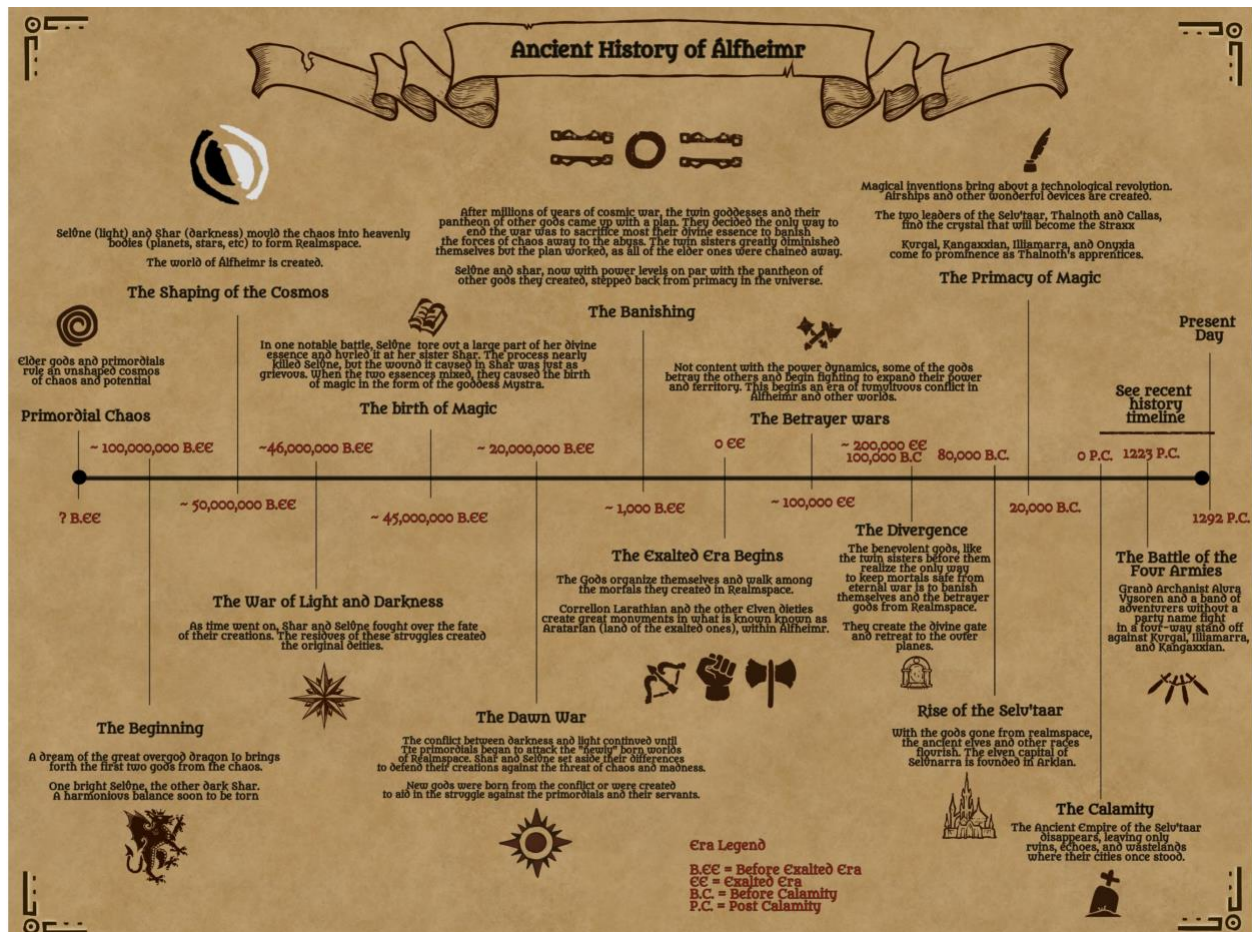


Matt Hale's Homebrew DnD Campaign Story Setting – The Isles of Meropis

1. The World (Álfheimr)

The world is said to be the favored realm of the principle elven god Corellon Larethian. It is said the realm rests within the crest of his ever-waxing crescent moon.

1.1 Ancient History of Álfheimr



1.2 Continent of Arklan

Arklan is quite distant from the other areas in Álfheimr. Arklan has a long and storied history that goes back to the times when gods walked among mortals. After the time of the gods, a great civilization of high-elven mages, known as the Selu'taar, built a society that lasted for thousands of years. The ruins of their civilization lie scattered around Arklan – including extreme places of power that are studied by the arcanists of today.

After the fall of the Selu'taar, there was a time of anarchy before several city states emerged and asserted themselves politically under different governance structures. There was:

- an elven city state named Deneria, which sat in the deep ancient woods south of the old spine mountains,
- the industrious human-led city state Dranseri that had a burgeoning navy, large trade port, and strategic centrally located terrain features,
- the “jewel of the south” named Emorhin, which advertised itself as “the free city” - a melting pot of different peoples and ideas
- the isolationist gnome-led city of Jorkh that existed on the southern tip of the Dagger Sea,
- the human-led society and mortal enemies of Dranseri named Sriss-khrif,
- the dragonborn island nation of Sletios,
- and the underground dwarven society of Orshem.

ARKLAN

400 MILES (1 hex = 20M)

NORGIC DEEPS

NORGACHEIM

Orshem

MIRKHOL

THE OLD SPINE

Kel'sadah

Kel'sadur

SEA OF ARKLAN

Leshur

The Queens Gate

The Glade

Striss

Deifthal

Deep Water Bay

SLETIOS
(ARSIAN ISLAND)

Denertia

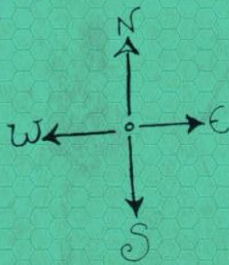
Oranseri

Bay of Steel

Jorkh

Emorhin

ARSIANIC SEA



The city states warred for hundreds of years, before uniting under Queen Dranser Dranseri in 804 PC (post calamity). Under the united Dranseri leadership, each city state retained its distinct culture features, but also began to become more culturally diverse through collective trade and prosperity.

In addition to the city states of the south, Arklan also contains vast areas of dangerous wildlands. The Mirkhol to the northwest is said to be the epicenter of the calamity. Few adventures tread into this area due to the many dangerous creatures and spirits that are said to still reside there. The Norggheim is similarly inhospitable. Many stories tell of ancient evils that lie dormant in the snows. Finally, the Dry expanse is a large desert area that was once said to be green and verdant. Now it is a lawless area where outlaws and various goblins, orcs, and other creatures roam.

1.3 History of Arklan and Álfheimr so far

In 1222, an ancient primordial evil known as Yan-C-Bin was released when cultists in the Dessarin Valley of Dranseri opened some sort of rift to the outer planes. Historians claim that a band of nameless heroes affiliated with the Arcana Pansophical and Grand Arcanist Alura Vysoren prevented the release of several of the evil primordial's siblings. The release of the Yan-C-Bin began a year and half long war with a demonic horde.

Later that year, the Temple of Selune, in Dranseri's temple district, was attacked by a mysterious drow secret society. While not part of the public record, the official Dranseri council accounts credited the attack to an ancient Selu'taar lich named Illiamarra. The same heroes involved in preventing further calamity in the Dessarin Valley tracked the drow to an underground ziggurat surrounded by a flowing river of animated undead bodies. The heroes discovered the lich was part of a triumvirate of secretive entities that had existed for thousands of years. The council records and contemporary intelligence reports gathered by the Master of Information, Seeker Assum Emring, showed that the liches were all preparing for the arrival of the enigmatic Straxx monolith above the ancient selu'taar capital Selúnarra. The heroes of the Dessarin Valley were hired by the council to investigate. They traveled to the monastically neutral Anfoor Observatory and learned that the liches were spying on and plotting against one another. There they located their phylacteries and began a quest to remove the liches from the world. The heroes encountered all three at what became known in the queendom as The Battle of Four Armies. There, they defeated the evil Kangaxxian and what remained of the drow leader Illiamarra. The heroes also formed a pact with Kurgal, whom later became Grand Emperor of the New Arklan Imperium.

With the defeat of Kangaxxian, and the destruction of his phylactery during his reformation process, the floating city of Elyveshara was captured by Kurgal. The orcish horde threatening Sriss disbands after the mind-control devices used on the Orcish chieftains cease to function.

Without central coordination, the Orcish armies begin to bicker. Infighting and disorganization is observed from the walls of Sri'ss and a counter-offensive organized by Chief Councilor Maria Renoir, leader of the Matriarchal Orden de la Sri'ss easily repels the orcish forces. The horde disbands into their original tribes and they retreat to their ancestral homes in the Dry Expanse – particularly Kel'sadah and the nomadic routes along the coast of the Sea of Arklan.

With Kangaxxian's defeat, Queen Dranser and the Dranseri Council turn their attention to the demonic incursion in the Dessarin Valley. A large tower of flesh is constructed by the demons in the valley. History never discovers its purpose. Nearly a year into the no-mans-land style conflict with the demons, the Straxx materializes above the capital city of Dranseri in Corellon of 1224. Airships launch from the structure and form up into a holding pattern – weapons aimed at key areas of the city. The Dranseri wyvernriders and prototype flying beasts of the gnomish Lofty Ambitions guild launch air units, but before a battle ensures, Kurgal requests a formal parley with the Queen and her council. Confidently, Kurgal goes alone into the Sky District of Dranseri and meets with the Queen and council in Castle Dranser. Kurgal asks for Dranseri to surrender. They claim that the Straxx can be used as a weapon, if the Queen chooses to resist. Initially, the queen declines to surrender, so Kurgal teleports it to a small nearby village called Conyberry, just outside the demonic incursion perimeter in the Dessarin Valley, within view of Dranseri. The queen watches at a distance, as the large crystalline Straxx begins to brighten and the 2nd moon(Selune) grows brighter until a beam of light shoots from it, hits the crystalline structure of the Straxx and is focused down as a massive laser beam, destroying the Dranseri forward staging base against the demons at Conyberry. Minutes later, the Straxx rematerializes above Dranseri and another parley is requested.

Faced with a no-win situation from the superior technology of a mile-high megastructure death machine and a fleet of well-armed airships, the queen formally surrenders to Kurgal without any further bloodshed. As part of the terms of surrender, Kurgal leaves the Queen in charge of Dranseri and offers to deal with the demonic horde. In return, Dranseri becomes the first of several city-states in Arklan to join the New Arklan Imperium in 1224. Word of the power of the Straxx travels fast. Over time, Kurgal presents the same offer to all of the city-states of Arklan. One by one, they surrender to Kurgal and become part of the Imperium. Like the Romans, Kurgal proves to be a reasonable, largely absent, Emperor.

A few laws change, some new Imperially-dictated mining and other resource gathering operations begin, but for most residents of Arklan and beyond, the day-to-day doesn't really change much. The common person's experience actually improves slightly during this time, as the Imperium begins a new universal compensation plan to keep people off the streets and happy with their system of governance. Among the new laws, one notable one legalizes necromantic "preservation". New 'long life' clinics, run by state- licensed necromancers, give those with the

means to pay a new outlook on life in cases of terminal illness or advanced age. The floating city of Nelheserin, the city Kurgal lived in the recesses of Norggheim for so many years becomes the seat of central governance of the Imperium. While mobile, it stations itself above the city of Dranseri, where it can be found today. A large elevator, constructed in 1231, routinely takes Imperium-collected resources and taxes to Nelhessarin. The other Selu'taar floating cities, Elyveshara (Kangaxxian's former home) and Elaenagoth (Illiamrra's former home) are sent abroad to the capital cities of Arterlan and Meropis, to extend Imperial control to those areas. In 1233, a new state-sanctioned airship services opens a route between all capital cities in Arklan and the seats of imperial control in the Araterlan capital Concordia and the Meropian city of Acheron.

For nearly 25 years after the birth of the New Arklan Imperium, there are rebel movements that seek to overthrow the Imperium. In 1255, forces organize against Nelheserin. Using the elevator as a means of attack, they attempt to storm the seat of imperial power. The rebellion is violently quashed and an example is made of the ring leaders.

Few major rebellions have emerged since. In 1257, the peoples of Álfheimr watch as the moons surrounding the planet begin to slow. For every year after, into the common time, Io takes 40 days to complete its cycle, while Selune takes 80. The planet rotates slower around the Sun. No one is quite sure why. Many theories run wild, but even astronomers are puzzled by the phenomena. It is this same year that people begin to notice that when people die their bodies begin to naturally zombify. These zombie bodies live on as shells of their former selves – still retaining some intelligence, but gradually losing it over. Unlike propagandic stereotypes of flesh-eating monsters promoted by some groups, most zombies manage to contribute to society as manual laborers for 5-7 years after death. Most zombie bodies fully decay within 10 years of their death, although some families meticulously maintain the dead out of some sort of duty for their lost loved ones. In some places, the living begin to create zombie retirement communities for the (un) dead to live out what remains of their time on the planet.

In 1285, the gnomes invent a new type of gunpowder device, improving on the gunpowder cannon commonly equipped on ships. Their new flintlock pistols and musket-loaded rifles begin to proliferate over the next few years.

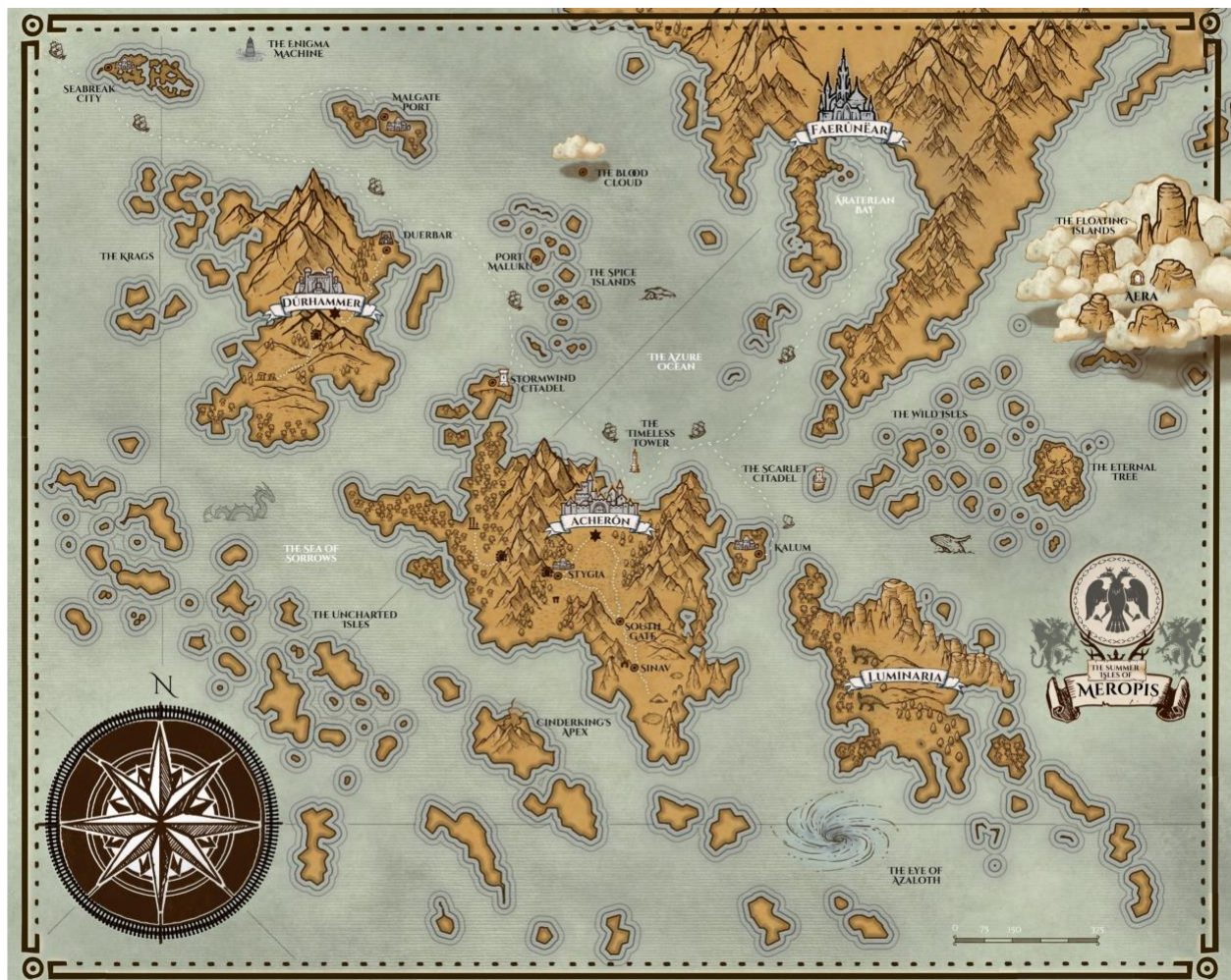
The current time is 1292 P.C. the people of Arklan live in relative harmony under the banner of the new Imperium. Sometimes people grumble about taxes or the need to harvest resources that seem to disappear into the city of Nelheserin above Dranseri, but most people live contented lives not unlike their ancestors two generations prior. No one in Álfheimr has seen Kurgal or the Straxx in over 60 years, but they abide by the Imperial laws because the price of rebellion is severe, and...as the slogan goes, the Imperium provides.

1.4 Continent of Aratarlan

Aratarlan is the largest landmass in Álfheimr and home to a number of countries, wild untamed areas, and unexplored regions. Aratarlan is said to be the land where Corellon Larethian first created the Elven race. The exact location of the creation has been lost to time and legend. Valance is the largest country in Aratarlan. It extends along the western seaboard and into parts of the central and northern regions of the landmass. The capital city of Valance is a large coastal city named Concordia.

1.5 Meropis Isles

Meropis is a collection of islands to the south west of Aratarlan and south east of Arklan. The area has been lawless except in waters protected by the Acheronian hegemony, named the Chronos Concord – now affiliated with the New Arklan Imperium. The area has attracted inhabitants that are mostly pirates, criminals, and outcasts. It is said that a lost city of the Selu'taar exists within Meropis – possibly at the bottom of the ocean.



The Meropis region is made up of several island chains as well as three large mini-continents roughly the size of the Iceland, the UK, and New Zealand. The three mini-continents, by order of size are: Acherôn – Translates from celestial as the “Gateway to the depths of the under realms”, Dûrhammer – Translates from Dwarven as “Darkhammer”, and Luminaria – translates from Elven as the “The land of light”. The northern reaches of Meropis are the southern gateway to the continent of Araterlan. In the Arterlan Bay is the city of Faerûnëar – Translates from elven as “One land of elves meets the sea.” In addition to the large continental land masses, there are several large port cities that include Seabreak city, which connects directly to the long overseas trade route leading to Arklan, Malgate port, a large plantation island known for producing sugar cane, and Port Maluku, known as the gateway to the Spice Islands.

In addition the port cities, there are several large island chains. The lucrative Spice Islands are known for the rare regional spice farms and plantations. The Wild isles are a mostly undeveloped chain of islands that abut the massive 1000 foot tall Eternal tree that towers over the nearby area. The Uncharted Isles are a cluster of islands said to house the ruins of a long dead society. The area around them, the Sea of Sorrows, is very dangerous to navigate and plagued by pirates – so few venture forth to investigate them. Even the few that have explored the uncharted isles have gone missing or come to terrible misfortune later in life, leading to popular theories that the islands are cursed. The Cinderking’s Apex is the largest of the Uncharted Isles and is dominated by a towering volcano that reaches into the clouds.

The floating islands of Aera are oddly self-levitating bodies of stone past the eternal tree and the wild isles. Few travel the waters beneath them as some say areas of the ocean are often sucked into the clouds. Within the Acheronian Continent are the cities of Stygia (gateway to the under realms), South gate (a small city in a mountain pass), and Sinav (the recently built city of the dead). A large pyramid sits in the middle of the desert south of Sinav.

Around Acheron is the port city of Kalum, the city of a thousand verses and two citadels that allow for regional control – the Scarlet Citadel and Stormwind Citadel. A mysterious tower, known as the timeless tower, juts out of the water about 80 miles from the coast of Acheron.

Within the Dûrhammer continent, there is the port city of Duerbar known to be the primary gateway to the underdark as goods pass into and out of the port before heading towards the city of Dûrhammer and downward into the underdark trade routes to drow cities and duergar cities beneath the earth.

On the continent of Luminaria, there are no permanent settlements. This area characterized by massive jungles and inland grassland highlands is known as the land of the dinosaurs. The few settlements of people in Luminaria roam the continent on the backs of the massive Yggdrasuars – friendly dinosaurs nearly a mile long from head to toe.

1.6 Calendar of Celestial Bodies

The world of Álfheimr has two moons named after prominent deities: Io, and Selûne. Prior to 1257 P.C. Io had a 25-day lunar cycle and Selûne has a 50-day cycle. Now, Io has a 40 day cycle and Selûne an 80 day cycle. There are 8 months in the calendar. The cycle of Io marks each month and the cycle of Selûne marks the changing season. The months, named after deities are: Auril (Winter), Raven Queen (Winter), Melora (Spring), Correllon (Spring), Silvanus (Summer), Pelor (Summer), Mielikki (Autumn), and Sehanine (Autumn).

2. Lore

Every good world has its backstories. Every “learned” person from Arklan knows about the divergence and the calamity. Some may have even read about the time before or after the divergence. Before the divergence, during the exalted era, the gods were said to have walked on the planets of the prime materium and created the many races of the world today. After, during the Age of Arcanum, mageocracies ruled the day during a period of scientific and arcane studies. Some select few researchers may even have studied the time before the Exalted Era when primordial chaotic eldritch entities existed before the cosmos had even been formed.

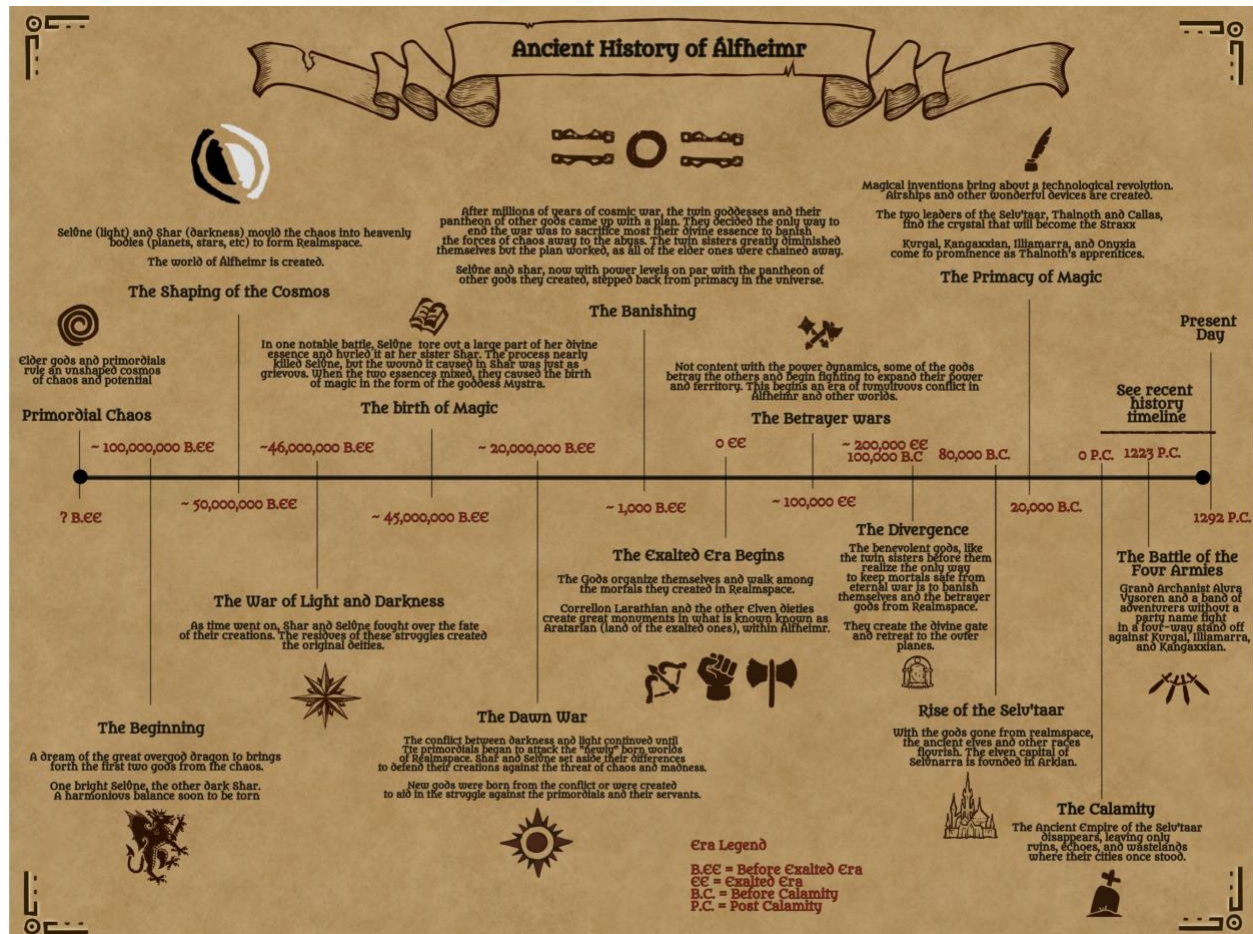
2.1 The Divergence

In the beginning of the world, it is said that gods and goddesses walked among the peoples of Álfheimr. This time is known as the “pre-divergence” (PD). During the gods created the various races of the world and lived among their chosen. Over time conflicts arose among the gods and led to a time of strife that culminated in the divergence. During the time of strife, the good-aligned gods came together to fight the forces of chaos and destruction, known as the “betrayal gods.” The good-aligned gods defeated the betrayers and constructed a celestial creation known as the “divine gate.” As part of its design, the gate separated the mortal world (known as the material plane) from the divine. Each god created their own divine plane and the good-aligned deities banished the betrayal gods to the abyss and the nine hells. The separation of mortal and divine realms is known as the Divergence.

2.2 The Calamity

In the years after the divergence, the world was largely ruled by the elves. The elves constructed a grand society that rivaled the beauty and majesty of the societies controlled by the gods before them. As time went on, powerful high-elfen mages, known as Selu'taar in elven, constructed artifacts by manipulating primal forces of the world. Initially, they used their powers to create artifacts that protected their people and built floating cities.

It was the pinnacle of the fusion of the sciences and arcane arts and the Selu'taar rose to prominence as the leaders of the elven nation. This age stretched on for millenia. As the saying goes, absolute power corrupts absolutely. Eventually some of the Selu'taar aspired to be gods themselves. The specific details of the fall are lost to time, but ultimately a great cataclysm destroyed the Selu'taar nation. This time of upheaval is known as the calamity. The modern dating system is in years post-calamity (PC).



1.4 Gods and Goddesses (the Pantheon)

There are a lot of different pantheons in D&D. The following list contains the primary gods in my world. You can goggle the names to find out more about them. They are standard D&D gods.

Prime Deities:

- Corellon Larethian
- Moradin (The Allhammer)

- Avandra
- Pelor (The Dawnfather)
- Sarenrae (The Everlight)
- Ioun (The Knowing Mistress)
- Erathis (The Lawbearer)
- The Raven Queen
- Selûne
- Bahamut (The Platinum Dragon)
- Kord (The Stormlord)
- Melora (The Wildmother)

Betrayer Gods:

- Tharizdun (The Chained Oblivion)
- Zehir (The Cloaked Serpent)
- Torog (The Crawling King)
- Asmodeus (Lord of the nine hells)
- Gruumsh
- Lolth
- Bane
- Tiamat

Also all of the Seldarine (Elven Pantheon) exists within my world. Read more here:

<https://forgottenrealms.fandom.com/wiki/Seldarine>

3. Prominent Factions

3.1 Chronos Concord

Sometime during the Age of Arcanum, a lost magocracy built grand monuments and cities within the Meropian Isles. Ruins of their civilization can be found throughout the region. The largest, and best preserved, was a grand city named Acheron. Historians aren't sure why, but the civilization disappeared hundreds of years before the calamity, leaving the islands largely uncolonized. Many regional and single-island civilizations flourished during this time.

Nearly nine hundred years ago (392 P.C.) traders from Emorin, in Arklan, founded a new nation in the ruined city of Acheron, returning it to some of its former glory of the next 50 years. They allied themselves with the Keke'huna, the people in what would become known as the Spice

islands. Establishing a federation they named the Chronos Concord, in honor of the Keke'hunan word for time, the Emorian traders created a democratic nation modeled after their own city-state. The Concord was established to enforce law and order and regulated commerce in the area. Over the next 100 years, several other areas were colonized by the peoples of Áraterlan.

In the present day, the Chronos concord is comprised of five independent city-states, each ruled by its own marquis. The city-states operate as one union under the banner of the Chronos Concord. This arrangement ensures uniform laws, regulation of trade, and mutual protection between the city-states. The five cities are Seabreak City, Malgate Port, Port Maluku, Acheron, and Kalum. Port Maluku is the former capital of the Keke'huna people and is considered to be the gateway to the spice islands. Open shipping lanes and inviting tropical scenery have made the domain of the Chronos Concord a cultural melting pot and a popular place to live or visit. Knowing this, the respective marquises uphold a long tradition of welcoming all weary travelers and providing an atmosphere of color and delight. If there is gold to be spent, the concord is eager for you to spend it within their cities. Between the venues for entertainment and vice, and the ample business opportunities, the concord hopes to convince those with wealth to spend it here, outside the more tightly controlled governments in Arklan or Áraterlan.

Internally, each marquis of the Chronos Concord keeps a tight grip on the shipping and trade that comes through their cities, overseeing all guilds that organize imports and exports and managing a handful of guildmasters that form the backbone of local commerce. When a marquis dies or is impeached by the other members of the concord, the remaining members choose a successor. Warriors who prove their might through gladiatorial bouts during times of celebration and ceremony are asked to join the Acero Militar (translates as "Steel Guard" from the Emorin regional tongue), a well-paid guard force that works for the governing marquis to enforce the laws. Cities have one or more magistrates that oversee judgment on legal matters and criminal punishment.

While the cities do work together for the good of the concord, they are also each in silent competition with each other, flaunting their affluence and clientele at every opportunity. When a prominent figure from the far reaches of Álfheimr finds their way to Meropis, it's not uncommon for them to be courted by multiple marquises in an attempt to convince the personage to stay as a guest of their city. In recent times, the Legion has subtly infiltrated the Chronos Concord, often with the unwitting aid of greedy local politicians. Rumors of criminal collusion have raised suspicion amid members of the concord. Sooner or later, the tension will have to break — and the fallout won't be pretty.

Since 1231 P.C. when the floating city named Elaenagoth arrived above Acheron with a fleet of heavily-armed airships, the Chronos Concord has paid tribute to the New Arklan Imperium

and abided by its laws. In return the Imperium lets the Concord operate as it has for as long as its been around. The Imperial presence is seen, but not really felt in the area. Most of the Marquis stay in line and contribute their share of the tribute without question ever since 1262 when the Acheronian Marquis Francisco Durán conspired to rebel against the Imperium. Before any rebellious actions were taken, Durán along with his entire family and closest confidants were found in their homes drained of all of their blood. Despite the concord's cordial relationship with the dwarves of Dûrhammer, the proximity to the dwarven continent along with its military and trade might is a lingering source of unease. Currently, the concord maintains a standing military of 7,800 Sea Wardens (naval soldiers), a nautical fleet of 370 ships, and 5,200 Acero Militar divided between the cities. Some of the Sea Wardens are posted inland, where they maintain forts and citadels that provide the Concord with geographic strongholds.

The Chronos Concord is concerned with maintaining the trade and commerce that ensures their continued influence, both in Meropis and the rest of Álfheimr. Anything that might jeopardize business is viewed as a major threat to the sanctity of life in the region. Faced with the hazards of dangerous creatures that lurk in the nearby jungles and beneath the waves, as well as piracy on the open waters, the concord is employing substantial numbers of adventurers and mercenaries.

Four hundred years ago, when the concord worked to enforce rising taxation on independent merchant companies operating within the Meropis region, the outrage led a small union of angry enterprises to turn to piracy. Over time these groups formed into a collective known as the Bloody Corsairs. These pirates have claimed the island of Darktide's wake and terrorized the shipping lanes for hundreds of years, all while deftly avoiding pursuit and naval retribution. The concord is eager to destroy the Corsairs and have put massive bounties on the heads of the so-called "scourges of the ocean".

3.1.1 Laws of the Chronos Concord

All who are found by the esteemed Acero Militar to have broken the fair laws of the Chronos Concord are judged and sentenced by the local magistrate and are subject to punishments befitting the crime. All fines and punishments for crimes against a Acero Militar official or a noble are doubled. All fines and punishments for crimes against a Chronos Concord official are tripled. Permits must be purchased and owned to do business for more than 15 days in Chronos Concord cities. Permits are approved, purchased, and logged at any temple to Erathis in the region.

All religions are legal to practice in private, but public worship of Betrayal Gods is considered dangerous to public discourse and is strictly forbidden.

Theft: 3–10 days incarceration and/or a fine of twice the worth stolen.

Public worship of Betrayer Gods: 10 days incarceration and/or a fine of 300 gp.

Ownership of another intelligent humanoid creature: 6–12 months incarceration and/or a fine of 1,000 gp.

Trespassing: 7 days incarceration, and/or a fine of 100 gp.

Failure to pay taxes to the Chronos Concord: 3–15 days incarceration and a repossession of property equal to the amount owed.

Damage to private property: 5–15 days incarceration or a fine of twice the worth of property destroyed.

Damage to concord property: 30–60 days incarceration and a fine of twice the worth of property destroyed.

Kidnapping: 30 days incarceration and/or a fine of 500 gp.

Assault with intent to injure: 15 days incarceration and/or a fine of 250 gp.

Assault with intent to kill: 170 days incarceration and/or a fine of 1,000 gp.

Murder: 5–10 years incarceration and/or a fine of 5,000 gp.

3.2 Bloody Corsairs

Meropian historians will tell you that the Bloody Corsairs's turned to piracy because of the excessive taxes and unjust laws imposed by the Chronos Concord nearly 400 years ago. What started as public dissent in 912 P.C. turned to lawful protests over the better part of decade (913-923). In 924, a group of disenfranchised salvage ships and trade vessels organized a public blockade of Ascheron's port, the Triwell Piers. The demonstration turned violent when one of the captains fired at a Chronos Concord nautical patrol that was maneuvering between ships in the blockage. A brief skirmish left 5 Concord frigates and a dozen of the protestors' ships sunken in the harbor. The protestors fled the city towards Port Maluku. There they captured the key port city and raised the Jolly Roger flag to identify the port as free from tyranny.

The loosely organized group of captains named themselves the Maluku Corsairs. For a little less than a year, they governed the spice isles and controlled the seas allowing for passage through the Arklan trade route. Not known to suffer challenges to their authority, The Chronos Concord responded with overwhelming force nearly 9 months after the Triwell Pier event. Attacking Maluku, the Concord sank most of the Maluku Corsair vessels and killed the ringleader captains they could find. Most of Port Maluku burned down in the process.

The survivors, mostly at sea at the time, returned to Maluku to find themselves without a port to call home. They left the known routes and charted a course south into the Uncharted Isles, knowing the Concord would not follow.

them into the dangerous waters of the Sea of Sorrows. Few traveled to the uncharted isles because they were thought to be cursed, the remnants of some calamity related to an old lost civilization. In the Uncharted Isles, the corsairs found an island with a system of sea caves that leads a large harbor-sized tidal pool. Surrounded by craggy rocks and shallow waters with a port accessible only at night, they named the island Darktide's wake. There they established a lawless base of operations. It has proved extremely defensible over time. After establishing a base, the pirates began stalking the well-known shipping routes to harry, intimidate, steal from, and destroy passing ships that flew under the concord's banner. Over time the Maluku Corsairs became known as The Bloody Corsairs. These "free folk of the sea" have now spent over three hundred years terrorizing the Azure Ocean. Any time the Concord has sought to squash the pirate movement their fleets have been battered by the Sea of Sorrows, met with unexpected weather phenomena, or when a few managed to get close to Darktide's wake, they were destroyed by cannons from the superior defensible position provided by the island.

With loose morals and a twisted code of honor, the corsairs take what they want from less protected targets while living a life of debauchery in the well-guarded haven of Darktide's wake. The Corsairs long ago abandoned a uniform symbol, instead changing the colors and symbols of its banner regularly to avoid counterfeiting and infiltration.

The Corsairs are governed by a collective of captains, all of whom defer to the final word of the Plank King, a capricious monarch who never leaves Darktide's wake. While the original Plank King, an elf named Orist Liaro, ran the organization for nearly 200 years, the leadership since has turned over every twenty or thirty years. The latest Plank King, a massive goliath named Gharok Bravebreaker, has led the Bloody Corsairs for the last 11 years. He is known not just for his brutality, but also for his increasingly risky plays for large haul piracy operations. While once it was safe to travel on large, well guarded vessels, now everyone is on edge when passing outside of the protective narrows near the Stormwind Citadel.

Each member of the Corsairs known to the Chronos Concord is considered a major criminal, amassing an ever-growing bounty with each infraction they commit and every ship they raid. Those arrested are generally executed and strapped to the rocks outside Concord-controlled ports as a warning. Word on the street is that some of the more affluent merchant guilds from Acheron that have little investment in concord shipments use back-channels to pay off the Corsairs and fly specific colors when crossing their territory to avoid being boarded.

The corsairs have a fairly open membership model, but mostly respect people that pay the price of iron for what they take. While the Corsairs's original goal was to scare the concord into revoking their soaring taxes, its charter has changed. The Chronos Concord refused to change its laws, and the pirates found a certain dark joy in theft and murder on the waves. The original

members of the Corsairs (and now their children) have no plans to return to their former lives as legitimate traders. They intend to maintain and grow their operations across the Azure Ocean, while continuing to defend and improve their fortress in Darktide's Wake, finding intricate ways of reinforcing the reefs with dangerous traps and impassable barriers.

The Corsairs has since expanded their interests beyond mere piracy. Relics and secrets dating back to the Age of Arcanum and beyond are rumored to be scattered all across Meropis. Some scavengers have returned to Darktide's Wake with proof of such artifacts, and a new kind of aspiring treasure seeker has emerged within the Corsairs: one who seeks to plunder from the dead rather than the living. The drive to outdo their fellow sailors has already placed several ships in serious danger. For this reason, the corsairs have employed adventurers that value coin over moral compasses to delve into the regions dungeons and seek out treasures. Adventurers be warned, dealing with pirates is a fickle business.

3.3 The Houses of Dûrhammer

Established within Mount Dûrglander (dwarven for dark gems), the largest of the Iron Mountains, following the divergence, this subterranean fortress city is the pinnacle of dwarven society. Five great houses rule Dûrhammer; they have maintained power since the city was original established. The ruling families are House Flintsword, House Icebeard, House Steelgrip, House Bronzeguard, and House Opalbrand. These great houses elect an official known as the "Ironkeeper" every 20 years to keep the alliances between houses just and healthy for the good of all the dwarves of Dûrhammer.

When lesser family houses have attempted to overthrow one of the ruling five through the centuries, the other great houses put aside their differences to maintain the sanctity of the traditional rule. Even when tensions boil into bloodshed between the houses – occasionally when a new Ironkeeper is to be elected – the Ironkeeper will call upon the city guard, known as the Etchers, to end the violence and maintain peace.

Dûrhammer is known for its legendary master-forged weaponry and armor, as well as the many raw materials it mines from the Iron Mountains. It is also known as one of the few "safe" entry points into the underdark. The dwarves of Dûrhammer have peaceful, but tense diplomatic connections to nearby drow and duergar settlements in the underdark. This makes Dûrhammer the exclusive trade gateway from surface dwellers to underdwellers.

Each ruling house has a speciality and holds responsibility over that domain within Dûrhammer. House Flintsword maintains the largest mine under Dûrhammer. House Icebeard trains the chief architects of the city and most masonry and building projects are organized by or through them. House Steelgrip funds the smithing guilds and

maintains the Steelgrip Metalworks, Dûrhammer's largest blast furnace and ore refinery. It is here that the legendary arts of the dwarves usually come. House Bronzeguard prides itself on training Dûrhammer's foremost scholars and premiere arcanists. House Opalbrand maintains the law and delivers punishment, though a recent scandal that uncovered corruption between House Opalbrand and sects of the Etchers has seen them fall from grace, throwing Dûrhammer's judicial system into chaos. Dûrhammer culture fosters distrust of most non-dwarves, especially among the Dwarven elite. The greed of the Dûrhammer dwarves is almost as legendary as their works of art. This greed is what enables them to see past their doubts and set aside their prejudice to trade with the rest of the world. The dwarves are always looking for adventurers to delve into the underdark in areas they wish not to send their own people. They also routinely hire mercenaries to help protect their trade caravans. Duerbar, which translates from Dwarven as the "Shield of the Dwarves", is a large port city built partially above ground and partially below. Duerbar acts as a dwarven tradinghub allowing Dûrhammer to export its goods and raw materials to Arklan, Áraterlan, and Acheron via the lucrative nearby shipping lanes. Brave adventurers seeking work from the dwarves can find it in Duerbar.

3.3 The Wardens of Faerûnëar

Faerûnëar, which translates from elven as "One land of elves meets the sea", is the southernmost tip of the Áraterlan continent. It acts as a trading hub for the wood elf nation of Valance. The elven city was established in the lush expanse by the sorceress Yelora, the wood elves' first leader after the Divergence because she knew of the rich resources in the Meropis area and desired to have trade and open dialogue with the foreign magocracy in the area. Today, Faerûnëar is safeguarded by the three offices of elders called "wardens" and are united by the High Warden Tirelda, who has held the office for at least the past 300 years. These four keep the city and the surrounding lands safe from intrusion, but also manage a port quarter open to outsiders that allow for lucrative trade with the concord, the houses of Dûrhammer, and with the city states of Arklan. Maintaining the prosperity and safety of Faerûnëar and the broader elven nation of Valance is of the utmost importance. The wardens believe that the elven lives they have sworn to protect are worth more than the lives of outsiders. For this reason, the Wardens and other elven nobles in the city often employ outside adventuring parties as mercenary guards to protect their caravans and ships or as dungeon delvers in search of artifacts from the Age of Arcanum throughout the many ruins of Meropis.

3.4 The Manifold

Any civilized society will turn the people it has failed into criminals, and the societies of Meropis are no exception. The area's, currently, largest criminal organization took shape about

two hundred years ago, when a shipping company in Malgate Port turned to smuggling contraband to make ends meet. This tightknit group of clever smugglers soon began to bargain with their competitors, employing blackmail and offering membership to their organization as an alternative to elimination. The syndicate grew with alarming speed, infiltrating the criminal underbelly of every major city in the area. Masquerading as purveyors of antiquities and foreign textiles, the Manifold focuses on providing their clients with exotic goods, such as illicit substances and magical beasts, or supplying hired muscle to intimidate their clients' rivals. The worst of the Manifold even deal in human merchandise. Originally centered in Malgate Port, the Manifold now operates across the area as a loose network of gang bosses who run their own local sects without direct oversight from the mysterious heads of the syndicate. Each satellite group is expected to regularly deliver information and a cut of their profits to the leadership. Those who fail to pay up receive quiet threats of enslavement or assassination — and the Manifold always makes good on its threats. Members of the Manifold are sworn to keep their syndicate secret by pretending that their chapter is still just another local gang. This has given the Manifold a sinister and enigmatic reputation, which further obfuscates its activities from the authorities. Since members of the the Manifold prefer coercion to public displays of violence, officers of the law often fail to recognize Manifold activity until it's too late.

The Chronos Concord scored a major victory fifteen years ago when they discovered and raided the central Manifold stronghold in Malgate Port, forcing the surviving leadership to scatter across the area. The Manifold has emphasized the narrative of its own fall in order to keep a low profile, though in fact it has retained most of its power. Its influence has stretched to the distant corners of Meropis as it bides its time and waits to reinstate its control within the area. Shifting tactics, the Manifold has now begun seeding major factions with double agents, who turn the most foolish or corrupt of their colleagues into the Manifold's unwitting pawns. Recent rumors are that Malgate Port is back within Manifold shadow control.

The loss of their headquarters taught the surviving Manifold leaders to temper their arrogance with caution. Now a decentralized network of allies and informants, the Manifold is reconnecting with their temporarily dormant contacts, not all of whom are happy to see their cruel masters return.

Beyond the borders of the Chronos Concord, the Manifold has deftly utilized the chaos of the Corsairs centuries- long reign of piracy to infiltrate the guilds of the Chronos Concord. Merely mentioning Manifold activity within the Chronos Concord, Dûrhammer, or Faerûnëar is enough to draw unwanted attention; members of the local law enforcement might investigate the rumors — and the person who started them. Those involved with the Manifold are often convicted of crimes and vanish into the darkest prisons.

Though the Manifold has apparently scattered since the raid on their base in Malgate port, the authorities still keep an eye open for cell activity. Many years ago, the Manifold established satellite cells in the distant land of Arklan, working closely with the local thieving organization there known as the Clasp. Since their headquarters in Malgate Port was destroyed, some have suggested sending agents across the oceans to reinforce their foreign operatives. If the network can quickly regain its former strength, there will eventually be little chance of stopping the spread of its power and influence.

The manifold operatives are happy to employ adventurers that value coin over questions. Smuggling operations, particularly of illicit and stolen goods are commonplace. Occasionally, the Manifold also involve outsiders in certain kidnapping or shakedown operations.