

THE LAND OF GRADINA

The land of Gradina is home to many kingdoms and even more numerous peoples, primarily descended from settlers from all different corners of the world. The earliest settled first in the northeastern islands of Vindalia, then along the eastern coasts of the mainland; the next sailed from the west and found themselves in deserts rich with natural resources; and the southern settlers, who have made their homes in the dense, verdant marshes. Finally, to the northwest lies an island populated by people indigenous to Gradina, who show no interest in claiming parts of the mainland for themselves.

As these settlers built cities and spread across the land, they talked and traded, argued and warred. Now, the continent is occupied by many kingdoms, each one a branch from the path taken by the original settlers, and each now with their own goals. Most of the land is *claimed* by one of these kingdoms, though for all of the exploration done by the settlers, it still holds many mysteries in the dark corners where no human has yet dared to tread.

Now, the greatest mystery yet has arisen: the Day of Beasts, on which Monsters began to skulk from the forests and caves of Gradina. Many villages, caught unawares, were left to fend for themselves, and panic killed just as many as the Monsters. Now, each country recognizes delving further into the study of Magic as a necessity for survival, and central to this study are the ruins that have mysteriously appeared in regions thought to have been fully-surveyed. In a world fraught with growing tensions, humanity must put its petty squabbles

aside and band together to stand against this new threat and survive the Night.

THE KINGDOMS OF GRADINA

TRESS - An imperial kingdom led by a Divine King, anointed by their Saints, and led by a code of faith based on their “one true God”. They are the 2nd largest Kingdom in Gradina.

THE OLD EMPIRE - The kingdoms of Grinwald, Costana, Helghit, Isamir, and the Golden Company were all a part of the Aegir empire, these lines were drawn in wars of succession following the death of Aegir’s last emperor with no heir.

FORDOSSA - A proud people that splintered from the original settlers and have since remained independent. Several times, Tress and the Old Empire have attempted to conquer Fordossa. Neither has succeeded.

VINDALIA - An ancient kingdom founded by the first colonists from the east, these warrior-poets have chosen not to expand beyond their mountainous islands, choosing instead to engage in raids along the Tressian and Izuwan coasts.

BAZALI - This empire of sailors settled the swamp lands and conquered everything south of Asmodeus Pass. A civil war, assisted by the Golden Company, split Izuwa off from its original borders.



TRESS

This kingdom is the oldest of those founded by the eastern settlers. It was built on the ideals of religious independence by people seeking recognition of their belief in Saints. In their homeland, it was considered blasphemous to worship anyone other than the “one true God”. However, Tressian settlers firmly believed that their God would show themself through the “Saints” of the world, and by extension even recognized deities of other religions as “lesser deities” or “foreign Saints”. In other respects, Tress’ government is very similar to that of their previous homeland. A Divine King and royal family, believed to be selected by God, rules over the kingdom with the aid of a politically powerful, independent religious sector. There is a strong cultural drive to extend the reach of faith in the Saints and to find “undiscovered”- Saints in other regions of the world—though this is often decided by missionaries to make the Tressian religion more palatable to the locals. They also aim to expand the borders of Tress to “share their achievements with all”. This has led to several wars with their neighbors. Despite the bloodshed, the Tressians always see what they are doing as right, and in particular cite their architectural and agricultural advances as “proof of greater sophistication”.

(This Kingdom has aesthetic and architectural influences from France)

CITIES

TERRADIEU - This is the capital of Tress, known to its citizens as God’s Land or, in more rural parts of the country, Godland. The capital holds both the royal palace and the Grand Cathedral, acting as the political and religious headquarters of the country. Within the Grand Cathedral are the Hall of Saints and the Sainthood Assembly, in addition to clerical spaces for the Arch-Father and his Cardinals to carry out their holy work. The Grand Cathedral is one of the largest multi-complex structures in all of Gradina.

LESCOLE - The second-largest city in Tress, Lescole is the oldest and most developed city in Tress, having been built on the foundations of one of the original landing sites of the eastern colonists. It is home to the River University, the largest academic institution in the field of magic in this part of the world. Its scholars have made pioneering strides in all four Casting types, and the school spends a great deal of resources patronizing the arts. It displays more statues and paintings, and hosts more art

OHNYA - These peaceful ritualists originally journeyed to Gradina with those who would go on to found Bazali; they went their separate ways, and now are known for trade, witchcraft, and their custom of religious sacrifice.

IMBWE - An odd, nomadic people whose arrival in Gridina is a mystery. Some believe they are descended from the southern settlers; others believe they are natives to the land. Regardless, they lead peaceful pastoral lifestyles.

ASONONGI EMPIRE - This empire was founded by the western settlers, who brought a massive stockpile of resources to sustain their new colonies. Their early stability, in addition to their ruthless exploitation of the gold in the earth and the spices growing on the land, as made them the largest and wealthiest kingdom.

SYDIRA - Founded by dissidents who objected to what they believed to be greed-driven corruption, Sydira’s culture values faith and study more than that of the Asonongi Empire.

ESTRANGED ISLE KINGDOMS - These large islands are home to the reclusive natives of Gradina. Though they have lived in Gradina longer than any of the mainland kingdoms, they have never shown an interest in expanding across the straits. Their familiarity with the land gives them deeper insight into its workings than any mainland kingdom could hope for.

galleries than anywhere else in the world, striving to live up to its motto of “Science & Beauty”. The border of the city is tightly restricted, including a river blockade which makes the route from Lescole the entrance with the heaviest traffic.

LOCATIONS

RIVER TRESS - This is one of the longest-running rivers in the world, making its way all the way from Asmodeus Pass to two different shores in Tress. It is wide enough to provide water to all of Tress—the majority of their cities reside on this river or are supported by the goods and resources it produces, primarily the crops Tressians use to irrigate.

LONELY RIVER - A strange river in a sparsely-inhabited part of Tress, ambling through the hills near its border with Grinwald. Muddy and slow-moving, nobody understands how it can support enough fish to feed those who dwell near its banks.

PEOPLE

LUCIEN CLEMENT - The Current King of Tress, also known as Lucient the Merciful. Despite his successful background in military service, he is renowned for both his diplomatic skill and his reform of criminal law, opting to fine criminals for Ingots or Money rather than continue to enact corporal punishment. The fact that these fines fund the government has led many to accuse him of becoming blinded by Gold, but public opinion is still favorable following his peaceful resolution of the most recent conflicts with Grinwald and Fordossa.

DELANO GAUTHIER - The Arch-Father of the Church of Saints, Gauthier oversees the operations of Tressian Churches and leads the Anointed in their practices and divinations. First taking his position at the uncommonly young and inexperienced age of 30, Gauthier is now 92 years of age, earning him the moniker of “the Deathless

Father”. While he still participates in the daily proceedings of the church, he has become more of a figurehead of late due to his ailing health.

FACTIONS

ROYAL FAMILY - Collectively forming the head of state, the Royal Family is vetted by the Anointed for connection to the Original Saint. They pass laws, manage the economy, handle interactions with foreign powers, in addition to granting knighthood and issuing calls to arms when necessary.

CHURCH OF SAINTS - Tress’ chief religious authority oversees the operations of all Tressian churches, organizes festivals, collects tithes, and works to keep the Kingdom’s morals aligned with that of the church. While most of their political power resides in their advisorship to the Royal Family, they are somewhat able to back up their decisions with their standing reserve of missionaries and crusaders—though their loyalty often lies more with their favored Saint than with the Church itself.

THE ANOINTED - While technically subservient to the Church of Saints, tasked with studying mysticism, performing divination, and maintaining clerical records, the Anointed hold much sway over the proceedings of the Kingdom. Their position as archivists give them the power to legitimize or discredit a noble family’s ties to the aristocracy, in addition to the final say as to whether one has achieved Sainthood. The Sainthood Assembly is a body composed of representatives from all extant sects that works to integrate the teachings of every Saint into the Church’s doctrine, seeing them all as “different truths of God”. Most of the Anointed are loyal to their Saint, not the Church directly.

RIVER MAGI - The River Magi are the heads of Lescole’s academic institutions, and are at the forefront of all Magical inquiry in the country. They have no official political power, but with their influence over most of the country’s intellectuals—in both the field of Magic and in the mundane sciences and arts—their influence is significant.



THE OLD EMPIRE

The region of Gradina occupied by Grinwald, Costana, Helghit, and Isamir has a rich, albeit bloody, history. Early in the settlement of the continent, in the course of the expansion of their respective peoples, settlers from the eastern and western coasts met in the middle and almost immediately began a series of wars over territory. Eventually, a warlord from now-Isamir (who went on to be known as Aegir I), united the Bloody Plains and founded the Old Empire. The Council of Kingdoms, an assembly of the leaders of the widely-varied conquered peoples, was called to order under the new Emperor, an arrangement which lasted for centuries until the last of Aegir I's lineage died without an heir. The resulting power vacuum lead to the formation of what are now known as the Four Kingdoms.

(This Kingdom has aesthetic and architectural influences from many Countries depending on the Faction)

- Grinwald is influenced by Britain & Wales
- Costana is influenced by Spain & Italy
- Helghit is influenced by Germany & Poland
- Isamir is influenced by Russia

CITIES

HIGHCASTLE - This is the Capital of Grinwald, which stands tall and proud over a small lake at the end of the Imperial River. It is considered an architectural marvel, and is one of the most fortified cities in the world, having firmly embedded stone walls around a majority of the city. It is said that Highcastle will never be taken by force.

TERRELIBRA - The capital of Costana sits along another of the Imperial River's banks, with artistic architectural achievements to rival the military engineering of Highcastle. Prominently featured in the city is a Cathedral full of beautiful iconography of their Saints, said to rival the Tressian Grand Cathedral.

HEILIGKEIT - The capital of Helghit, founded on the banks of the Great River at the end of an exodus led by Saint Helga from kingdoms farther eastward. The long march became legendary, coming to an end only after being turned away by the horrors of The Depraved Warren; the city itself became a place of religious significance and the destination of many further pilgrimages; in its prime, over 200,000

residents were recorded, making it the most densely-populated city in the world.

RODINA - The Capital of Isamir and the birthplace of the Aegir lineage, as well as many other of the Old Empire's customs. Rodina places great importance on its history, painstakingly maintaining century-old statues and manuscripts and running one of the largest libraries in the world to store documents related to Imperial history. This library contains detailed records of the Day of Beasts, and is said to hold many secrets of old-world Magic.

LOCATIONS

IMPERIAL RIVER - A beautiful river that divides the Four Kingdoms, stretching all the way from Lake Aegir and eventually converging into the Great River that pours out into the Forgotten Sea. This river is, by a small margin, even longer than the River of Tress, making it the 2nd largest river in all of Gradina.

GREAT RIVER - Without a doubt the largest river in the world, over a mile wide at its most broad, and flowing all the way from the Illahi Mountains to the Forgotten Sea. Its waters are beautiful and full of life, fruitful for fishermen and farmers alike, and serve as a natural defense from The Depraved Warren on its opposing shore.

AEGIR LAKE - The Largest lake in Gradina, supporting dozens of villages that have established themselves on its shores on the border of Grinwald and Isamir. It is often visited by outsiders from as near as Tress and as far as the Golden Company, and is the premiere spot to trade. Despite Isamir's and Grinwald's terse relations, it is considered a relatively peaceful place.

PEOPLE

WILLIAM JONATHAN JAMES II - This bearded warrior-king of Grinwald was a part of a noble family that was exiled by the Empire. When the Empire began to crumble, the James family rose to prominence as a symbol of the Grinwalsh people's desire to move on from the past and grow into their own nation. which led to wars with both Fordossa and Tress. After the death of his father-seized upon as an opportunity to attack by the Isamirans- William finally acquiesced and made peace with both nations.

CAMILLA LOMBARDI - The first Queen of Costana, being the only child of the previous King Anthony, it was clear that Costana would be thrown into chaos over the throne, and since the previous Queen died before giving birth to a male heir, the King instead changed the laws to put her daughter first in line, this caused the ire of many cousins and nobles, which became Camilla's first obstacle as Queen, but with diplomacy, and a firm hand where needed, she quickly squashes dissenting opinions, through words or force. Despite her thin stature, she is known to be fierce and never leaves negotiations empty handed.

MIKOLAJ ZIELINSKI - Known as the "Pilgrim King" for his part in the exodus that founded Heiligkeit: it is said that he walked amongst his people in his all-green garments, exerting himself as they did and refusing to lord over them from atop his horse. He is known as a pious and pure man, but this zeal is said to be both his greatest strength and greatest weakness. He demands this same purity of his court, and his absolutism regarding "sin" has caused him to cycle through many, many advisors. Additionally, he often abandons the capital on further pilgrimages, visiting holy places and hermitages to pray in seclusion. This leaves the day-to-day governance of Helghit in the hands of his advisors, who often must account for sudden changes of plan when he returns unannounced and retakes the reins.

VIKTOR PETROV - The Emperor of Isamir, and holder of "The Spear", which is said to contain the blood and power of the Aegir family, passed down to his father at his coronation and thus to Viktor at his own. With The Spear in hand, Viktor undertook a rite of passage prior to his ascendancy, slaying a Monster and returning with its head with the help of only a small retinue of knights. Unlike many other places, Viktor holds the throne with his father at his side serving as an advisor. His father's political expertise allows Viktor to take a more active role in military and social affairs, while the issue of governance remains well-attended

FACtIONS

GRINWALD - One of the last Kingdoms to integrate into the Empire, and actively denounced the Emperor. When the Empire shattered, they were the fastest to stake their claim, re-establishing the Old Monarchy that was in place.

COSTANA - Did not support the Council or Empire, and utilized their newfound freedom to explore new arts and trades. They are one of only two kingdoms that attempted to explore the Unclaimed Lands, and provide the little information that Gradina has. Seeming to have learned from the mistakes of their predecessors, they enshrined an absolute primogeniture into their laws upon their secession.

HELGHIT - Firmly believed in the empire, but specifically carried the "Divine right of Kings" from the old Eastern settlers, believing themselves to be the holiest of the Four Kingdoms. As a result, many of their customs closely mirror those of the Old Empire.

ISAMIR - This Kingdom is the heartland of the Old Empire, and believes itself to be the true carrier of its torch, not Helghit. They actively trade with the Asonogi and have thereby acquired many technological advances.



FORDOSSA

This Kingdom was born out of an interest to practice the Eastern Faith of Sainthoods while also participating in ancient ritualistic magic like Shamanism and Witchcraft, heading for the forests of Fordossa for safe places for their covens to practice. The first Fordossan king—the Original Royan—was revered as a Saint and is now considered almost a deific figure. Later Royans were, and still are, required to be descended from him, as the Fordossans believe that his holy spirit passes from leader to leader, giving them strength and wisdom.

(This Kingdom has aesthetic and architectural influences from Scotland & Ireland)

CITIES

THE CITY OF CRIEDHA - Also known as the City of Heart, or simply the Heartland. Many of the eastern settlers who did not follow the Old Religion fled here; though they retained their personal objects of worship, interpreted by Tressians and other adherents as Saints, they accepted, learned from, and integrated the beliefs of those who practiced Witchcraft and other nature-oriented, spiritual belief systems. The City of Criedha became known as a place where Druids, Shamans, and so on could safely observe their faiths, and though there is less magic there in the modern day than its reputation suggests, it is still one of the most diverse and accepting cities in Gradina, and boast one of the richest tapestries of local folklore.

SYOCHAN - This City lies in the northwestern valleys of Fordossa, close to the Gaelin cliffs. It is the home of the Gaellinites, a zealous and dedicated people that adhere to the “Old Ways”, practicing witchcraft and druidic magic more openly than they do in most of the rest of Fordossa. They refer to their doctrine as the “Truth of the Mountain” and serve as a living repository of druidic knowledge.

LOCATIONS

ORINN LAKE - This mystical lake, situated on a northern peninsula, is somewhat perplexing. It is often shrouded with fog, remains warm all year round, and is unnaturally clean in spite of being a stagnant body of water with no rivers feeding into it.

GAELEN CLIFFS - Gaellinites claim that upon the peak of these cliffs, a Gaelin Mystic experienced a revelatory vision and descended bearing the Truth of the Mountain. Spoken of in oral histories as the Old Hero, he established several tenets of Fordossa's moral and spiritual framework. Many individuals in Fordossa make pilgrimages to the spot where the Old Hero received his first vision to pray to the spirits and their ancestors.

RACONTEUR FIELDS - These rolling fields lay just outside the Forests of Fordossa. The name is Tressian in origin, but stuck among Fordossans during peace talks between Fordossa, Grinwald, and Tress wherein territorial disputes were settled. It was on these very fields that the peace talks were held, and Fordossan storytellers exchanged tales and songs with Grinwalsh and Tressian scribes during breaks in the deliberations. Though today the fields hold little of importance, they serve as a safe crossroads for merchants traveling between the three kingdoms.

PEOPLE

ROAN MAEVE - The current Royana, of Fordossa. She initially had many detractors, as she inherited the title at a young age when the previous Royan was slain during the conflict with Grinwald and Tress. She quickly silenced them, showing no hesitation to join her soldiers on the front lines. Her incredible aptitude for strategy and inspiring presence have made her one of the most popular rulers in Fordossan history. Beautiful, fierce, intelligent, and fair, her people were behind her at every step.

FACTIONS

THE HIERARCHS - The royal family of Fordossa, those who trace their lineage to the Original Royan. While in the past there have been disputes, and even brief military conflicts, about this lineage, it is now tracked meticulously by a dedicated circle of storytellers to prevent any further uncertainty or debate.

THE LAYURDS - The Fordossan nobility, which enjoys certain privileges, including affordances of land and warbands placed under their command. One can become a Layurd through various means, including legitimate but distant connections to the lineage of the Original Royan, performance of great

feats, and occasionally notable wealth. This title is hereditary in the same manner as the position of Royan; many current Layurds are the descendants of ancient Fordossan heroes.

GAELLINITES - While there is no official religion in Fordossa, the Gaellinites are the most prominent religious organization. These individuals study mysticism, commune with spirits, and provide guidance on how best to live by the Truth of the Mountain. In recent years, some have leveraged their authority on the subject of the Old Ways to dissent against the current Royana.

VINDALIA

The first place that the original eastern colonists made landfall on Gradina was actually not on the mainland, but on the large, inhospitable islands to its northeast. Though all had undertaken this journey to flee religious persecution, over the course of the voyage, those who would go on to found Tress had become just as strict about adherence to their Saints as the old world had been about the “one true God”; this tension, in addition to fatigue from traveling, lead some settlers to take a chance on the island while the others continued their search for a new home elsewhere. As these early settlers spread, their ability to make ends meet through the harsh winters became strained, and the now-Vindalians built grand warships in an effort to sustain themselves via plunder from the newly-established mainland colonies.

(This Kingdom has aesthetic and architectural influences from Norse & Scandinavia)

CITIES

DROMMELAND - The Capital of Vindalia and the first city established by the eastern settlers, affectionately nicknamed “The Dreamland” for the hope its coast brought to the sea-weary colonists. Those who remained on Vindalia did so in part in protest against the movement in favor of enforcing the worship of Saints; as a result of this emphasis on personal expression, the arts flourished, and Vindalia has a sophisticated culture of sagas and epic poetry. It is through these skalds that Vindalia has records of the formation of several clans, and the century of conflict that arose between them as resources became more scarce. Built on bloodshed-literally–Clan Bjorn now rules from Drommeland, and it is there that the heads of the other clans convene with Frey Bjorn to discuss governance and plan raids.

LOCATIONS

KRIGER'S CROSS - The straits that split the islands of Vindalia, which serve as transportation between coastal settlements, the country's primary breadbasket (supporting a hearty fishing industry and driving innovation in marine agriculture), and a meeting place for the country's poets, artists, and scholars.

WILD ISLANDS - An archipelago that stretches from the southern tip of Vindalia all the way to the eastern coast of Tress and Izuwa. These small, foggy clusters of islands aid in navigation from Vindalia to the mainland, serving as landmarks and, in a pinch, a place to set anchor. Tress and Izuwa have skirmished over control of these islands in the past, and were caught off guard during one such conflict by the arrival of Clan Njal, whose naval prowess decimated both forces and claimed the largest haul in Vindalian history. While Tress and Izuwa both still technically own the islands, they do not hold as firmly to them for fear of another intervention from Clan Njal.

PEOPLE

FREY BJORN - The current Jarl of Vindalia, a direct descendent of Bjorn the Uniter (and quick to pound on his family name). While he is a skilled warrior and fiercely loyal to his people, he is young and inexperienced. This, combined with his family's characteristic fixation on the “proper” way for a Vindalian to live, has caused him to cling tightly to his forefathers' methods of governance. In the unpredictable landscape of Vindalia's needs, this lack of adaptability drew him much criticism, and he has leaned heavily on his advisors to help him solve problems; in recent years, he has been acutely aware of their growing influence, and has clamped down on his remaining political power with an iron fist. .

TARBEN THE RED - The Chief of Clan Njal, and one of the oldest living Chiefs in Vindalia, his father was responsible for the raids against Tress and Izuwa in the Wild Islands. Having found success in warfare his entire life, and having personally known Frey's father, he has denounced Frey's willingness to compromise with his advisors as a sign of weakness. After organizing expeditions independently of the other Clans, and refusing to share the loot, he was summoned to Drommeland, where he dared the other chiefs to take their shares from Clan Njal. With no other Chief willing to challenge him—he had earned the name Tarben the Red, after

all-Frey exiled him to maintain peace between the clans. While Clan Njal is no longer technically part of Vindalia, and Tarben does not dispute Vindalian rule, he continues to lead his men in hoarding resources from the mainland's coast.

ASTRID ULFHILD - Leader of Clan Ulfhild and the first woman to hold the position of Chief. While many—particularly Clan Bjorn—opposed her taking the title, she has handily won the hearts of her own people—and many battles, to boot. While she is still spoken of more for her “broad shoulders” than her military achievements, she has encouraged other women to take positions of power in Vindalia.

FACTIONS

CLAN BJORN - The first Clan to have formed in the early days of Vindalia, and the de facto head Clan as a result of Bjorn the Uniter. Its patron animal is the bear, and it refers to itself as the Clan of Might; its culture strongly emphasizes masculinity and values military strength. The people, especially the leaders, of Clan Bjorn are known for their confidence and their unwillingness to back down—traits that other clans call stubbornness.

CLAN STEN - The next largest Clan to Bjorn and the second in Vindalia’s history to form, considered the garrison of the islands. When Tress launched a naval invasion of Vindalia in an effort to rid themselves of the raiders, it was the “Clan of Stone” that met them in the waters and held them on the beaches. Clan Sten is known for their stubbornness, but also for their stalwart natures and their patience. They also host the greatest number of Scholars and Mystics of any of the Clans.

CLAN LIEF - The youngest of the Clans, and one with a different outlook on the seafaring ways of Vindalians: Clan Lief, having greatly enjoyed the wealth Vindalia won in raids, have turned to a mercantile way of life to more easily maintain their standard of living. While the so-called Clan of Gold is often pointed to as an example of “moral decay” or a sign of the decline of Vindalia’s warrior culture, they are the largest patrons of Vindalia’s artists and skalds, and are viewed by many as offering a more sustainable future for the islands.

CLAN ULFHILD - The fourth clan to form, bearing the title of “Clan of the Wolf”, and the only Clan to be led by a woman (Astrid having been the only child left behind by the previous Chief). While it can contend with the other clans in terms of raw might, its unique strength lies in the diplomatic ability of its leader—Astrid has forged a close alliance with Clan Lief and has personal ties with Frey Bjorn. She wields her influence in an effort to move Vindalia in a less violent, more stable direction.

CLAN NJAL - Formed soon after Clan Sten, Njal is considered one of the “original” Clans, and is known as the Clan of Giants. Clan Njal has participated in every raid since the founding of Vindalia, and pride themselves on training the strongest warriors in Vindalia. Following the change of direction of Clans Lief and Ulfhild, and especially after what was viewed as a “moral collapse” of Clan Bjorn, Clan Njal has secluded itself from the other Clans. Given its defensible, mountainous location and its proximity to other raid targets, it seems content to remain that way.



BAZALI & IZUWA

This Kingdom reaches from the southern shores of Gradina all the way to the Asmodeus Mountains, ruled by the Kula Zali (lit. the “One Founder”), a deific figure said to be a god manifested in flesh to enact divine rule over the Empire. Its founders eventually conquered their neighboring clans and constructed large Temples from which they could administrate and exert spiritual influence over their new constituents, appointing local chiefs as officials and recruiting hunters and trappers into militias.

(This Kingdom has aesthetic and architectural influences from the Inca & other South American cultures)

CITIES

DYASSURRI - This is the Capital of the Bazali empire, and one of the founding cities of the Kingdom. Sometimes referred to as “God Tower”, this City is known for its serpentine Temples, along with the Emperor’s keep, which is an incredibly large tower that sits in the center of the city. The Emperor’s Keep is said to be the closest building to the Heavens, and the top of that tower is where Emperors are anointed and touched by the Gods of old, elevating the Emperor to the status of a living deity.

MUSOGALLPA - This is the Capital of the Izuwa, who were a collection of distant tribes that split from the original Southern settlers, much like the Ohnya peoples. Unlike the Ohnya, the Izuwa tribes were quickly reconquered under the ever-grasping iron fist of the Bazali. Musogallpa was built by Bazalin architects and, in contrast to their usual policy of allowing their vassals to oversee their own affairs, designated the capital city of *all* of the Izuwan territories. Though said to be a “gift” meant to “unify” them, and although its central location makes it a convenient meeting ground for Izuwan chiefs, it is widely thought of as a reminder of who truly makes the decisions within the Empire, and as such has actually become a hotbed for Izuwan dissent.

GROLANDIA - This city houses the headquarters of the Golden Company, whose economic and military sway effectively elevate the city to a proper Capital. It was the original settlement placed by the Old Empire, named after the lush and green hills that the Imperial colony discovered on the other side of the Asmodeus Mountains. Without Imperial support following the fall of the Old Empire, Grolandia has been forced to restructure itself to

support itself and its surrounding villages and cities; now, it serves as the new hub for trade between ex-Colonial Kingdoms and merchants from Izuwa.

LOCATIONS

ZINZA COVE - Also known as the Marshy Cove, this is a large inlet near the southern coast of Bazali, framed by two inward-arching peninsulas with a city at each tip. The body of water makes for quicker passage than land can offer, and as a result, trade between these two cities booms.

GREAT ARVICH - A dense swampy forest in the center of Bazali, one of the densest forests in the Empire. It was once a sacred place where Shamans and spiritual leaders would go to commune with the spirits and pray at the “Great Tree”, for which the forest is named. The tree itself was previously renowned for being the largest in the world; following the Day of Beasts, it is infamous for being infested with particularly powerful Monsters, and many Hunters now venture to it to prove their mettle.

CHOIHUANA HILLS - Sometimes simply referred to as “The Crossing”, this is a harsh range of tall hills that separate Bazali territory from that of the Ohnya. Because its terrain serves as such a strong defensive foothold, many Bazali incursions have been stopped there--so many, in fact, that the Ohnya refer to them as the Bloody Hills.

PEOPLE

EKKEKO HUAMANI - The current Kula Zali. The word Bazali breaks down into ‘Ba’ (“the”) and ‘Zali’ (“Founder”), and so does the title Kula Zali, which translates as “One Zali” or “One Founder”. The Bazali believe this title to be bestowed by the gods themselves, and that the Emperors are living deities sent down to lead the Empire. Ekkeko himself is an unusually young ruler at merely 13 years of age; he is the youngest Emperor in Bazali history. His ambitions, however, as big as those of any empire: he aspires to expand the boundaries of Bazali into the territory of the Golden Company and to consolidate his rule over the northern Izuwans.

AMARU VICHAMA - The current Kwapa of Izuwa. The nation’s name is a word derived from ‘I’ (“Me” or “My”) and ‘Zuwa’ (“Home”). Vichama is a hardened warlord, and led the initial battle that followed Izuwa’s declaration of independence from the Bazali Empire. To do so, he met with

and successfully petitioned the Golden Minister for financial support. Within the military sphere, Vichama is known as the “Bringer of Death” for his relentless tactics, and the personal execution thereof.

AURELIO FERNANDES - The Minister of the Golden Company and, by extension, the ex-Colony. His position is an appointed one, rather than dynastic or won through conquest; he is responsible for orchestrating economic and social initiatives to help the Colony grow and sustain itself. Aurelio is often referred to as the “Golden Minister” for the wealth that he has brought to the Company through his expertise in trade and logistics, even in an otherwise dire political situation in the wake of the Old Empire’s collapse.

FACTIONS

THE DESCENDANTS - This is the direct lineage of rulers in Bazali, which includes members of the Huamani dynasty and several unrelated recipients of the Gods’ blessing. While relation to an existing dynasty is the easiest claim to divinity—as those who are descended from gods are naturally considered gods themselves—the Bazali belief that Emperors are *sent* from the heavens, gods themselves, lends validity to claimants without well-documented divine blood.

THE GREAT TEMPLES - This is a collection of Shamans and spiritual leaders that organize the construction of Temples, pursue the study of magic, and organize local ceremonies and festivals. They also serve as local administrators and leaders, making executive decisions for small-scale issues such as handling crime, civil disputes, and other goals decided upon by their community.

THE IZUWA - A collection of clans that stood independent for many decades north of Bazali following Gradina’s initial colonization, but were conquered by the expanding Empire. It wasn’t until the arrival of the Old Empire’s colonies that the Izuwa found the chance to break away from Bazalin rule; they have since formed an alliance with each other in an ironic fulfillment of Bazali’s promise of unity, and now strive to permanently secure their independence from their old conquerors.

THE GOLDEN COMPANY - An administrative body formed from the remains of the Old Empire’s mercenary forces that had been deployed on the far side of the Asmodeus Mountains. When the Old Empire fell, material support from its successor Kingdoms dried up, and the military presence of the

mercenaries became the only form of government in the region. Eventually, laws were formalized and a Minister was chosen to oversee civilian affairs, while the hired hands of the Golden Company remain the military backing of the new “state”.

OHNYA

Ohnya is not a Kingdom in the traditional sense; rather, it is a coalition of independent clans who operate in coordination with each other. Each sends military, religious, and economic leaders to an assembly, where they negotiate with each other over the direction that their collective peoples should take. This assembly is directed and mediated by an Aloy who is elected from the body of leaders.

(This Kingdom has aesthetic and architectural influences from the Aztec, the Maya, & other Mesoamerican cultures)

CITIES

OZOMATLI - The Capital of Ohnya, which sits at the foot of Mount Ozomatli. Ozomatli looms large as a symbol in Ohnyan culture, representing hope for their future, and often associated with pleasant dreams. The city, prosperous and peaceful, extends down the mountain and onto both banks of the Nemeliz River, and is even partially constructed above the river itself. This feat is possible through water-resistant materials pioneered by the Ohnya, as well as sophisticated architecture, which incorporates stilts, pulleys, and ropes to keep the structures floating in place even as the river shifts, rises, and falls.

PALACHAK - Located on the Nemeliz River roughly halfway between Ozomatli and Kualax, Palachak is a major trading hub, allowing merchants from either other city to meet in the middle rather than sending goods all the way along the river themselves. Palachak itself is actually comprised of two distinct cities, both growing extensively enough from the mercantile activity that they met and effectively became one larger urban area. The new city now boasts the largest population in Ohnya.

KUALAX - Situated on the mouth of the Nemeliz river, Kualax could be considered the gate to the remainder of Ohnya. As such, it brokers most of the nations’ outgoing and incoming trade, which earns it some degree of protection from its expansionist neighbors on both sides. The sheer abundance of goods that Kualax exports to both the Bazali and

the Asonongi keeps prices quite low for all three countries, and this, as well as the large mercenary force hired to protect these goods, means that *many* people have a vested interest in Kualax's continued prosperity.

LOCATIONS

MOUNT OZOMATLI - The Shamans and lay faithful of Ohnya spent many decades hollowing out paths and caverns throughout Mount Ozomatli, as well as an elaborate system of elevators to the top, based on devices similar to those they employ to keep the floating portions of Ozomatli stable. At the peak of the mountain resides a massive puppet, in which the spirits of their ancestors are believed to reside. Other chambers in the mountain provide space and privacy for druidic rituals and the practice of other Magic.

NEMELIZ RIVER - One of the longest rivers in all of Gradina, about half a mile wide and extending all the way from the Ozomatli Mountain to the Green Water Ocean in the south. It is an outstandingly fruitful and beautiful river, providing nigh-endless fish and sustaining miles of wheat and barley across its length. The river is the spiritual core of the Ohnyan people, often thought of as the nations' "spine", and many small shrines and temples dot the river's banks. These places of worship contain sacred statues, icons of the plethora of Ohnyan animal Gods, to which they pray for bountiful harvests, successes in love, safe hunting, and so on.

PEOPLE

ZUMA COCOLATL - Cocolatl currently holds the position of Aloy, and though he doesn't "rule" over any portion of Ohnya, other Kingdoms often treat him as the singular head of state in their political dealings. Zuma organizes the Kuxiquabal, as well as breaking ties in matters of law and the military, though he uses this power extremely judiciously. He firmly believes that an Aloy should not attempt to use their position for anything other than the common good of the Kuxiquabal's constituent Baquibas, and that it is not his place to dictate the choices of the people living in them.

TENOCH NOCELOTI - The young Nochami of Ozomatli, Nocelotl leads the military of Ohnya's capital, organizing great hunts, training young ones to fight, allocating military resources, and overseeing the production of weapons. Despite having no formal authority over the Baquibas to the south, their constituents respect and revere Tenoch, looking to him as a defender of Ohnya from the looming threats of the Bazali and Asonongi.

YOLOTLI POPOCA - The Baquia of Palachak is seen as the core of Ohnya, overlooking its largest cities and directing a majority of its population. Due to consistent raids from the Bazali and Asonongi, Palachak is seen as a safe bastion; in addition to growth from its bustling trade, Palachak has been seeing an influx of refugees from villages closer to the border of Ohnya's territory.

XOCHITL IZEL AHUATL - This Baquia of Kualax, whose sharp tongue and sharper wits have brought great prosperity to the port city. As the chief representative of the most outward-facing region of Ohnya, she is a skilled negotiator and a strong voice for peace.

FACtIONS

THE KUXIQUABAL - The assembly of various leaders of the Ohnyan people. It is led by the Aloy, and both military commanders (Nochamis) and civilian leaders (Baqibas), as well as any other figures of sizable influence, are welcome to join the discussion in the temples of Ozomatli over how best to guide Ohnya.

THE SUNGAZERS - An order of Shamans and ritualists who organize and lead the Ohnyan faith, cataloging the different deities and practices observed by individual clans and compiling them into a consistent and coherent timeline. In the past, they often conducted blood sacrifices, but pressure from the populace (and therefore, from Aloy Cocolatl) have diminished their frequency.

HOLQUEN TIGRE - Tenoch's personal retinue, elite hunters and warriors who bear the title of Feathered Tigers. These individuals are the best of the best of Ohnya's soldiers, and stand on the front lines of every engagement with outside invaders.

IMBWE CLANS

The Imbwé Clans are a loose association of peoples, each with their own culture and leaders, who live in close proximity to each other and cooperate to meet their own needs. While, according to oral histories, they have always cooperated in this way, the recent development of Monster activity has made their alliance more important than ever, and they continue to share their surpluses and loan their respective skills to each other for their mutual benefit.

(This Kingdom has aesthetic and architectural influences from The Lakota, Dakota, Nakota (Sioux), and Haudenosaunee Confederacy)

CITIES

The Imbwé Clans have no cities on their lands.

LOCATIONS

THREE VALLEYS - Lying in the center of the land on which the Imbwé Clans live are the Three Valleys, a low-lying region in the Imbwé Prairie where three large lakes form in seasons of heavy rain. These three lakes hold spiritual significance to the three clans, as well as serving as their main source of drinking water and as a waterhole for the animals they subsist on. While the Imbwé peoples do not always live in the immediate surroundings of the Three valleys—the constant cycle of evaporation and refilling of these valleys with rainwater has lead to an intimate understanding of the Prairie's weather patterns, and the Imbwé regularly move their encampments to follow the reappearance of the lakes—they often return even during dry spells to pay respects and pray to their ancestors. Since the Day of Beasts, their nomadic lifestyle has experienced interruptions; Monsters need to drink, and so follow them to the lakes, and need to eat, poaching the herds of wild cattle. As a result, the Imbwé travel even lighter than they once did, ready to relocate to another lake at the first sign of an approaching Monster to avoid attacks.

PEOPLE

SOCHAK KAGA - The chieftain of the Sousoula Clan, and one of the eldest members of all the Imbwé Clans. He is also known as "he who has seen the spirits", and he is one of the most powerful shamans amongst the Three Valleys. Without the physical prowess to hunt or fight, Sochak has served

as a teacher for the young and a spiritual leader for the Imbwé faith.

HAUGIHA SAHWE - The chieftain of the Arnihava Clan, and a Clan known for their dedicated and fierce warriors that has established itself as the defender of the Three Valleys from Monsters and other threats. Haugiha was once a part of the Sousoula Clan and a student of Sochak, but as he grew, he found that his talent did not lie in matters of the spirit. When Chief Rotaug was exiled, he sensed opportunity; he began to travel with the Arnihava Clan instead of his own, and through hard work, proved himself worthy of the position of chieftain.

KACHINA MUTEXI - The matriarch of the Furonioux Clan and the one responsible for the Imbwé Clans' recent experimentation with new methods of farming. She is seen as a motherly figure and is widely revered for her wisdom and foresight. As a defense against Monsters, Kachina has strived to teach her people to navigate safely in the darkness of night, an idea inspired by both a dream and the name of the clan.

POLOWATHA ROTAUG - Originally the leader of the Arnihava clan, Polowatha is now the chieftain of the Rovahan Clan. As Monsters became more numerous and intrusions from neighboring Kingdoms increased, Polowatha took an aggressive stance in protecting the prairies, attacking all intruders and pushing his hunters and warriors to the limit. Because of this, Sochak exiled him, leading Polowatha to take his most fervent fighters—those who would dedicate their very lives to the protection of the Three Valleys, even in exile.

FACTIONS

SOUSOULA CLAN - The spiritual heart of the three clans, led by Chief Kaga. Although every clan has their own shamans, hunters, and gatherers, members of the Sousoula clan spend much of their time practicing shamanic rites and pursuing greater knowledge of the land .

ARNIHAVA CLAN - A clan with a long tradition of tracking, herding, and bringing down larger animals, and as such the home of many fine hunters and warriors. Members of the Arnihava Clan are the first line of defense for the Three Valleys and the clans that dwell there. It was led by Polowatha Rotaug until his exile; he was succeeded some time later by Haugiha Sahwe.

FURONIOUX CLAN - The gatherers and farmers of the Imwe Clans. As the clan responsible for the Three Valleys' food stores, as well as much of the attendant craftsmanship, they deal in diplomacy and trade with other nations most frequently. They place sentinels to watch over their flocks—and by extension, the homes of the clans' people—and warn the Arnihava clan of any dangers that approach.

ROVAHAN CLAN - A band of warriors committed to the protection of the Imwe Clans, at *any* cost. It was founded by Polowatha Rotaug upon his exile from the Arnihava Clan, and is comprised of those among the people of the Three Valleys who also believed that such excessive force was necessary to ward off foreign Kingdoms and Monsters.

ASONONGI EMPIRE

This Empire was born of the original Western settlers, specifically the more conquest-minded among them. The Asonongi are ruled by Sulisans, a title of nobility with religious origins. The organization of their society is fundamentally different from that of their homeland: the political sphere and the military exist separately from religious authorities, and where religion would have dictated law, religious leaders instead serve as moral guidance for legislature crafted by the Sulisans. The Sulisan class is split into Qansa (lit. "Emperor"), Harehk ("home King"), and Harbahd ("away King"). When a Sulisan rules over their own dominion they are known as a Harehk, and they will delegate oversight of their conquered territories to local leaders. If a conquered territory is particularly significant, militarily, economically, or otherwise, then a Sulisan might lead it personally, designating them as Harbahd. The religious institutions of the Asonongi, collectively representing the Faith, are able to bestow the title of Sulisan upon worthy families.

(This Kingdom has aesthetic and architectural influences from Mali & Songhai Empires)

CITIES

RAYA EAST - One half of the Asonongi Capital. East and West Raya originally started as two separate cities, but as trade grew, they slowly encroached upon each other and became one larger city. Raya East is where the first Qansa rose to prominence, and it holds many of the Asonongi cultural centers: the Grand Palace, where the Qansa and their family resides; the Iron Quarter, which

produces a majority of the Empire's weapons, armor, and tools; and the Asonongi Bank, which holds an enormous store of money and natural resources.

RAYA WEST - The lesser of the two cities prior to their unification, and which was not part of the Asonongi Empire prior to that point. It was, and still is, a center of the arts, of theological thought, and of other scholarly pursuits; it is home to the Grand Mosque and a litany of Universities and schools that study astrology, math, medicine, and Magic. When this city was absorbed into the Asonongi Empire, a mass exodus of scholarly individuals—dissenters against the way the Sulisans interpreted and enacted the tenets of the Faith—left and settled farther north, becoming Sydira.

ILLUHA - This wealthy oasis city sits on the bank of the clear lake of Illuha's Grace, providing a respite for those traveling through the harsh and unforgiving deserts of Asonongi. Illuha is a trading hub connecting parts of Asonongi, and many fine spices, silks, and exotic goods from all over the Empire can be found there.

LOCATIONS

RAYA RIVER - This majestic river, striking into the heart of Asonongi, is the lifeblood of the Capital and many other villages and towns. It also is one of the greatest reservoirs of Gold in all of Gradina. With the rise of the Raya and the Asonongi, that gold (and its other natural resources) were quickly seized upon and held by the Sulisans, specifically the Sulisan family that would later become the Qansa of the Empire. The Raya is both a material and spiritual touchstone for the Asonongi, and represents their iron-fisted rule and their religious roots in the form of their blessings and shrines all along the river.

ILLUHA'S GRACE - The largest and most beautiful oasis in the Asonongi Desert, said to hold magical healing properties. It sustains a massive trading hub and checkpoint for those trying to cross the unforgiving dunes, surrounded on all sides by beautiful, rolling golden hills--those who live there say it is "the most beautiful place in the world". Although it resides within the Asonongi Empire it is a city that welcomes any and all travelers, and the scholars there openly share their knowledge with the rest of the world. Ever since the Day of Beasts, their efforts have been redoubled, as the need for knowledge of Magic and Monsters grew with each passing day. Now Illuha's Grace is a hub not just for travelers and traders but adventurers and Hunters as well.

QALEEL RIVER - A long-reaching river that acts as a natural border between the Asonongi and the Ohnya, although over time the Asonongi have slowly pushed their border past the river. It is now seen as a defining feature of the Asonongi's territory and is prominent in their culture. Despite this, some remnants of Ohnyan culture still persist in the local religious iconography, and enclaves of Ohnya people still reside in small, scattered villages on its banks. Although it was once seen as a tranquil place, due to the repeated assaults it is now seen as cursed, where only the hardened and the brave dare go--to some, the barbaric and the bloodthirsty. To the Asonongi, it is a symbol of conquest and expanded glory; to the Ohnya and many others it is a place of bloodshed and tragedy. Since the day of Beasts, the Qaleel River has been haunted by ghosts and the spirits of the dead with greater intensity than most other places.

PEOPLE

RABIU AGUTA - The reigning Qansa of the Empire, the 4th-born in his family--all his older siblings died at childbirth. His name reflects this small miracle, and his family now holds as tradition that 4 is their lucky number. Qansa Aguta was sheltered and hidden away due to the family's fear of losing their one and only heir, but Rabiu was not content with this way of life. Rabiu disguised himself and stole away with a departing army, joining them on the front lines and killing an enemy soldier during his first excursion. Upon his return, his family forbade him from ever leaving again, shocked at the risk he had exposed himself to, but on that day Qansa Aguta declared that he was a man, and that he would never be held back from his destiny. An altercation ensued, which led to Rabiu cutting off the hand of his own father. After the incident, Rabiu spent his remaining years as an heir walking the streets of Raya, and learning the necessary skills to lead from various masters, preferring a hands-on approach and applying his knowledge in a real scenario whenever possible.

HAMID SARPONG - The current Harbahd of Qaleel. He is a commander and military expert with vast swaths of land to his name. Hamid is

one the most prolific conquerors of the Empire, the latest in a line of aggressive commanders known for constantly pushing the Empire's borders forward. Hamid, practically raised at war, employs cold and cruel tactics, for which he has received much praise from his family and peers. Hamid himself believes he was destined to expand the Empire, and he interprets each successive victory as further proof of this fated purpose.

IFAMA ABIMBOLA - The Vasawt (lit. "Voice") of the Empire, and the head of its sprawling religious institutions. Ifama was once part of a minor but wealthy Sulisan family, and being a noble, his youth was spent living quite lavishly. Later in life, he renounced these luxuries and lived as an ascetic for many years before returning to take a position within the Faith. Through intense study, unshakeable piety, and total dedication, he eventually earned the position of High Ehkam, and was later chosen by the previous Vasawt as his successor. Ifama has spent so long meditating and living modestly that many forget that he was once a noble, and even Ifama himself has said that it feels as though it was a different life. Most Vasawt live within the Grand Mosque, but Ifama chose to live in more humble conditions, donning simple garments, with only the bare necessities of religious ornaments necessary to denote his position.



FACTIONS

THE SULISANS - A collection of noble lineages who once ruled over independent, sovereign Kingdoms, now united under the leadership of the Qansa. The name is carried over from an older word used by the original Western colonists to denote a position equivalent to a King, but currently the title Sulisan is more in line with the Tressian interpretation of "Lord" (though, culturally speaking, the title has more breadth).

THE FAITH - The Asonongi state religion, led by a Vasawt who serves as an interpreter and rule-maker for the Faith. The Vasawt makes speeches, handles the Faith's treasury, appoints high leaders to organize local ekhams, and performs powerful divinations for the Qansa and Sulisans, receiving

visions and guidance from their god. The Faith is held as more important morally than the Sulisans, but politically lesser, although the Vasawt works as ambassador for the Kalimeestra, the true reigning authority on the Western Faith's moral and spiritual laws.

THE GABOANA - A body of leaders, ekhams, guildmasters, and other representatives that hail from different regions, cities, and factions, which serves as a unified voice for the region to organize the Empire's needs and desires, as well as update each other about each area's current events. The Gaboana does not have any official administrative power, but is an important tool that reaches the ears of the Sulisans, the Faith, and the Courts, and is the primary method by which the common people communicate with the legislative bodies of the Empire. In this regard, the Gaboana also attempts to provide relief to places in need, acting as a humanitarian organization to villages affected by the Day of Beasts and other catastrophes. The Master of Guilds is not the leader of the Gaboana, but hosts their assemblies and serves as a mediator and coordinator to their efforts.

SYDIRA

This Kingdom split from the Asonongi as they drifted from the Western settlers' "original Faith", creating a Kingdom that more closely resembles the political and religious structure of their homeland. In Sydira, the Sulisan is the highest attainable position (equivalent to a King elsewhere) and serves as the ultimate military and executive power under the authority of the institutions of the Western Faith (or Kalimeestra). The Faith, in turn, is led by a Kalimafa who is believed to be a descendent of their messiah, or a descendent of their god. In effect, the Sulisan acts as a military commander and a legal judge, while the Kalimafa acts as an arbiter of moral right and wrong, and interprets divine law in coordination with other nations who follow the Faith. In a similar sense, Sydira has two types of nobility: the Ahiktar, or "Divine" Nobles, and the Dharlik, or "Earthly" Nobles. Both serve similar functions as landowners, commanders, lawmakers, and leaders of their lands, but the Ahiktar are selected by the Kalimeestra for their divine heritage or origin, while Dharlik are nobles who are politically assigned or who have no existing lineage to divinity.

(This Kingdom has aesthetic and architectural influences from Persia & The Ottoman Empire)

CITIES

ALHIKKA MARFASA - The Capital of Sydria, colloquially known as the "Land of Wisdom and Knowledge" or briefly referred to as Marfasa. The Western colonists came with a large store of resources and strong dedication to their homeland's religion. Unlike the other colonists of Gradina, who were avoiding persecution or seeking independence, the Western colonists were not escaping their homeland but expanding it. With time and distance, however, the goals and culture of the Western colonists drifted, and became something different entirely. Many colonists objected to this abandonment of purpose, believing that the culture that would eventually become the Asonongi had veered too far from the original religious roots of the Western colonists. These dissenters splintered off and founded Marfasa as a religious sanctuary and a place to pursue growth and knowledge within their religious purity. Marfasa now boasts some of the most prestigious centers for faith and education, including several large Mosques and several universities.

SUFAHJABAL - Known as the City at the Foot of the Mountain, Sufahjabal is a prominent religious center where many members of the Kalimeestra go to perform rituals and the destination of many pilgrims hoping to perform prayer and pay their respects to their faith. It was once said that when the original Western colonists came here, a prophet teaching new and unconventional concepts gathered his closest followers and discovered an ancient cavern and catacomb that led to the other side of the Illahi; many believe that his words can still be heard in the cavern halls.

MADILA AHMI - A city full of wealth and exotic goods, the City of Salt serves as both a scientific and economic center, with mages finding a way to turn the typically undrinkable salt water into a source of potable water dependable enough to sustain the entire city. This became a magnet to those wishing to further their understanding of Magic. Which in turn attracted merchants selling supplies for the mages and investors looking to benefit themselves with their research. Though the Ahiktar and the Kalimeestra generally hold the most sway in Sydira, the mercantile class is large and successful enough in Madila Ahmi that they can influence local politics merely by wisely choosing which promising students and projects to invest in.

LOCATIONS

ILLAHI MOUNTAINS - Also known as the Divine Mountains, this tall-standing range serves to split the Asonongi/Sydiran Deserts from the Old Empire's plains. There are many beliefs surrounding the Illahi, especially since the Day of Beasts where countless ghosts and spectral figures have been spotted in the crags. This, in the end, only heightened the spiritual importance of the mountains, some believing that a material afterlife exists in the range.

ILLAHI DUNES - These deserts sit just south of the Mountain, and are claimed by neither Sydira nor Asonongi, as the region is heavily infested with Monsters. With both rare quarry and a lack of government oversight in the region, Hunters flock here to seek fortune in poaching Monsters—or from other, less cutthroat adventurers.

PEOPLE

AHMED SAMI MUSTAFA - The Sulisan of Sydira, chosen (like other Sulisans) from the Ahiktar for his particularly strong ties to divine heritage. Unlike other Sulisans, Ahmed displayed remarkable Magical prowess in his youth, outstripping even other members of the oft-blessed Ahiktar; he became a personal student of the Head Minister of the School of Najma, and is now one of the most Magically-adept Sulisans in Sydiran history. In addition to this talent, Ahmed was chosen by the Kalimeestra for his stance on the role of Sulisan: he holds the humble, pious position that the Sulisan should neither create armies nor laws, but wield them in service of the Faith.

FARAH SAYEGH - Known as the Dharlik of Madila, or the Queen of Gold, Farah was young when Madila was founded, but is given much credit for crafting it into the city it is today. She has a keen eye for value and a knack for making shrewd, forward-thinking decisions. For reasons unknown, she rarely makes public appearances, and heavily veils herself whenever she does. Some claim that she is horrifically scarred; others claim that she has been killed and replaced by a more cunning underling; others still believe that she is simply bashful, or paranoid. With no evidence to any of these claims, she remains shrouded in mystery.

KABIR MOGHADAM - The Kalimafa of Sydira. While Sydira goes to great lengths to ensure that its political laws reflect the moral foundations of the Western Faith, the Asonongi's adherence to "the

Faith" on one hand and to their own wordly laws on the other causes a great deal of tension between the neighboring Empire and the Kalimeestra. Many within Sydira desire for Kabir to excommunicate the Asonongi, but Kabir refuses to, since "The Faith" itself does not go against the teachings of the Western Faith; the Asonongi rulers do.

FACTIONS

THE AHIKTAR - A class of noble families whose heritage has been linked to a divine origin based on scripture, family records, and understanding of the Kalimeestra. The Ahiktar in many ways serve the same purpose as regular Dharliks and the nobility of other Kingdoms, but are elevated by divine imperative. All the highest ranked and most prominent lords are a part of the Ahiktar, and the Ahiktar wield the most influence in enforcing the moral and political laws created by the Kalimeestra.

THE KALIMEESTRA - The organization under which all religious institutions that adhere to the Western Faith (distinct from the Asonongi sect simply known as "The Faith") fall. This is the central authority regarding the Western Faith, regardless of Kingdom. The Kalimeestra does not hold direct power in Sydira or any other Kingdom their religion exists in, although it does create what it calls "Moral Laws", which all followers of the Western Faith are expected to obey. Despite its lack of explicit influence, the government of Sydira is deliberately structured around the Kalimeestra, and as such Sydiran politics and law are shaped much more strongly by the Western Faith than any other Kingdom with a significant population of followers.

SCHOOL OF NAJMA - An illustrious university with a sprawling Madila campus, which serves not only to educate Mages and further the pursuit of more and more advanced technology, but to co-ordinate academic efforts across the many schools of Sydira. While each university operates independently (and independently pursues its own funding, students, teachers, and goals), none can contest the School of Najma, which frequently hosts large conferences to facilitate the sharing of knowledge between universities and to keep information flowing freely between disparate parts of the Kingdom.

OTHER REGIONS

These are important Cities, Locations, People, and Factions that don't belong to an established Kingdom or Empire, from lone organizations that operate beyond political boundaries to isolated cultures that reside in places where Kingdoms and armies can't normally reach. Though there have always been powerful individuals and movements that influence history without bearing the standard of any Kingdom, the chaos caused by the Day of Beasts has made it all the easier to work unnoticed, with many Mages, Factions, and Hunters seeking to further their own ambitions.

(These all have influences from several places and regions and will be listed as necessary)

CITIES

POLYA - This is the city for which Polya's Crossing was named; it is a neutral place, "owned by no man and no king", where Hunters, Merchants, and other myriad adventurers and outlaws can congregate beyond the reach of any meddling Kingdoms. It was once a colony of the Old Empire, but unlike the Golden Company, it was truly left to fend for itself upon the Empire's collapse. Now, its administrative offices and guardhouses lie empty, and the only law in the city is that of its ever-drifting inhabitants, bound together by the need for a safe haven from the overwhelming Monster infestation in Polya's Crossing.

RED MOON - A small island off the coast of the Sanguine Land, it serves as a midway point between Sydira and the Estranged Isle. Under the ownership of the Pirates of Roku, it is open for traders and travelers of any kind, and is one of the only places that interacts with the natives of the Sanguine Lands. Many different forces and Factions have attempted to stake a claim on this island to the point that the buildings spill haphazardly past the beach and onto extensive piers and jetties; while they initially attempted to keep their distance from each other, the walkways and buildings now mesh together into a "floating city".

LOCATIONS

POLYA'S CROSSING - The foothills of the Asmodeus Mountains, and the only manageable path through them for miles. Polya's Crossing is infested with monsters at most times of Day, and it only gets worse at Night, but due to both the more

forgiving terrain and the lack of oversight by any Kingdom, it is a popular travel route.

ASMODEUS MOUNTAINS (+PASS) - This infamous Mountain range is named after an extremely powerful Monster that appeared in the early days following the Day of Beasts. He bore the name Asmodeus, and his first act upon intruding into our world was to summon an army of Demons to follow him. He then amassed disciples, promising them powerful Magical gauntlets—the very same wielded by Rune Haunters today—in exchange for their fealty, and commanded them to build a series of temples and fortresses in the peaks, from which he planned to launch an assault on humanity. Destroying these strongholds of evil was the deadliest Hunt in recorded history, but despite widespread knowledge of these Hunters' sacrifices, the knowledge of the Cursed Gauntlets (and their current whereabouts) fell into obscurity. Some say that they are held by certain Kingdoms in secret vaults; others say they were hidden away by escaping disciples of Asmodeus; yet others believe they lie hidden in the rubble of these fortresses. Regardless, the Asmodeus Mountains are treacherous, affected to this day by the Demon lord's Dark Magic. However, they are one of the only ways to pass the mountain range, the alternatives being the sea or Polya's Crossing, and due to its narrow roads the pass remains defensible, even against lurking Monsters, so it remains a popular choice for travelers.

THE DEPRAVED WARREN - One of the largest stretches of forests in Gradina, and also its most dangerous. All of the *many* attempts by Helghit and Costana to colonize the western side of the Great River, have met with failure; in addition to nonstop monster attacks, disaster after disaster befell every burgeoning colony, leading many to believe that the Woods themselves—or something within them—is rejecting the advance of humanity.

PEOPLE

SLAYER SVETCH - A Monster Slayer who had received the mutations of a Crow, he was one of the first recruits after the Day of Beasts and one of the leaders of the Usurpation. Though the inciting member of the Usurpation, a close comrade of his, did not live to see the end of the conflict, Svetch carried on his legacy. Svetch now resides in Polya, serving as an unofficial leader of the rebuilt Order waiting with open arms for any Slayer in need of brotherhood (or just a place to find new missions). Though he doesn't see himself as a leader, he is



happy to handle diplomacy between Slayer schools and the various governments of Gradina, and most Slayers respect him enough to heed his guidance.

NOVIDELLA - A secretive individual, one who would not be recognized by most Accursed, Novidella is one of the most influential who remain in their characteristic state of undeath. With the help of a coven of Witches, she maintains and oversees a pocket dimension for Accursed Embers to congregate and rest, as well as being the founder of the Assembly of Covenants, which settles their disputes through civilized discussion. Though she belongs to no Covenant herself, she has arguably done more for the Accursed than any Covenant could.

AYBERK KARGA - This old and wizened Magus of Sydira is the seventh in a meritocratic succession of Headmasters of the Colored Magistrate.

Though the Colored Magistrate was founded by a Sydiran, tradition going back to the first turnover of the position dictates that the Headmaster select someone from a different Kingdom to be their successor. Now that the position has found its way back to Sydira, Ayberk's otherwise-immaculate reputation for solid research is occasionally sullied by accusations that he harbors too many ties with Sydira instead of dedicating himself fully to the pan-Gradina ideals of the Magistrate.

ELISE DESROSIER - Elise lived a simple life as a nun in a Tressian Church. Soon after the chaos broke loose, the priest of the Church was slain before Elise in a raid on the Church's reliquary by a Mage seeking power from the artifacts they safeguarded. She resolved to do something more to protect the peace of Gradina, starting with contracting Hunters

to retrieve these artifacts. Over the course of working with them, she recorded their experiences in fighting various Monsters and took careful notes regarding their preparation and needs for a Hunt; when the artifacts were back in her care, she studied them to learn how they could be used against the Monsters, and her newfound expertise in their care earned her the authority needed to collect and study more (this time in secret, for their protection). With her knowledge and influence, she petitioned other Churches to lend their aid to Hunters everywhere, establishing the Silent Law. She now resides in a stronghold on the Tressian coast, tending to yet more holy icons and powerful tools, as well as coordinating communications between Silent Followers across the continent.

FACTIONS

THE PROMISED ORDER - A formerly prestigious Order of Monster Slayers which was contracted to travel with the eastern settlers on their journey to Gradina. Initially just a small squadron, upon their arrival they began to recruit more to their ranks to allow them to clear the way for expansion across the continent. After the continent was largely settled, but prior to the Day of Beasts, they had established several strongholds and built relationships with most Kingdoms, but because of the relative rarity of both Monsters and Magic, they were seldom hired for anything other than dispatching the occasional Witch or one of their creations. Their fortune changed after the emergence of Monsters across the continent, and where a Commoner had previously never seen evidence as to their necessity (instead seeing a Slayer as the closest thing to a Monster as they had ever witnessed), they were now hired in as great numbers as Nobles could afford. To keep up with demand, they increased their recruitment and began experimenting with harsher training and more unorthodox methods of mutation—the masses of recruits dying off before receiving their first missions, and the suffering borne by the survivors, eventually lead to the Usurpation of the Order, a mutiny that resulted in the decimation of the Order, which now remains a shell of its former self to this day.

ASSEMBLY OF COVENANTS - Found within a Pocket Dimension supported by several Witches, and lead by the revered and feared Novidella, the Assembly is both a political space for Covenant leaders to discuss Accursed matters, and a village where Accursed can refurbish their equipment,

gather the necessary goods for their travels, and generally escape the distrusting mortal world. Fighting is prohibited with powerful Magic, so as to keep discussions civil, and all Covenants—even smaller ones without a seat on the Assembly, or the Covenant of Death, who has a seat but never sends a representative to the proceedings—are entitled to the attention and aid of the Assembly.

THE COLORED MAGISTRATE - This is an alliance of Mages that transcends Kingdom boundaries, serving as a unified initiative for Magi to share knowledge, research, discoveries, and work under one umbrella to further Magical research for the good of all of Humanity. To keep their doors open, many Schools cooperate with their host Kingdoms; for some, the promise of information that will allow them to keep the edge against other Kingdoms is enough, while for others, they must carry out requests or work more directly with the Kingdom's scholars. The oldest School in the Magistrate is located in Sydira, and boasts the most graduates of any institution in Gradina. While Magistrate bylaws forbid the use of the Magistrate's advances for the purpose of war, many of its graduates find few other career options in the Magic-fearing countryside or in the highly-competitive academic scene within the Magistrate's own halls, and so are frequently recruited by local militaries.

THE SILENT LAW - The collective efforts of Churches and faithful individuals across Gradina to support the efforts of Exorcists comprises the Silent Law. To call it an “organization” would be misleading, as the only thing binding these Churches together is their oath to aid in the fight against Monsters and Demons; each strives to uphold this oath in their own way, at their own discretion. No such agreement existed before the Day of Beasts, but the scale of the devastation—and the speed at which governments left their rural subjects to their own devices—prompted many within the Church to take matters into their own hands, starting with Elise Desrosier. Over the course of years, she and others provided select families of Hunters with all the information regarding Monsters that the literate clergy had at their disposal, as well as portions of the Churches’ tithes for their equipment and training. Seeing the success these lineages had in protecting those under the Churches’ jurisdictions, the Silent Followers were easily able to sway the heads of other Churches, and soon nearly every religious institution in Gradina had sworn to silently do their part against the Monsters.