Military and society

🙡 under emperor Rassan III 🙣

Political situation

At the time the young lord Rassan of Silwáin rose to prominence, first as Marshal of Astória, then eventually as Emperor and founder of the renewed Empire of Elmanár, the Empire was immersed in a 300-year long chaotic era – known as *the Interregnum*. There was no central authority over all Elmanár, as it was shattered into numerous independent states, frequently warring among themselves.

The most prominent states were the 7 principalities, vestiges of a once-great empire stretching over most of the Benegárian peninsula. Holdovers from the Old Empire, those states were a continuation of the original division of Rassan I’s empire into provinces, each to be ruled in his name by one of his most trusted military leaders – his *emyár* (singular *amír*, meaning “military leader” or “commander”, which later came to mean “prince” – parallel to the etymology of the Latin word *dux*).

The largest principalities were Cáldria and Albredóna, also known as the *crown principalities* – traditionally ruled by the emperor’s two eldest sons (the Red Prince and the White Prince). Next in importance were Tánjia, Ámbria and Fríllia, also ruled by color-coded princes: the Blue, Yellow and Purple princes, respectively, heirs to Rassan I’s original generals. Lastly were Áspra – controlling the large desert area in the center of the peninsula, which was given to Rassan’s younger brother following the suppression of Mélchos’ Revolt (6 b.e.r ― 1 e.r); and Bérgia – conquered by emperor Felgordín in 87 e.r from the mountain Kanádda tribes, and given to his top general.

By the year 573 e.r, in which Rassan of Silwáin (named after the first two emperors) became the Marshal of Astória, the Empire was but a loose consortium of various states:

* **Kingdom of Albredóna**, the principal power in the east, ruled by King Wáinric of *House Albrióri* ― the last vestige of the ruling dynasty of the Old Empire. The most populous state, at 9.6 million citizens, its rulers were the only ones bold enough to claim kingship – both by virtue of the most direct descent from the emperors of old, and by virtue of briefly holding the northern half of the kingdom of Zurbaghán.

The Kingdom was subdivided into five *duchies*: Cape Duchy, Upper Albredóna, Lower Albredóna, Duchy of Chelmís and Duchy of Dhógas; and two *marches*: March of the Bend and Whitemarch.

* **Regency of Cáldria and Astória**, the principal power in the north, ruled by Prince Clódgar “the Fat” of *House Sílos*. The largest state by territory and a close-second in population, at 8.9 million citizens, it came into existence as a personal union of crowns between the principalities of Cáldria and Astória (a new principality founded in 322 e.r as a result of the War of Liberation). Its rulers have traditionally laid claims to overall imperial rule, naming themselves *Regents of Elmanár* ― a claim occasionally recognized by the lesser principalities.

The Regency was subdivided into seven *duchies*: Ermahánd, Felicitá, Sílos, Stócmyr, Silwáin, Ctárrin and Sacquimóra; four *marches*: Eastmarch, Southmarch, Dómmilen and Geráico; and the semi-autonomous Lordship of Ithcár.

The leaders of the two aforementioned states both considered themselves the rightful rulers of the Empire, a fact resulting in numerous bloody conflicts over the last three centuries. It gradually led to erosion in central authority (paralleling the situation in early medieval Europe), so by the second half of the 6th century e.r, both states were led by weak and incompetent rulers.

* **Principality of Tánjia**, the most important of the coastal principalities. Despite its relatively moderate territory and population (2.8 million citizens), it was a formidable maritime power, having the largest ports in the Empire – which made it a crucial member of any alliance.
* **Principality of Ámbria**, another coastal state, slightly larger in population than the neighboring Tánjia (3.3 million). Its capital, Gónarbas, is a major port since ancient times, and an important trade hub.
* **Principality of Fríllia**, the smallest of the coastal states. With only slightly over a million citizens, it had to rely heavily on alliances with its larger neighbors, but its position as both a tax-free port and a pivotal part of alliances secured its independence over the centuries.
* **Principality of Bérgia**, the westernmost of the original 7 principalities, with a population of 1.9 million. Thanks to careful diplomacy and the principality’s remote position, its leaders managed to stay out of most major conflicts, securing a mostly peaceful and prosperous rule.
* **Republic of Áspra**. Originally a principality, this spacious and sparsely-populated desert state became a battlefield for the many clashes between Cáldria and Albredóna over the interregnum period. Its capital, Áspra, was subject to many sieges ― ever heightening its walls ― and many consecutive civil revolts did not allow any dynastic succession to establish, eventually shifting to elective rule. It was by far the smallest of the major states population-wise, with only 400 thousand citizens, the vast majority of them living in only two cities – Áspra and Nisséya.

Over time, the people of Áspra built their walls to withstand any siege, making it a tremendous stronghold. This perception of safety, along with the republic’s policy of neutrality, has made the city of Áspra a major trade hub, with traders from all over the world arriving to buy and sell produce. At nigh 250 thousand people, the city of Áspra was among the largest human cities throughout the interregnum and long after.

* **Duchy of Cernevóra**, a remote agrarian state to the west of the Strait of Jidáth, bordering the southern part of the Green Mountains. Conquered from the Kannádan tribes in 473 e.r by prince Gistár of Cáldria-Astória, it was given away to one of his generals as an independent state, on the condition of serving as a military buffer between the Empire and the savage tribes. Known for its abundant arable brown soil (for which it is named), exporting agricultural produce to the entire Empire. 1.4 million citizens.
* **County of Délvi**, an island state in the northern Upper Sea, opposite Bérgia. Served as an important port, providing mercenaries and privateers to the highest bidder. Formed shifting alliances with any of the coastal states, but also with Zurbaghán, Eldacár and Monjardín – thus considered a somewhat unreliable ally. 82 thousand citizens.
* **Province of Nicanór**, another island state, situated north of Astória. A dependency of Cáldria-Astória, ruled by a Lord President, appointed by the prince. Inhabited mainly by fishers and farmers. 150 thousand citizens, in two counties: Nicanór and Vióna (each constituting a large island).
* Multiple dwarf states such as the **Lordship of Túrwassad** (situated in the delta of the Ithlén), **Viscounty of Hóldri** (between Tánjia and Albredóna), **Free State of the Strait** (northern tip of the Strait of Jidáth) and many more. Political instability and constant weakening of central authority prompted the creation of various separatist states, ruled by lesser nobility (counties, viscounties and baronies), military leaders or even rogue warlords (lordships and free states).