ensuring a banished person stays banished.

The actual evaluation of each case is a matter for the community as a whole, just like any decision. So the person responsible for mending a broken fence might be resolved between the injured parties, with the Sheriff acting as arbitrator. Serious issues like arson might require staging a community meeting and festival. Once again, the elders are generally the

strongest voices, although the sheriff plays an integral role in making the case and arbitrating between injured parties.

Economy

Despite having healthy appetites and a love for homely pleasures, Jhan communities tend to produce a surplus. This surplus is usually traded outside the community through outsider traders who make regular rounds.

Jhan mostly export fresh produce and handcrafts, such as rugs, cloth, packs and other sundries. The most highly prized are luxury items such as pipe-weed and sweet mead. Jhan pipe-weed and mead are generally named after the family who created it, with each family having their own methods and secret processes. So while Willowburrow Jhan might spice their mead with cinnamon and clove, the Sweetriver family might swear by the mead made using honey created from the flowers native to their lands. Such names have become world renowned for the quality of their product.

Jhan are not normally miners but they have a high demand for metal tools, therefore they mostly trade for practical materials with little to spare for frivolities. However, they also value such treats, so clever traders know to include a few 'special' items when they visit to trade with Jhan. Jhan have little use for impractical shiny things like gems and jewellery, but they love items such as fine elven silks, foreign confectioneries and rare wines. Clever gadgets also amuse them, such as dwarven puzzle boxes and locks.

Due to the complimentary requirements of both people, there often exists a very good relationship between dwarven and Jhan communities. Both usually prosper greatly by the trade, and the mutual respect creates other bonds such as political and military aid.

Military

Jhan communities rarely ever maintain any form of standing army. However, all members are trained in combat techniques and can be called upon in times of need. The only real standing force of any sort are the sheriffs, who spend most of their time simply patrolling the land and checking in on families. In times of war the Sheriff will muster a force he deems suitable and leadership will be determined as required (see Government). Sheriffs try not to take too many people away from their fields if it can be avoided.

As Jhan make good and prosperous neighbours, it is rare for disputes between them and other people. Therefore, they are rarely troubled, and if threatened by an outside force they can often rely on others to lend a hand in their defence. However, Jhan are loathe to call upon others for help, preferring to handle things within their own community. Inviting others in is often an invitation to other trouble, so if Jhan reach out, they do so only



when they are fully aware that the life of their community is on the line. Therefore a wise neighbour will often shepherd a Jhan community by putting a watch of their own on the borders, ready to intercept problems before they reach the Jhan at all.

Religion/Philosophy

Jhan have little time for religion, there's simply too much work to be done to take time out for gods. However, they are also a people who believe in respect, so they often give a token nod to the Immortals before engaging in something that the Immortal might favour.

As lovers of a good celebration many Jhan will also have a few festivals each year that celebrate the Immortals in some way. Rather than pick sides, such festivals might simply be called Festival of the Gods, or Immortal Day, celebrating the Immortals

as a whole rather than singling out individuals. So while the Jhan are technically polytheistic, they are not really religious folk. They believe in the Immortals and give them respect, but still see them as outsiders and would prefer they stay out of Jhan affairs.





Immortals

ARLETTE, TWILIGHT MISTRESS

TWILIGHT brings a peace to the land, a moment of transition between the activity of the day and the softer activities of the night. Arlette offers the same peace, a quiet time of rest which brings people together in a moment of transition.

It is also a time when the stars begin to come out, offering guidance to travellers, allowing those parted to navigate their return to each other.

Arlette herself is a fairly new Immortal, her stories of life dating back only a few centuries to the now extinct Kingdom of Chaldea. She was a commoner, the simple daughter of a merchant. Though well defended, the Kingdom of Chaldea stood no chance against the might of the Empire of Getica at its height. The Kingdom fell, and Arlette and her family became subjects under the shadow of an oppressive overlord. To prevent any form of organised uprising, Chaldean families were torn apart, villages divided and strict curfews imposed. The only people with any freedom of movement were those whose trade required it. Arlette, as daughter to a tinker, was one such person.

Arlette used her freedom to smuggle messages between houses and outlying villages, allowing families to maintain contact and to friendships to continue. She risked her life, but through her humble deeds she kept people together in one of the darkest times in history.

When the Age of Jackals began to peel back the Empire's hold, Empire officials began to pay special attention to the movements of their subjects. Empire Inquisitors discovered the activities of Arlette, and setting a trap, they cornered her. As they moved in, Arlette simply smiled, turned, and walked up into the stars.

Arlette never got to see how her efforts changed the world before she departed, but because of her work, family and friends were able to find each other once the hold of the Empire was broken. The Kingdom was never restored, but the people were. All because a humble tinker was willing to carry messages, keeping open the paths for people to find each other again.

Portfolio

Astronomy, navigation and friendship.

Arlette is evoked by those missing friends and loved ones. She is also called upon by sailors, traders and navigators for guidance to find their destination.

Holy Symbol

Cartouche. The holy symbol is also used as a standardised scale on official temple maps, creating a standard that is being adopted across the world.



Primary Followings

Though the people of Chaldea are scattered among the Garter States, they still remember Arlette and hold her in special veneration as one of their own. Her following can also be found in any place traders and travellers frequent.

Key Factions

There are no special factions among the followers of Arlette.

Practices and Rituals

Part of the role of clerics is the creation, reproduction and maintenance of maps and records. They study the movement of the stars, and for a fee their highly detailed star charts and almanacs can be purchased. This work is beginning to create an international standard for cartography and navigation.

Holy Days

Some people celebrate the liberation of the lands of Chaldea as a day sacred to Arlette. However, this date is not really set, because the driving out of the Empire was a long and arduous affair. While dates might vary, the celebration can be found in many places in the Garter States.



CHIMERA

THE EVER-CHANGING

THE followers of Chimera teach that the only constant in life is change, and that the only true death is stasis. As such, they bring life and growth to the world by bringing change.

The origins of Chimera are a mystery to all except perhaps the clergy. What is known is that many composite creatures call upon Chimera as their patron protector and guide. How such a deity has developed a following among monsters all over the world is a mystery.

To the outsider, Chimera can seem like an insane god with insane worshippers. However, this is very far from the truth. Chimera teaches that creativity and new thought is achieved first through breaking with tradition. Therefore they are not contrary due to insanity, but through carefully planned reasons. It's a paradox to most people, but is filled with clear reasoning to the followers of Chimera.

Portfolio

Discord and composite beasts.

Chimera is seen as a parental figure who loves and cares for all the misfits of the world. Chimera tries to promote understanding and acceptance by creating discord among those 'trapped' in a life of normalcy. As such, she is also patron of jesters and anarchists.

Holy Symbol

A Chimera (the monster) made out of whatever materials are available. At its most simplistic, Chimera is represented by a circle with three upward strokes at the top.



Primary Followings

While there is evidence of many monsters paying tribute to Chimera, the followers of Chimera are also numerous among human and demi-human peoples. Anyone who has looked at life and wondered about the weird twists and turns of fate may have contemplated whether or not Chimera has taken a hand in events.

Chimera is often called upon in times of political upheaval, and many shrines today owe their roots to the casting down of the Getica Empire. As such, the Garter States hold Chimera in high regard.

Magic users also venerate Chimera, seeing the god as patron of the magical sciences, especially in regards to experimentation or the abolishment of old systems in favour of new.

The religion is not popular but rarely outlawed. The Kingdom of Solmani discourages worship of Chimera and has no shrines openly established in the cities, but only Getica outright bans its practice.

Key Factions

Chimera is represented in many ways, and is by its very nature a highly disorganised religion. Worshipers can often come into conflict with each other. Such was the case in the wars between the centaurs of northern Solmani with the neighbouring gnolls.

Small factions are constantly born then dissolve. The very nature of the deity almost demands that any structure made must be swiftly dismantled. Even shrines often have no attendant guardian, and clergy roam almost aimlessly.

Practices and Rituals

Chimera can be very unpredictable, with few real set practices or methods of worship. Followers tend towards light hearted fatalism, and enjoy pranks and off-centre humour. Clergy are often mocking of others and have a tradition of being intentionally contrary. Deception is common, and the laws of the land are rarely respected, often intentionally disobeyed.

Holy Days

Nil. Worshipers may hold their own holy days, but are just as likely to break their own holy observances to honour their deity in their discordance with their own random practices.

CHITANEA THE RADIANT

Pronounced kai-TAN-ee-ah

HERO among heroes, stories of Chitanea abound throughout all civilised people. She is a wily hero who has wrestled giants, riddled with dragons and turned back kobold invasions. Her name seems to be proxy for any good tale in which a noble hero has stood against the forces of darkness and prevailed through might and wit.

She is usually depicted as being honourable with a clever wit and sense of humour, often outsmarting her foes and tricking them into their own defeat. Tales of Chitanea tend to transcend reality, but whatever the truth of her deeds in life, she is certainly among the Immortals now.

Portfolio

Glory and heroism.

Patron goddess of adventures and those of noble heart for whom steadfastness in the face of fear has delivered them from evil. She is also patron to any who oppose the undead.



Holy Symbol

Golden effulgent sun in a blue circle.



Primary Followings

Many knighthoods claim Chitanea as their patron. She is also called upon by adventurers, with many of her clerics living as professional adventurers. She has well established temples in any place bordering wild and untamed lands. The temple often provides special services for adventurers, such as spells and raising the dead. In order to maintain their extravagant temples they demand high fees for their services.

Chitanea is most popular in the Garter States, especially near the border and around the Black Corridor. She is also very popular in the Kingdom of Solmani, where her noble nature and adventurous spirit finds favour with the storybook realm.

Key Factions

Many orders claim Chitanea as their patron, however there are several organisations with strong direct ties to the established temples.

The Order of the Scarab are primarily paladins resplendent in iridescent enamelled blue plate. They are funded directly by the temple and also self-funded through independent adventuring. Their keeps dot the borderlands and all have additional military units as general guardsmen and soldiers. They are said to be incorruptible with a lust for life yet a willingness to die for a good cause.

The Order of the Radiant Light are undead hunters who either work with adventurer groups or fund expeditions to root out and slay the undead. They are well trained in the nature of undead and how to best defeat them. Most members of the order are clerics, though people who prove sufficiently devoted may be invited to join.

The Blackguard are an elite force that maintains a keep just inside the Black Corridor. They are a small order but they are highly devoted to maintaining the corridor, preventing Getica from ever entering the southern lands. They are fierce opponents of Getica and most of their members have at least one horror story of real world experience with the Getica Empire and its minions.

Practices and Rituals

The followers of Chitanea make no excuses for their love of glory and wealth. They openly display their wealth in magical arms and armour which they use to seek further glory.

The temple offers generous rewards to adventurer guilds, often aiding by sharing job listings among the various guilds and by posting independent boards outside their temple. If no

adventurers are to be found, they are quick to assign their own people to the job.

Holy Days

The biggest day on the Chitanea calendar is the Festival of the Bard. Once per year the temple holds a festival, providing food and drink for all, in order to attract large crowds. They invite the best bards and ask them to share songs and tales of heroism to inspire the people.

The clerics also tell their own stories during this time, making it clear that Chitanea can empower the common folk to great deeds. The festival tends to last anywhere from a few days to a week, and is usually followed by a big influx of new adventurers seeking to make their own fortunes and legends.

FIORI THE DRUNK

FIORI is a loud mouthed lush with a wicked sense of humour and the ability to fight like a devil. Her fame comes from being the subject of many old pirate tales, where she is an anti-hero who constantly bucks authority in acts of daring only the drunk or the foolish might attempt.

Her origins appear ancient, with representations among many cultures, even the Painted People, who see her more like a trickster spirit. In Saluria they see her as a fox spirit, leading honest men off their path and into danger where their wits might bring them great fortune, but where failure brings death.

Portfolio

Goddess of drunks and fools

Holy Symbol

Wine Cup (Garter States) or the fox (Saluria)



Primary Followings

Despite the dwarven love of drink, Fiori was never followed by the dwarves even before they turned away from the gods. Likewise her popularity among Elven and Jhan communities seems surprisingly small given you would think a love of drink and a clever wit might appeal to such people. For some reason, Fiori has remained a distinctly human deity.

She is very popular among humans, with the Garter States given their roguish nature becoming her spiritual home. However, her following tends to be very informal, with little structure to the religion.

Fiori is especially popular with adventurers.



Key Factions

The closest Fiori has to a temple are the many taverns that offer her tribute. She is also the official patron of a number of adventurer guilds, given the very act of adventuring tends to be a foolhardy idea.

The only real organised faction is the League of Fiori based in the Kingdom of Solmani. The League is essentially a merchant league with a focus on wine. They propose methods of properly rating wine, maintaining standards of production, and are advocates for banning the watering down of wine. While many argue their main purpose is the use of Fiori's name for personal profit, the League does have a number of genuine clerics of Fiori among their number.

Practices and Rituals

As a fairly informal religion Fiori is evoked by many, but has few truly sacred rituals. Alcohol is seen as a cleanser, and clerics bless wine and ale for use as holy water. Fiori's Fire is a potent cocktail of blessed high concentration holy alcohol which is utterly devastating when lobbed into a wave of undead, then set alight.

Fiori is a goddess who loves life, making her a firm advocate against the undead.

Holy Days

Though there is no official holy day, many towns offer a special day dedicated to Fiori. Most taverns take donations in exchange for putting out great barrels of alcohol for people to help themselves to over the course of the day. The quality of the alcohol is often poor, but the quantity is high, in the belief that the more people you can attract to your tavern on that day, the more Fiori will bless your establishment throughout the year. Tavern owners usually take a loss on that day, in the hope of appeasing the goddess.

GREY MAN, THE

THE roots of the Grey Man legend are lost in time, he simply always was, and likely always will be. There is some evidence of the Grey Man being known even among the orcs, goblins and other dark races.

The Grey Man is in many respects a non-entity. He moves through the world unseen, and his presence is only known by the tendency for things to disappear around him. When things are lost, it is said the Grey Man took them.

Portfolio

Thieves and lost things.

People make offerings to the Grey Man in hopes that he might hide their own clandestine activities, or to request he return a special lost keepsake.

Holy Symbol

Ashen hand print



Primary Followings

The Grey Man will be given tributes in any place where thieves can be found. Of course, this means anywhere in the world. In most places his shrines are little more than dark wells, or hidden under bridges where an ashen hand print is the only sign the place is favoured by the followers of the Grey Man; any place where little keepsakes can be thrown away to be forever lost. Here people will throw trinkets away in hopes that the Grey Man will take their offering and grant them what they desire.

Only a few clerics dedicate themselves to the Grey Man. They operate almost exclusively as part of a thieves guild, or in the back of taverns and other seedy gathering places. There they act as 'fixers', arranging employment for shadowy activities and at times fencing goods. Such individuals are rarely thieves themselves, but the servants of thieves.

Key Factions

Little is known about the inner workings of the followers of the Grey Man. The Clerics are known to be the ones to see if you need a thief. They might even be coaxed into finding a stolen item for a victim of crime desperate to retrieve something of high emotional value, for a price of course.

As for other agents there are only rumours. Legends speak of master thieves who the Grey Man tasks with special crimes committed in his name. There are stories of tribes of orcs and goblins who venerate the Grey Man as a master brigand and champion of the raider. The truth of any such rumours are as much a mystery as the Grey Man himself.

Practices and Rituals

Value is not a matter of price, price is negotiated once value is determined. Offerings should be things of value, no matter the actual price of the item. Clerics can sometimes make unusual requests when asking for payment. They usually accept gold if paying a thief for their work. Items of special personal value usually require the sacrifice of other items of personal value in exchange; therefore, a child might surrender a beloved dolly in order to pay for the return of mummy's valuable jewelled necklace. Followers of the Grey Man must understand this distinction between value and worth. Followers also accept that



all things are transient, and that ownership is a privilege, not a right.

Holy Days

There are no universally accepted holy days for the Grey Man. However, there is a growing practice in some areas of the Garter States to put aside a day to honour him. This day is a day of revelry, where normal moralities tend to be overlooked. It would not be far from the truth to suggest this this holy day has been manufactured for the single purpose of being naughty for a day.

LADY OF SEASONS

THE Lady of Seasons is one of the oldest goddesses, with her influence found throughout the world in a great many guises. Some say she is a single person, who ages a lifetime in a year. Others say she is actually four sisters, each representing one of the seasons. However individual followings perceive her, the practice of her religion contains many consistencies.

Portfolio

The changing of the seasons.

While principally a goddess of agriculture and the changing seasons, The Lady is attributed a great deal more than just those simple concepts. While Chimera is a god of random change and magical oddities, The Lady is the goddess of natural change, offering the understanding that all things come full circle in time.

Her primary focus changes with each season, as does her iconography. In spring she is represented by a young girl, full of promise and potential. It is a time for planning, planting and regrowth.

In summer she is a fierce maiden who guards the crops and the home. In autumn she is middle aged, and represents the reaping of crops and the planting of learned wisdom.

Finally in winter, she is the old woman, wise and reserved. Huddled within her home she rests, and waits to be reborn again in the spring.

Holy Symbol

Changes with the season. Wooden with painted green foliage in spring. Gold in summer. Plain wood with partial foliage in autumn. Silver with no foliage in winter.



Primary Followings

She is highly favoured among farming communities. She is also venerated on the oceans where she is called upon to provide fair winds and ward off fierce storms.

She is also strongly favoured by most women, who see in her aspects of themselves as progenitors and protectors of the hearth. In fact, most of her clerics are female.

Jhan tend to love the Lady of Seasons and joyfully celebrate all her holy days. She is also highly favoured in the Kingdom of Solmani and in many of the Garter States. She is even finding a firm hold in the distant lands of Saluria.

Key Factions

Her clergy are often simple people, such as the local village wise woman. A simple house might have a little field-side shrine where people come to leave offerings or to pray.

In larger communities organised shrines provide a central point for the religion. In the Kingdom of Solmani and in many other lands, the temple of the Lady takes on the responsibility of tending and protecting the storehouses. As she is the goddess of natural cycles, her clerics are responsible for predicting how harsh the seasons will be and must ration food accordingly.

The Hearthguard are the Lady's military, affectionately called Ratcatchers by the people, as protecting the storehouses from vermin are among the most common duties of the guard.

The Lady also maintains a handful of knights, either paladins or wandering priests who visit outlying areas to bless fields and aid in the management of villages. They are almost always solo, but will sometimes muster a force to help drive out creatures that threaten a community. The Knights of the Lady tend to live a humble life and they never have trouble finding a roof and a warm meal in any village of the land.

Practices and Rituals

The Lady is evoked at many key times in the year. Planting and harvest are the most popular, where she is called upon to bless the fields and to protect the crop until the next year.

The clergy are responsible for reading the weather, predicting the flow of natural events and guiding the people on how to work with nature rather than against it. They determine the right days to plant, and often aid in directing larger community events like barn raising and harvest.

Holy Days

Planting and harvest are the biggest times of the year, with each holy period lasting until the job is done. In places with a diverse range of planting times and crops, at least one day is given to each crop to properly honour the goddess.

In the heart of winter there is a special observance called 'The Last Candle'. It is a time where those who died throughout the

year are remembered in stories told around the fire. Often a literal candle is lit for each person lost to that family in the year. The name of the day perhaps hails to the practice of each house preserving one last candle especially for this day. It is a day of tears, but it is also a day of respectful joy. Those households without deaths during that year light the candle for the Lady, giving thanks for having been spared that sacrifice for this year.

LILIANA THRICE-BORN

ASCENDING into the realms of the Immortals, Liliana gained her following in the Age of Jackals. When the invasion of Forecastle kicked off the Age of Jackals, Liliana was a common harlot who joined the fighting among the Freeman ships. In that battle she distinguished herself as a powerful leader as she rallied slaves and servants to perform exceptional deeds.

When the city was taken, some pirate fleets sought to bring the slaves back under their command. Liliana had no desire to fight for a free life only to return to a life of servitude under a different dictator. The people who shed blood at her side agreed with her sentiments. They rose up against the pirates, with Liliana slaying the Dread Pirate Lord Zangov Ninetail with her own hands. The Freeman, under the continued leadership of Liliana, took a large portion of the city as their own, defying the other pirates' claims.

Liliana continued to rule her people, making them instrumental in rolling back the Getica Empire. Having fought on the very front lines and been involved in many small unit missions, her name became legend.

One day she simply disappeared, and in so doing her legend placed her among of the Immortals.

Portfolio

Rebirth and regeneration, endings and beginnings.

Liliana teaches that if you are willing to make the choice, you can change your life entirely. Do not sit idle and let others lead you or save you. If you want change, it is your responsibility to make that change happen.

Liliana is often called upon whenever new ventures are about to be embarked upon, then thanked again at the conclusion.

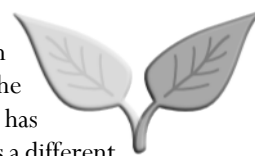
She also helps people make a change in their lives, allowing them to step out of one life into a new one in a Rebirth ceremony. Her temples aid in the changing of name, appearance and every detail of a person's life. Fees are charged for those who can afford it, but the service is usually free for anyone in need.

Clerics also help people make big life choices by counselling and advising them on how to manage their lives. In fact, they will

usually refuse to do a Rebirth ceremony until the person has first of all attended a few life coaching appointments.

Holy Symbol

Two leaves, upright like an emerging seedling, one copper, the other gold. An alternative version has only a single leaf, each side of which is a different colour.



Primary Followings

Liliana has a very devout following in Forecastle and throughout most of the Garter States. She has even found favour among some elven courts who already have a long tradition of transitioning between different ways of living.

While she is the champion of the poor and downtrodden, she is not a goddess who cares for the meek and lazy. Those who sit idle and do nothing to improve their lot in life will find no answer from Liliana to their prayers, and will often be turned away by the clergy who do not have the resources to become a welfare service to the terminally needy.

Key Factions

The temples of Liliana are often supported by the labour of lay worshippers, who help out as a way of repaying the aid they too have received. This help can be anything from cleaning through to supporting the clergy directly by assisting people through a Rebirth.

The clergy are referred to as Fathers or Mothers, and it is their responsibility to oversee the Rebirth process. They also preach the teachings of Liliana, often taking their sermons into places others fear to tread. As the religion is not motivated by financial gain, they have no reservations about offering services to the poor quarter.

The temples of Liliana do hold a standing army of irregulars, consisting primarily of lay worshippers lending their services, though they will hire additional mercenaries when needed.

The Knights of Liliana are an elite group of heroes from many professions who tend to be very practical and down to earth trouble shooters. Usually coming from an adventuring background, they are often deployed to aid in the resolution of issues preventing people from changing their station in life; such as inciting riot to overthrow an oppressive ruler, or slaying a marauding monster.

Practices and Rituals

Despite the low financial demands placed on their followers, the temple is relatively wealthy. They have a good record for



putting people into influential positions thus giving the temple contacts everywhere, providing for many concessions.

Recipients of their aid often pay regular tithes to the temple in thanks for the new life they are living. Such payments also allow people continued access to the network of connections, using the clergy of Liliana as proxies to ensure the individuals remain anonymous in their dealings.

The Rebirth is the most commonly demanded ritual, usually taking place in the main temple called The House of Many Doors. The House of Many Doors is a round building with a central garden. True to name, the house has a great many doors at regular intervals around the outside. People who enter the house can therefore leave by one of many doors, allowing them to evade watchers. The process is also symbolic, representing how a person now follows a different path.

Within the House of Many Doors is a network of rooms which house people during the process of Rebirth. People learn new skills and construct their new identity under the advice of the clergy or their assigned representatives. The process of Rebirth has no set time and can be overnight or take years, depending on the requirements of the individual.

Temples of Liliana are bastions of sanctuary, and the members will go a long way to ensure that once someone has entered those doors, providing they do not act against the temple, they will be safe. Political connections mean that when Liliana gives sanctuary, few ever try to violate that pact.

Holy Days

Both summer and winter solstice are sacred days to Liliana, representing that even the sun, moon and world undergo major transformations. These are times when the clergy don full robes with female masks, streaming out of the many doors of the temples. They carry a backpack full of wine flasks which they distribute to people at all levels of society so they may toast Liliana no matter what station they hold.

The masks and full robes also make the solstice a great time to disguise people of notable reputation who might have undergone Rebirth. Disguised as clergy, they leave with a backpack containing all they need for their new life.

The date Forecastle fell is also a holy day called The First Gate. Twenty-two days later the temple celebrates The Second Gate, celebrating the official recognition of Liliana's city quarter becoming recognised as the property of the Freemen.

LORD OF MASKS

THE Lord of Masks takes no name as his own, though he has used many aliases. His clerics say he was once king of a vast realm. The kingdom had known such peace and prosperity that no one had to struggle, nor work for a living. The Lord of Masks often moved among his people in disguise, living among them as an equal and indulging in all life had to offer.

There are no boundaries for the Lord of Masks or his followers, except that acts which violate the pleasure of others are forbidden. However, among consensual adults, any depth of depravity and personal fulfilment is perfectly valid.

The Lord of Masks is said to be able to take any form, and still attends many celebrations among his followers, in the flesh.

Portfolio

Beauty and hedonism

He is in essence a god of self-indulgence and pleasure. However, that pleasure does not come at the expense of others. He also embodies beauty in all forms, though mostly physical. Yet poets, lovers and those able to find beauty in something might give thanks to the Lord of Masks.

Holy Symbol

Androgynous mask plated with gold and studded with jewels.



Primary Followings

The Lord of Masks is most popular in the Garter States and among the Elven courts. In fact, the elves claim his origins are actually elven, a practice still represented in the proliferation of mask use among the elves.

He is also popular with a great many nobles, who are among the few people able to surrender to hedonism on a regular basis.

Key Factions

The glorious temples spare little expense and each offers a multitude of delights. From drugs to prostitutes, the temples of the Lord of Masks are a den of depravity. However, while there is some degree of dark rumour surrounding the temples, it generally stems from the jealousy of people unable to afford the services on offer.

The militant branch of each temple is home to warriors who trade their martial skill in exchange for the delights of the temple. They are a barely controlled bunch who are often little more than



drunkards and lechers. However, there are those who take the calling more seriously.

The Order of the Jewelled Mask are an elite order of knights who find balance between hedonism and performance. Their glittering cavalry are a beacon upon the battlefield, and the knights can often be found wandering the world alone in search of new pleasures.

There are rumours of a faction who call themselves the Velvet Mask. They believe the rule that one shouldn't violate the pleasure of others is a rule made to be intentionally broken. In a religion which celebrates breaking the moral boundaries, this faction believes an internal moral is profane, and it is the breaking of that rule that is the final test which shows true devotion to the Lord of Masks. The Velvet Mask knows better than to operate openly, and if even half of the rumours are true they exhibit a vile depravity beyond the laws of any land.

Practices and Rituals

A mask carved from white wood depicting an androgynous face is the standard issued to all clerics, however most clerics commission their own individual version of the mask. The masks are properly consecrated and serve as the Holy Symbol for the clerics.

When attending the temple, guests are able to bring their own mask or choose freely from among the selection made available at the temple foyer. The mask offers the anonymity to let go of inhibitions and do what the heart desires.

In towns that object to the moral ambiguity of the religion, the masks are often worn by criminals as a way of placing blame onto the temple. The temple accepts these actions as a price for their indulgences, suggesting the power of the mask allows their detractors to freely express their own disdain for the religion. However, in order to maintain the temples and protect the religion, the temple freely works with local authorities to clear the name of anyone falsely accused. While the temple strives to maintain the anonymity of attendees, they will not protect those who violate the pleasure of others. They are even complicit in the entrapment of such people, thus maintaining a good relationship with most law enforcement.

Holy Days

While every day is a celebration within the temples, on one day of Spring each year the celebration pours into the streets in the Festival of the Forbidden. On this day masks are handed out to those who don't have one, and the city stops as people all over the town either lock their doors and stay in, or become part of the hedonistic celebrations.

Taverns usually offer many special deals to attract patrons, though the ale and wine is probably watered down. It is said noble

women will play the role of hard currency women and beggars will be kings. It is a time without limits, and where law enforcement tends to turn a blind eye to most things. However, the golden rule of not violating the pleasure of others must be maintained. Despite the temple assisting with policing there are invariably revellers who take things over the edge. This trouble has placed limitations on the festival in some towns.

SHAE, LADY OF THE ROAD

THE brightly coloured waggons of the Shae are a common sight in many lands. Constantly on the move, the followers of the Lady of the Road lead a gypsy lifestyle, but it is a lifestyle filled with adventure and free of binding ties.

Shae herself is said to have been a dancer from a distant land. A dark sorcerer demanded she dance for him and she refused. In response to this insolence the Sorcerer cursed Shae to wander the earth forever, never finding a home or a family. Shae took to the road, the dark magic forcing her to commit to an endless journey. Rather than suffer the curse, Shae made the road her home, the people she met her family, and instead of misery and loneliness she found joy and freedom. The dark curse was thwarted, but the followers of Shae still travel ever onward.

Portfolio

Travellers, freedom and dance.

Shae is the protector of travellers, granting them good cheer and the discipline to endure the hardships of the road. She is also the goddess of dance, honoured by dancers the world over.

Holy Symbol

An embellished shawl unique to each follower.

Primary Followings

The gypsy folk named for Shae are the most devout of her worshippers, spending their life on the road and never staying in one place for long.

Throughout most of the lands, Shae is evoked by traders and other travellers before they embark upon a journey. The relationship between dance and other entertainments make Shae especially favoured in the Garter States, and any realm where people have the time and money for revelry.

Key Factions

While there are a few roadside shrines, the only real clerics and full time worshippers of Shae are found among the people who bear her name. Among those people can be found the Seers of Shae and the Dervishes of Shae.



The Seers are full clerics who serve the caravan as guides, diviners and wise elders. They regularly help those in need, but save their highest magic for their own use to protect and guide their people.

The Dervishes are mystics, trained in martial arts and movement. They perform wild dance routines beyond the ability of most traditional dancers. They also maintain the defence of the caravan, often taking the initiative and using their skills to be proactive in avoiding troubles for their troupe.

Practices and Rituals

Read the listing for the people known as the Shae for their most common practices. Notably, the clerics of Shae cannot remain in one area for longer than a full cycle of the moon. What defines an area is open to interpretation, but most believers interpret the requirement as a change of town.

Holy Days

The hardships of travel mean that organised days are not always convenient. Lay worshippers tend to only call upon Shae at the start and end of travel. Those who spend a lot of time on the road will often donate to travelling Shae caravans when they meet, hoping to earn the favour of the goddess by supporting her people.

The Shae themselves practice their skills daily and worship the goddess in many little ways. They give thanks in regular small prayers, and their most treasured offering is their own body, which they keep trained and healthy.

SHARM MASTER OF FLOWERS

NO one who lives in or near the wilderness can believe it is natural to live in perfect peace and harmony. Nature is about struggle and balance, and sometimes balance can only be achieved by pushing something off the scales forever.

Sharm is the god of natural balance, and he is as much a god of tooth and fang as he is of butterflies and flowers. Flowers are his chosen symbol, because they are delicate and subject to regular changes, yet they are a beauty that keeps returning every year, proving that even things of beauty can find a place among the savagery of nature.

Sharm is a fairly old god, though not as old as The Lady of Seasons or Zwiarn. Ancient stories say Sharm was originally a hermit who retreated into the wilds on a quest to find the true meaning of life. Travellers would often stumble upon him in quiet meditation and contemplation, and he would talk with them and share his tales.

Years slid by, and still stories were brought into town about this modest little old man of the wilds, sitting in quiet contemplation. People started to seek him out, and his following began. People would sit in contemplation with him and listen to his teachings.

It is not known how long it took for Sharm to join the Immortals, but it is believed he lived many centuries of physical life, and perhaps is still alive today. However, his celebrated place among the Immortals now forms the basis of his religion.

Portfolio

Competition and guardian of nature.

Rather than being a passive nature god, Sharm teaches that survival has its roots in struggle. The meek must learn to run and hide, constantly competing against predator and other prey alike to stay alive. Predators compete against each other for available prey and also compete against the evasive skills of that prey. All of nature can be found in this ebb and flow of life with its often violent competition.

Holy Symbol

A daisy in a ring of thorns



Primary Followings

Sharm can be found throughout most lands, finding firm roots as far south as Saluria, and as far north as the edge of the Garter States. As a nature religion it usually has shrines in the wilds, and only rarely within city walls. Locating a cleric of Sharm generally means making enquiries with local farmers to find out where the shrines and simple huts of the Sharm can be found.

Key Factions

Sharm seems to have inspired different religions as different pockets of followers found their own interpretations of his teachings. The Thorn Druids believe the role of the predator offers the greatest of life lessons, as they compete with predators and prey equally, learning the ways of both. Each Thorn Druid takes a section of land as their own territory, then they defend that territory as any predator might.

The Mystics of the Flower Circle are almost the opposite, claiming that life flourishes when in abundance and in a state of quiet servitude, much as a field of flowers spreads and offers its pollen to be shared.

Brotherhood of the Briar believe that humans are creating an imbalance by not respecting nature and the delicate balance. They are primarily fighters, druids and clerics devoted to the defence of the wilds, especially the preservation of untouched sanctuaries.



The Deepwood Hunters started as an Adventurer Guild in Manakata, but are now a premier monster hunting guild devoted to Sharm. They believe that hunting is a natural cycle, and thus they are celebrating Sharm's teachings by becoming adept at their art.

Practices and Rituals

Practices vary a great deal. Competition is at the heart of most celebrations, and the request for help from a cleric of Sharm might first involve winning some sort of competitive test. Clerics of Sharm do not believe in fighting for people who are unwilling to struggle for themselves, however they may lend aid to give people a fighting chance when the odds are stacked against them. When faced with a losing battle, a follower of Sharm will usually abandon their ward to preserve their own life, as survival is a key teaching of Sharm.

Offerings made to Sharm consist of offcuts and unwanted parts from the hunt, thus shrines to Sharm might boast stacks of bones and torn hide. Sharm teaches that while each creature takes what they need to survive, other creatures have adapted to take the leavings for their own survival. Nature wastes nothing in the end.

Holy Days

The temples of Sharm promote many holy days throughout the year. In cities, they set up a faire outside the town and host games and other competitive events. In more remote areas they host hunts and other forms of friendly competition. While they have few set holy days, they are active contributors in any local community that allows them to promote competitive play.

THAGHERA

THE BLACK FLAME

THAGHERA is a vengeful god of rage and retribution. Sheathed in black flames he hunts down those who commit crimes against the innocent and punishes them. His name is oft evoked by the victims of crime who seek retribution for the wrongs done to them.

Thaghera's story says that he and his family were victims of brigands. His family were abused and killed while he was forced to look on, bound and helpless. Rather than killing him outright, the brigands left him tied, taking time to cover his flesh in cuts. As the brigands predicted, it didn't take long for a local pack of wolves to find Thaghera bound, bleeding and helpless.

As the wolves lapped at Thaghera's wounds they drank in his soul, and in so doing they drank in his lust for vengeance. Thaghera's rage possessed the wolf pack, and over the following days, they hunted the brigands tirelessly, until every one of them

was torn to shreds, visiting upon each the fate they had intended for Thaghera.

With his vengeance complete, Thaghera's soul left the world to join the Immortals. His personal vengeance might have been complete, but the cries of all those others who suffered in similar ways echoed through the aether, keeping the black flame of Thaghera's heart burning brightly.

Portfolio

Revenge and justice.

Thaghera is the ultimate judge, jury, and executioner. Called upon by those who have been wronged, the vengeance of Thaghera knows no boundaries and knows no mercy.

Holy Symbol

Wolf face formed of onyx flame.



Primary Followings

Temples of Thaghera can be found in most places in the world, as there will always be those who wrong others, and those who wish that harm returned. While the brutal practices of Thaghera are often frowned upon, the Getica Empire is the only land in which his following is illegal.

Key Factions

Shrines are usually small and discreet, often hidden in remote places where the aggrieved can pray safely. The clergy guard their shrines and ensure safety is maintained. There they will listen to the prayers of the applicants, though they rarely offer condolences or direct aid. However, it is well known that the shrines are where the Wolves of Thaghera can be called upon.

The Wolves of Thaghera are a network of 'Equalisers', who respond to the prayers of the faithful by tracking down the wrongdoers and exacting brutal justice upon them. Doubtless clergy number among the Wolves, but the wide range of skills reported indicates that not all Wolves are actually clerics.

Those who regularly suffer punishment from the Wolves often call them Dog Soldiers, as a derogatory way of saying they are the lapdogs of others. Yet the mere threat that the Wolves have your scent has been enough to cause some people to take their own lives. The Wolves propagate this fear by often leaving a mark, such as a simple charcoal drawing of a wolfhead on a wall, or even branding it into the flesh of particularly bad people.

The shrines of Thaghera do not maintain a standing military, but they are well known to provide agents for clandestine activities if someone in a powerful position needs to be punished.



Practices and Rituals

Thaghera is patient, and can take years to ensure only the guilty are punished. As such, the clergy of Thaghera are often employed by local governments as a police force of sorts. The clergy are willing to use their magic and expertise to track down criminals and bring them to justice. Usually, they are happy enough with the justice provided by the laws of the land, but it is well known that not all criminals make it to trial.

In some nations, Thaghera provides judges and executioners, once again filling in for the local police force or working with them. They tend to show little interest in financial or political crimes, except where people have been robbed blind and left destitute. However, they take special interest in the crimes of murder and rape.

To the followers of Thaghera, justice knows few bounds. Criminals are usually brutally beaten, often killed and often tortured for some time before death. The brutal practices regularly brings into question whether or not the church attracts the sort of people who take joy in violence. However, the clergy argue that the victims need to know their prayers were adequately answered or their own hearts will remain unquiet.

Holy Days

Thaghera has no set holy days, however the clergy promotes the idea of people creating their own days, giving thanks to Thaghera on the anniversary of justice coming to those who wronged them.

YOLAN AKA OLD BONES

YOLAN is technically a god of luck and good fortune, but he teaches that luck is most often made, thus making him patron of cheats and merchants.

He appears to be a fairly new Immortal, but his history seems to be obscured, perhaps intentionally. His proliferation has come out of the Age of Jackals, but he's well known to pre-date that time by an unknown amount. Over time the various versions of a deity of luck found a common ground, and that common ground is now known as Yolan.

Portfolio

Cheats, merchants, gambling and luck.

Holy Symbol

Two bone dice.

The dice are often worn in a wire cage which can be opened and used to actually game with. As it is technically illegal for the clergy to use weighted die, this has manufactured a belief that

official blessed dice of Yolan are fair. However this hasn't stopped individuals from exploiting this belief for profit.

Primary Followings

Popular in any place where games are played. Yolan is most well-known are the Garter States, particularly in Forecastle. Yolan's name can be heard being evoked all over the world, especially the taverns and gambling houses where traders frequent.

Traders often start a day by calling upon Yolan to bless their day's dealings, then 'tithe' him later in the taverns as they lose money gambling.

Key Factions

There are no key factions in service to Yolan. The religion does not have a militant arm nor do they have any real temples. However, taverns and gambling houses often double as temples, quite often run by clerics of Yolan.

Practices and Rituals

Yolan is a fairly laid back god who places few demands on his worshippers. This likely contributes to his popularity among the undisciplined people who form the majority of his following.

Yolan teaches that fortune can be fickle, and that it's important to take losses with a measure of decorum, should you not do so Yolan might turn away from you for life leaving you cursed with poor luck.

People often beseech the clergy of Yolan to lift such curses, asking to be returned to Yolan's favour. It's a simple enough blessing that requires little more than a suitable donation from the patron and a prayer said by the cleric.

Holy Days

There are no set holy days for the followers of Yolan.

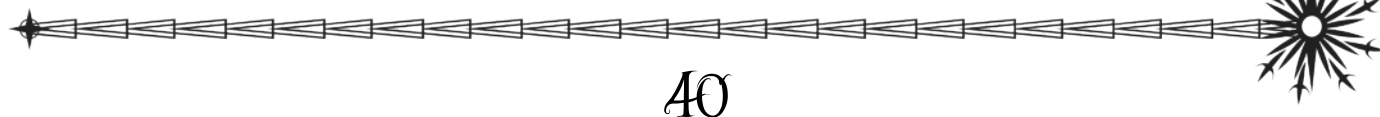
ZWITARN THE BEARDED LADY

ZWITARN is an ancient deity and is claimed by many to be the original creator of everything. Being both male and female, Zwitarn impregnated himself to create the first people. Not wanting to put the full responsibility of creation into the hands of any one being, he split the genders, creating man and woman.

As such an old god, his origin is a mystery as it comes from before recorded time.

Portfolio

Love, fertility and hermaphrodites.



More than just a fertility god, Zwitarn also represents the special connection that can be made between people, the connection of love. Love is the divine energy of creation and is as close to godhood as any mortal can hope to come.

Holy Symbol

Wooden idol of a big breasted woman with a full beard.

Holy icons are often made very crudely, such as roughly hand carved wood, or a shrine made from a simple stack of round stones.

Primary Followings

Idols to Zwitarn can be found all over the world, many dating back to before recorded time. Sometimes he is represented just as a pregnant woman without a beard, and at other times as a muscular virile looking man, yet the practices can all be brought back to the one god.

Followers of Zwitarn can even be found among primitive folk, and the various beast peoples such as orcs, ogres and gnolls.

The shrines to Zwitarn tend to be simple and usually placed outside of city walls, although some can be found within walls where the city has expanded to enclose it. The shrines are often guarded by a handful of worshippers, who tend to be either Clerics or Druids.

Zwitarn is popular among smaller villages where the simple unassuming religion represents everything most people want from a god. Zwitarn is often the god of choice for marriage ceremonies and birth blessings.

Key Factions

There are no notable factions among the followers of Zwitarn. Both clerics and druids are considered equals, and there is no military branch of the religion. It is a religion of creation, not destruction.

Practices and Rituals

One of the things that contributes to Zwitarn's popularity is the lack of strict requirements and practices. It is not a wealthy nor influential religion, so clerics tend to live a humble and simple life. It is not a life of enforced poverty, just a life of quiet modesty.

Holy Days

The anniversary of any marriage or birth within the family is usually celebrated as a holy day by followers of Zwitarn. So while the religion itself has no set days for worship, each follower will

have their own special days. It is simply a day to give thanks for what has passed and to make offerings of food or clothing to the shrines. These offerings are used by the clergy, both for their own use and to give as gifts to newlyweds and the newborn.

