

The Eye of Gazul: A Mountain-Scale Burning Shadows Emplacement With Dwarven Runic Augmentation

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Abstract—The Eye of Gazul is a new defensive weapon in the Karak Eight Peaks region. A Bound Spell of Burning Shadows is applied to the shadow of Karaoke Nar. Targets are selected by either a Grey Wizard operator or an array of magical signatures for common enemies of humanity and *Dawi*. A Rune of Gazul transmits *Zharvengryn* through the Bound Spell to the targets, severing their souls from the mortal plane and damning them to the ever-burning nega-fires of Dwarven Hell. Bound Spells of *Azyr*, *Aqshy*, and *Ulg* control weather and lighting and provide power for 24-hour operation with arbitrary shadow placement. The Eye was successfully deployed to break the back of Waaagh Birdmuncha, killing over 500,000 greenskins with its initial activation. We additionally present new suggestions about the operation of Burning Shadows and observations on large-scale dwarven runes.

Index Terms—Burning Shadows, Dwarven Runes, Gazul, Siege Weapons, Towers

I. INTRODUCTION

King Belegar Ironhammer's Expedition to Karak Eight Peaks retook Karag Lhune, Karag Nar, and the Citadel in 2479. Impending threats from nearby orcs, trolls, and beastmen indicated immediate fortification. Several approaches to the Expedition's holdings are too open to be easily defensible, notably the slopes of Karag Lhune and the Caldera. During the Expedition's initial push these open approaches were held using artillery, Anvils of Doom [6], and infantry. This was unsustainably expensive and the siege-scale resources, particularly the Anvils, could not be guaranteed to be present in the future. A more permanent large-scale defense was needed.

In this work, we detail the design, capabilities, construction, and initial combat deployment of a unique weapon system which satisfies Karak Eight Peaks' need for permanent, large-scale defenses. A cluster of towers atop Karag Nar binds a spell of Burning Shadows which is projected through the shadow of the mountain. A Rune of Gazul allows targets that fall within the shadow to be burned from the inside out by the anti-fires of *Zharvengryn*, which is Dwarven Hell, the Sword of the Dwarven Ancestor-God Gazul, and the soul-burning fire that Gazul uses to judge the enemies of the *Dawi* [2]. A cluster of other towers clear the weather, place a light so the system can be fired at night, and move the image of the sun so the shadow of Karag Nar can be placed anywhere within

the Karak Eight Peaks region at any time in any weather. In 2482 the Expedition's holdings fell under attack by Waaagh Birdmuncha, numbering approximately 1.1 million greenskins. The system was deployed by Magister Dame Mathilde Weber, instantly destroying almost half of the Waaagh. This makes the Eye of Gazul one of the most powerful operational weapons known to the authors.

II. RELATED WORK AND BACKGROUND

A. Burning Shadows

Burning Shadows melts flesh like acid by disappearing it into the depths of the shadow that is used as the spell's focus [9]. Occasionally referred to as "Baby's First Battle Magic", its exacting requirements give it a reputation for being tantalizingly powerful in the right situation and dangerously useless in every other. If every single one of a dozen conditions is met, a brand-

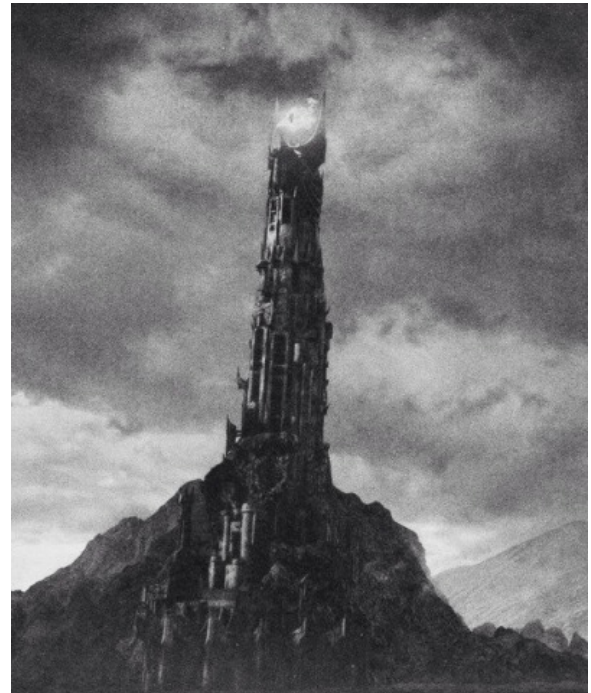


Fig. 1. An illustration of the Eye of Gazul.

new journeyman can instantly break a charge or obliterate an enemy formation. If even one of those conditions is absent, an enemy too far or too close or too many lights or not enough lights, the spell does nothing. Many wizards have lost their lives in attempts to arrange the perfect shot [3], [9].

Scaling Burning Shadows up for battlefield use has been a topic of research since the spell was invented [1]. These attempts suffer from the same limitations as the original spell and have a similar success rate. Recorded downfalls include: A Magister killed when beastmen attacked their tower at night [5], a Lord Magister killed when the forces of chaos attacked their tower on an unseasonably cloudy day [5], and a Journeyman killed when a greenskin shaman doused the bonfire they were using to direct a wagon's shadow [8].

B. Gazul

Gazul, Lord of Underearth, is one of the Dwarven Ancestor Gods and the Dwarven protector of the dead. He is additionally credited with the discovery of the signature Runes for himself as well as his siblings Grungni and Valaya. Gazul's signature weapon is the runesword *Zharrvengryn*, "Flaming Vengeance" [2]. Little more is known about Gazul as his worship is considered a religious secret.

C. Dwarven Runes

Dwarven runecraft uses precise inscriptions in rock and metal to capture the Winds of Magic and direct them in stable patterns. Each rune has a single, well-defined, and reliable effect, such as making the wearer of a belt immune to fire or causing a sword to burst into flame on command. Runes typically affect a single conceptual "item", such as a weapon or suit of armor. Different runes require different materials and methods of construction [7].

III. FUNCTIONALITY AND CONSTRUCTION

A. Grey Tower

The Grey Tower contains the system's core components. The majority of the construction is of a common granite from the surrounding area. Steel beams tie the tower into the bedrock of Karag Nar to make the tower conceptually part of the mountain. To ensure the beams do not interfere with the power they transmit, Dwarven Runesmiths ensured that no wind but *Ulg* touched the steel while it was being smelted and forged. Extensive runic inscription on the beams and in the tower's internal spaces ensure stability and permit manual operation. Refer to [1] and [10] for further details.

Karak Eight Peaks is at roughly sixty percent north by the Praag-Norden wasteline, or about forty by the theoretical Northern Chaotic Pole. On Sonnstill, the shadow of Karag Nar runs exactly east to west, covering the entire Eastern Path, the easternmost 20% Death Pass, and the entire Caldera and the Eastern Valley. On Mondstille, the shadow covers 80% of Death Pass but misses the entirety of the Caldera and the Eastern Path. See Fig. 3a.

The Eye of Gazul can also cast a spell of illusion to cause the sky to forget where the sun is and swap it with another part

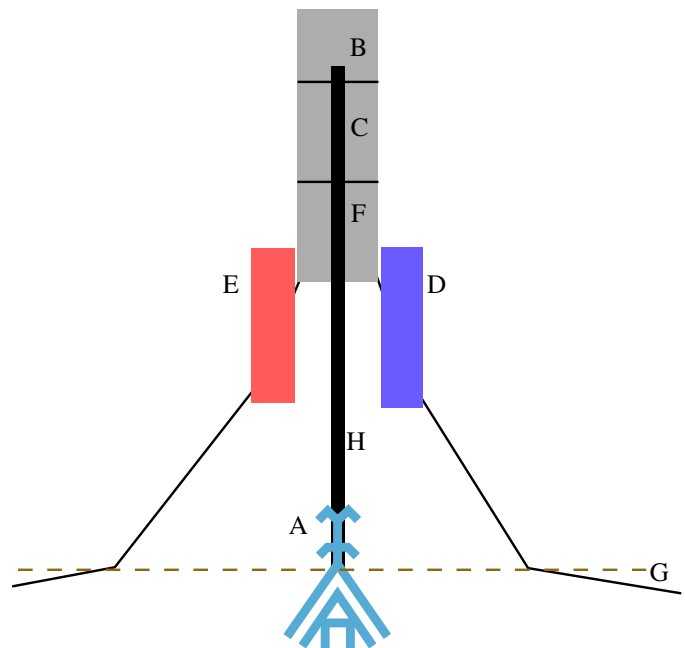


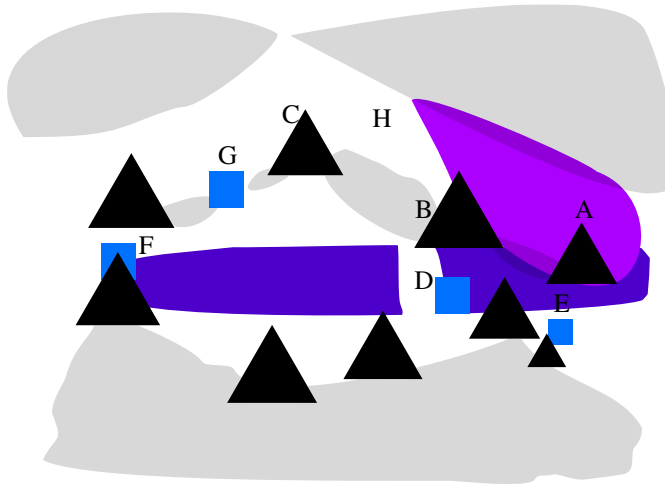
Fig. 2. Functional Diagram of the Eye of Gazul. Not to scale. A: Rune of Gazul. B: Control Room and major functionality. C: Room of Dawn and Dusk. D: Blue Tower. E: Red Tower. F: Living Space. G: Conceptual line between Karag Nar and Ground. H: Rune connector beam.

of the sky. This can be coordinated with the casting of Burning Shadows to cast Karag Nar's shadow at an arbitrary angle. The *Ulg* necessary to affect the sky itself, rather than the people under it, is provided by a series of *Ulg* powerstones placed throughout the Grey Tower.

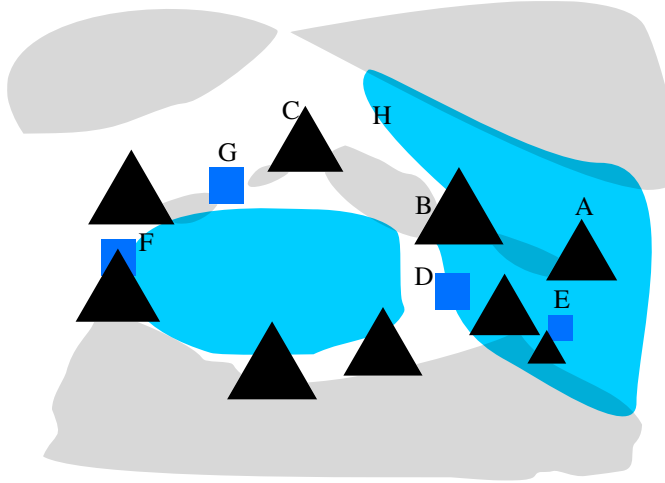
When steered, the Eye of Gazul's engagement range covers the entirety of the Caldera, the Eastern Path and Eastern Gate, the door of the Western Gate, Death Pass, and the Eastern Valley. The only entrances to Karak Eight Peaks that cannot be targeted are Death's Crossing and some exterior mountain slopes. The immediate approach from the Caldera to the Citadel is shadowed by a southern ridge on Karag Lhune, but enemies can be engaged as the cross the caldera before they reach this area. See Fig. 3b.

B. Chamber of Dawn and Dusk

When operated by a Grey Wizard, the Eye's operation is limited only by the user's ability to remain focused. When the system is operated manually, power is provided by a chamber that captures and stores *Ulg*. An enchantment draws morning mist to the tower, bringing *Ulg* with it that is absorbed by a partial powerstone which only attracts *Ulg*. Note that, to avoid contamination and ease construction, the mist-drawing enchantment is *not* a standard weather-control spell using *Azyr*, instead being purely of *Ulg*. A chamber lined with wood from Araby, along with the powerstone and a pattern of interlocking shadows, provides an *Ulg*-friendly environment in which it accumulates in bulk. This component stores enough *Ulg* for several continuous hours of operation and replenishes at a rate of approximately twenty minutes of



(a) Reach of Natural Shadows



(b) Reach of Controlled Shadows

Fig. 3. Maps of Karak Eight Peaks showing the reach of the shadow of Karag Nar under various conditions. Dark Purple [■]: Daily extent of natural shadow at Mondstille. Pink [■]: Daily extent of natural shadow at Sonnstill. Blue [■]: Area targetable when controlled. Grey [■]: Easily-defended mountains. A. Karag Nar. B. Karag Lhune. C. Karagril. D. The Citadel. E. East Gate. F. West Gate. G. Death's Crossing. H. Death Pass.

operation per day. As a side benefit, the Chamber provides a reservoir of extremely pure *Ulg* that can be drawn on for research purposes.

C. Red Tower

The Red Tower uses *Aqshy* to cast a bright light so the Eye can be operated at night. *Aqshy* is drawn from smoke produced by the tower's inhabitants, or in extremis from a bonfire built in the tower itself, and stored in a network of wooden beams with runes burned into them. The enchantment is a simple spell to create fire, but tuned to produce primarily light and minimal heat. The fire is created at a significant distance from Karag Nar, several miles in the air, to avoid diffusing Karag Nar's shadow. Coverage can be improved by firing multiple times. For more details, see [4].

D. Blue Tower

The Blue Tower is the focus for a Bound Spell of Clear Sky. The *Azyr* for the spell is provided by simple accumulation at the tower's altitude or a lightning rod mounted at the top of the tower. The *Azyr* used to clear the weather would be placed very close to the *Ulg* used to cast Burning Shadows and would be rapidly diffusing outward, so significant care had to be taken to make the spell of Clear Sky as efficient as possible and to minimize leakage.

E. Rune of Gazul

The Rune of Gazul is buried directly underneath the center of the Grey Tower, plus or minus a thousandth of an inch, at a depth placing it at the conceptual boundary between Karag Nar and the rest of the world. The Rune is approximately two meters across and formed of pure diamond dust, which as a product of the depths of the earth is conceptually related to Gazul's realm. The rune is made part of the rest of the mountain and the tower using a perfectly vertical steel beam. This beam which glows with a faint blue light that's just visible under indoor lighting. Some witnesses describe the pillar as "unearthly" or otherwise unsettling, but no evidence suggests this is other than simple fear of magic.

F. Control Room

A Grey Wizard can operate the Eye of Gazul from a revolving chair in the center of the control room. The Eye will guide its operator through the activation, guidance, and firing procedure when necessary. In this mode, the operator provides the *Ulg* for the spell directly and the Eye can fire as long as the operator's focus holds. Firing the Eye can be mentally or spiritually exhausting, however.

In the absence of a Grey Wizard, the Eye of Gazul can be manually operated. Levers activate and deactivate the Blue and Red towers as well as the sun-placement component of the Grey Tower. A control panel can be moved around the room on a track to control the shadow's azimuth. A dial sets the altitude, which can be determined using a precomputed table of landmarks. A set of targeting crystals each contain a magical signature for an enemy to be targeted. Existing crystals include Greenskins, Ogres, several varieties of Beastman, Undead, and four varieties of Daemon. Additional signatures can be added by any wizard with a basic knowledge of enchantment and decent Magesight. Finally, a large button triggers the firing sequence.

Runes throughout all three towers ensure that only properly authorized users can operate the tower. Armored plates over the windows protect the operator and can be opened when firing by eye. The tower's more sensitive components are protected by thick walls and extensive runecraft.

Further details of the tower's defenses will not be made available.

IV. DEPLOYMENT

All noise vanishes. The sun jerks in the sky. The Caldera is plunged into shadow. And for a single

exhilarating, terrifying moment, you feel power you can't begin to comprehend flow through you.

Apart from the click as the button sinks down as far as it will go, there's nothing but silence. But this is more than an absence of sound, this is silence that devours sound, somehow growing louder by the moment. *Ulgû* is siphoned from the Room of Dawn and Dusk and in the space between heartbeats, the sky is made to forget where the sun should be, and the shadow that was pointing straight north is now centered almost exactly on the greenskins below. The silence echoes, there's a hint of a scrape of metal on metal, and the shadow of Karag Nar deepens into a solid black...

And then, just as suddenly, the sun is back where it belongs and the quiet that grips the tower is the mere sound of eight people holding their breath.

A. A Note on Target Selection

It is commonly believed that Burning Shadows draws information from the caster's mind to differentiate between target and non-target. The authors observed otherwise when firing the Eye of Gazul under Wizard control:

For an instant that stretched into what felt like hours, I glimpsed one greenskin after another for a fraction of a second each and mentally confirmed that, yes, it was an enemy of the *Dawi*. Apart from some having been Orcs and some Snotlings, the only variation was the scarce handful of vultures mixed among them, following hopefully in the Waaagh's wake and likely destined to be very disappointed. And throughout the entire process I could feel the energy of the Waaagh like an unpleasant vibration in my teeth.

It is possible that the divergence is due to the presence of the Rune of Gazul. Confirming targets as enemies of the *Dawi*, rather than as enemies of the operator or simply targets versus non-targets, is particularly suggestive of this possibility.

V. FUTURE WORK

The Eye of Gazul has so far only been tested against greenskins. Future work will report on its effectiveness against other attackers and on extensions of the targeting array. Of particular interest is the possibility of adding targeting parameters for destroying particular portions of an enemy force (e.g. assassinating Bosses or Shamans) and servants of Chaos less significantly mutated than full daemons. The authors are also interested in peacetime uses of the system. For example, a targeting crystal attuned to Sosnowsky's Hogweed, which causes severe burns and photosensitivity on skin contact, would make weeding in the Karak Eight Peaks region significantly less dangerous.

VI. CONCLUSION

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to thank King Belegar Ironhammer of Karak Eight Peaks, King Kazador Thunderhorn of Karak Azul, High Priest Gunnars of the Cult of Gazul, Lord Magister Melkoth of the Grey Order, Lord Magister Grey of the Grey Order, Magister Grey of the Grey Order, Magister Bann of the Bright Order, Magister Kereveld of the Celestial Order, Magister Solmann of the Celestial Order, and the many stoneworkers, smiths, engineers, and runesmiths of Karak Eight Peaks for their expertise and contributions.

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