

Campaign Three: A Continent on the Threshold

The continent of Lykasia has been tracked, the Shrouded Lands have been opened, a land-route stretching from Verenia to Orovia has been found, and in almost an instant the continent has become much closer than it ever was before. A heretofore unknown, vibrant kingdom, known as Ganzoria, has been discovered deep in the heart of the Shrouded Lands. The kingdom of Einmark has been carved from the region. The flames of war burn bright in the east. This is the world you've been born into; a world of machinations and intrigue, of warfare and violence, a world in twilight for the elder races but dawn for the younger.

Verenia and Ilzura are united as one. The motherland of Vistla has been taken by Jükland. Akutan tries to find its place in the world once again. Ganzoria weaves among the many dangers to east and west to take its place as a major player on the continent. Looming over all, like a spider with irresistible and indispensable webs, the merchants of Holtney play every side of every game for fun and profit. This is the continent of Lykasia.

This primer delves deeply into the state of the continent. Within these pages you will find details on current events, information on each nation found in Lykasia, the recorded history of the world, the gods that rule the land, and the factions found in the towns and countrysides of the continent. Lastly, this primer will detail the races of Lykasia, and the inevitable doom that comes to the elder races.

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Current Events

Much has changed in Valth in the 137 years since Hogun's Heroes defended the Green Crown from the Abgrishal attack and the coming of the being from the outer darkness known as Burzipox.

Einmark

Ganzoria granted their western marches, known as Estoch, to Styrke of the Einheit. This region is now known as Einmark, and its nomadic people count the Ganzoi as their principal ally (some might go so far as to call Einmark a client state of Ganzoria, but not

within earshot of an Einheit). Einmark is separated from the Palatinate of East Verenia, the eastern reach of the Holy Union of Verenia and Ilzura, by the Frostwave River. Skirmishes between these two countries are rare, but rising; occasional trappers out of Suffrage sometimes make their way across the river, and the border within the Merskeld Swamp is nebulous at best.

It doesn't help matters that the Einheit emigrated from northern Verenia initially; when the Einheit settled in Estoch, Verenia attempted to claim that it was therefore Verenian land. Intermittent armed clashes did occur between Verenia against the Einheit and Ganzoria. However, at the time Verenia was not prepared to press their claim too strongly and the Treaty of Belaria was signed in 457 CE which recognized Einmark as an independent state.

The Green Crown

With the heroic actions of Hogun's Heroes, the Green Crown was kept safe from the depredations of the Abgrishal as well as a nightmarish creature known as Burzipox. In their wisdom, they determined that it should be a place of learning, for those with the courage and intelligence to try to unlock its secrets. It is said that a great library is held within the Green Crown, although the learned have not been able to pierce the veil to enter it just yet. The Tower of the Green Crown was built to house these scholars from across Lykasia, and it is protected by adventurers from every corner of the continent. Despite the ongoing political ploys and wars that plague Lykasia, the Green Crown is considered neutral ground, and thus those that study the floating meteor set aside their allegiances before entering.

It is said that strange happenings occur at the Green Crown, although no one has ever explicitly said what those occurrences actually are. The scholars that survive these events only speak of them in veiled terms, never describing exactly what happened. It is known that in the year 494 CE, every adventurer and scholar that was within the tower was mysteriously slain; it was whispered that all of the scholars and most of the adventurers were turned inside out, while the remainder appeared to have died in an explosion they themselves set off. It is also known that in the year 522 CE every single person at the Green Crown, from scholar to scullion, warrior to wain-driver, went completely insane. Still, the lure of the secrets that can be unlocked within draw the wisest sage and foolhardiest adventurer to the Green Crown.

To reach the Green Crown, travelers must follow a proscribed path that hugs the western wall of the World's Edge Mountains. Stray too far onto the Great Glacier, and the Tamur Confederacy will firmly guide you back onto the path. Stray too far into the mountains, and you either get lost among their jagged peaks or the giants of Jotunheim find you and grind your bones to make their bread. It is a perilous journey for even the

most seasoned adventurer.

The Holy Union of Verenia and Ilzura

Since the Battle for the Dawn, the nations of Verenia and Ilzura have grown closer and closer with each passing year. These are the greatest nations in Valth, and their fates have been intertwined since the Greater Gods walked among the mortals. They are also the most religious nations in Lykasia; Bayeur in Verenia was the place of Angmin the All-Father's recuperation, and Varanash in Ilzura is the place where Angmin first slew Akivasha. Both peoples have always felt especially close to the gods.

In addition to those links, trade agreements and alliances have brought them closer over the years. Finally, a proposal was made; Emperor Galdor II of Verenia was a bachelor and High Queen Barathi of Ilzura was a bachelorette, and so it was agreed that they should marry. A double-wedding was held, where Dowager Empress Merida married the Elven leader Arthod of Gael Tholiad and Galdor II married Barathi. From these two unions, the Holy Union of Verenia and Ilzura were born. Two items of note came from these marriages; first, that Merida and Arthod had a daughter named Hogunna, and second, that since Barathi was a human Galdor II outlived her. After Barathi's death Galdor married a daughter from a cadet branch of the royal line of Ilzura, and then another lady from a cadet branch, and so on. Galdor II has thus outlived four wives, and his current wife is young Empress Shivesta.

The Union (as it is known) thus consists of four distinct provinces. In order of population the provinces are, respectively, Verenia, Ilzura, the Dependencies (consisting of the Golden Isles and the colonies of Solith), and the Palatinate East Verenia in the Shrouded Lands. The governance of the Union is unique, and described later.

The Union is a religious place, not quite a theocracy but not far from it, and beneath the predilection of self-righteousness lies an intense fear of the unknown. It is a country steadfast in its faith, and likewise steadfast in the thought that all things different are at best wrong, and at worst heretical. This concept of heresy has given rise to a growing number of state-sanctioned witch-hunters and exorcists, who rove across the Union searching for witches and those in league with demons.

Ganzoria

When Hogun's Heroes left Suffrage in what is now the Union, they had no idea that Ganzoria even existed. Imagine their surprise upon finding a functioning kingdom deep within the Shrouded Lands. Since that time, Ganzoria has continued to modernize under the shrewd gaze of Ema (aka queen) Khulana and her descendants.

Contact with the outside world made Ema

Khulana realize that if Ganzoria wished to secure its place on the world stage, they must buy time to modernize. To that end, she granted Estoch to the Einheit and the eastern marches to the Vistlans to act as buffer states against the world at large. During that time, she enacted a robust reform program to modernize their military into a standing, professional army and encouraged the arts and sciences within the kingdom, establishing the University of Highkeag, free of charge provided aptitude can be demonstrated, so that the populace can be educated in farming sciences, engineering, and mathematics. During her rein she completed her greatest work, the terracing of most of the hills in Widhurst so that farmers had more arable land to plant. This led to a population explosion and the founding of several new villages within Ganzoria. Although their population does not match the Union's, Ganzoria is on the rise. With its rising population and edge on technology, Ganzoria has become a flashpoint of concern for the Union to the west and Jükland to the east. This newfound rise in its fortunes is not without tribulation, however; the relative peace of the past century and a half has allowed several demonic cults to fester in the dark recesses of the kingdom, and like the Union witch-hunters have become part and parcel of everyday life within Ganzoria.

Vistla

On its eastern flank, Ganzoria ceded all uninhabited lands between the Taw River, River Twinning, Yellow Leg River, and the Great Canyon to Vistla in thanks for the Vistlans turning back a Jüklander invasion in the year 449 CE. This land became the Duchy of Welestria, a part of the kingdom of Vistla. These lands were only ostensibly under Ganzoria control, being uninhabited, and so this wasn't counted a huge loss amongst the Ganzoi nobility.

Jükland and Vistla have been enemies for centuries. In the year 451 CE, the Wuthalid Coven goaded the Jüklanders to charge their warriors directly into the Vistlan motherland. The Wuthalid Coven froze the River Vistla falls and the Jüklander horde poured across the frozen river, first sacking Krasnik before driving into the steppes. They took the unprepared southwestern Vistla and came to the gates of Lublask itself. There, the might and ingenuity of the Vistlans stopped them.

Vistla has long been known for its feats of engineering and science. The best engineering school in Lykasia is the People's College of Lublask, found in the heart of the capital. These engineers had been working on a new weapon, a weapon that would allow the lowliest peasant to defeat the greatest knight; the matchlock. Using saltpeter refined from bat-infested caves in the Hills of Blyotom, the engineers had crafted weapons that could project lead balls for hundreds of yards without needing strength or even dexterity to

guide them. This great equalizer allowed the men, women, and children to stave off attacks by the Jüklanders that otherwise would have crushed the will of other kingdoms. With the Jüklander siege stalled, and the pegasus-mounted Order of the Griffin en route, the war was nearly won. Nearly.

The Wuthalid Coven left Haugrog in 452 CE, something that hasn't occurred in centuries, and crossed the Kazpak mountains riding demonic hybrids of toads and dragons. The Order of the Griffin died to a man in the resulting battle above the Nyzin Forest. Those pegasi that survived fled to Lublask, snorting and keening in lament.

With the coming of the Coven, Frost Queen Kasia, her children, a small cadre of handgunners, and many able-bodied non-combatants fled to the west under cover of night with the aide of the pegasi, while the River Prince Zivan stayed behind to lead the defense. They were soon overwhelmed, and Lublask was taken.

The refugees fled for the Great Bridge, and once there they built a wagon-fort on the eastern end. It was one last desperate defense against the oncoming Jüklander horde, slain to a man, but not before the Frost Queen, the remaining pegasi, and all the non-combatants made it across. Once they reached the town of Crossing, Frost Queen Kasia used her magic to destroy the central span of the Great Bridge, saving the Duchy of Welestria from the depredations of the Jüklanders.

The Frost Queen and her retinue reached Highkeag, capital of Ganzoria. The Ganzoi were too weak to assist her in Vistla's war against the invaders, but they promised to allow her and her descendants to stay in Highkeag, under Ganzoi protection, until they can muster the power to take back their homeland. Her great great grandson, Frost King Pazov, can be found in Highkeag. He hawks the last of their crown jewels to pay for mercenaries to first retake the Disputed Lands and then the motherland itself. He is referred to as the Pauper King behind his back, however he still retains the great magic that has been passed down to each Vistlan ruler for millennia. This magic sustains the ice walls and buildings of Lublask; when asked why he hasn't released it, to bring the capital down upon itself and thus deny the Jüklanders the capital, Pazov responds that its very existence brings hope to the Vistlans suffering under the yoke of Jüklander rule, that his people know all his thought and will is for them, and one day they will return.

Thousands upon thousands of mercenaries have fought beneath the bear banner of Vistla since the country was taken. The Vistlan recruiters scour every city for soldiers and send them to the village of Hope within Welestria. From there they are ferried across the Great Canyon by the remaining pegasi, to the steep-walled island of the Disputed Lands in an attempt to reclaim it from the Jüklanders. Thus far they have been

unsuccessful in taking the island. Those that survive tell horror stories of the depravity of the Jüklanders. These survivors typically wear a pale blue scarf around their neck to show they served 'beyond the canyon' in service to the Vistlans. This is a way of acknowledging each other, and a point of pride amongst them. In fact, there are some taverns within Highkeag, Binyaq, and other cities that only serve those wearing the blue scarf.

Akutan

When Akutan closed its borders in 447 CE, whispers echoed through the courts of Ilzura, Verenia, and abroad. Those whispers foretold of a secretive alliance between the Akutani king Ostan and a heretofore unknown Dwarven clan that came to its icy shores aboard ironclad ships. These whispers turned out to be true; the Akutani had allied themselves with the Abgrishal dwarves that live along Chillfog bay. After Hogun's Heroes and the Tamur people defeated the combined army of the Abgrishal and the Akutani, they returned bearing rumor of lycanthropy among the Akutani people. Shortly thereafter, King Ostan sent his emissaries back among the kingdoms of Lykasia. These emissaries reported that the kingdom is reopen for trade at favorable prices, swore that the Duskwolves of the Duskwolf Expedition were expelled from Akutan, and that the kingdom had no part in either their alliance with Abgrish or their fall to lycanthropy. As there were no Duskwolf or Abgrishal leaders left alive to refute this, Akutan was warily welcomed back into the international community. In the 137 years since the battle of the Green Crown, Akutan has worked ceaselessly to ingratiate itself with the world at large; their merchants provide seafood and whale oil at prices even Holtney can't undercut, and the Akutani navy has assisted the Union against pirates on multiple occasions.

In the year 468 CE, Holtish merchants attempted to establish a mercantile exchange in the Akutani village of Dusk. They were politely, but firmly, rebuffed. Two years later, the Holtish merchants returned with an armed flotilla. The flotilla was spotted by an Akutani fishing vessel off the northern shore of the Cape of Baelirion. As the fisherman told it, that night a huge squall formed on the sea between Southerly Island and the Cape of Baelirion. It headed south, against the prevailing winds, and dashed the Holtish flotilla against the sea stacks along the coast. As the survivors reached the shore, undead creatures emerged from Morgwald Forest and pulled them screaming into the shadows beneath the pine boughs. Holtney never again tried to force open the Akutani ports.

Holtney

When Jükland invaded Vistla in 451 CE, Holtney sprang into action. Dragon King Hedwyn flew to Haugrog and personally protested to the Wuthalid Coven. Upon his return to Overmarket, Holtney

withdrew all of their merchants from Jükland territory. Unfortunately this did not have the desired outcome; despite the rebuke the Jüklanders pierced the heart of Vistla and Holtney had no choice but to simultaneously withdraw their merchants from Vistla before they, too, were swept up in the Jüklander tide. Holtney has had no formal relations with Jükland since then.

In the year 502, Holtish emissaries went to the Orovia capital of Binyaq with the express desire to buy out the syndicated beehive farms in Berenne. The envoys were strongly rebuffed. The Holtish returned in 524 CE with an improved offer and the hope that the new, young King Balbatore would be more pliable, but they were once again denied. Suddenly, in the year 526 CE Orovia declared war against Holtney. Berenne's syndicate governor was found dead, a poisoned apple clutched in her hand, and several of the orchardists were missing; Orovia accused Holtney of orchestrating the foul play, however Orovia had no proof and was therefore unsupported. The only battle of the war was the Battle of Hagfang Bay in 527 CE, where a squadron of Orovia galleons attacked a merchant fleet tacking in the bay. Several ships were sunk on either side and both sides withdrew. Shortly thereafter, Holtney sued for peace and, in exchange for a hefty sum, Orovia signed the peace treaty.

It's said that *anything* can be bought from a Holtish trader for the right price. Unfortunately, it's the right price for the Holtish, not for the buyer. In the year 449 CE, an adventurer named Orson Burrows, a citizen of Suffrage, began trading on behalf of Holtney's Council of Trade and Development. Suffrage was still finding its feet at this point and food was always scarce. Orson made a fortune on Holtish salted fish, nuts, and dried berries; somehow he was able to sell his wares at prices that were often cheaper than the food from the farmers and trappers of Suffrage! The food was always plentiful and so Suffrage began to rely heavily on Orson to provide for the growing settlement. Expecting that the imports would last at the same price forever, and virtually priced out of their own market, many farmers and trappers turned to other vocations and became well-paid porters, guards, and teamsters for the Council of Trade and Development. Then, in the midwinter of 456 CE, disaster struck. Apparently, as Orson explained, wherever Holtney sourced these foods had suffered a drought, or a plague, or some other malady. No matter the reason, the foodstuffs had become more scarce, he proclaimed, and thus the prices skyrocketed. Food became so expensive that it beggared half the populace before the winter was through. Being midwinter, there was no time to plant and the weather was too grim to do much hunting or to receive aid from Verenia, so the Suffragers had little choice but to bear the prices. By spring, food was more plentiful and the prices fell to slightly higher than they were prior to the crisis. At the very end of that autumn, Orson proclaimed that he was

too old to continue his service to Suffrage, packed up his shop and, accompanied by many armed guards, retired to Holtney. Those Suffragers that had taken employment with the Council were now out of a high-paying job and ended up returning to their old vocations as farmers and trappers, and that was another very lean winter for the town.

In the year 450 CE, a Holtish trader named Ellefaire began buying up smithies in the Ganzoi city of Highkeag. The offer was enticing to the smiths; Ellefaire pays the smith to purchase the smithy, the smith continues working as an employee of Ellefaire and gets paid for each piece they craft, but all work orders are centrally taken and distributed by Ellefaire. This worked out well for the smiths; they had steady work, evenly distributed between them, and their normal work was supplemented by orders from across Lykasia. The smiths were happy and prosperous. But the people of Highkeag suffered as a result; in 451 CE a huge order of weapons and armor was distributed across all the smithies in Highkeag and the smiths were given bonuses for each sword and breastplate they made. Thus the smiths worked that order instead of mending plow blades and horseshoes for the Ganzoi, and the economy of Highkeag effectively ground to a halt for a year while the smiths grew rich on Holtish coin. By the midsummer the queen had had enough of this and sent soldiers to force the smiths to go back to their normal work. This provoked a general strike among the smiths, who declared that they had the right to pursue their own fortunes, and the occasional riot broke out. Eventually the queen relented, since roughly half of the city sided with the smiths, and allowed the smiths to continue their work; she was forced to source (some say inferior) smiths from the Verenian Guild of Merchant Venturers to complete the city's necessities. No one knows exactly where all those weapons and pieces of armor were shipped to, but several mercenaries swear up and down that the Jüklanders they fought in the Disputed Lands bore swords and breastplates stamped with the mark of a Highkeag smith. Finally, exasperated, in the year 516 CE the Crown purchased the smiths from Holtney. No one knows exactly how much it cost, but since then the monarchs have worn substantially less jewelry.

Whether real, imagined, or circumstantial, Holtney's reputation for cut-throat business practices has not prevented them from doing business with Lykasia at large. Their selection is expansive and pricing is low, and their wizards and teamsters can provide their products quickly. As a result, desperate citizens and leaders in need of cheap and plentiful goods are all too happy to allow Holtish merchants into their towns.

On the Nature of Gunnery

Three Vistlan engineers were able to flee the country with Frost Queen Kasia. They brought with them the designs of matchlock handguns, and the

understanding of how to corn saltpeter into gunpowder. Upon arriving in Highkeag, they founded the Vistlan School of Engineering (it is said that one of the conditions upon harboring the Frost Queen was that they would give their secrets of gunpowder to the Ganzoi, although this is not confirmed).

Ganzoria is a country of steep hills. Most of these are cairns for giants. Open cairns are havens for bats. Thus saltpeter is found within Ganzoria in abundance. With the knowledge of the Vistlan gunsmiths, and the resources of the kingdom, Ganzoria has become the premier manufacturer of gunpowder and matchlocks in Lykasia. This has rankled both Holtney and the Guild of Merchant Venturers; both have attempted to break into the gunpowder market, even sending spies disguised as students into the Vistlan College of Engineering, but thus far the spies have been found and disposed of, and the gunsmith trade has been tightly controlled by the Ganzoi government.

The Nations of Lykasia

The Holy Union of Verenia and Ilzura

Demonym: Union

Capital: Shefia

Leader: Emperor Galdor II (Elf male)

Government

The Holy Union of Verenia and Ilzura, known colloquially as the Union, is the largest state in Lykasia, both geographically and by population. It is led by Emperor Galdor II, an Elf of mixed Wood Elf and High Elf heritage. He has reigned for 247 years. The Union has a strong centralized government with the Emperor as its head, however given its breadth the Union does accede to local custom somewhat. The Senate, made up of all the nobles of the Union (the clergy does not participate in the senate, however they have significant clout among many of the nobles), crafts policy for the Emperor. That policy is refined by the Emperor's Cabinet, the Emperor's closest advisors. The Cabinet is elected every twelve years by the Senate from among themselves. The Cabinet always consists of two representatives from Verenia, two from Ilzura, one from the the Solithan Colonies, one from the Golden Isles, one from the Palatinate of East Verenia, one from the Elves (typically, but not always, from Baelirion), and one from the Dwarves of Zanakul.

The laws and will of the Union are upheld by a hereditary leader that has dominion over each province of the Union. In Verenia and Baelirion, that is the Emperor himself. His heir, Princess Finara, leads the Palatinate of East Verenia. Ilzura is led by his wife's eldest younger sibling, High King Rahore. The Solithan Colonies are led by King Sundh, and the Golden Isles are

led by King Tarsun. Zanakul is led by King Kragg.

Beneath these leaders, each settlement has its own governor who acts as administrator as well as chief justice. This strict bureaucracy originates in Verenia but has been exported across the union. Oftentimes, the governors of Verenia are East Verenia are not nobles, while the governors in Ilzura, Solith, and the Golden Isles typically are (a holdover from when they were individual countries).

Bureaucracy is a part of life in Verenia (moreso in the southern heartland of Verenia than elsewhere), where on a given day a citizen may meet with tax collectors, police, or census-takers, and also make use of public roads, public irrigation systems, or the public education system. Working for the government is seen as respectable, and the entrance exams are strenuous.

Nobility

The nobility of the Union are not responsible for direct administration in their regions. Instead, they are hereditary landlords who rent out their broad lands to tenant farmers. Each noble house holds a seat in the Imperial Senate, where they craft and debate policy before submitting it to the Emperor for approval. In addition to their rents, they receive payment from the government in exchange for their work in the senate.

Many of the noble houses, especially in Ilzura, hold to a fierce martial tradition. Many are pledged to one of the several knightly orders that can be found in Ilzura.

Trade

The Union's major exports are food (including bananas and sugarcane in the south and spices in Ilzura), textiles (wool and cotton in Verenia, silk in Ilzura), and gemstones in Ilzura. East Verenia primarily exports furs and grain. Additionally, the Golden Islanders are renowned for their shipwrights.

The Union's trade is dominated by the Guild of Merchant Venturers, who control most of the ports in the Union and fiercely compete with Holtney for control of the remainder.

Military

The Union Army is two pronged; a professional volunteer army, and several knightly orders. Although there are some knightly orders in Verenia, many more can be found in Ilzura given their feudalistic heritage. Once Verenia and Ilzura united, the great order known as the Knights of the River have become the most ardent supporters of the Emperor and the Union at-large; their vocal support helped quell any potential unrest that may have occurred in Ilzura from the formation of the Union.

Culture

Culturally, southern Verenia places more emphasis on the welfare of the community, while the north, the Golden Isles, and the Palatinate of East Verenia places more emphasis on individuality. In Ilzura and the Colonies of Solith, people strive for perfection at anything they do; the focus on perfection is not to dominate others or out of pride, but instead to be satisfied in their own work.

Nobles, as a rule, enjoy a higher status than peasants. However, wealth allows social mobility and thus some merchants move in noble social circles.

In general, one's occupation also affects their social status; career soldiers and priests are held higher than bureaucrats, who are held in higher esteem than merchants, while merchants are held in higher esteem than farmers/workers. Typically, members of a lower class are deferential towards those of higher class.

Verenians and East Verenians value painting and drawing above all other works of art, and most homes are decorated with large murals of pastoral scenes, landscapes, and portraits. In Solith and Ilzura pride themselves on their fine sculpture, while in the Golden Isles people take pride in a self-written limerick or bawdy song.

Magic

Magical philosophy is heavily influenced by the High Elves, who place their emphasis on how to create and manipulate matter through magic. With the former magical college Ultras destroyed, most mages study at the one of the many branches of the School of Galdor.

Religion

The Bayeur monastery is the main religious force within Verenia. All gods are worshiped at Bayeur, from the greater gods to the least hero.

The Union tends to focus their worship on Valth's Chosen, a group of Verenian heroes who rose from their simple backgrounds to save the world in the Battle for the Dawn, and eventually ascend to godhood.

The Holy City of Varanash is Bayeur's twin. It is the site where the all-father Angmin first slew the god of horrors Akivasha, thus ending the war of Heavensunder. Angmin's great spear, which he threw and missed Akivasha during that climactic battle, once stuck out of the holy mountain Bengir, and the holy river Segan cascades from the interior of the mountain, through the hole left by javelin tip, and down to the Detta plateau below.

Varanash was built on the river shore, and the entire riverside is a series of steps that lead directly into the river. People from all around Lykasia make pilgrimages to Varanash to bask in its holiness and wash in the cleansing Segan river. It is not unheard of for the richest in Lykasia to stipulate in their wills for their bodies to be borne to Varanash. Once there, they have

elaborate funerals where they are placed in reed boats to float down the holy river so they may be close to the gods.

Geography

The Union is so large that its geography is nearly as varied as its people.

Northern Verenia is harsher and wilder. The Frozen Reach is a dry tundra with little grassland. It is flanked on either side by taiga forests of evergreens. The Valmia mountains are tall and jagged, incisor-shaped mounts perpetually capped by snow.

The areas immediately south of the Valmia mountains are rugged and covered in brambles and shrubland, while the middle of the country is gentle grassland pocked by temperate forests of oak, maple and beech.

The Thanator mountains are unnatural formations of tall mountains. They look like they have been carved into the shape of writhing flames.

Further south, Verenia gets wetter and wetter; the southern Arclyst, the Harwald, and the Pachwin forests are mostly rosewoods, teak, and mountain-ebony. Bamboo and grass stretch between the forests.

The south is dominated by the Quanfells, a dense cypress swamp.

The southwest of Verenia is the wettest part of the country. It is dominated by the nigh-impenetrable Otola jungle. The southwestern tip is covered by the Dragonteeth mountains, a range of narrow chimneys of granite that rise to touch the clouds.

The Palatinate of East Verenia is similar to the Frozen Reach; it is a wild, windswept tundra. Coldcop forest is a cold evergreen forest draped with the thick webs of huge spiders.

Ilzura itself is roughly split into two parts; the dry upper Ilzura and the wet lower Ilzura. Upper Ilzura encompasses the Detta plateau. It's a dry, arid region with seasonal heavy rains. The plateau is cut by wide rivers, producing steep, grassy canyons. The table of the plateau is covered in rough hills and forests prone to wildfire in the summer months.

The Detta springs forth from the Godsreach mountains, the tallest and wildest mountains in all Valth. These perpetually snow-capped mountains are a nigh-impassable boundary. Few races have the physical capabilities of contending with the thin air and bitter cold to scale the peaks, and only a handful of adventurers have completed the expeditions.

The Godsreaches are inhabited by dwarves in their city Zanakul at the roots of the mountains, aarakocra eyries in the middle reaches, and dragonborn monasteries in the upper reaches. Somewhere in the Godsreach mountains is the invisible celestial bridge that links the gods' halls of Elysium with the world of Valth.

Lower Ilzura, by contrast, is very wet. Clouds

rapidly form off the Great Sea and sweep over lower Ilzura. As a result, lower Ilzura is mostly jungle with deep briny swamps in the lowlands.

The Solithan Colonies are sparsely populated. It is peppered with small towns, interspersed with farmland and untamed wilderness.

The Golden Isles are an archipelago of coral islands that are a graveyard of shipwrecks. The one true settlement in the Golden Isles is Lanka, an old pirate haven that has gone respectable. The people of the Golden Isles make their living as merchants, fisherfolk, and sailors. Given their expertise in sailing, the shipyards of Lanka build some of the best vessels in all of Valth.

Climate

Northern Verenia and the Palatinate of East Verenia have short summers and long winters. North of the Valmia Mountains and upon the plain of Duach, little rainfall is seen except in the summer season. Central Verenia is more temperate, with cool winters and warm summers. Southern Verenia is comparatively hot and wet year round.

Ilzura is, as a whole, hot. Lower Ilzura is typically hot and wet no matter the month, while upper Ilzura is typically hot and dry except during the rainy season when it is just as wet as lower Ilzura. The Solithan Colonies are cooler given that it is a large peninsula, but with more even weather. The Golden Isles are a tropical paradise, if you don't mind the horrible insects.

Foreign Relations

The Union and Akutan have several trade agreements and treaties to keep the seas between them free of pirates. They are on cordial terms.

The people of the Union view Vistla, Ganzoria, Jükland, Orovia, Loekyr, and Holtney with suspicion and outright prejudice given that they did not participate in the Battle for the Dawn.

Holtney is tolerated given their extensive trade with Verenia, putting in at the ports of the Union and providing the country with needed foodstuffs and other goods. However, they are viewed as the main carriers of the plague of 382 CE, and so they are unwelcome in some of the less open-minded parts of the Union.

Jükland is reviled throughout Verenia, viewed as a necessary but unwelcome trading partner given their actions during the plague and for starting the War of 349 CE. Most Verenians hold them in disdain, if not outright belligerence. The Jüklanders don't seem to care since they know they are making huge amounts of money off the Verenian markets.

The Union sympathizes with Vistla's plight, and so the Union does not object when the Vistlans seek mercenaries within their borders. However, the Union doesn't believe they have any stakes in the ongoing war

between Vistla and Jükland.

Einmark is viewed as a usurper of land that is by rights part of the Union, despite the Treaty of Belaria where Einmark was recognized as independent.

The Union is wary of Ganzoria; they aren't sure what to make of this upstart kingdom and so the Union tries to subtly undermine them to test their strength.

The Union has little to do with Orovia and less with Loekyr. Much of the Union couldn't even place them on a map. Occasionally, Orovian traders will put into Lanka or Golnat, but that is a rare novelty.

Demographics

The homeland of the halflings is primarily among the hills just to the south of the Valmia mountains, although they're found throughout the cities and towns of the Union. Half-orcs and nomadic barbarians live in the Frozen Reach. The Dwarven diaspora is scattered across the cities of the Union, but they're mostly found in the vaults of Zanakul. High Elves, Drow, and Wood Elves call Baelirion home, and many Wood Elves live in the tree city of Gael Tholiad. Dragonborn are found in the extreme north and south of Verenia and the southern spurs of the Godsreach mountains. Tabaxi are usually found in the jungle Otolá and the Golden Isles. Tieflings are an extreme rarity.

Humans and half-humans- 60%

Dwarves- 10%

Halflings- 8%

Wood Elves- 5%

High Elves- 3%

Dragonborn- 9%

Gnomes- 4%

Tabaxi- <1%

Tieflings- <1%

The Kingdom of Akutan

Demonym: Akutani

Capital: Blacksand

Leader: King Ranult (Human male)

Government

Once, Akutan was fractured and ruled by its king in name only. The country was divided by a centuries-long civil war among the major Houses. After Valth's Chosen freed King Aeronel from the clutches of house Darksun, the king united houses Bloodcrab and Blacklion. With their united armies, King Aeronel crushed house Darksun and utterly destroyed them, root and stem. Now, the three major Houses are Silverbear on Southerly Island (a former cadet branch of house Blacklion), Blacklion on Middle Island, and Bloodcrab on Northerly Island. All of Akutan is united behind the king, Ranult. The great houses are led by Great Lady Gavrid Silverbear, Great Lord Flot Blacklion, and Great Lady Tula Bloodcrab, respectively.

Nobility

Each of the major Houses has, over time and through warfare and diplomacy, come to dominate the smaller Houses on their respective islands. The major Houses suffer these lesser nobles to exist as long as they execute their Great Lords' wills. Above all the major Houses reigns the king. The current ruler is King Ranult.

Trade

Akutan does brisk trade across Lykasia. The Ilzuran's appetite for Akutan's whale oil is unrivaled, and in exchange the Akutani receive Ilzuran spices, gems, and silks to sell to the wider world. Additionally, iron from the ironsands across middle island is an important export, traded principally with the Guild of Merchant Venturers' trading houses in northern Verenia.

Military

House Bloodcrab's soldiers are primarily sailors and they have an excellent navy. House Blacklion's strength is heavy, armored infantry. Their elite soldiers, made up mostly of the nobility of Middle Island, are encased in full plate and are nigh-unstoppable on the battlefield. House Blacklion also makes use of a large colony of kenku assassins that live in the Heron Mountains. House Silverbear favors lightly armored but heavily armed infantry.

Culture

The Akutani's cultural foundation is war. Its history has been one of perpetual civil war. However, this has recently ended, and now Akutani soldiers are employed as mercenaries the world over. Across the

country, the people spend the spring and fall sowing and harvesting, and the winter and summer raiding and fighting.

Above all else, obedience to one's masters is considered of utmost importance. In fact, the laws in Akutan severely punish disobedience.

Music is an important part of Akutani culture. Their music is unique, using unusual time signatures and arrangements, and most songs tell the stories of a local Hero. Theatre is also an important past-time amongst the Akutani. Each harvest holiday is capped by a new play produced by a local playwright.

Magic

Because of the great pestilences and disasters wrought by House Darksun over the ages, magic is viewed with great suspicion and fear. The only magic used in Akutan are magical weapons and armor, or the occasional druid practicing their craft under extreme scrutiny. All magic is banned in Southerly Island.

Religion

Akutan is not an especially religious place. They mostly worship their local, lesser deities and Heroes instead of the greater gods. There are occasional temples scattered throughout the country, but most worship is done at small shrines inside one's home.

Geography

Akutan consists of three principal islands and a scattering of smaller islands; most of the smaller islands are either uninhabited or seasonally inhabited.

The main islands are Northerly Island, Middle Island, and Southerly Island. Northerly Island is rocky and windswept, with natural deep water harbors. Middle Island is slightly less rugged as it's protected from the wind by the Heron Mountains. Southerly Island has no natural protection from the wind beyond the Shiverpines, and so the wind howls across the island. The forested regions of Akutan are all evergreen, since they're the only trees that will grow in the country's cold climate.

Climate

Akutan is cold and wet year round. Torrential storms fly across the Great Sea to crash onto the islands. The islands see heavy rain in spring and fall and deep snowfall in winter, especially on Northerly and Southerly islands.

Foreign Relations

Akutan was on excellent terms with Verenia and Ilzura after the Battle for the Dawn. However, after the passing of Good King Aeronel his daughter Frida ascended the throne, and during the course of her reign relations with Verenia and Ilzura cooled. Frida's grandson King Ostan expelled the Verenian and Ilzuran

ambassadors. After a period of isolationism, some say fueled by an alliance with the destroyed Dwarven kingdom of Abgrish, Akutan has once again opened its ports and welcomed delegates from across Lykasia.

They are on favorable terms with the Union, Einmark, and Ganzoria, however they seem to despise Holtney. They are especially close with the Vistlans; given their war-like nature and Vistla's perpetual desire for mercenaries, the Akutani are happy to allow Vistlan captains to scour for new recruits in their cities.

Demographics

The vast majority of Akutani are humans. There are few dwarves and even fewer elves in the kingdom. There are many halfling serfs, but the entirety of the nobility is human. A sizable Kenku population lives deep in the mountains of Middle Island.

Humans and half-humans- 80%

Kenku- 9%

Halflings- 7%

Dwarves- 2%

Wood Elves- 1%

Gnomes- 1%

The Kingdom of Holtney

Demonym: Holtish

Capital: Overmarket

Leader: King Gildas Caerdraka (Human male)

Government

The Kingdom of Holtney is a hereditary kingship. The current ruler is Dragon King Gildas Caerdraka. The king sits upon the dragon throne in the gigantic Dracorex Castle in Overmarket. Beneath the king, and the true day-to-day power, is the House of Landsmen. This is made up of elected officials from each of the major towns in Holtney. The House of Landsmen drafts and passes laws to the King for approval. Once approved, the House of Landsmen executes the laws in their respective towns.

Nobility

Nobility exists in Holtney, but the titles Lord and Lady are exclusively given to landowners. Thus one generation may be nobles, but if they fall on hard times and sell their lands, they lose the title. There are no rights or duties attached to the terms Lord and Lady; these are mere courtesy titles to landowners.

The only true nobles in Holtney are the Viper Dukes. They are the cadet branches of the Caerdraka line, or the descendants of the first families to settle in Holtney. The Viper Dukes make up the king's court, and are the only families that are allowed to tame and ride the wyverns native to Holtney.

Trade

Trade is Holtney's primary drive. They have merchant houses in every port city in Valth, from which they buy and sell to every other port city. Holtney itself is relatively poor in natural resources; very little timber is available, with even less mineral wealth. The foundation of their own exports are dragon scales and teeth. Dragons lair in the wilds of Holtney, and intrepid adventurers harvest their scales and teeth, which are crafted into weapons and armor by Holtish smiths to sell to the rich across Valth. Holtney's wide-spanning trading interests tend to put them at odds with merchant guilds, especially the Guild of Merchant Venturers.

Military

The Holtish military is small, professional, and elite. Service in the army is voluntary, but many of the poor agree to sign up in exchange for the generous pay and the relative comfort. Many of the captains are adventurers that were paid very handsomely for their service to the dragon king. The higher echelons of the military ride guard drakes instead of horses, and the Viper Dukes ride wyverns as they patrol the island.

The Holtish have found very few opportunities to use their army; instead, they favor diplomatic or economic means of coercion. If a country angers Holtney, the Dragon King simply pulls their traders from the country's ports. Eventually the lack of access to all of the goods Holtney has at its disposal, and the resulting imbalance in the country's economy, brings the country back to the negotiating table.

Culture

The island of Holtney is, itself, a curiosity. It was originally a dragon turtle God named Murkyamar, god of the cold whitecap waves. It was titanically huge even for that gigantic species. A group of medusae somehow found their way to the god as he was bathing in the Jagellia Bay in eastern Lykasia and turned him to stone. His stone corpse sunk to the bottom of the bay, leaving only his shell above the waves, and there he has rested for the past 19,000 years. About 1,500 years ago, voyagers from Jükland landed on the corpse and slew the medusae, and founded their own kingdom.

Holtish art tends to be geometric and orderly, with balanced shapes in concentric circles or blocks. They also tend to use dragon motifs in their works. Their music tends to be very basic with simple repeating phrases and beats. The Holtish value stability, balance, and safety, and that is reflected in all their art.

Magic

The arcane arts are celebrated in Holtney as they are a means of more efficiently conducting trade and finding competitive advantages over conventional goods. Little stock is given to spells used in combat; instead most of their wizards learn spells like mending, unseen servant, phantom steed, and stone shape, as they help with crafting.

Religion

Holtney is not especially religious. They tend to worship the major gods, especially Jenoth. They also have several festivals to Murkyamar, in thanks for giving the Holtish their home.

Geography

Holtney is a single large island in the Jagellia Bay, near the shores of Jükland. The island is filled with jagged mountains that were once Murkyamar's shell spines, making it difficult to traverse overland. The island has cold sandy beaches and stone cliffs along its edges. Since the island is rocky there is only small vegetation like moss and shrubs, with the occasional copse of thin trees struggling to root in the stone. There are no freshwater rivers, only pools, natural cisterns, and shallow lakes refreshed by rainfall.

Climate

Holtney is typically fairly mild and cool year round. The island is damp relatively frequently and suffers heavy rainfall sporadically due to its location in Gatesea.

Foreign Relations

Given its focus on maritime trade, Holtney has strong relationships with most countries, who view the Holtish as vital trading partners. They are particularly close to the Union, who allows Holtney to operate trading concerns in many of her ports.

Holtney attempted to keep peace between Vistla and Jükland by use of its deep economic ties with both countries, however that failed when Jükland overran the Vistlan heartland. Holtney has withdrawn its interests from both kingdoms, and the Vistlan king and duke of Welestria refuse Holtney's emissaries.

Demographics

Most Holtish are humans. Still, the kingdom is somewhat cosmopolitan, with an especially large contingent of dragonborn among the populace. The entirety of the nobility is human.

Humans and half-humans- 61%

Dwarves- 4%

Halflings- 8%

Wood Elves- 1%

Dragonborn- 23%

Gnomes- 2%

Tieflings- 1%

The Kingdom of Jükland

Demonym: Jüklander

Capital: Haugrog

Leader: High Druidess Hoarvend (Wood Elf female)

Government

Jükland is ruled by High Druidess Hoarvend, the Timeless. She is a wood elf of unknown age, steeped in magic that has kept her beautiful and young. Her writs are executed by the jarls that hold power in each individual city and town. The common man has no way of petitioning the High Druidess directly. Instead, they can bring their quarrel to the jarl in charge of their village, and if they're lucky the jarl will deal with them fairly. However, given that each jarl is prone to bribery, mercurial, or lazy, fairness is not the usual method of justice.

Nobility

The jarls are the nobility of Jükland. Long ago, the land now known as Jükland was ruled by a human civilization known as the Taernogs. They were the first humans to explore eastward from Ilzura shortly after the War of Heavensunder. Later, the people now known as Jüklanders left Ilzura in their raiding ships. The shipmasters and warband leaders that wrested the land from the Taernogs and put their people to the sword were the first jarls. Those who now hold the title are the direct descendants of those warmasters.

Preceding the Taernogs were a group of wood elves that were cast out from Gael Tholiad due to some long-forgotten transgression, known as the Wuthalids. They mostly ignored the Taernogs, but when the Jüklanders arrived they quickly realized that they would destroy the Taernogs, so the Wuthalids made alliance with them and helped scatter the Taernogs. The Wuthalids' queen, High Druidess Hoarvend, impressed and inspired fear among the first Jüklanders, who practiced no magic themselves. With displays of their magic, the Wuthalids were able to position themselves as the leaders among the Jüklanders, and are seen as sort of demi-gods among them. As a result, they ultimately hold all the power in the country.

Trade

Jükland has little to export, as they are near-subsistence level farmers and herders. What little they export is mainly wool and meat from the coarse-coated goats they herd in the dales of their stony land. They import mostly steel and weapons.

Military

Jükland has no formal military, although in times of war the High Druidess can call on the jarls to

summon their ships to defend the country.

Fighting-aged men and women are expected to go on raids led by their jarls. Jükland has little mineral wealth and less knowledge of how to work it, so the jarls organize annual raids during the winter (since it is a non-harvest season), principally against Vistla and Loekyr, to plunder steel, gold, other precious metals, and slaves. It is rumored that the most robust slaves are sent to the High Druidess as fodder for unspeakable rituals.

Culture

The Jüklander culture is built around the raid. Their songs, art, and religion glorifies raiding. Renown is built upon the renown earned by raiding the enemies of Jükland, and they view anyone that is not of Jükland as an enemy. There are many bards in Jükland, who make their living writing songs and tales that glorify their patron's prowess during a raid. Each jarl employs several bards, and they compete against each other to aggrandize their masters during the Jarlmoot, a yearly meeting in Haugrog. Whomever spins the greatest yarn about their master wins their jarl a seat closest to the Wuthalid leaders, and whomever tells the least entertaining tale is put to death. The Jüklanders tell outsiders that the Jarlmoot is a time where the leaders of Jükland discuss harvesting and the affairs of state, but the true reason for the Jarlmoot is to discuss the next year's raiding.

Given the wildness of the region, each town in Jükland is very insular and self-sufficient. As a result, dialects and culture will vary from one town to the next, and jarls may not see eye-to-eye and may attempt to raid each other to benefit their own town. The only thing keeping the jarls together is fear of the High Druidess and the Wuthalids.

Jüklanders have a winter solstice celebration called Lincmas. During this holiday the Jüklanders give thanks to Linc for the bounties received throughout the year by roasting game-meat, drinking mead, and doing the things that consenting adults do when they're bored and stuck indoors.

Magic

For all their rage and violence, the Jüklanders are one with their natural world. Just as the Wolf stalks and kills the Coney, so too do the Jüklander raiding ships stalk and raid the trading cogs of other countries. The Wuthalids are peerless druids, but they are protective of their knowledge. They are willing to take pupils from among the Jüklanders who show aptitude for the art, but most are never heard from again. Each village and town has a woods-witch that helps guide the community, heals the sick, and tends to the wilds to ensure harmony with nature.

Religion

Jükland tends to revere the gods that deal with nature, such as Linc, Bregan, Dinead, and Hezan.

Geography

Jükland is a rugged region of deep rills and dales. It is rocky and mountainous in the north, leading up to the Kazpak mountains that separate it from Vistla. It is rolling, hilly country in the south, with several rivers spilling down waterfalls to reach the ocean at the southern shore. The center of the country is dominated by Gruwold Forest, a dim and foreboding wood, where the capital, Haugrog, broods. Haugrog is a tree city, a mockery of Gael Tholiad and Gael Anfai, that sprouts from a spider-haunted giant's skull deep in the forest. The country is wild; beyond the borders of a town one may walk along a game trail winding through the forest for days before reaching the next town.

Climate

Jükland is cool during the spring and summer months and bitterly cold in winter. Deep snows blanket most of the country during the winter months.

Foreign Relations

Most countries hate the Jüklanders, because they tend to raid and plunder their enemies (and the Jüklanders consider everyone their enemies). However, they are viewed by all but the most foolhardy firebrand as too powerful to attack.

Jükland invaded and utterly devastated Vistla during the Vistla-Jükland War of 451-452 CE. The Jüklanders now occupy Vistla's hardy tundra, working its people as slaves, starving them so they can send their meager harvests back to Jükland. It is a hard life for a Vistlan beneath the Jüklander yoke.

However, the Jüklanders appear to at least respect the Vistlan capital, Lublask; they have not attempted to destroy the walls or palace, and have allowed the People's College to continue (under the Wuthalid Coven's watchful eye). It is assumed that they are only doing so to scour the library and surveil the teachers for any information they have on the mysteries of gunpowder and the matchlock.

During the Vistla-Jükland War, High Druidess Hoarvend herself came to direct the final assault on Lublask, the capital of Vistla. This is the only time she has been seen by the wider world since the Wuthalid Coven fled Ilzura. A refugee saw her, and described her as follows:

"The bitch-hag was there, Hoarvend. I saw her trod the sacred flags of the People's College. She is an elf, for certain; thin of bone, pointed ears, all that. But her hair was dry, colorless, and strawlike, and her stomach distended like a starving child. Her limbs were overlong, all bone and loose skin. She looked like a spider with an elvish head. Her face was pallid, and her skin looked like

it was drawn too tight over her face, like a corpse. You'd be forgiven for thinking she was dead, but sure as I'm standing here her long, thin legs still carried her. She cackled as she walked the halls, always cackling, her mouth a rictus of sharp teeth and black gums. She haunted my nightmares for a week."

Since taking Vistla, Jükland has quieted. They no longer raid Orovia and Loekyr, and they haven't crossed the Great Canyon to attack the Duchy of Welestria, despite the countless failed invasions of the Disputed Lands by the Vistlans.

Demographics

The vast majority of Jüklanders are humans. The jarls are all human, but the true power in the country, the Wuthalids, are wood elves. The only dwarves and gnomes in the country are slaves.

Humans and half-humans- 85%

Wood Elves- 15%

Dwarves- <1%

Gnomes- <1%

The Kingdom of Vistla and the Duchy of Welestria

Demonym: Vistlan

Capital: Lublask (occupied), Crossing

Leader: Frost King Pazov, Duke Viromir (human males)

Government

Vistla is ruled by the Frost King Pazov and his consort, the River Prince Ante. Once, the Frost King or Queen was elected among the Tributaries, the parliament of Vistla made up of the nobles of the country. However, this custom ended once the Tributaries were dissolved following the occupation of Vistla by the Jüklanders, and the crown is passed to the firstborn child of the previous monarch.

Now, the only free part of Vistla is the Duchy of Welestria. While Frost King Pazov dwells in Highkeag, petitioning Ganzoria for assistance in retaking their homeland, Duke Viromir of Welestria is responsible for the day-to-day leadership of those Vistlans that remain free and live within Welestria.

Nobility

Vistla is a feudal society, where the nobles own the land and allow the peasants to work it in exchange for a percentage of their production and for the peasants to work the nobles' own fields a set number of days a year. The peasants hold no voting rights and are completely beholden to their lords. Their movements are closely guarded, even weddings between peasants belonging to different lords have to be approved by the lords before proceeding. In exchange for the above, the Vistlan nobles are expected to administer their towns and hinterlands, and summon a defense in time of need. Different nobles handle the latter at different levels; some show up with only a militia wielding farm implements, while others set aside time throughout the year to drill their peasants and maintain a standing force.

Trade

The duchy of Welestria is barely above subsistence levels, and so it has few goods for trade. What trade it can do, it does with Ganzoria; Welestrian grain and alcohol are the principal exports, while they mainly import iron and manpower.

Military

Being a feudalistic society, Vistla's military is mostly made up of peasant militias. However they have a strong cavalry tradition, bred among the elites in the land and based on their ancient origins as horse-born nomads. They call their heavily armored lancers the Szavards, and rely on their thunderous charges to

shatter their enemies. In addition to common horsemen, the Vistlan nobility may ride Perytons or Pegasi whose sires were caught in the Kazpak mountains. However, these creatures are not native to Welestria and so the breeding stock dwindles with each passing year.

While using their feudal armies to defend Welestria, the Vistlans use countless mercenaries every year to invade the Disputed Lands, viewing this as the first step to take back their homeland. The mercenary companies muster in the village of Hope and from there are ferried across the Great Canyon and into the Disputed Lands on the backs of the Vistlans' remaining pegasi and perytons. Thus far, each invasion has failed. It is rumored that Frost King Pazov has pawned the last of the Crown Jewels to pay for one last season of invasion.

Culture

It is said, although unconfirmed, that the Vistlans were born of the confluence of the horse-born nomads of the Shrouded Lands and the Taernog survivors that fled before the Jüklanders. While they are a proud people, the loss of their homeland has struck their pride to the quick. Most Vistlans in the wider world are fatalistic, emotional, and sad.

Vistla places great stock in science, especially astronomy and engineering. Some call the Vistlans the bridge-makers due to the great technological marvels they have laid across their kingdom, including the (now destroyed) Great Bridge across the Great Canyon. This bridge stretched more than 24 miles, and once had a village at its center. Now it is a haven for ghosts and ghouls. The Vistlans also invented the marvelous weapons known as matchlocks, and so their engineers are held in the highest respect.

Their music tends to be fast with intricate drum beats that reflect their love of, and the impermanence of, life. Their art is life-like, especially in portraits, so that they may better remember their past. Vistlans live and die by the waters provided by the Vistla river, whose tributaries water the entire country. They tend to show their respect for the river by wearing deep blues and greeting each other by saying "Water's blessing." or "Water be with you."

Since timber is so scarce, most buildings are built of wattle and daub. The exception are the southern villages of Welestria, nestled within Wespín Forest where wood is plentiful.

Magic

The Vistlans tend to value water and ice magic, since their kings and queens control these elements. In addition, their wizards tend to study evocation spells to better allow them to strike back at the Jüklanders. The city of Crossing has a small Galdorian School of Magic, where those that have an aptitude for the Art may study.

Religion

All religion leads to the waters of the Vistla river, just as all life in the country springs from its course. The great river is the main source of water in Vistla, and as such is held in special reverence by the populace. Hezan, god of water and winter, is the principal deity worshipped among Vistlans. The loss of the great river greatly grieves the Vistlans.

Geography

Most of Welestria is wide steppe, much like the homeland of Vistla. However, a deep forest covers the southern tip of the duchy, providing timber for its people. The Ryst Highlands is a range of tall, windswept hills in the middle of the duchy; it is rumored that a small stone keep is nestled in one of its dells, the last refuge of a fallen people.

Climate

Welestria, like Vistla, is perpetually cold, especially in the north. They have a long winter season and short summer. The extreme south of Welestria is relatively temperate, with more even weather throughout the year.

Foreign Relations

The Free Vistlans hate the Jüklanders with a passion; they have nothing to do with them. They likewise refuse to treat or trade with Holtney as they believe the Holtish abandoned them when Jükland attacked in 451 CE. They have good relations with Akutan, as Akutani mercenaries are ready and willing to fight under the Vistlan flag at a moment's notice. Their closest ally is Ganzoria, who granted the lands now known as Welestria to Vistla in 449 CE, and who harbor Frost King Pazov in their royal palace. The Vistlans are also close with Einmark, both seeing each other as a people oppressed by a stronger adversary (the Jüklanders and the Verenians, respectively). The Vistlans and the Union view each other with suspicion and there is no trade between these countries.

Demographics

The vast majority of Vistlans are humans. The largest minorities are dwarves and halflings. There are few other races, and the entirety of the nobility is human.

Humans and half-humans- 86%

Halflings- 5%

Dwarves- 7%

Wood Elves- 1%

Gnomes- 1%

Dragonborn <1%

Kingdom of Ganzoria

Demonym: Ganzoi

Capital: Highkeag

Leader: Ema Taia (Human female)

Government

The kingdom of Ganzoria is a country of middling size placed almost exactly at the center of Lykasia. As such, it is a cosmopolitan place; a mixture of east and west. It's ruler is called an Ema or Emoi, synonymous to Queen and King respectively. The current ruler is the elderly Ema Taia, granddaughter of Ema Khulara, who ruled when Hogun's Heroes discovered the kingdom deep in the heart of the Shrouded Lands. The Ema is advised by a Council of Elders, which consists of the most powerful nobles in the kingdom, the Court Wizard, and the Ferrouk (General in the Ganzorian dialect of Common). The Ema's court is filled with courtiers, foreign diplomats (including the Frost King Pazov), and the flotsam that flocks to power for personal gain. Although the Ema is predisposed to listen to petitioners' gripes, and harken the Council of Elders' advice, the Ema commands her kingdom singly and directly.

Despite the Ema's supreme executive authority, she relies on the nobility to enact her will within their respective fiefs. Thus the authority in, say, the town of Hengway is exercised by the local lord, Baron Jundar. As long as the general peace is kept and the Ema's edicts are followed, the local nobility has leeway to execute law and order within their fief as they see fit. For example, if you are caught stealing a loaf of bread in Tarnauk, you will be fined 50 silver plus the cost of the loaf of bread; the victim receives 48 pieces of the silver and the town receives the remainder. However, if you were caught stealing a loaf of bread in Cairnfork, the penalty is the loss of your dominant hand and incarceration in the haunted cairns beneath the village for a period of three days.

Nobility

The nobility of Ganzoria is responsible for direct administration of their fiefs. However, this is not a feudalistic state; the nobles' sole duty is that administration, to act as the governor over the lands under their purview. Since there is no real duty owed by the common man to the nobles, the people of Ganzoria have more freedom than in Akutan or Welestria; they're free to move where they please, take on any occupation they wish, and so on. This has resulted in more people flocking to the towns and cities, especially Highkeag.

There is no formal ranks to the Ganzoi nobility however there are some that are undoubtedly more powerful than the rest. They are members of the Council of Elders. These are Kada (lady) Tamsin Zama of

Highkeag, a halfling; Bar (lord) Quins Bosei of Tarnauk, a human; Bar Shazkan Mal of Rivergate, a human; and Kada Peony Tenpenny, a halfling. Peony comes from a line that claims descent from the famed Garrett Tenpenny of Hogun's Heroes; her grandmother was born on the land granted to Hogun's Heroes by Ema Khulara, and her great grandmother claims she had a heated romance with Garrett. None can dispute it since Garrett went straight to Verenia after the battle at the Green Crown. Styrke was asked about it once while visiting Highkeag, but he just shrugged. Rounding out the Council of Elders are the Court Wizard Kolamnon the Red and Ferrouk Adithir Mazumni. The Council of Elders resides at the Royal Castle with Ema Taia, and their estates are administered by their heirs.

Trade

Ganzoria's heartland lies within the Widhurst Hills. Ema Khulara's great work was terracing these hills, providing the farmers of Ganzoria with substantially more land to till. This provided Ganzoria with a surplus of food which contributed both to a population explosion within the kingdom and products to trade with the surrounding kingdoms.

Ganzorian grain flows eastward, to Loekyr and Orovía, as well as to the Duchy of Welestria. Additionally, the giants' cairns beneath Widhurst Hills provide rich deposits of saltpeter, which the Ganzorians corn into gunpowder. They only trade this with Welestria, as agreed between Ema Khulara and Frost Queen Kasia a century and a half ago.

Military

Despite its relatively small size, Ganzoria has the most modern military in Lykasia. It is a purely professional army, backed by a compulsory militia in each town that can mobilize in dire need. Although they have no cavalry tradition like Vistla, reputation for ferocity like Jükland, or wide-spanning arcane schooling like the Union, Ganzoria has the matchlock. This weapon's devastating power has protected the borders of Ganzoria for 150 years.

Culture

The Ganzoi, as a culture, tend to believe in the good in people and welcome newcomers with open arms. However, if this trust is betrayed, there tends to be no way to come back from the falsehood. Despite this, Ganzorian politics seems to be almost a game of faces; a courtier may treat their enemy as their best friend and offer their life for them, while simultaneously trying to bury their enemy in debts or rumor.

The Ganzoi are fiercely proud of who they are and fiercely jealous of their place in the world. They will deride innovations from the Union or Orovía as being beneath the Ganzoi, yet still make use of those innovations all the same. The exception to this is

anything that comes from Einmark or Vistla, since the Ganzoi view themselves as the benefactors of these kingdoms. Thus oftentimes a Ganzoi will utter the phrase “no true Ganzoi would do/use....” although no one in Ganzoria can agree on what a true Ganzoi would actually do.

The Ganzoi enjoy music and plays that tell tales of faraway places, however they tend to temper that enjoyment by unfavorably comparing whatever the art depicts to how things are in Ganzoria. They also favor vibrant colors to contrast against the dreary tundra they live in.

The word Ganzoi means “the lost” in their dialect of common. Their legends say that long ago their had to leave a forgotten kingdom within the Godsreach mountains and settle in the Shrouded Lands. They strive to be the best, almost as if they're proving to that long forgotten homeland that they are able to stand on their own.

Magic

Folk magic can be found in every village within Ganzoria; each has its own wise man or woods witch to help heal or curse on a limited basis. The most apt find their way to Highkeag, where the magic school known as the Tower of Dreams is found. There, a pupil can learn the depths of magic if they have the aptitude and a master is willing. Unlike the School of Galdor, where students study in groups under a teacher that specializes in a given field, the Tower of Dreams' masters only take on a single student so that both may unlock the mysteries together. As a result, there are fewer wizards in Ganzoria than the Union, but they are stronger in their fields.

Religion

The Ganzoi are not as religious as the Union or even Vistla, but they do worship the major gods. Temples to Angmin can be found in every settlement, as well as temples to several other greater gods.

Geography

The heartland of Ganzoria is the Widhurst Hills, a series of giants' cairns that have been terraced to allow more farming. In the southwest is the Breckon Woods, a snow-capped pine forest that marches to the edge of the Godsreach mountains. South of the Widhurst Hills, the land slopes downward into the Averskol Bog, an expanse of cold marshlands. In the southeast lies Auchet Forest, a mixture of conifers and deciduous trees that stretches to the Gulf of Bale. In the northwest lies the foreboding Frewold Forest, a forest of darkness where none have set foot since before the coming of the Shrouded.

Climate

Most of Ganzoria is cold, with snow-blanketed winters and short, wet summers. The extreme south, such as Heliora Swamp and the southern part of Auchet Forest, is more temperate. It has a longer summer and is drier overall.

Foreign Relations

Ganzoria has extremely close relations with both Einmark and Vistla. The Ema considers herself as their protector and has offered them aid as often as she could. Ganzoria has very generous trade agreements with both kingdoms.

Ganzoria views Holtney with suspicion, especially considering that they precipitated the Smith Riots of 451-452 CE. Since then, relations between the kingdoms have become more normalized, but distrust remains.

Given their close relationship with Vistla, and given the Jükländer invasion of the far eastern marches of Ganzoria, the Ganzoi hate the Jükländers. High Druidess Hoarvend has visited Highkeag only once; she stayed for two days in 525 CE and her visit left such a pall on the court that it was closed to courtiers, dignitaries, and petitioners for a month.

Ganzoria views the Union with trepidation, seeing them as a looming threat to the west. Still, the Guild of Merchant Venturers did come to the Ganzoi's aid during the Smith Riots, and so the two states conduct regular trade. Diplomatic relations are good, with each country having a resident ambassador in the other's court.

Ganzoria sends annual trading missions to Akutan, Orovia, and Loekyr.

Demographics

The majority of Ganzoi are humans, however there are sizable minorities of the other goodly races within the kingdom. The settlements of the kingdom are cosmopolitan; there are no settlements that are filled with any one specific race.

Humans and half-humans- 70%

Dwarves- 6%

Halflings- 11%

Wood Elves- 4%

High Elves- 2%

Dragonborn- 3%

Gnomes- 4%

Tabaxi- <1%

Tieflings- <1%

Einmark

Demonym: Einheit

Capital: Styrkheim

Leader: Chieftain Sigbold (Dragonborn male)

Government

The Einheit follow Chieftain Sigbold, the great grandson of the first chieftain, Styrke, and wielder of the ancestral sword of his line.

The Einheit are a semi-nomadic people, split up into individual clans that follow the herds of musk ox and elk that roam their lands. Each tribe has a semi-permanent village where they winter, typically along a river or lake. Each clan has an elder that leads them and is the supreme word of law in their tribe. However, each elder defers to Chieftain Sigbold, who settles inter-clan disputes and summons the Einheit warriors in times of war.

Styrkheim is the only permanent settlement in Einmark. It is situated along the Heartweave River which allows access to the wider world. As a result it is heavily fortified, but also allows access to traders from across Lykasia. From here, Chieftain Sigbold rules Einmark.

Nobility

There are no nobles in Einmark. The closest analogue are the elders that guide each clan. However, this is not a hereditary position; if an elder is found to be unfit for leadership, or an elder dies, all adult members of the clan vote for a new elder to lead them.

The exception is the chieftain. It is assumed that this is a hereditary position, however as with the elders if a clan loses confidence in the chieftain they may attempt to oust them. To do so, the new leader must fight them to the death between the hazel branches; a square of approximately 40 square feet is outlined with hazel branches and the chief fights his opponent between them. If either is defeated or flees the area demarcated by the branches, they lose. This has not occurred since before Einmark was founded.

Trade

Some small trade occurs between individual tribes and the Union city of Suffrage. Trade also occurs on the Great Lake between Ganzoria and Einmark. Most trade occurs at Styrkheim, where foreign merchants come to hawk their wares and buy Einheit goods. Einmark's principal exports are furs and scrimshaw, which is intricately carved bone. They import steel from Akutan and food from the Union and Ganzoria.

Military

Einmark is an egalitarian society where men and women of fighting age are expected to heed the chieftain's call to arms. Feats of strength and arms are respected in Einmark, so most of their warriors are doughty fighters. Thus far, their army has not had to participate in any wars, however over the years there have been several close calls with the Union.

Culture

Culturally, Einmark is a simple place that reveres its ancestors, holds to tradition, and goes about its day-to-day mostly ignoring the outside world and hoping to be ignored, itself.

The Einheit love music, especially when it tells of the great deeds of ancestors. They also love poetry, and each clan has a clan poem where each stanza is dedicated to a great feat that one of its ancestors performed. Rhyme thus acts as entertainment but also as a method to preserve their history.

The Einheit are skilled in the carving of bone. Their homes are decorated with tusks and horns that are intricately carved with whorls and surprisingly lifelike carvings of hunting scenes.

Magic

Folk magic can be found in every Einheit clan, where the elders typically can heal or curse on a limited basis. There is no formal school of magic within Einmark.

Religion

The Einheit pray particularly to those gods with domain over the natural world. They have two principal holidays- Lincmas, which occurs during the winter solstice, and Dinead's Jul, which occurs during the summer solstice. Both holidays give thanks to the gods for providing their bounties, and both are celebrated with the drinking of mead, feasts, and feats of strength.

Geography

Einmark is dominated by an expanse of tundra known as Estoch. Near its center is the ghost-haunted ruin of a Tamur fort that is shunned by the Einheit. The southern reach of Einmark consists of the rugged hills of Lowdon that march south to the Godsreach Mountains.

Climate

Einmark is a cold place. Its winters are long and dark, punctuated by sudden snowstorms and gales. Its summers are short and rain-filled.

Foreign Relations

Chieftain Sigbold has strong ties to Ema Taia of Ganzoria. They have a mutual agreement to come to each others' aide in times of war, and the two countries trade regularly.

Einmark is wary of the Union given that the Union views them as Union citizens that have declared independence. Although it has not come to war, there have been several provocations by the Union and Einmark honor will not allow those to go unanswered.

Einmark allows Akutani and Holtish merchants in Styrkheim. Rarely, they receive merchants from Orovia. Einmark has no direct trade or diplomacy with Loekyr or Vistla. Jükland has sent vessels with small trade into Styrkheim's port (Chieftain Sigbold accused them of being spies), but they were immediately expelled since Einmark's is allied with Ganzoria and Ganzoria refuses to treat with Jükland.

Demographics

Einmark's peoples originally came from the Frozen Reach in the Union. Its people are therefore those that are typically predisposed to cold, mountainous climes.

Humans and half-humans- 58%

Dragonborn- 17%

Dwarves- 10%

Half-Orcs- 9%

Gnomes- 6%

Kingdom of Orovia

Demonym: Orovian

Capital: Binyaq

Leader: King Callio Avantine (Halfling male)

Government

The Kingdom of Orovia is a constitutional monarchy. Within this constitution, called the Writ of the People, the hereditary monarchy and its personal court acts as the executive branch of the government (including the power of the declaration of war), with legislative powers devolved to the Chamber of Voices. The Chamber of Voices consists of all of the heads of the noble houses, plus a commoner elected by the people from each of the cities; Binyaq, Torosse, Madros, Druze, Lizanne, and Goult. Additionally, each of the merchant syndicates of Berenne, Lizanne, and Culanne sends a representative to the Chamber of Voices. Any legislation can be passed by a simple majority of all members of the Chamber.

Originally, Orovia was a 'typical' monarchy however following the civil war of 357 CE, which the nobles won, the Writ of the People was signed by King Arpellon which granted legislative rights as explained above. Since this is a devolved power, the King has the right to dissolve the Chamber of Voices and retake legislative power in times of "need or strife." However, this has never been exercised.

Nobility

The nobility of Orovia are hereditary landlords who rent out their broad lands to tenant farmers. Each noble house holds a seat in the Chamber of Voices, where they craft and debate policy before turning it over to the king to execute, and dictate the spending of the kingdom's taxes.

Trade

Most trade is done through the merchants of the coastal cities of Lizanne and Binyaq. Druze acts as the principal stopping point for the merchants from the western reaches of the country. From there, the goods are shipped to the markets of Binyaq by boat.

Berenne, Culanne, and Lizanne are unique in that each settlement has a syndicate over a particular trade. Those trades are honey and mead, timber, and shipbuilding, respectively. These syndicates were set up by enterprising merchants (most of the representatives in the Council of Voices from these syndicates come from the families of the founding members). The founders were issued 50 shares of the syndicate, the syndicate itself was issued 100 shares, and every worker was issued one. At every Lincmas, the profits of the syndicate are tabulated and all profits are distributed based on the number of shares held; all

profits taken by the syndicate itself are put into research and new acquisitions, while every shareholder gets money based on how well the syndicate performed that year. Additionally, any person with a share in a syndicate may vote on any proposed changes within the syndicate, such as investment in new lands or tools. As a result, the employees are fiercely protective of their shares and their jobs. Productivity within, and quality of product coming from, these syndicates outperforms any comparable operations across Lykasia.

Military

In times of war, each noble is expected to raise a militia of specific size based on the size of their lands. Some nobles impress the peasants of their settlement, while others entice willing soldiers with coin. Still others maintain a standing force that is trained and armed directly from the noble's coffers. As a result, the Orovian army can vary wildly in arms and prowess.

Culture

Orovians are militantly sensitive to any slight against their perceived honor or place in society. Duels are a regular occurrence within the country. However, this does not mean that they place themselves above others, only that they demand that their individual value is not impugned.

They are fond of collective action against any perceived oppressors. Violence by agitators against the upper class occur with some regularity, and these are met with swift and vicious reprisals.

Orovians place great stock in the arts; some of the most intricate mosaics in Valth can be found in the temples of Orovia, and every noble patronizes several artists and musicians.

Magic

For those with an aptitude for the Art, magical tutelage is available within Orovia. Most magic users find their way to the Sealight, a school contained within a tower north of Binyaq. It is on an island with a landbridge that is only accessible during low tide.

Religion

The Orovians are not as religious as the Union or even Vistla, but they do worship the major gods. Temples to Angmin can be found in every settlement, as well as temples to several other greater gods.

Geography

Much of Orovia is tundra and plains, however several pine forests line the mountains to the south and west. The extreme south of the country is nestled beneath the cold boughs of Gwindor Forest, a shadowed and close forest of foreboding pines standing at attention.

The coast of Orovia is much more temperate,

with long plains and marshes. Thion Forest is filled with oaks and yew, which are shipped on shore-hugging cogs along the coast to stock the shipbuilders of Lizanne.

Climate

Much of Orovia is cold tundra and highlands, with short summers and long, snowy winters. However, the lands near the shore are surprisingly temperate due to a constant breeze from the sea that brings warm air from the far south. As a result, the Orovians along the coast can even cultivate grapes throughout the year.

Foreign Relations

Orovia refuses to deal with Holtney, viewing them as a danger to Orovian mercantile interests at home and abroad.

Long ago, Orovia irregularly suffered from Jükland raids and as such refused to trade or treat with them. Since the Jüklander occupation of Vistla, these raids have ceased and Orovia has conducted tentative diplomatic and trade exchanges with the Jüklanders. All the same, the defensive positions at Krol and Torosse passes remain sizable.

Orovia and Vistla were once close allies, however when Vistla was invaded by Jükland, Orovia only sent a token force since they viewed the defense of Vistla as a lost cause. Since the occupation of Vistla, any sense of comraderie between the two kingdoms has long since cooled. Rarely, Orovian trading vessels will put into Welestrian ports to trade, but that is the extent of their interactions.

Orovia irregularly sends trading expeditions to the Union, Ganzoria, and Akutan. Ganzorian grain once flowed overland into Orovia, however since Jükland's occupation of Vistla the Ganzorian merchants have been forced to ship it by sea to Binyaq and Lizanne. As a result, much less reaches Orovia than before. There are no further relations between these kingdoms and Orovia.

Orovia and Loekyr, while very different, are incredibly close. They know how isolated they are from the rest of Lykasia, that Jükland is a sleeping dragon at their doorsteps and they are the easiest meal, and so they have banded together for their common good. Several trade and mutual defense agreements have been made between the two.

Demographics

Orovia is a cosmopolitan country; the goodly races freely intermingle within their settlements and there are no villages or towns that are exclusive to one race. While most of the population is human, there are many halflings and gnomes among them. Elves are very rare in this part of Lykasia, and are generally viewed with some suspicion in fear they are spies for the Wuthalid Coven. For protection, the elves tend to form enclaves within the settlements they call home, which

unfortunately casts more suspicion upon them.

The nobility is just as cosmopolitan as the kingdom itself; the king himself is a halfling.

Humans and half-humans- 68%

Halflings- 12%

Dwarves- 6%

Wood Elves- 5%

Gnomes- 9%

Kingdom of Loekyr

Demonym: Loekyri

Capital: Karridyll

Leader: Queen Dagverk (Dwarf female)

Government

Loekyr is a feudalistic society. Laws and policies are crafted within Queen Dagverk's court. After Dagverk signs the proclamations into law, the laws are passed on to the local lords who execute the laws in the Queen's name.

Nobility

Each town and village is owned by a noble. The people of the settlements rent their lands from the nobles in exchange for the right to live and farm.

The nobles are required to act as the executor of the Queen's edicts and sit as the judge during disputes between the people that live on his lands. Justice varies between individual nobles, so most of the time issues are resolved among the peasants instead of bringing it before the capricious lord.

Loekyr's settlements are typically racially distinct, and as a result the nobles are representative of the people that tenant their lands.

Trade

Loekyr's principal exports are stone and iron, mined in the Schorspites beneath Karridyll and Averwall. Karridyll also sits atop rich seams of mithril and adamantite, which Loekyr jealously guards. Rarely, the kingdom will gift fine mail made from these precious ores to the rulers of other kingdoms, but they never sell the metals on the open market.

Pine is another export of Loekyr, since the entire country lies within the pine stands of Gwindor Forest.

Military

Each village is expected to provide warriors in times of war. The elves of Wend and the humans of Lannor use their hunting bows to excel at hit-and-run tactics, while the people of Colney, Rhud, and Maeltryth are excellent infantry. The dwarves of Averwall are experts with siege weaponry. It is rumored that the people of Karridyll make use of a powder called Cynddarium in times of war, found in the caves beneath the city. It is said that Cynddarium is a chalk-like substance with a pale-blue color. The people of Karridyll coat themselves with its powder (or mix it with mead and drink it, depending on who's telling the story) and as it seeps into their system it imbues them with impossible strength and resilience. Either way, the legendary Caernyx warriors of Karridyll have never lost a single battle.

Culture

Loekyr is a peaceful country of deep forest and steep mountains. Given the natural barriers, the kingdom's various settlements are rather distinct.

The forest clans in Wend, Lannor, and Maeltryth are dominated by elvish culture, where they revere the trees that provide for them and try to be at peace with nature. The peoples of these places accept the world as it is and try to fit themselves in as they can.

The mountain clans of Averwall and Karridyll value industry and hard work. These clans try to carve out their place in the world, always seeking to improve their homeland.

The water clans of Colney and Rhud revere the sea and the limitless possibility it represents. These are the most adventurous Loekyri.

Given their relative isolation from each other, the settlements of Loekyr vary greatly. For instance, the music and poetry of Wend often speaks of new friends and unity, given their position on the border of Orovia. However, the songs of Maeltryth, a more isolated forest town, describe the wickedness of outsiders.

Magic

Its wild locale means that magic pervades Loekyr. Tree-songs sung by the ancients of Lannor have the ability to awaken the forest. Runes stamped into weapons in Averwall give their blades a magical edge. In Colney, rites pledged over the masts of boats before their maiden voyage ensure their sails always catch the wind. There is no unified magical school in Loekyr, yet the people of Loekyr still capture the magic of Valth to help their lives.

Religion

The Loekyri pray particularly to those gods with domain over the natural world. The people of the mountains tend to worship Wendinghorn, while the forest clans tend to worship Dinead, and the water clans tend to worship Hezan. All worship Angmin, Typhan, and the gods of Gwindor and the Schorspites.

Geography

Most of Gwindor Forest lies within the borders of Loekyr. It is a shadowed and close forest of foreboding pines standing at attention.

The southern border of Loekyr lies within the mountains known as the Schorspites. It is a range of steep-walled mountains, pocked by caves and interspersed by mazes of steep valleys.

Eastern Loekyr marches to the coast. It is a land of cold tundra and icy marshes.

Climate

Loekyr is a cold land, with short, wet summers and long, snow-filled winters. Most of the kingdom lies beneath the close boughs of Gwindor Forest, which

protects its peoples from the worst of the wind and precipitation.

The mountains of the Schorspites are perpetually snow-capped and freezing, even in the summer.

Foreign Relations

Loekyr's closest ally is Orovia. They have banded together for their common good, given their isolation from the rest of Lykasia. Several trade and mutual defense agreements have been made between the two.

Loekyr refuses to have any trade or diplomatic relationship with Jükland, given Jükland's previous depredations on Loekyr and their invasion of Vistla.

Loekyr irregularly sends and receives trade missions to the rest of Lykasia.

Demographics

Loekyr is not a technologically advanced state, and death by sickness or malnutrition is a distinct possibility. As a result, the population breakdown between races has remained relatively steady during the course of the kingdom's existence.

Humans and half-humans- 40%

Halflings- 12%

Dwarves- 25%

Wood Elves- 11%

Gnomes- 5%

Dragonborn- 7%

Historical Timeline

-25,000 BCE: Tiadona births the primordial cloud of dust and gases, and Angmin creates a sphere of briny water from it. He dips his spear into the water, and the salt that drips off forms the land masses. Thus the planet Valth is created, and the nature gods are born. A celestial bridge tethers Elysium to the Godsreach mountains, and the gods use it to move between Elysium and Valth.

-21,000 BCE: Denwa gathers rock from the Godsreach mountains, earth from the Detta plateau, and moss from the great tree Gael Tholiad, creating each of the goodly races from varying mixtures of each. They wander around and form transient temporary hunter-gatherer groups.

-19,000 BCE: The first evil thoughts come to the goodly races, followed by envious action, then murder. The evil gods Anmare, Tanshura, Arkwath, Roch, Gajar, and Kharadar spring into being as a result of these thoughts and actions and hide in the Abyss. They summon Akivasha, the great Other, from the outer darkness to join and lead them. Tiadona births Ygdaq to pass judgement on those who acted evilly, who creates Hades to entomb the souls of evil beings.

-18,527 BCE: The Dragon Turtle god Murkyamar is slain by gorgons and turned to stone.

-8,500 BCE: The first tribes of the goodly races form as protection, and they discover farming. Thus Shand is born. Jealousy amongst the tribes leads to war and the appearance of Gurrkagne.

-8,000 BCE: Gurrkagne and Shand supplicate before Angmin and Tiadona and inform them of the waxing power of the evil gods as their influence spreads amongst sentient races. They pledge allegiance to the greater gods.

The evil gods come to Valth and create monsters to spread war across the planet. Angmin, finally recognizing the danger of the evil gods, descends to Valth to confront them. Thus, the War of Heavensunder begins.

-7,995 BCE: Valth is a battleground, as forces of the goodly races, now using bronze and learning the ways of iron, led by the good gods fight the monstrous armies of the evil gods. Akivasha reveals himself at the feet of the Dragonteeth mountains and challenges Angmin to single combat. Akivasha gravely wounds Angmin, who retreats.

-7,994 BCE: Denwa creates the mountain called Bayeur and Angmin hides inside as he recovers from the wound.

Without their leader, the goodly races are sorely pressed; the evil gods start winning the war and take over almost all Lykasia.

-7,993 BCE: Angmin recovers. He disguises himself as a beggar and reaches Akivasha's stronghold in the Godsreach mountains. He challenges Akivasha to a rematch, and they fight in the valley below. During the

fight, Angmin threw his spear and missed Akivasha. The spear punctured Mount Bengir and a great, icy flow burst forth, creating the holy Segan River. Eventually, Angmin killed Akivasha and removed his head. He then created the moon and expelled the remaining evil gods to it.

-2,000 BCE: The goodly races expand from modern day Ilzura to the rest of Valth.

-1,800 BCE: The city of Baelirion is founded by the High Elves. It's the oldest continuously inhabited civilization outside Ilzura.

-1,000 BCE: Steel is discovered in Akutan. It quickly spreads throughout Lykasia.

-975 BCE: voyagers from Jükland landed on the corpse of Murkyamar and slay the medusae living there. They found the kingdom of Holtney.

-936 BCE: The magical college Ulras is founded by a cabal of High Elves.

-800 BCE: Ilzura is a series of city states, Verenia is 4 major states plus smaller states held by individual races, and Akutan is a single, strong state with colonies in the northern and southwestern parts of modern-day Verenia. Solith is a centralized kingdom that is fiercely independent. Nomadic tribes cover the Greensea who seasonally trade with the easternmost Verenian state of Biskal.

-600 BCE: Plague sweeps across Ilzura, Solith, and Verenia; populations are decimated.

-300 BCE: A meteor shower strikes Akutan. Many are slain but it leads to the creation of the city of Starfall.

-220 BCE: House Darksun releases a plague on the High Elven city and the bay, summoning countless undead to battle the elves. The High Elves ask the Wood Elves for help, but by the time the Wood Elves arrived the High Elves had defeated the invasion at great cost. They are not strong enough to strike at the Akutani stronghold in the Frozen Reach, and the Wood Elves refuse to attack alone. The High Elves never recover. Many High Elves curse the Wood Elves' lateness to this day.

-200 BCE: The Great Sea boils for a week, unknown cause.

-150 BCE: Ilzura unites under High King Garnach.

-100 BCE: A shared vision come to countless seers across Lykasia, saying 'Beware the impending Horror.'

-50 BCE: The Greensea starts to blacken. No one has seen its nomadic tribes in years. Scouting parties from Biskal report desolation.

0: The Shrouded appear and ravage Verenia. Verenians unite under the Shefian king Guyen. He is crowned Emperor and raises the Mantle. Its magical wards prevent further incursions by the Shrouded, and those within Verenia's borders are hunted to extinction. The Shrouded do not cross the Godsfall mountains, presumably due to the link to Elysium. Solithan civilization disappears.

15 CE: Guild of Merchant Venturers founded in Shefia by a group of retired adventurers.

20 CE: Akutani colonies in present-day Verenia are besieged. They fall to the Verenians. The Akutani throne's control over the Great Lords weakens, and they fall to infighting.

80 CE: The Unity Canal is built to encourage trade and good-will between the former city-states of Verenia. However, thousands of peasants die in creating the canal.

A large group of peasants who worked on the canal and were subject to the horrible working conditions rebelled. They were led by a young Wood Elf named Rolan. They stormed Shefia castle and Emperor Gulred is slain in single combat by Rolan. Rolan is crowned emperor.

208 CE: Emperor Rolan sends colonists to Solith, accompanied by a small military force. All contact with the colony is lost after a few months.

267 CE: Fort Valaneth is established on the Cannibal Isles by the Guild of Merchant Venturers. Dozens of families willingly join the colony, lured by the free land and the promise of riches.

268 CE: Fort Valaneth is overrun by local tribes, put to the torch, and the colonists are dragged into the jungle, never to be heard from again.

311 CE: Land is purchased in Ilzura by the Guild of Merchant Venturers, and their Ilzuran spice and silk colony is founded.

316 CE: The plantations around the Guild's Ilzura colony are suddenly set ablaze, and the Verenian-Ilzuran war begins.

317 CE: Verenian-Ilzuran war ends, with the Verenians losing all holdings in Ilzura. The Imperial Army returns home, disgruntled and wondering why they died for the Merchant Venturers. Valth's Chosen begin their quest to dispell the Mantle, defeat the goddess Tiadona and prevent her from resurrecting Akivasha, and thereby save the world.

318 CE: The Mantle is dispelled, Tiadona and her minions are slain in the Battle for the Dawn, and Valth's Chosen save the world. Angmin is restored to his position at head of the pantheon. Emperor Galdor ascends to become god of elves and government. Linc ascends to become god of the animals and the wilds. Eathan ascends to become god of law and truth. Liam rejects godhood, but a bright star appears in the firmament and is named Liam's Hearth, which guides the just and true home. Typhan survives and reunites with his wife Olthirien in Gael Tholiad. The wood elves are crippled by the losses suffered at the Battle for the Dawn. Those in Verenia move to Baelrion, which has become the center of elvendom in the empire. The rest focus on rebuilding Gael Tholiad in Ilzura. Empress Merida and Emperor Maedras are initially unable to come to an agreement on how to rule Verenia since both push their claim to the throne. However, Empress Merida reveals she is with Emperor Galdor's child, and

both agree to act as co-regents until the child comes of age. Later that year, Prince Galdor II is born. Findy Minklethorp is named High Priestess in Bayeur. The school building at Ultras collapses due to instability in the magical weave in the area following the severed connection to the Celestial Library. Verenia commissions the construction of a memorial called Chosen's Rest on the site of Garonne castle.

319 CE: Selond attempts to break apart the meteor stuck in its mountain roof, but is unable to do so. The city resolves to rebuild around the meteor. Akutan and Verenia agree to a formal non-aggression and trade treaty.

320 CE: King Aeronel of Akutan finally destroys the last of House Darksun in the battle of Dusk, however the king refuses to describe what he saw in the small town. Rumors shudderingly relate that there was a gigantic pit filled with pale and grasping arms spreading from the pit's walls, and nameless, formless terrors that fought beside House Darksun. The walls and palace of the city of Starfall are destroyed by King Aeronel, and he makes Blacksand his new capital.

321 CE: Selond is quarantined as a wave of madness has struck the inhabitants of the city. The madness persists and worsens. The quarantine is never lifted.

322 CE: The reconstruction work at Carmont is complete.

Construction of the Chosen's Rest memorial is completed.

323 CE: Still reeling from the economic destruction and the death of so many, Verenia and Ilzura sign a landmark trade agreement. The two countries agree to assign no tariffs on goods moving between them. Holtney, a maritime trading power in the east and a principal trade partner of Ilzura, threatens war against Ilzura but nothing comes of it.

325 CE: A peasant rebellion erupts in Southern Verenia. A group of soldiers, calling themselves "The Children" and demanding the abolishment of conscription, assassinate the captains of an army company bivouacking in Wirtle. This incites mass desertions across the south. Typhan returns to Verenia and settles with his wife in Baelirion. He founds a new wizard school, called the School of Galdor. It is based in Carmont on the site of the former home of Valth's Chosen, but has branches throughout Lykasia.

327 CE: Lady Colys Knolls, commander of Fort Drakanes, is slain by The Children.

Ilzura sends explorers into Solith to attempt to make contact with anyone still living there.

330 CE: Emperor Maedras quashes the peasant rebellion.

333 CE: Several former pupils and the remaining teachers of the original Ultras break into the ruins of the school in an attempt to find the entrance to the Celestial Library among the rubble. They are all slain by a mysterious magical explosion within the rubble, no

doubt killed by their own meddling.

339 CE: Emperor Galdor II ascends the throne of Verenia. Dowager Empress Merida becomes his closest advisor.

Economic prosperity returns to both Verenia and Ilzura, and Lykasia is content.

340 CE: Soldiers of Fort Berisar report that the purplish-black earth in the Shrouded Lands has eroded away in places, revealing rich black earth. The Ilzuran explorers return from Solith and report that it is completely abandoned. Ilzuran settlers immediately enter the peninsula and the Ilzuran government declares that it is annexing the former kingdom of Solith.

349 CE: Jükland raiders storm into Ilzura and pillage up and down the Yavana and Ander rivers. They reach the gates of Zanakul but find that they can't breach the Dwarven doors, so they turn back. They sack Leshan and steal the city's prodigious wealth. They even collapse the huge statue of Great Leshan into the river mouth to prevent Ilzuran ships from following them onto the sea.

Jükland disavows the raiders, claiming they were on vacation and were not attacking as part of any official action, however Ilzura declares war on Jükland. Verenia and the Pirate Isles join the war on Ilzura's side. Typhan is promoted to general and given command of the Verenian army.

350 CE: Phoenix and Rhuno, leading the storming party, are instrumental in the coalition victory at the Jüklander city of Falmouth. They sack the city, but their army is unsupported and are themselves besieged. Typhan leads

his army to break the siege but is unable to reach them.

351 CE: With their northern neighbor Vistla threatening to join the coalition and also attack Jükland, High Druidess Hoarvend of Jükland sues for peace. After several months of discussion, the coalition agrees to a white peace in exchange for a sizable payment to each of the coalition members.

357 CE: Orovian Civil war occurs. The king loses, signs the Writ of the People in exchange for keeping his throne.

358 CE: Grass begins to return to the Shrouded Lands, replacing the orange growths and seeping vines that once marked the region. Rats and other rodents are occasionally spotted.

363 CE: Forests begin to sprout and grow in the Shrouded Lands. High Priestess Findy declares that new gods have come to the Shrouded Lands, which has healed the region.

365 CE: A flight of dragons descends from the Godsreach mountains and wreaks havoc on northern Ilzura. It is eventually defeated by a band of adventurers led by Rhuno, Phoenix, and Typhan, however Phoenix is slain in the battle.

370 CE: The Verenian ambassador to Akutan remarks to

Emperor Galdor II that King Aeronel has met with several dwarves that speak a language completely foreign to him.

The dwarves came on curious ships without sails and with iron hulls. When the ambassador asked King Aeronel about the dwarves, the king said nothing. It is later determined that these dwarves came from Abgrish.

373 CE: A sickness is found in the heartwood of Gael Tholiad. Typhan is able to halt the damage. He proclaims

that it was an illness called "the pining," and that the heart of Gael Tholiad was sick from missing its sister Gael Anfal.

375 CE: Rhuno is slain by a jealous miller in the Ilzuran town of Elinat who found the bard in bed with his wife.

378 CE: Groups of Verenian deserters and their families enter the Shrouded Lands.

379 CE: Bounty hunters return from the Shrouded Lands and report that the deserters were slain by orcs. They opine that the land appears to be clear of the taint of the Shrouded.

380 CE: Typhan, last of Valth's Chosen, passes peacefully in his sleep. He was surrounded by friends and died content. Upon his death he ascends to become god of magic and love.

382 CE: A plague sweeps across all of Lykasia. It is believed that the malady was carried by Holtish merchant ships. Emperor Maedras is one of the slain. Given the high density of soldiers in the forts and castles, the Verenian army is particularly hard-hit.

384 CE: Jüklander raiding ships are spotted along the coast of Verenia. They do not land, but several Verenian trading ships disappear on the ocean, likely due to attacks by Jükland. Given the plague, Verenia is unable to respond.

386 CE: With the army wasting away from the plague, and with fears of an attack by Jükland, Emperor Galdor II lowers the age of conscription to 14. This sparks riots in several cities, which in turn causes the plague to spread faster. Akutan cuts off trade with Verenia. Without Akutani fish and rice, food prices in Verenia skyrocket.

387 CE: Verenia is starving due to the ravages of the plague. Jükland strongarms Verenia into a trade agreement that trades weapons and magical items from Verenia in exchange for poor quality food from Jükland.

388 CE: Food production across Verenia is near failing due to the fact that most able-bodied people are being sent to the army to replace the soldiers killed by the plague.

Emperor Galdor II issues the 'Diamond Proclamation,' which many Verenians have been fighting for for centuries; "I say unto my people; from this day forth our tradition of conscription is at an end. Let those who wish to enlist in our distinguished military do so, and let those who do not tend to their homes and work.

For I see now that a person cast as an unhappy soldier is less fulfilled than if they are cast as a happy worker, and your happiness and prosperity are all that guides me." And there was much rejoicing.

390 CE: Lanka, leader of the Pirate Isles, is slain by the plague.

392 CE: The plague appears to have run its course. All told, approximately a quarter of Verenians, a fifth of Vistlans, a quarter of Holtneys, a third of Ilzurans, and approximately half of the Pirate Islanders have died due to this malady. Akutan and Jükland are curiously unscathed.

The Ilzuran colonies in Solith, being less densely populated, are relatively untouched by the plague; the balance of power in Ilzura thus shifts to rely more on the colonies.

400 CE: An Orc horde roars out of the Shrouded Lands, carrying simple black banners. The horde besieges Fort Berisar and Fort Gelaza. The forts are able to hold, and a relief force from Ghyllis and Wickel pushes the orcs back into the Shrouded Lands.

407 CE: A large group of outlaws, downtrodden, and ne'er-do-wells sneak past Fort Gelaza and enter the Shrouded Lands, hoping to found their own city-state in the wilderness.

408 CE: Crippled by the plague and leaderless since Lanka died, the Pirate Isles pledge to stop their pirating ways and agree to become part of Ilzura. They are now known as the Golden Isles.

409 CE: The city-state of Suffrage is founded in the Shrouded Lands, along the shores of the Frostwave river. Master Vecon Fristher, a human vagabond who was held in a Meronel jail for 10 years on a fraud charge, is elected the first Mayor of Suffrage.

412 CE: With the army still recovering from the plague and the transition to a volunteer force, a small company is spared to set off and bring the Suffragers to heel. This force is handily defeated by the Suffragers and retreats back to Fort Gelaza.

413 CE: With no more soldiers to spare, Emperor Galdor II turns to the Guild of Merchant Venturers to destroy Suffrage and bring the traitors back in chains. The Guild begins amassing an army of mercenaries from across Lykasia.

414 CE: The Guild's mercenary army sets out from Fort Gelaza and reach Suffrage. After a prolonged siege, the army breaches the walls and overwhelms the defenders. Mayor Fristher and the other leaders of the city are put to the sword, however the city is not torn down. The Guild replaces the city's leadership with Guild personnel, and Master of Scales Adon Basilthorpe, the young halfling firebrand and leader of the Guild of Merchant Venturers, persuades Emperor Galdor II to make Suffrage a colony of the empire. Although it is ruled in name by Verenia, the true power in the city is the Guild of Merchant Venturers.

416 CE: Dowager Empress Merida publicly grants a writ

to Lord Holter Windle, captain of Fort Berisar, to establish a second colony in the Shrouded Lands, this one situated at the mouth of the Frostwave river. He names it Belaria after his grandmother who perished in the Battle for the Dawn. Most contend this colony was established to watch the Guild at Suffrage as much as to project the power of Verenia.

417 CE: Lord Windle sends a small fleet of cogs to map the ocean shoreline north of Belaria. They discover that Akutan has already set up a colony called Whiteshore at the mouth of an incredibly wide river. The Verenian fleet is turned back by a fleet of dwarven ships without sails and with armored hulls, and flying an unknown flag, only a hundred miles north of Belaria. Every subsequent attempt to explore to the north was likewise turned back by these unknown dwarves. It is later determined that they dwarves came from Abgrish.

420 CE: With economic prosperity returning to Verenia, Emperor Galdor II is finally able to turn his army towards scouring the country of monsters and making the empire safe.

422 CE: Trappers out of Suffrage report to the Guild that

they found a campsite and traces of humans to the east. They confirm that the camp could not have been made by Suffragers. The Guild sends out adventurers to find the people who made the camp, but no one is found.

423 CE: An adventurer out of Belaria stumbles upon an ancient tomb. Buried inside are a man and his horse. The runes used in its wall paintings were similar to those used by the tribes in northern Verenia, and were eventually deciphered. The runes identify the tomb as belonging to Chief Kurzulbai of the Tamur people. It is surmised that the Tamur were the horse-borne nomads that roamed the Shrouded Lands before the coming of the Shrouded.

424 CE: Riots erupt in Suffrage as the people attempt to throw off the yoke of the Guild, claiming that they are starving while all the profits of their trapping and hunting are taken by the Guild. The riots are brutally suppressed.

Chief Kurzulbai's tomb sparks a rush of scholars flooding into the Shrouded Lands to find out more about the Tamur. Most are slain by monsters in the wilds.

430 CE: Several dissidents against the Guild's leadership in Suffrage have been sent upriver to Belaria to await transit back to Verenia to be tried for crimes they committed (real or otherwise) in the empire prior to establishing Suffrage. This sparks massive riots that are brutally quelled by the Guild. The Guild begins advertising in Verenia to have new settlers come to Suffrage, promising land in exchange for 10 years' labor.

433 CE: Hunters out of Suffrage find a young human child, lost and wounded, out in the wilderness to the east of the city. They brought her back to town and discover her name is Honba and her people are called the Ganzoi, but they are unable to get any information

from her regarding where her people live or where they came from.

When asked about her people, she says the Ganzoi are the children of Lhosan, but can't explain what that means. From her clothing, the items she was carrying, and what she told them, they can tell that she is not of the Tamur nomads that once lived in the western Shrouded Lands. She is given over to a childless family in town.

Adventurers sent out by both Suffrage and Belaria attempt to find the Ganzoi, but are unable to find any trace of them. Many are cut down in the wilds by monsters and beasts.

441 CE: More orcs flood from the Godsreach Mountains and unite with the Black Horde in the plains between Suffrage and Verenia, effectively cutting the colonies off from the empire. Bands of adventurers organized under the Guild scour the region, but they're unable to destroy the Horde entirely. The orcs continue to harass caravans heading to the colonies to this day.

448 CE: Drow warriors attack the elves of Baelrion, hoping to wrest control from the High Elves. Hogun leads the defense, and the Drow withdraw to the tunnels beneath the city.

449 CE: Hogun's Heroes reach Suffrage. Once there, they overthrow the Guild of Merchant Venturer leadership and deliver the town to Verenian control. They enter the lands now known as Einmark and slay a creature known as the Mad Piper. They discover Ganzoria and reach its capital, Highkeag. Once there they plumb the depths of a giant tomb beneath the city and render it safe. They find an ancient weapon called Bulverk and bring it to the Green Crown. While there, they defend the volcano and its floating meteor from attacks by the white dragon Isigluidos, the army of the Abgrishal, and a creature from the outer darkness known as Burzipox.

Afterwards, Jayce (and his Kuo Toa wife) opens the Wilderness School in the southeastern part of what is now known as the Palatinate of East Verenia, Hogun returns to Baelirion, Garrett returns to Shefia alongside members of a criminal operation known as The Black Hand, and Styrke establishes Einmark.

The Tamur pursue the Abgrishal back to their underground city and raze it to the ground. The surviving Abgrishal, their skin now turned the darkest black in recognition of their alliance with demons, flee into the tunnels. They become known by the Tamur word for their kind, "Duergar."

The tower at the Green Crown is founded, so that anyone from across Lykasia may study the meteor within the volcano and attempt to unlock its secrets. Jeoffrey and Pixie defeat an invasion by Jükland into what is now the Duchy of Welestria. They go on to become leaders in Vistla.

Ganzoria cedes the lands known as Estoch to Styrke of the Einheit; he establishes Einmark.

Ganzoria cedes its eastern marches to Vistla. This becomes the Duchy of Welestria.

450 CE: Garrett destroys the leadership of the Black Hand, along with himself. The criminal enterprise never recovers.

451 CE: Jükland invades Vistla. The matchlock is first used. Holtish-controlled smiths in Highkeag begin making weapons and armor for export by the Holtish. This brings the Ganzorian economy to a halt and precipitates the Smith Riots.

452 CE: The Wuthalid Coven leave Jükland and join the invasion of Vistla. Vistla capitulates, Frost Queen Kasia flees to Ganzoria. Pixie accompanies the Frost Queen, however Jeoffrey and Kaddy are slain in the siege of Lublask.

453 CE: Ganzoi treasure-hunters out of Dellauk cross the Honor River in an attempt to loot the giant cairns beneath the Widhurst Hills north of the river. Their bodies are found piled up on the north bank of the river, directly across from Dellauk, a few days later. Afterwards, the Tamur refuse to permit expeditions to the Green Crown for nearly an entire year.

454 CE: Xurghat dies from exposure on his travels to the tower at the Green Crown. His body is returned to Jayce's Wilderness School where he receives a traditional orcish funeral.

455 CE: [Redacted]

456 CE: The University of Highkeag is established.

457 CE: Verenia and Einmark sign the Treaty of Belaria, recognizing Einmark as a sovereign state.

463 CE: Verenia and Ilzura unite, becoming one country known as The Holy Union of Verenia and Ilzura.

468 CE: Holtish merchants approach the Akutani village of Dusk, intent on starting a mercantile exchange. They are turned away.

470 CE: Holtish merchants return to Akutan with an armed flotilla. A singular storm rises in the sea, destroying the Holtish fleet.

A pack of Barghests terrorizes the Ganzoi village of Rivenwaters. Their den is found in Auchet Forest by a woodsman. Adventurers descend on the village and destroy the Barghests.

472 CE: Madmen and other, frightful creatures break out of the quarantined city of Selond. Many staggered to Aylo and attacked during what is now known as the Month of Shadows. Aylo defended itself as well as it could and sent runners to Fort Drakanes. The Union army counterattacks and slays the horrors. Selond is resealed, but there are rumors that some of the escaped monsters survived and now dwell in the Malbornes or Ganere forest.

477 CE: Styrke is injured while slaying a kraken that swam up Heartweave River and attacked Styrkheim. He succumbs to his wounds two months later. He died with his hand on weapon hilt, surrounded by family including Jayce and Hogun.

481 CE: The terracing of the Widhurst Hills is

completed. Ganzoria's population increases substantially, and new villages spring up.

483 CE: Jayce passes away in his sleep, due to old age. His wife, Mrggg, passes away the same night. They're found the next morning, having passed away in loving embrace.

486 CE: [Redacted]

494 CE: Every adventurer and scholar at the Green Crown is slain.

498 CE: A swathe of infanticides in the Union city of Leshan leads to the discovery of a coven of bearded devils in its sewers. The coven, and those that assisted it, are put to the sword by the local militia.

499 CE: Hogun passes away at Fort Sulidas. He died of old age. He was found at sunset on the sandy beach of the bay, lying on a sun lounger and with drink in hand.

Dowager Empress Merida begins wearing black clothing exclusively, which sets off a short-lived, morbid trend of mourning dresses at court.

502 CE: A large group of Einheit nomads of the Ulfbaum clan attempt to hunt beneath the eaves of Frewold Forest. None return alive. Ganzoi from Tarnauk report that the trees of southern Frewold rustled and shook for a month thereafter, even when there was no wind.

518 CE: The Union holds a bicentennial memorial at Chosen's Rest. Emperor Galdor II presides over it, and representatives from across Lykasia are present. The Emperor does an excellent job of highlighting the contributions of Akutan. There are minor scuffles between Vistlans and Jüklanders, and between Unioners and both Ganzoi and Einheit, but overall it went well. The Akutani ambassador notes that the event helped create much goodwill towards their people.

522 CE: Every person at the Green Crown goes insane.

525 CE: High Druidess Hoarvend of Jükland visits the Ganzoi capital of Highkeag. The city still shudders at the memory of the visit.

526 CE: Based on circumstantial evidence, Orovia declares war on Holtney.

Drow emissaries are received by Baelirion. They request reintegration into the elvish city. Negotiations begin.

527 CE: The Battle of Hagfang Bay is the only action of the Holtish-Orovian war. It is a draw, and a white peace is declared shortly thereafter.

533 CE: A night hag coven is discovered in Merskeld Swamp after a wave of madness-inducing dreams plagues Jagger's Bend. They are tracked by a group of adventurers and slain.

541 CE: [Redacted]

556 CE: It is discovered that some locals in the Ganzoi village of Esqui are in league with a pair of white abishai hiding in the World's Edge Mountains. The cult and the fiends nearly destroy the village. Soldiers are dispatched from Wolf-Tower who are able to defeat them at great cost.

563 CE: It is rumored that Emperor Galdor II received

an anonymous letter suggesting a mandatory one-child policy for all humans, half-orcs, dragonborn, and halflings. While this policy was not enacted, and there is no evidence that this proposal was explored by the Union government, it's unknown what his opinion is on the subject.

The Holy Inquisition is founded in the Union. It's mission is to hunt down any that seek league with Fiends and bring them to justice.

564 CE: A cabal of human, dragonborn, and halfling Demon worshipers is uncovered in the Union village of Nantilis. All 42 members, including the entire local noble family, were found guilty by the Holy Inquisition and executed.

574 CE: Negotiations between the Drow and Baelirion conclude. The Drow are reintegrated into elven society.

579 CE: Lady Chakti, a beautiful young human woman, presents herself to the Union Court, along with 99 of her handmaidens. Each handmaid is similarly beautiful, as if they're all related. She claims to hail from Rivergate in Ganzoria. She enchants the court, which calls her 'The River Maiden.'

580 CE: The Holy Inquisition investigates after a spate of human men are murdered in Shefia. With assistance from the Ganzoi crown they determine that Lady Chakti and her handmaidens are not from Ganzoria at all. They are succubi. All of them are slain.

582 CE: Varanash throws a huge festival for the vernal equinox. People from across Lykasia attend. Dwarven tinkerers from Zanakul give away toys to every child, and the Knights of the River joust and perform feats of horsemanship as entertainment. Emperor Galdor II meets Ema Taia in person for the first time, and together give a speech (but, cynics would note, no treaty) expressing peace between the two kingdoms.

586 CE: Present day.

Religion in Lykasia

The gods of Lykasia are innumerable; each mountain, stream, and forest has its own god. Each town or village has its own god as well, usually a mortal that ascended to godhood for performing some deed that pleased a greater god. These ascended mortals are called heroes. Heroes usually don't have a portfolio of their own, but they act as patrons for their followers and advocate to the greater gods on their followers' behalf.

Several gods were slain during the Battle for the Dawn, and were replaced by lesser gods that ascended by the will of Angmin. Valth's Chosen, the heroes of the Battle for the Dawn, were made new gods upon their deaths in recognition of their deeds. All of Valth's Chosen accepted this gift, except one; Liam chose to graciously turn down godhood. Instead, a single star was placed in the firmament, brighter and stronger than the rest. It is known as Liam's Hearth, and it is said that it will always lead those with good in their hearts home.

Many gods chose to aid Tiadona in her scheme to resurrect Aquivasha. These gods fought and slew those who defended Valth. After the Battle for the Dawn, those surviving followers of Tiadona repented before Angmin. In his benevolence, Angmin forgave them and allowed them to keep their places in the pantheon.

The Greater Gods of Lykasia

Angmin

The all-father, god of gods. All gods rule by his consent. He is responsible for ordering the gods, ensuring there is no strife amongst them, and lifting mortals into godhood. Manifests as a humanoid with 18 faces; one for each combination of goodly race and sex. Portfolio: Good, Law, Sun.

Typhan

God of magic and love. One of Valth's Chosen, he ascended to become a greater god upon his death. Typhan took the traitor Tiadona's place as the god of magic. With Gulorien's death, he also inherited his powers over love. When a mortal ascends to godhood, he creates a new constellation to honor him. Manifests as a middle-aged human male with a spangled robe. Portfolio: Air, Magic, Knowledge.

Jabizwe

The known and unknown. She is the goddess of memory. After Wugatrix' death, she became the goddess of time, death, and immortality. Her manifestation changes based on the perceiver, manifesting as their favorite memory. Portfolio: Time, Death, Knowledge.

Hurqwath

The weeping death. They are the god of slain children and mothers who died in childbirth. When Ygdaq died, Hurqwath became the ruler of the underworld. They manifest as a robed androgynous humanoid wearing a weeping mask. Decides whether a mortal will go to hell or to heaven. Attended by an army of tortured souls. Portfolio: Law, Death, Strength.

Bregan

Lord of writing, fishing, and hunting. Manifests as an ancient wood elf with elk horns. Patron of the Wood Elves. Portfolio: Animal, Knowledge, Plant

Wendinghorn

Heroic earth. Wendinghorn's aid against the demonic hordes of Tiadona during the Battle for the Dawn was instrumental. With Denwa's death, he ascended to fill her role as a greater god in recognition of his courage. He manifests as a flock of owls. Portfolio: Good, Earth, Plant.

Shand

Lord of farming, herbalism, and medicine. Manifests as a weather-beaten bare-footed elderly human man with a wide straw hat. Portfolio: Plant, Healing, Animal.

Dinead

Goddess of wood, fertility, and spring. Manifests as a lithe dryad. Portfolio: Plant, Travel, Healing.

Hezan

God of water and winter. Manifests as a giant blue octopus. Portfolio: Water, Animal, Chaos.

Golgana

The molten beauty. She is the goddess of volcanoes. With Agnirn's death, she ascended to take his portfolio. Manifests as a beautiful dwarven female made of molten rock. Portfolio: Fire, Sun, Strength.

Pentalax

Pentalax is the god of technology and discovery. Upon Berqada's death he took control of her portfolio, including metal, autumn, and commerce. Manifests as a huge dragon with paper scales covered in scribbled scientific theorems. Portfolio: Protection, Knowledge, Earth.

Gjora

Gjora is the goddess of writing. When Wend was slain, Gjora inherited her powers over literature, art, and culture. Manifests as a young female human bearing a pile of books. Portfolio: Knowledge, Luck, Travel.

Gurkagne

God of war. Manifests as a human with fire for hair. Portfolio: War, Strength, Destruction.

Ulshiya

Goddess of mercy. Manifests as a plump human female. Portfolio: Healing, Time, Law.

Hould

God of fortune. Manifests as a plump gnome with sacks of gold and a filled cornucopia. Portfolio: Luck, Travel, Good.

Anmare

Goddess of murder and desire. Manifests as a high elf cloaked in dark smoke. Portfolio: Evil, Death, Destruction.

Tanshura

Goddess of craving, lust. A giant sow. Portfolio: Chaos, Evil, Animal.

Arkwath

Goddess of aversion, fear. Manifests as an emaciated gnome with long stringy white hair. Portfolio: Chaos, Death, Travel.

Roch

God of greed, envy, and passion. Manifests as a richly clothed Halfling skeleton. Portfolio: Trickery, Chaos, Evil.

Khota

God of Unfulfilled Oaths. Manifests as a gigantic ghost wolf wrapped in iron chains. Portfolio: Death, Evil, Time.

Bolcskung

God of slaughter. Manifests as a barrel-chested man encased in black armor. Portfolio: Strength, Destruction, Chaos.

Jenoth

God of the winds and messenger of the gods, brother of Kharadar. Manifests as a huge dragon whose scales constantly ripple with various metallic hues. Portfolio: Order, Air, Knowledge.

Galdor the Blessed

Once the emperor of Verenia and one of Valth's Chosen, Galdor ascended to become the god of all elves and of good government. He manifests as a male high elf with a missing eye. Portfolio: Good, Knowledge, Law.

Eathan

A Lord Paramount of the Knights of the River, Eathan's virtue and courage were tested in several battles; he was never found wanting. As with the other members of Valth's Chosen, he ascended to become the god. He rules over Law, Truth, and Puzzles. Eathan manifests as a broad-shouldered half elf. Portfolio: Law, Good, Strength.

Linc

The shifter, ally of all plants and animals and hero of the battle of Ulras. Linc was one of Valth's Chosen, and upon his death he ascended to become the god of animals and all the wild places on Valth. Linc manifests as a middle-aged human man. Portfolio: Animal, Plant, Travel.

Dead Gods of Lykasia

The Battle for the Dawn was tumultuous, with some gods siding with Tiadona as she attempted to revive her son, Akivasha, and bring ruin to Valth. Thankfully the side of good prevailed, but not without cost.

Tiadona

Tiadona was once the goddess of the sky and Angmin's consort. However, Akivasha was their child, and once he was slain by Angmin she held deep resentment towards Angmin for killing him. She was determined to bring him back to life. Thankfully, Valth's Chosen thwarted her scheme and were instead able to revive Angmin. Angmin killed her by his own hand.

Denwa

Denwa was once the goddess of homesteads. She created all of the goodly races from soil, water, clay, and stone. She was slain by Tiadona's followers prior to the Battle of the Dawn.

Wend

Wend was once the goddess of culture. She was slain by the fiery halberd of Gurkagne prior to the Battle of the Dawn.

Wugatrix

Wugatrix was once the goddess of time, death, and immortality. She sided with Tiadona in her efforts to revive Akivasha, and was slain by Galdor the Blessed.

Berqada

She was once goddess of metal, autumn, and commerce. She sided with Tiadona in her efforts to revive Akivasha. She was slain by Rickon Rollington, the god of music, in the time leading to the Battle for the Dawn.

Ygdaq

Ygdaq was once the god of the underworld. The hulking dragonborn was slain during the Battle for the Dawn.

Agnirn

Agnirn was once the god of fire and summer. He sided with Tiadona in her efforts to revive Akivasha, and was slain by Valth's Chosen during the Battle for the Dawn.

Gajar

Gajar was the god of gluttony and sloth. He sided with Tiadona in her efforts to revive Akivasha, and was slain by Valth's Chosen during the Battle for the Dawn.

Akivasha

Horror made manifest. Slain by his father, Angmin, during the War of Heavensunder. Tiadona's efforts to revive him led to the Battle for the Dawn.

Gulorien

Gulorien was once the god of love. The elderly man was slain by Gajar during the Battle for the Dawn.

Kharadar

Was once the goddess of wrath, pride. Manifested as a huge dragon whose scales constantly ripple with varying colors. She was slain by Valth's Chosen.

Major Factions of Highkeag

The Ganzoi capital, Highkeag, hosts many disparate factions; some good, some evil, some at odds with others.

The Rooks and the Swords

The Council of Elders can be loosely split into two informal factions, known colloquially as the Rooks and the Swords. The Rooks favor protectionist policies; they don't believe that the Ganzoi army should be used to fight Jükland on behalf of Vistla, and they believe that foreign market influences, such as Holtney and the Guild of Merchant Venturers, should be expelled from the country. The Swords, on the other hand, view Jükland as the primary antagonist in Lykasia. They believe that Ganzoi should enter a formal military alliance with Vistla, should retake Vistla and invade Jükland, and that foreign investments and trade should fuel the campaign.

The Guild of Merchant Venturers

By all rights the Guild of Merchant Venturers should no longer exist. They've been brought low several times; the mishandling of the Ilzuran plantations and resulting Verenian-Ilzuran War in 317, the mishandling of Suffrage in the early 400s. But each time they're thrown a lifeline and miraculously survive. Ganzoria brought them in to break the Smith Strikes in 451, and they never left. Over time, they've bought up properties to rent them back to their original owners and now a large section of the New City is under de facto Guild control.

The Blue Scarves

Thousands of Highkeag's citizens have fought under the Vistlan flag in the Disputed Lands. Those that return wear the blue scarf as a badge of honor. These Blue Scarves tend to keep to their own and look down upon those who haven't served.

The Order of the Bear

Once the most sacred knightly order in Vistla, they were decimated during the Jükland invasion and are a shadow of their former glory. They act as personal agents to Frost King Pazov, who resides at Ema Taia's court, and recruit mercenaries in the city.

The School of Galdor

The School of Galdor was founded in the wake of Ulras' destruction. It was founded by Typhan, one of Valth's Chosen, and named after his ally Galdor the Blessed. It is an institute of the arcane arts, centered at Carmont in Verenia but with branches throughout Lykasia. In contrast to the pursuit and hoarding of power of its predecessor Ulras, The School of Galdor emphasizes that magic should be used as a tool for good to support all of society.

A very small School has been founded in Highkeag as a token to the Union, however the Tower of Dreams tries to undermine it at every turn.

The Tower of Dreams

The Tower of Dreams is where most of the wizards in Highkeag are educated in the Arts. The Court Wizard always comes from the Tower of Dreams, and as a result the Tower has substantial sway over the governing of the country. Outwardly, the Tower's wizards project themselves as being aloof from worldly issues, however there is no telling how many strings they pull for their own benefit behind the scenes.

Although there is a School of Galdor within Highkeag, it's curious that every Ganzoi expedition to the Green Crown has been made by wizards from the Tower.

The Holy Bayeuran Order

The Holy Bayeuran Order is the strongest religious sect in Lykasia. Their priests are found all over Lykasia and are respected for their discipline, piety, and zeal. The order only takes in the most promising pupils, who must first demonstrate their worthiness by some great act of piety. They then study the Order's rituals for years before going out into the world as an anointed priest. To be an anointed member of the Order is to be the closest to the gods, and it is a position that allows movement among the highest temporal powers.

In 563, the Holy Inquisition was founded as a subset of the Order. Although there are no Inquisitors in Highkeag (as most of the ruling class views them as an arm of the Union government), some within the Ema's court are fearful of insidious demonic cults and believe the Inquisition may be useful in eradicating them.

The Council of Trade and Development

The Council of Trade and Development sends councilors, often without prior consent, to assess the needs of a foreign settlement and then set up a trade mission to provide them with needed goods from Holtney in exchange for local surpluses. They have a knack for appearing in the wake of a crisis to provide the goods the settlement requires at crippling prices. They are in fierce competition with the Guild of Merchant Venturers, given their parallel interests.

Although they were all but expelled from Highkeag in 516, the Council still has agents within the city.

The Damned

Little is known of the Damned. Several murder scenes in Highkeag over the past decade have had notes scribbled on a nearby wall or floor about "Balance for the Damned." No one knows if this is an organized murder ring, a serial killer, or just copycats.

The Races of Lykasia

The races of Valth have varying life expectancies and likewise relatively varying birth rates. As a result, the long-lived races like elves, dwarves, gnomes, and firbolg do not repopulate as quickly as the half-orcs, humans, dragonborn, tieflings, or even halflings.

Given that the loss of life is felt more keenly by the 'elder races,' they tend to be more cautious about entering into warfare and desire peace as quickly as possible. They're also more tolerant and more forgiving of the actions of misfits among their race; the death penalty is all but unheard of among the elder races, and exile is seen as just as final of a fate.

In times when the flames of war wreath Lykasia, war itself has served to keep the domination of the 'younger races' in check; they bear the brunt of the fighting, and as a result their populations ebb.

The wars in eastern Lykasia mostly deal with humans against humans. Western Lykasia, by contrast, has been relatively peaceful since the Battle for the Dawn. As a result, the younger races' populations have increased dramatically in those places while the elder races' have only seen a slight increase in population. The domination of the younger races, especially humans, in the western countries has grown. Thus is the Doom of the elder races; to see themselves and their power in the world diminish through no fault of their own, only due to simple biology.

Recognition and realization of that Doom has only been given voice recently. Most of the elder races have felt the creeping dread of their inevitable wane in the face of the growing populations of the younger races for some time. The elves of Baelirion were the first to take action; they welcomed the refugees from Gael Anfal and even the drow into their city, thereby creating a bastion for elvenkind at the edge of the continent. The dwarves have followed suit, offering Zanakul as a home for all dwarves who wish it. But the concept of the Doom and what it means to the elder races has only recently been articulated. Emperor Galdor II reacted by ensuring that both Zanakul and Baelirion have permanent seats and representation within the Emperor's Cabinet. Only recently, however, have the scholars among the elder races begun to actively discuss the situation and how to stave off the Doom. But what of those elder races that still live among the younger races?

There appears to be four general reactions among those elder races who still live in the cosmopolitan cities and countrysides of Lykasia. Most ignore the Doom, content to live their lives intermingled with the younger races, without concern for what the future holds. To them, Valth has seen upheavals before, perhaps the world will change again and the elder races will once again be ascendant, or they simply don't care and just want to live their lives.

Some pray to the gods, such as Galdor the Blessed, in the hope of some sort of divine intervention to increase the fecundity of their people. Thus far the gods have not answered.

Others prepare to leave for Baelirion or Zanakul. They sell what possessions they can't carry, what land and properties they have, and make the journey to their self-styled homelands. They believe that their people are only safe from depredations by the younger races if they stick together. In some ways, they aren't wrong; their diminished populations in the more cosmopolitan states of Lykasia mean they are rarely represented by their own people within their governments.

A few of the elder races prefer direct action against the younger races. It's rumored that someone suggested a one child policy for the younger races to emperor Galdor II. Given their long life-spans, the elder races are able to perfect skills and spells that the younger races simply don't have the time to match; some among their kind are rumored to advocate using those powers to cull the younger races. It's even been said, however unproven, that some among the elder races are conducting a stochastic murder pogrom against the younger races in order to "thin the herd" (as an elven agitator in Raeksdale was once heard suggesting).

Whatever the solution, one thing is certain; despite the prolonged lifespans of the elder races, time is certainly their greatest enemy.