

The Middle Lands of Keltor

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Table of Contents

Foreword	5	Archduke/Archduchess	25
About the Maps	5	Prince/Princess	25
The Scrolls of Beginnings	6	King/Queen	25
A World View	8	Emperor/Empress	25
Keltor and the Middle Land Empire	9	People of the Middle Lands	26
A. The Middle Lands.....	9	Population Distribution.....	26
B. The Great Desert.....	10	Common Life.....	26
C. The Northern Wilds.....	10	General Living Conditions.....	26
D. The Inner Sea.....	10	Avg. Living Condition Cost vs Base Wage (ALCC/BW).....	27
E. The Sea of Storms.....	10	Keeping Time.....	28
Kingdoms of the Middle Lands	11	Noble Life.....	29
Argos.....	12	Non-Humans in the Empire.....	30
Celyd.....	13	Commerce and Business.....	31
Fellice.....	14	Settlement Construction.....	33
Mostor.....	15	Brick.....	33
Sulkor.....	16	Earthen.....	33
Noble Houses of the Middle Lands	17	Hide.....	33
Major Houses.....	17	Stone.....	33
Borsheen.....	17	Wood.....	33
Canitus.....	17	Basement.....	34
Dorell.....	17	Dugout.....	34
Morgain.....	18	Roof.....	34
Nentus.....	18	Settlement Size.....	34
Roesoon.....	18	Settlement Defenses.....	35
Trellmock.....	18	Fort.....	35
Minor Houses.....	18	Keep.....	35
Dosren.....	19	Moat.....	35
Gantu.....	19	Palisade.....	35
Helot.....	19	Wall.....	36
Kuntarr.....	19	Watch Tower.....	36
Lunaz.....	19	Cost of Construction.....	36
Orcrest.....	20	Life in the City.....	37
Pentell.....	20	Random City Life Events.....	38
New Houses.....	20	A botched theft.....	38
Casabon.....	20	A duel.....	38
Indorn.....	21	A fight.....	38
Murktan.....	21	A funeral procession.....	38
Urgains.....	21	An accident.....	38
Welldown.....	21	An argument.....	39
Fallen Houses.....	22	Elixir monger.....	39
Arrnas.....	22	Guards apprehend someone.....	39
Endun.....	22	Placard carrier.....	39
Fortess.....	22	Public punishment.....	39
Ricdon.....	22	Public execution.....	39
The Imperial House, Kalistic.....	23	Public speech.....	39
Imperial Loyalty vs House Loyalty.....	23	Puppet show.....	39
The Houseless Nobles.....	23	Spontaneous street fair.....	40
Hierarchy of Nobles in the Middle Lands	24	Street musician.....	40
Sir/Dame.....	24	Street juggler.....	40
Magister/Magistra.....	24	Street acrobats.....	40
Baron/Baroness.....	24	Traveling peddler.....	40
Count/Countess.....	24	Life in the Country.....	40
Duke/Duchess.....	25	Hunting, Herding, Fishing & Farming.....	41
		Cuisine.....	42
		Fellice.....	42
		Mostor.....	42

Sulkor	42	Imperial Guard	78
Celyd	43	Imperial Elite Guard	78
Argos	43	Mercenary Companies	78
At the Local Level	43	Blue Swords	78
Cookware	43	Iron Storm	78
Cooking With Fire	44	Wessroth Company	79
Clothing, Fashion, and Symbols	44	Other Companies	79
Etiquette, Manners, and Protocol	45	Shadow Organizations	80
Customs	45	Assassins	80
Births	46	Bandits	80
Festivals	46	Pirates	80
Funerals	46	Thieves	81
Holidays	47	Religious Orders	82
Marriages	48	The Caretakers	82
Name Days	49	Maven	82
Oaths and Oath Breaking	49	The Red Guard	82
Naming Things	50	Seers	83
Naming a Person	50	Intellectual Bodies	83
Naming a Settlement	50	The Arcane Syndicate	83
Naming a Tavern/Inn	51	The Prime Order	84
Military Organization	52	The Tinkers' League	84
Basic Imperial Military Formations	52	Trade and Service Groups	85
Law and Order	52	Lamp Lighters	85
Land Ownership	53	Gong Farmers	85
Slavery	54	Transportation Guilds	85
Record Keeping	54	Water Carriers	85
Education	54	Xorn Brokerage	86
Books	55	Geographical Regions of Interest	87
Tutors	55	Between Land	87
Apprenticeships	55	Cold Plains	87
Academies	56	Dagger Mountains	88
Universities	56	Danchu River	88
Technology	57	Dothmas Hills	89
Agriculture	57	Dragon's Backbone Mountains	89
Avionics	58	Dragon's Fang Mountains	89
Ceramics	58	Fellice Plateau	90
Clockworks	58	Grey Marsh	90
Fireworks	58	Hills of Par-dan-ro	91
Medical	59	Lesmah Swamp	91
Mining, Smelting, and Metalworking	59	Nocmal River	92
Printing Press	60	Nojala Mountains	92
Steam Engines	60	Rasfenie Mountains	93
Wheels, Water and Wind	61	Tynhare Plains	93
Example Settlements and Territories	62	Wild Hills	94
The Village of Red Oak Grove	62	Wild Woods	94
The Halovir Freehold	62	Yahsur River	95
The Barony of Bone Pass	63	Travel in the Middle Lands	96
The County of Sweet River	64	By Air	96
Major Cities and Centers of Civilization	66	By Land	96
A. Balashar	67	By Water	97
B. Rocrest	68	Water Vessel Types	97
C. Levloe	69	Vessel Details by Type	99
D. Murath	70	Safety on the "Road"	100
E. Ghuntos	70	Communication in the Middle Lands	101
F. Jortice	70	Messengers	101
G. Foamrest	70	Private Messengers	101
H. Sapreen	71	Imperial Messengers	101
I. Covehaven	72	Signal Networks	101
J. Rascool	72	Spells and Magic Items	102
K. Ahlabim	72	Sayings and Curses	103
L. Shalamahkib	72	Rumors	104
M. Lechwed	73	The Empire's Statistics	105
N. Southflo	74	Appendix A - Other Places	108
O. Hilldale	74	Keltor	108
P. Brazhale	75	Rektor	108
Q. Vesral	76	Soltor	108
R. Mischihoon	76	Unetor	108
Guilds, Orders & Armies of the Middle Lands	77		
Military Entities	77		
House Guard	77		
Army of the Domain	77		

Appendix B - Tribes of Keltor.....	109		
<u>Tribes of the Great Desert.....</u>	109		
Cliff-dwellers.....	109		
Nomadic Clans.....	109		
<u>Tribes of the Middle Lands.....</u>	109		
Bimcho.....	109		
Horse Runners.....	109		
Mursha.....	110		
Razlanchi.....	110		
Way Ash'non.....	110		
<u>Tribes of the Northern Wilds.....</u>	111		
Central Clans.....	111		
Jute Rhone.....	111		
Mako.....	111		
Appendix C - Language.....	112		
<u>Human Language Families.....</u>	112		
Novaskag.....	112		
Luvic.....	112		
Hemtopie.....	112		
Asurten.....	112		
Quy.....	112		
<u>Non-Human Language Families.....</u>	113		
Dwarven (Devairrik).....	113		
Elvish (Estollin).....	113		
Gnomish (Tecken).....	113		
Halfling (Looh).....	113		
Orcish (Gom).....	113		
<u>Special Languages.....</u>	114		
Trade Tongue.....	114		
Battle Sign.....	114		
Thieves' Cant.....	114		
<u>Dead Languages.....</u>	115		
Appendix D - History.....	116		
The Savage Time.....	116		
Forging the Prime Order.....	117		
The Rise of the Empire.....	117		
The Winter Wall.....	117		
Song of the Elves.....	118		
Establishing the Spice Road.....	119		
Founding a Republic.....	120		
Appendix E - Magic.....	121		
The Death and Rebirth of Magic.....	122		
The Magic Road Back.....	122		
Magic Theory 101.....	122		
The Nature of Magic.....	123		
How Magic Works.....	123		
Custom Spells.....	124		
Chaos Blessing.....	124		
Chaos Curse.....	124		
Prepare Ground.....	125		
Straw Man.....	125		
Straw Men.....	125		
Straw Horde.....	126		
Ritual Magic.....	127		
Designing a Ritual.....	127		
Executing a Ritual.....	128		
Ritual Failure.....	130		
Example, Ritual of Immortality.....	130		
Magic Items.....	131		
Intelligent Items.....	131		
Custom Magic Items.....	132		
Bow of Arrows.....	132		
Mirror of Wellness.....	132		
Stone of the Courier.....	132		
Tablecloth of Heroes.....	133		
Valmir's Charming Vest.....	133		
Appendix F - Deities.....	134		
Dwarven.....	134		
Kelgal.....	134		
Larhelm.....	134		
Yuretgolden.....	134		
Elven.....	134		
Bohtan.....	135		
Nishrah.....	135		
Tuzale.....	135		
Gnomish.....	135		
Arnuf.....	135		
Ortho.....	136		
Qurin.....	136		
Halfling.....	136		
Drazlooh.....	136		
Iturr.....	136		
Zaphkah.....	136		
Human - New Gods.....	137		
Bantus.....	137		
Gravston.....	137		
Hethrize.....	137		
Janumorn.....	138		
Nisvaloon.....	138		
Rakthor.....	138		
Tanjoom.....	138		
Tashrune.....	139		
Ursinah.....	139		
Volios.....	139		
Human - Old Gods.....	139		
Bantus.....	140		
Foel & Til.....	140		
Hajout.....	140		
Islynnas.....	140		
Kohlot.....	140		
Mononik.....	140		
Pangu.....	140		
Rajhahl.....	141		
Watlen.....	141		
The Elder Beings.....	141		
Ahjifrohme.....	141		
Meklidozrin.....	141		
Zenchu.....	141		
Underdark Deities.....	141		
Gorn.....	142		
Labnoz.....	142		
Untah.....	142		
Other Deities.....	143		
Cernoz.....	143		
Eohgin.....	143		
Sehthar.....	143		
Xanathurr.....	143		
Appendix G - Creatures.....	144		
Creatures of Keltor.....	144		
Above Ground Creatures.....	144		
Normal Animals.....	145		
Underground Creatures.....	145		
Extended Creature Details.....	146		
Boggards.....	146		
Bugbears.....	146		
Centuars.....	146		
Cyclopes.....	147		
Derro.....	147		
Doppelgangers.....	147		
Dragons.....	148		
Drow.....	150		
Duergar.....	150		
Fey.....	150		
Giants.....	152		
Gnolls.....	153		
Goblins.....	153		
Hobgoblins.....	154		
Kobolds.....	154		
Liches.....	155		
Lizardfolk.....	155		

Minotaurs	155	Primary Trade Roads, Temperate Locations	174
Morlocks	156	Secondary Trade Roads, Temperate Locations	175
Ogres	156	Tertiary Trade Roads, Temperate Locations	176
Orcs	157	Appendix H – Lore.....	177
Rakshasa	157	Songs	177
Sahuagins	158	Battle songs	177
Troglodytes	158	Ceremonial Songs	178
Trolls	159	Drinking songs	178
Vampires	159	Working Songs	179
Worgs	160	Stories	179
Creatures Unique to the Middle Lands	161	The Saga of Tazral	180
Fet'louse	161	Other Books	180
Jor Lizard	162	Other Stories	181
Mist Dancer	163	Appendix I - Herbs, Spices, and Useful Plants....	182
Basic Encounter Table Format	164	Influences.....	187
Sample Random Encounter Tables	164	Index of Names and Places.....	188
Desert, Hot Locations	165	Change History.....	190
Forest, Cold Locations	166	Map of the Middle Lands.....	193
Forest, Temperate Locations	167	Map of Levloe.....	194
Hill and Mountain, Cold Locations	168	Map of Sapreen.....	195
Hill and Mountain, Temperate Locations	169	Map of Hilldale.....	196
Hill and Mountain, Hot Locations	170	Map of Balashar.....	197
Marsh/Swamp, Temperate Locations	171	Map of Lechwed.....	198
Plains, Temperate Locations	172		
Underground Locations	173		
Sample Non-Wilderness Encounter Tables	174		

Foreword

During a day of boredom, I began to sketch a map. I have done this hundreds of times in my life but that day I liked what came out. My mind began to race, and I saw cities and kingdoms and people and lives unfold before me. I have reached into that maelstrom and snatched all I could from it. Here is the product of my ride with the muse. **This is still a “work in progress”, but isn’t everything?**

While I am writing this for my own use at this time, it is possible that I will allow others to use it too. Seems a shame to let it all go to waste should I not have the chance to use it. This is a work of fiction, and you will no doubt see things here and there that are inspired by other works of fiction and even some non-fiction but that is how I roll. If you look hard enough at any work of fiction you will see influences from other peoples works. I try not to be blatant, but I will take ideas that I like and change them to fit what I am doing.

Having played a variety of role-playing games (RPG's) over the years, both pen and paper and otherwise, let me take a moment to talk about how I run my games. There are commonalities among most of the medieval fantasy worlds I have created, some of them used in this world are:











- a low level of magic (even to the point of limiting access to or removing some spells/items)
- a relatively new civilization built upon an older one (lots of ruins and lost magic to be found)
- limited extra-planar interaction (adds a real source of fear when “they” do show up)
- limited demi-human population (allows for rebuilding relations)

I see these limitations as giving me, and the players, room to grow the world as time passes. By no means do I seek to limit players with these, but rather I give them the chance to affect the world in a greater way. Think of them more as design parameters and not hard limits to the world once play begins. If players take actions that I deem will affect these baselines then the world will change over time and I let them see this and know that they are responsible for it. As far as plot goes, sometimes it's a good thing and other times not so good, meaning PCs can be publicly vilified as easily as applauded. Regardless, this can pull players in and invest them in the world around them. Which, in my experience, makes the game more enjoyable. Playing off what the players do gives me more material than any other source.

I give special thanks to my wife for her insight and anthropological expertise. Without which the social structure of many peoples of this world would lack the depth they have now.

About the Maps

The color overlaid maps are a graphical representation of the land. While coastlines and rivers are fairly exact, the trees, mountain, hill, and swamp markers are representative of the most common terrain features in the area covered by the marker. So if you were to zoom in on a 400 square mile area showing only swamp you may find that only 250 square miles are swamp and the rest is forest and hills, for example. This effect is most prevalent with respect to islands. At the current level of magnification, not all the islands can be seen. The markers used on all the maps are explained in the following table.

Desert, hot		Hills		Plains, cold	
Forest, cold		Marsh/Swamp		Plains, dry	
Forest, temperate		Mountains, normal		Plains, normal	
		Mountains, volcanic			

The city maps are more impressionistic. For the most part, they show the location of groups of buildings rather than individual structures. In this way, they remain open enough for the GM to do as they need to while still showing the basic structure of the city. All maps have been made by me.

The Scrolls of Beginnings

THE FIRST SCROLL

IN THE TIME LONG PAST,
THE TIME BEFORE TIME,
THERE WAS ONLY THE SKY.

THE SKY WAS NOT ALONE.

INTO THE SKY WERE BORN
AND LIVED BEINGS OF MIGHT
HAVING THE POWER OF LIFE.

THEY WERE DRAGONS AND
DEATH WAS UNKNOWN TO THEM.

THEY RODE THE SKY
AND WERE AT PEACE
AND KNEW LOVE.

THEN CAME INTO THE SKY
DEMONS AND NIGHT,
WITH THEM CAME DEATH.

WAR WAS WAGED BETWEEN
DEMON AND DRAGON,
BOTH WOULD KNOW DEATH.

WITH THE COMING OF WAR
AND DEATH, TIME WAS BORN.
THE TIME BEFORE TIME ENDED.

THE SECOND SCROLL

WAR RAGED ACROSS THE SKY
AND DEATH TOOK ITS FILL OF
DEMON AND DRAGON ALIKE.

THEN ONLY ONE REMAINED.
THE DRAGON WAS ALONE
AND KNEW SADNESS.

THE SKY WAS COLD SO THE
DRAGON PUSHED ITS FIRE INTO
THE SKY TO WARM IT.

STILL, THE DRAGON WAS ALONE.

THE NIGHT WAS DARK SO THE
DRAGON PLUCKED OUT ITS EYE
AND HUNG IT IN THE NIGHT.

STILL, THE DRAGON WAS ALONE.

THE NEWLY BORN TIME DID
NOT HELP FOR IT ONLY MADE
THE DRAGON KNOW ITS LOST.

IN ITS GRIEF, THE DRAGON
SHED TEARS OF PAIN.

THE THIRD SCROLL

THE DRAGON WAS ALONE,
ITS FIRE IN THE SKY,
ITS EYE IN THE NIGHT,
ITS TEARS MADE THE SEA.

IN GRIEF, THE DRAGON RIPPED ITS
OWN FLESH AND INTO THE SEA
MADE OF ITS TEARS FELL ITS HOT
BLOOD AND THE HEAT OF IT COOLED.

HISSING AND WRITHING THE
LAND FORMED OF THIS
BLOOD AS IT COOLED.

IN GRIEF, THE DRAGON RIPPED
BOTH FANG AND SCALE FROM ITS
BODY AND FLUNG THEM INTO
THE COOLING BLOOD.

WHERE FANG AND SCALE FELL
UPON THE HISSING LAND HILL AND
MOUNTAIN FORMED AROUND THEM.

IN GRIEF, THE DRAGON RAGED
AND ROARED, BRINGING WIND TO
THE LAND.

THE POWER OF LIFE FLOWED ON
THE DRAGONS BREATH.

THE FOURTH SCROLL

FINALLY THE DRAGONS BREATH
TOUCHED THE LAND AND
LIFE SPREAD ACROSS IT.

AT LAST, THE DRAGON SMILED
FOR IT WAS NO LONGER ALONE.
THE WORLD WAS COMPLETE.

THE SKY, THE FIRE, THE SEA,
THE NIGHT, THE LAND, LIFE,
DEATH AND TIME MADE THE WORLD.

YET WITHOUT THE DRAGON AND
ITS GRIEF THERE WOULD BE NOTHING.

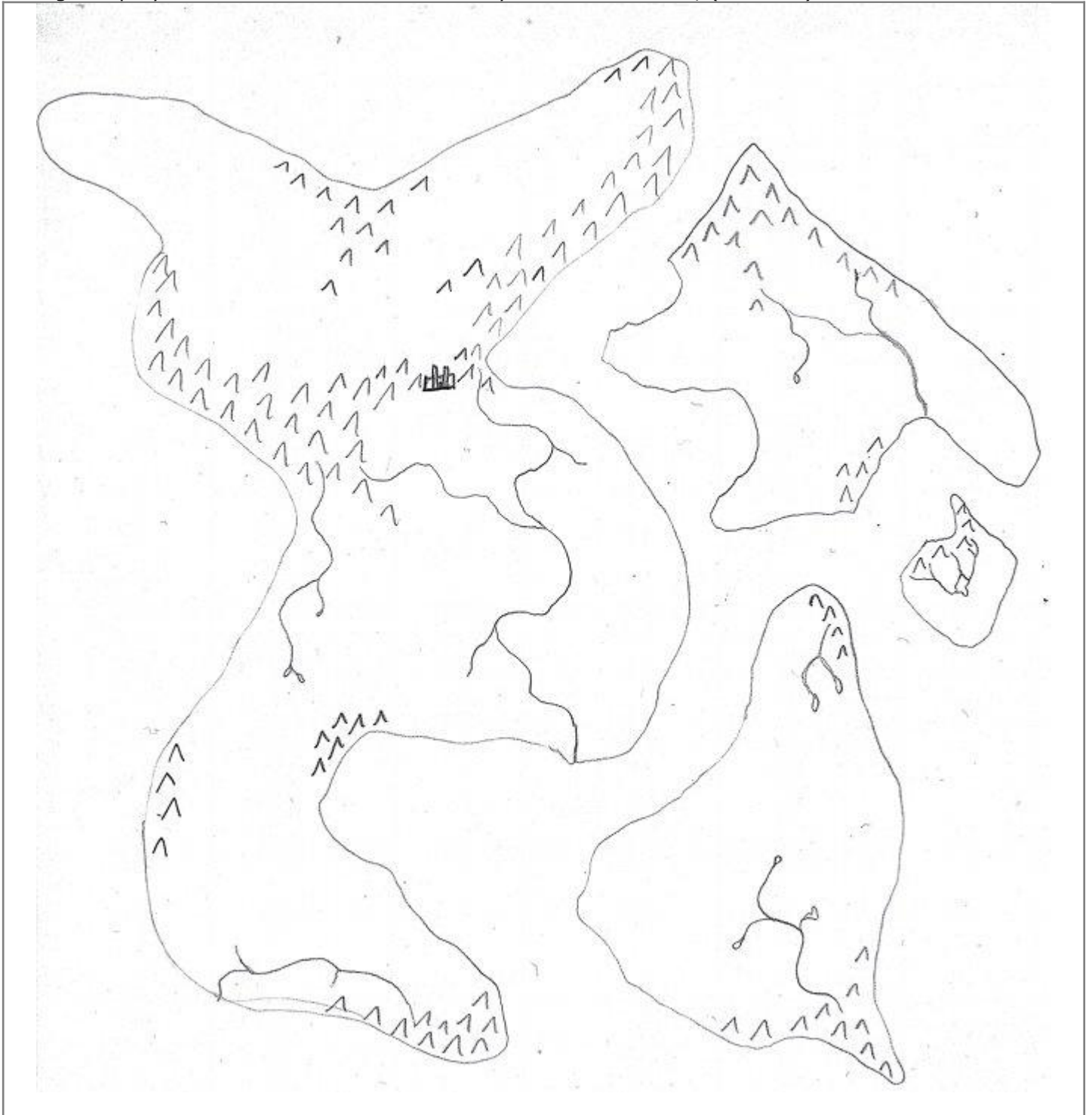
THE DRAGON WATCHES THE
WORLD AND KNOWS COMFORT.

YET ITS GRIEF IS STILL FELT
UPON THE LAND IN ALL
WIND AND RAIN AND COLD.

The scrolls date back over six-thousand years. They were found inscribed on clay tablets in a cave located in the north-west mountains adjacent to the Great Desert, called the Rasfenie Mountains. The author is unknown. These scrolls are the only known documents to predate the Savage Time. They were discovered by a Trelmock expedition in the year 331 MLE. Translation by Scholar Surian Lagrade, 340 MLE. Lagrade believed there was at least one missing scroll.

A World View

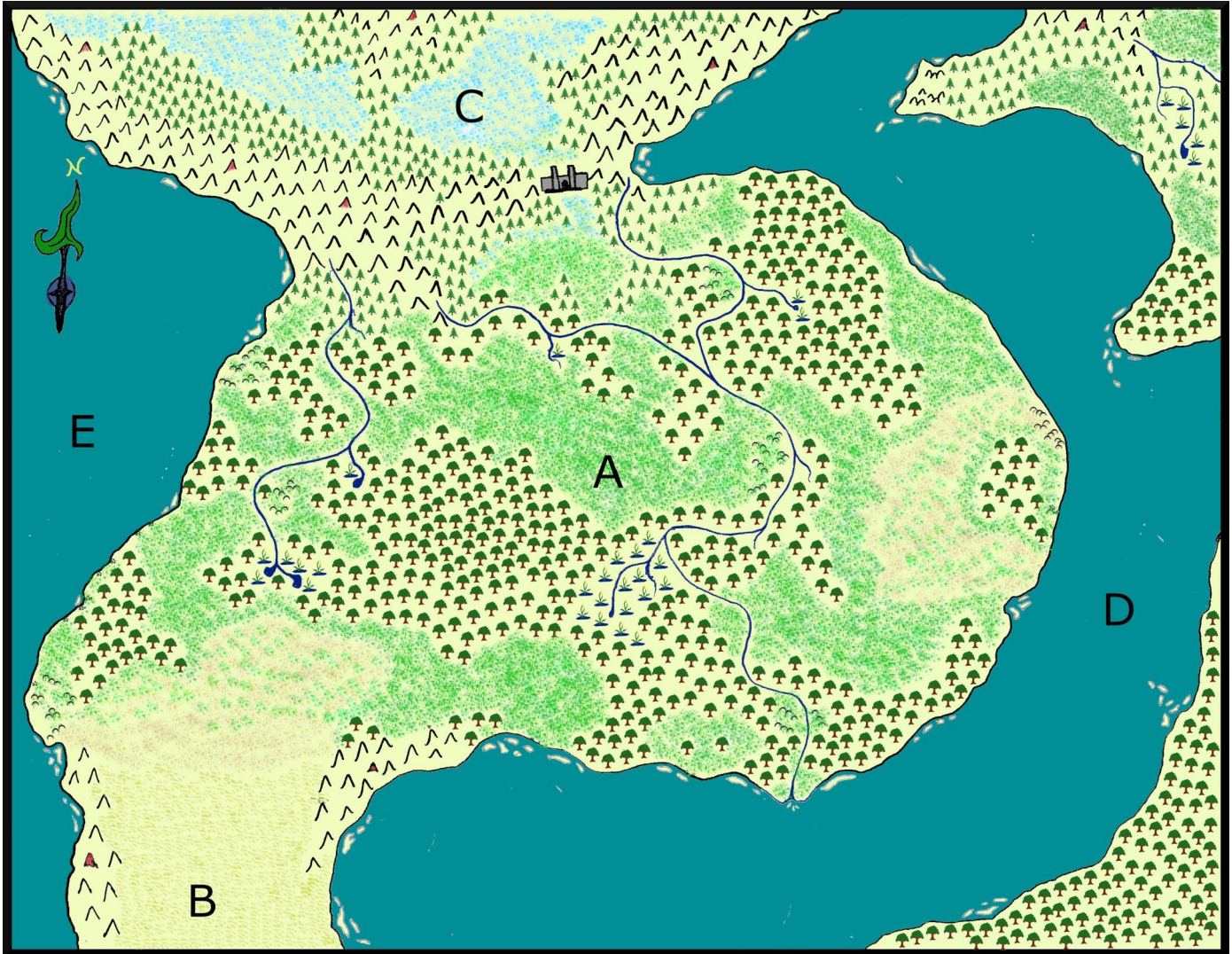
A rough map by the Trelmock Scholar Rolshim Dy'larious - 1640 SC, (126 MLE)



There are four main land masses in the *World*. The largest, Keltor, the smallest, Unetor, and the other two, Rektor in the north and Soltor in the south. Keltor will be the focus here, in particular the area known as the Middle Lands or the Artisan Kingdoms.

To the east is the Vast Sea, called the Beyond Sea in the Middle Lands. To the west is the Sea of Storms, also called the Wild Sea or the Sea of Pain. In the south is the Summer Sea or the Wind Sea also called simply the South Sea. The North Sea is also known as the Ice Sea or the Grief Sea. Running between the main land masses is the Inner Sea, a.k.a. the Narrow Sea or the Calm Sea. As a side note, sailors think it bad luck to call it the Calm Sea. This is a near universal superstition.

Keltor and the Middle Land Empire



A. The Middle Lands

a.k.a. The Mid Kingdoms or The Artisan Kingdoms.

Technically an empire (the Middle Land Empire), the Middle Lands are made up of the kingdoms of Argos, Celyd, Fellice, Mostor, and Sulkor. Each has sworn an oath to the Imperial Throne. This oath is renewed when a new leader takes charge.

While they are called kingdoms the structure of government varies from the traditional kingdom's monarchy system (seen in Argos, Fellice, and Sulkor) to a council of noble blood (in Mostor) and a republic (in Celyd). There have been no major conflicts between the kingdoms for over three-hundred years. Most conflict is with the inhabitants of the north and, on rare occasion, the kingdoms of the south. Conflict also comes from the wilderness within the Empire's borders. There are an abundance of orc, gnoll, bugbear, goblin, and troglodyte hoards which will strike out against settlements from time to time.

The world outside sees life in the Middle Lands as easy. The land is fertile, water plentiful, the forests are thick and weather is generally mild. There is still much unclaimed wilderness and hence room for growth within the Middle Lands. Freeholds in these wilderness areas are common and are largely left alone. Most fail within a few years. The ones that do not are eventually absorbed by the closest kingdom. This can happen peacefully (by oath) or by conflict but it always happens.

B. The Great Desert

a.k.a. The Southern Waste or The South Desert.

The Great Desert is just that, a huge desert that stretches between two mountain ranges (Nojala Mountains in the east and Rasfenie Mountains to the west). It runs along the southern border of the Middle Lands and separates the Middle Lands from the Spice Kingdoms to the far south. There are tribal people that inhabit the desert and run trade routes between the north and south lands. Some of these tribes are friendly, others are very hostile. Care should be used when entering the territory of such tribes.

Heat and thirst kill here, so water is worth more than gems or gold. In addition to hostile desert tribes, there are terrible creatures living in the deep desert. Also, there are ruins. Some say the sands have swallowed whole cities and even kingdoms. Scholars dream of expeditions into this hot and unforgiving land to discover lost civilizations and knowledge of the ancients.

C. The Northern Wilds

a.k.a. The Cold Lands or The Frozen Waste or The Ice Kingdom.

The Northern Wilds are blocked from the Middle Lands by the Winter Wall. The Winter Wall is over one hundred miles long and averages two hundred feet high. Bordered by mountain ranges on both ends, it is manned by an imperial force known as the Winter Guard made up of a mixture of volunteers and criminals all of whom are sworn to lifetime service. Once given, the oath of the Winter Guard is only lawfully ended by death. Those that break it early are guilty of high treason and forfeit life. The Winter Wall is within the boundaries of Fellice (the Northern Kingdom).

Little is known of the Northern Wilds by most residents of the Middle Lands. Rumor says that hoards of barbarians and giants roam north of the Winter Wall; all of which eye the Middle Lands hungrily. As members of the Winter Guard rarely go south of the Winter Wall these rumors are considered by most to be just that, rumors. Some call the idea of ice giants outright fantasy.

These are harsh lands that breed hard people. With all the wild beast and fantastic creatures that roam the Cold Lands its most dangerous inhabitant is by far the weather. Even the high summer sees snow and the deep winter will take the unwary a piece at a time, killing before half the night is done. Any who roam these lands do so at great personal risk.

D. The Inner Sea

a.k.a. The Narrow Sea or The Calm Sea.

The Inner Sea is a fairly placid body of water over which trade flows between the major landmasses. Commerce at the local and regional levels also travels on this waterway. Piracy is a problem and the number of uncharted islands within the Inner Sea compounds this issue by giving pirates plenty of hiding places. Rumor has it that there are islands with sizable towns devoted to the pirate economy. Raiding from the northern tribes is not uncommon in the northern reaches of this sea.

While the Inner Sea is a major conduit for trade it is also home to a variety of creatures. The massive beasts of the deep ocean are very rare here but the population of shallow water tribal creatures is higher. There are even rumors of the elusive aqua-elves having settlements somewhere in the Inner Sea.

E. The Sea of Storms

a.k.a. The Wild Sea or The Sea of Pain.

The Sea of Storms is known for quick spawning, powerful storms which are merciless to any vessel daring to sail upon it. As a consequence, most vessels remain well within sight of land and seek safe harbor at night, given the opportunity. Legend says there is a land of gold beyond the Wild Sea. Those that search for it do not often return. When they do, they only bring tales of terror, pain, and loss. The deep waters harbor fearful beasts and secrets that some say should not be disturbed.

Kingdoms of the Middle Lands



This map shows the boundaries of each kingdom as laid out by the Imperial Throne. The areas include both civilized and wilderness lands. Populations tend toward higher density in coastal regions and along rivers. This leaves the vast open lands largely underpopulated, even unpopulated. At its widest point, the land mass is about 1500 miles by 1000 miles, roughly 1,160,000 square miles. Having a population estimated at 30,000,000 there is a great deal of room for growth in the Middle Lands.

The Imperial Throne has erected a series of stone obelisks that mark the borders of all the kingdoms. Each obelisk is clearly marked, showing what kingdom is being entered, and numbered with an Imperial address number. They are spaced about one-half mile apart which makes their line easy to see. There are roughly 10,000 of these stones. All are uniform in make, being hard stone with a 5 ft base, 10 ft tall, weighing over 12 tons and having a hexagonal column configuration that tapers to about 2 ft at the top. Two of the six sides are engraved, showing the kingdom that will be entered, the Imperial identifying number of the obelisk and the Imperial Seal. Also engraved, in several languages on the other four faces, is a copy of the Imperial law that outlines the penalty for moving, removing or otherwise tampering with one of these obelisks. That punishment is to be drawn and quartered. Luckily this does not happen often as the stones are very hard to move. Each stone is inspected every two years.

Argos

The largest kingdom of the Middle Lands, Argos is also the seat of the Imperial Throne. Argos is not, however, a puppet of the Imperial Throne. Queen Melina Delan Dorell is the current ruler. Day to day business of the kingdom is left to the queen and her court. She is loved by her subjects and her court is not as prone to the political intrigue, plots and backstabbing that most royal courts of the Middle Lands endure. That is not to say such things don't happen.

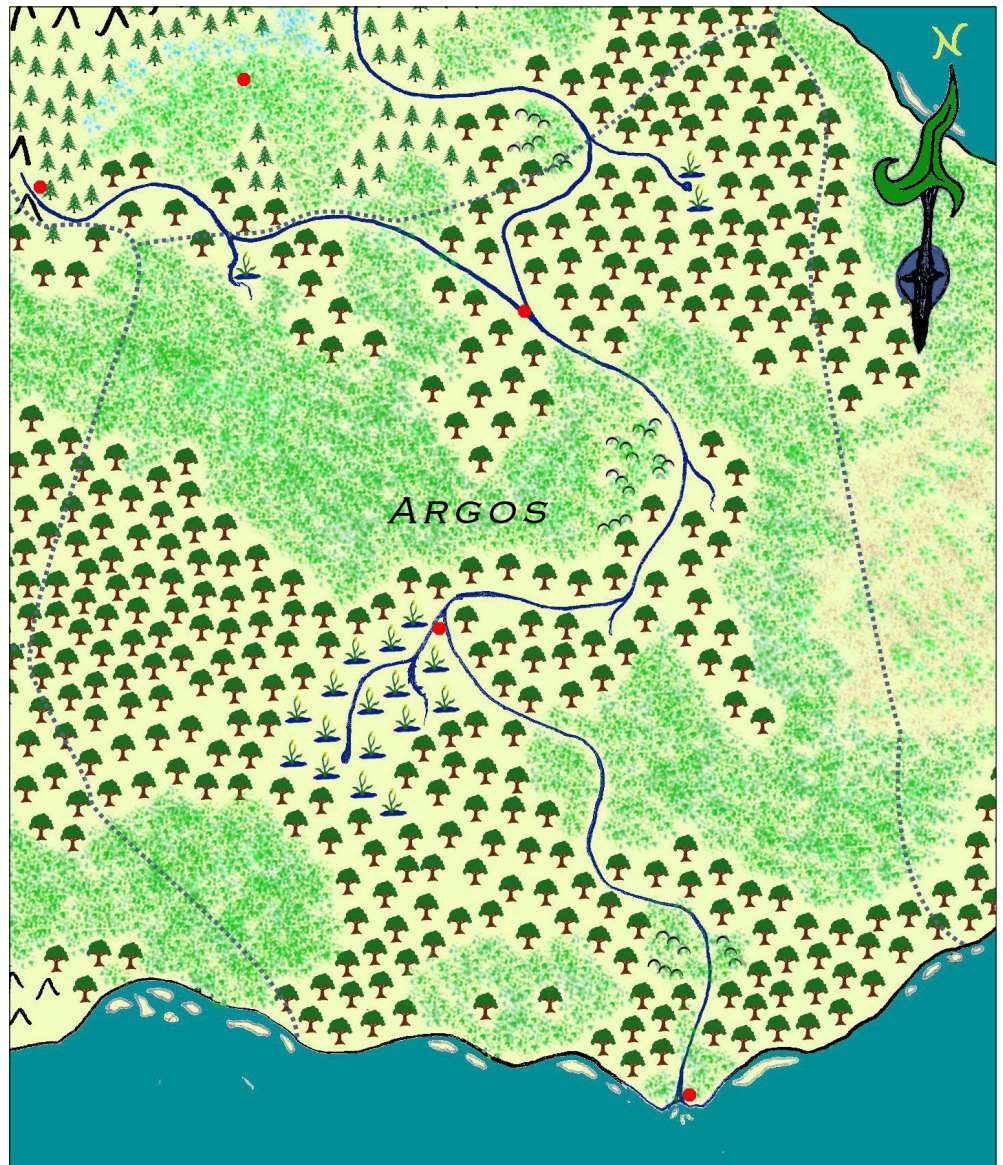
Culture, tradition, and stability are key characteristics of this kingdom and its people. This is something that filters down into every aspect of life in Argos. So much so, that when spots of tyranny do spring up, the contrast makes them blindingly obvious. It also makes them a target.

Argos is the most heavily populated kingdom in the empire. Most of those people live along the Danchu river or the Imperial Roads. Yet Argos is also the largest kingdom. As a result, it still has massive expanses of wilderness land.

The Blue Swords maintain a small keep in the north-easternmost section of Argos. It is close to the border of Fellice. In addition, it is half a day from the Danchu allowing the Blue Swords quick access to the river and hence the rest of Argos.

Rumor has it that deep in the central wilderness of Argos there is a fortress. The secret stronghold of the Arcane Syndicate. So far, none that have gone looking for this stronghold have returned with any news other than total failure.

In parts of Argos, a child's hair is braided rather than cut. This continues until the age of six.



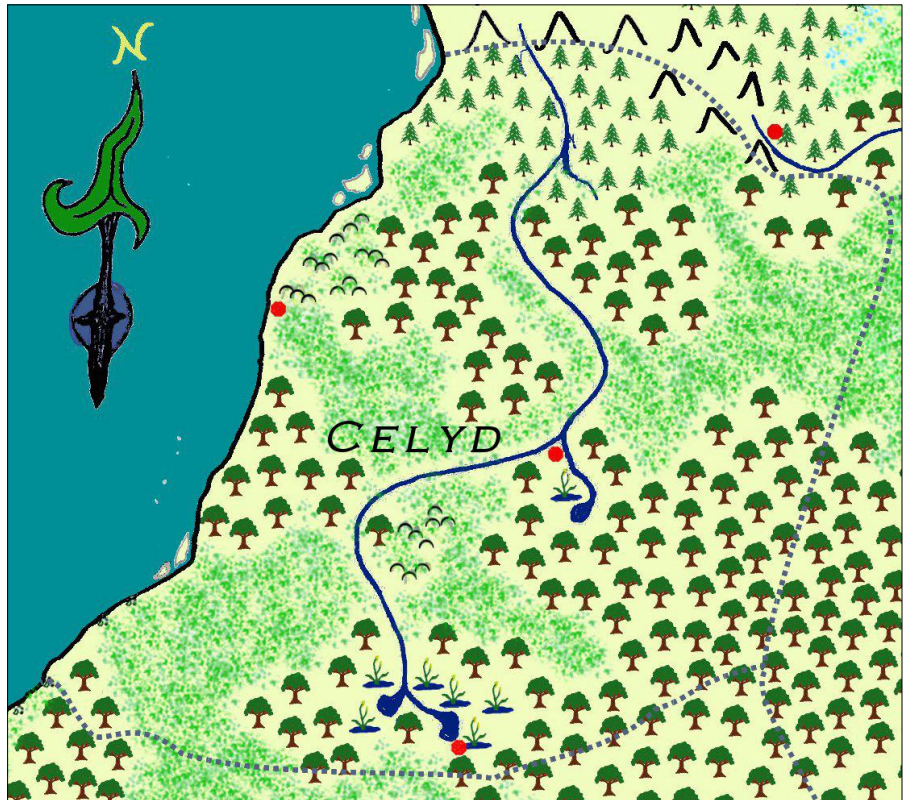
Celyd

The site of a revolution nearly sixty years ago; the outcome of which was the fall of House Arrnas and the creation of the Celyd Republic. Celyd is one of the most progressive of countries of the Middle Lands and the only one to have public schools open to all citizens. Gaining citizenship can be problematic for immigrants. It is possible to be a resident yet not a citizen. Immigrants seeking citizenship must offer two years of public service and pass an exam covering knowledge of Celyd and its history OR offer eight years of public service with no exam. Public service is by trade or profession and wages are fixed.

As to the republic's structure of government, most high-level elected representatives of the republic are of noble birth. While it is not unknown

for a commoner to be elected to such a position it is still noticeably rare. The land is divided into districts, each of which has a local council elected by the populace. These council members are just as readily of common birth as noble. In turn, these people will elect someone, not a council member and often a noble, to represent the district's interest in the Senate. The Senate governs the country as a whole. They vote on petitions and create laws and appoint judges to the High-Bar. High-Bar appointments are lifetime appointments. Each senator serves a three-year term and then another election is held. Each district has the right to impose term limits on their senator. A few have put in place lifetime limits of three to five terms. Some have a limit of two consecutive terms with no lifetime limit. There are 35 districts and each is allowed one seat on the Senate. An act of the Senate is needed to repartition one or more districts and High-Bar approval is required before the reconfigured districts can be implemented. In addition, the Regent has a seat on the Senate but only votes in the event of a tie. The Regent is a lifetime appointment of the Senate and is currently Cen Almos Nentus. Beyond tie breaking the Regent sees that Senate meetings follow procedure and are lawfully maintained. The Regent has influence and some power.

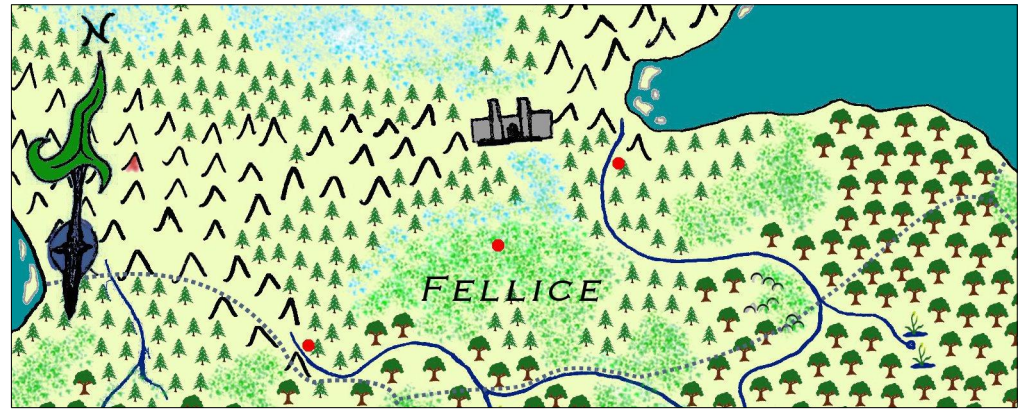
It is rumored that the Iron Storm is based in the northern mountains of Celyd. They were hired by both sides, at one time or another, during the Republic Rebellion. And are rumored to be on retainer to the Republic even today. As they only come out to fight no one has been able to substantiate this rumor.



All inns in Celyd have a bright blue door. The shade of blue varies and can be a source of pride.

Fellice

The northernmost kingdom in the Middle Lands is ruled by King Markus Davren Borsheen. The people of Fellice think of themselves as the guardians of the Winter Wall and many of the youth aspire to join the Winter Guard. The warrior culture of Fellice is evident in all aspects of the kingdom. The king sponsors several tournaments each year. The young nobles spend time between tournaments hunting a variety of monsters in the wilderness. Dueling is not uncommon, but frivolous duels are looked upon unfavorably, as are duels to the death. Outsiders see most people of Fellice as hot-blooded ogres.



Many inhabitants of Fellice live on the shores of one of its rivers, the Danchu and the Nocmal, or in the Cold Plains along one of the Imperial Roads. Journey beyond these areas and one quickly enters wilderness lands. It is a harsh and unforgiving land, full of menacing beast, tribes of orcs, marauding trolls, and ogres. The mountains and deep forest are even more dangerous.

No northern border is marked because, technically, everything to the north is part of Fellice. This is because the Imperial Throne does not recognize any other claim to that land. The reality of enforcing the claim is difficult, to say the least. So, while the Northern Wilds are part of the Kingdom of Fellice, as far as the Imperial Throne is concerned, only members of the Winter Guard have gone beyond the Winter Wall.

The Winter Wall is the largest fortress in the known world. It can house over thirty-thousand warriors plus another five-thousand support personnel. The current complement is about 10% of that number. This is a source of great anxiety for the commanders of the Winter Guard. They feel the Guard is not prepared to repel an assault.

New conscripts for the Guard have been dropping steadily over the past century. It seems that while the children of Fellice still hear the stories and hold the Guard in high esteem, fewer are following through and joining up as adults. There have been discussions of supplementing the Guard with standard army forces. Naturally, the Guard's leadership is not in favor of this solution and would rather see more prisoners given the opportunity to serve in place of a lifetime in jail or execution.

Wagon drivers in Fellice are said to know more card games than any three men combined.

Mostor

This land is governed by a council of nobles and is renowned for its libraries. The council is made up of nobles from the most powerful Houses in the land. The Minor Houses have only one seat while the Major Houses have two or even three seats. There are currently twenty-one seats on the council but that number has been both larger and smaller in the past yet it is almost always an odd number. The machinations of council members are legendary.

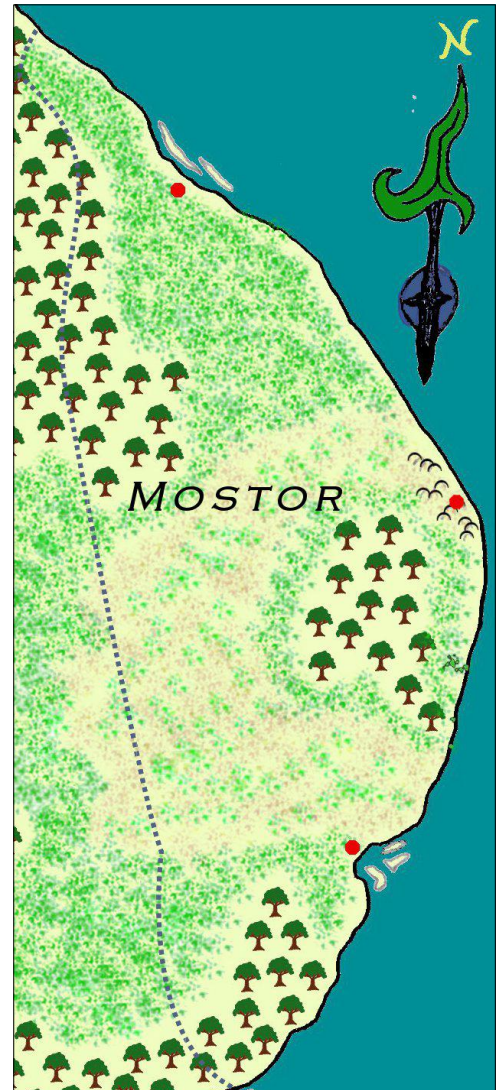
Mostor is known as "the wellspring of deceit" due to the seemingly unending stream of plots employed by council members to achieve their respective ends. This very rarely devolves to the point of outright assassination but it still gets more than a little "underhanded" from time to time. Nothing is sacred in these battles.

For all the talk of subterfuge, one of the most trusted and prestigious orders in all the Middle Lands is based in Mostor, the Prime Order. The Order has called the Sage City, Sapreen, home for more than six-hundred years. It is a very influential group within Mostor, indeed, due to the role of the Prime Advisors, the Order has notable influence in every part of the empire.

Coastal trade is the life's blood of the kingdom. The greatest threat to that is piracy. The Inner Sea has many unpopulated and/or uncharted islands; they seem to spring up and sink beneath waves like magic. The pirates make good use of these islands. So much so that it is a full-time job for Mostor's navy to patrol the shipping lanes. Even with all their work, pirates still attack trade vessels and make off with valuable cargo. In the past century, some of Mostor's coastal nobles have taken to issuing Letters of Marque and Reprisal to privateers. Some believe the privateers and pirates are just the latest proxies in the game of power nobles have been playing since the second noble was crowned.

The vast majority of Mostor's citizens live within 60 miles of the coast. The Tynhare Plains of Mostor are host to a variety of creatures, both humanoid and not. There are some human and elven tribals out there as well. Some trade with the freeholds others war against them.

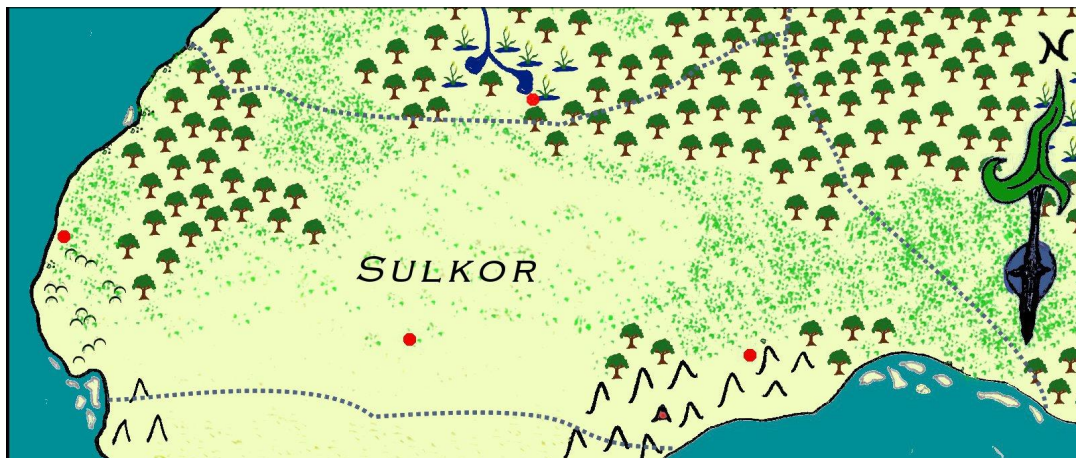
Mostor has numerous vibrant freeholds. They fail just as often as they do in other lands but civilization pushes its way into the wilderness at a steady pace. The wilderness does push back, with everything from wyvern to bugbear hoards. However, year by year, mile by mile, generation after generation, civilization moves forward.



In Mostor the saying goes, "Trust is a three-edged sword."

Sulkor

Sulkor is often called the Spice Gateway as the only land-based trade route to the Spice Kingdoms starts there. Sulkor is considered the least cultured of all the kingdoms, at least by the other kingdoms. It does have a higher ratio of "wild" tribe population than any other kingdom.



Many citizens of Sulkor can trace their lineage to one of the old tribes if they go back three or four generations. As a result, some strange customs can be found all over Sulkor.

One of the odd tribal traditions that remains part of the culture of Sulkor is taking "Hylee". A crude translation of which is "slave" yet most people of Sulkor prefer the translation "bound one". In times past, the Bimcho tribe would take enemy tribe members in combat, claiming them as Hylee. Those taken would serve for a fixed amount of time after which they were released and allowed to return home safely. That tradition survives in pockets of Sulkor's citizens yet without the component of combat. Just how and why one can be taken Hylee varies from area to area. Most cases involve a competition or a wager.

Until about one-hundred-sixty years ago Sulkor had no southern border. The White Sands Accord changed all that. As a result, the tribes of the Great Desert are the only entity bordering the empire which is recognized by the empire to have a legitimate claim to land.

Trade is very important, the trade routes are well patrolled and protected. Most of them run along roads that are fully paved and well maintained. This accounts for the speed of these land routes and why they are still relevant even in the face of the sea routes. Rumor has it that the navy of Sulkor has at times turned a blind eye to pirates that "operate within certain parameters". King Roesoon's idea of justice for caravan bandits is both swift and brutal.

The Wessroth Company has a small keep just north of the East Trade Road about a half day from the Argos border.

On the hot and arid plains, only a fool wears no head dress.

Noble Houses of the Middle Lands

The noble houses are the basis of all governments in the Middle Lands. Houses are divided into four categories: major, minor, new and fallen. While all members of such a House are nobles not all nobles are members of a House. This just proves that at the end of the day it is blood that makes a noble. Nobles not in a House are most often minor nobles having little in the way of title or wealth and their crest will not be graced by the Imperial Leaf which is worked into the standard of all true Houses.

Major Houses

These houses are old, powerful, wealthy and influential. All have strong blood ties to the imperial bloodline. Much of the land is under their control, directly or indirectly. They collect taxes from the people and tribute from some Minor Houses and any New Houses that catch their attention. All pay a yearly tribute to the Imperial Throne. In normal times, it is not at all uncommon for such a house to have a standing army of 500 warriors. They are capable of raising far larger armies should the need arise. They must be careful when doing so or they may find themselves under the scrutiny of the Imperial Throne as well as other Houses. There are currently seven Major Houses: Borsheen, Canitus, Dorell, Morgain, Nentus, Roesoon and Trellmock.

Borsheen

Standard: A white boar and crossed black spears on a green background
House Head: King Markus Davren Borsheen
Power Base: Murath in Fellice



The honor of House Borsheen is without tarnish and their victories cannot be easily counted. On the field of battle, they are among the most feared of opponents, not only for their fierce ability and martial skill but for their many-layered strategies. Borsheen is the only Major House to lack significant land holds in more than one country. Also, they are the only House to hold all the major land holds in one country; Fellice is unquestionably their land.

Canitus

Standard: A black stag above lightning on a green & white background
House Head: Duke Rychar Starcrest Canitus
Power Base: Foamrest in Mostor



While few members of this House excel at anything they are at least competent. They are the least powerful of the Major Houses and the oldest one still in existence, next to House Kalistic. Canitus has been around just over four hundred years. Strong land holds are maintained in northern Mostor and north-eastern Argos.

Dorell

Standard: A blue hawk over a rising gold sun on a blue & white field
House Head: Queen Melina Delan Dorell
Power Base: Balashar in Argos



They are known as fair rulers of a mind to care for their subjects and an excellent understanding of the relationship between commoners and nobles. Tradition is valued by House Dorell. They have the majority of the major land holds in Argos and some in southern Mostor as well. Of all the Major Houses, Dorell has the largest military force.

Morgain

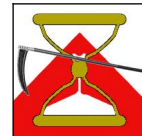
Standard: Three white stallions on a blue background
House Head: Duke Sezral Tal Morgain
Power Base: Rocrest in Argos



The black sheep of the Major Houses, House Morgain's near-legendary skills in carousing and womanizing are second only to their shrewd business sense and diplomatic faculties. Significant land holdings are maintained in eastern Sulkor, southern Celyd, and western Argos.

Nentus

Standard: An hourglass and black scythe on white and red
House Head: Regent Cen Almos Nentus
Power Base: Southflo in Celyd



They are a well rounded House with members known for a variety of skills and faults. The extent of their role in the fall of House Arrnas, while not known to all, was great. They benefited from that, gaining substantial Arrnas holdings by imperial decree. It is widely known that they were instrumental in establishing the republic although many nobles of slow wit question the wisdom of that. House Nentus has moderate sized land holds in Argos, Mostor, and Sulkor.

Roesoon

Standard: A red tower of stone on a gold & black background
House Head: King Justin Almir Roesoon
Power Base: Ahlabim in Sulkor



They are known for a harsh sense of justice and duty. Their wealth is substantial and their cavalry is known and respected across the Middle Lands. House Roesoon controls most of Sulkor, in addition, they have land holds in southern Celyd and minor holds in both Argos and Mostor.

Trellmock

Standard: A gold sword and tome on a dark blue background
House Head: Archduchess Clarise Vashee Trellmock
Power Base: Sapreen in Mostor



One of the most powerful Houses of Mostor, they are known for both a love of lore and a thirst for current information. It is said they take in scheming with their mother's milk. Significant land holds in Mostor are under control of House Trellmock as well as some in Argos.

Minor Houses

In general, these houses are smaller and less powerful than any of the Major Houses. A few have tenuous ties to the imperial bloodline, most often by way of bastards. Land holdings are small and/or poor in comparison to the Major Houses. They collect taxes from their subjects and pay tribute to both the Imperial Throne and at least one Major House. Power struggles between Minor Houses are nearly constant but not often bloody. Some would say that these struggles are encouraged and even orchestrated by one or more Major Houses. It is rare that a Minor House will raise a fighting force of more than 200 warriors. Most are lucky to have 50 at any given time. There are currently 82 houses recognized by the Imperial Throne as Minor Houses. Due to the large number, not all the Minor Houses will be listed here. Among the most powerful are: Dosren, Gantu, Helot, Kuntarr, Lunaz, Orcrest, and Pentell.

Dosren

- Standard: A black griffon head and two swords on white and blue
House Head: Count Jular Dosren
Power Base: Holdings split between Argos, Mostor



House Dosren is not known for planning, they tend to act with an alarming immediacy. This has led to more than one borderland conflict with other Houses. Most often smaller Houses but at times their rashness has led to conflict with far stronger opponents. Just in the past hundred years, scholars can point to three such instances and a few even speculate that had better actions been chosen in those times House Dosren would have substantially higher standing. They have strong ties to House Trelmock.

Gantu

- Standard: An orange ram's head on a blue background
House Head: Countess Mailyn Gantu
Power Base: Most holdings in Celyd



House Gantu is remembered for its founder's stubborn streak. A common saying being, "Old man Gantu could out wet water if he set his mind to it." Guston Gantu, the House's founder, has at least a half dozen well recorded historical references of his fierce nature. While his line has learned to be more prudent, they have not totally escaped Guston's shadow. They are firmly tied to House Nentus.

Helot

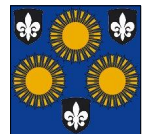
- Standard: A purple owl on a green & black background
House Head: Count Fularrd Soson Helot
Power Base: Most holdings in Mostor



The Helot line is one of the few Houses that has a strong streak of arcane magic in its family tree. This has been as much of a detriment as not. While there are some excellent advantages to being a mage, too many people still associate magic with the Savage Time. As a result, Helot has difficulty expanding their influence much beyond Mostor. Both House Roesoon and House Morgain have some influence with Helot but they have managed to avoid formal oaths of allegiance to either.

Kuntarr

- Standard: Three suns and three shields on a blue background
House Head: Count Dirk Heny Kuntarr
Power Base: Holdings split between Sulkor, Celyd



Founded during the Wild Hills Rebellion of 191MLE in which Sir Phillip Hend Kuntarr battled rebel forces in a three-day holding action which allowed Imperial reinforcements to arrive and put the rebellion down. House Kuntarr has seen many ups and downs over the years but they have endured. There have been times when it looked like they would achieve Major House status and other times during which it looked like they would lose everything. Some say House Kuntarr fights a perpetual holding action against life and success. They are tied solely to House Kalistic and that is where their allegiance is placed.

Lunaz

- Standard: A sword and key on a blue and purple background
House Head: Baroness Helen Kysta Lunaz
Power Base: Holdings split between Argos, Fellice



Members of House Lunaz always seem to be looking for an angle, they don't approach things head on. In addition, they are an opportunistic lot. House Lunaz is heavily involved in commerce. This has been the main method of their rise in power. As they are rather successful in these business endeavors they are a fairly wealthy House. It is often said they should move to Mostor as they would fit in better there. House Dorell holds major influence over Lunaz.

Orcrest

Standard:	Two black hatchets over a red and gold background
House Head:	Baron Barnabas Sulon Orcrest
Power Base:	Most holdings in Fellice



Known for their strength in battle, House Orcrest seeks out conflicts in the borderlands. Over the past two centuries, House Orcrest has actively pushed out into the borderlands. All their children are encouraged to strike out on their own and found a freehold in the borderlands. The ones that have the most success with this task will inherit the great titles of the House while a less successful sibling or cousin takes over their old position. While this means that, historically speaking, only one child in three lives beyond the age of 25, it also has seen Orcrest expand at a rapid rate, gaining lands and titles faster than their peers. They have ties to and are strong supporters of House Borsheen.

Pentell

Standard:	A knight on a tan & red background
House Head:	Countess Josephine Pentell
Power Base:	Most holdings in Argos



The members of Pentell are a long-lived House, many living to ages over 100. It is rumored they have elven blood. The general consensus is that while they are often a level-headed and an open-minded lot they are still prone to the occasional flight of fancy. Pentell sponsors more New Houses than most of their peers. They, themselves, have strong ties of allegiance to House Canitus.

New Houses

Small and often weak, these houses have only been around for one or two generations. They are often of common ancestry and rise to House status by deed and the will of the Imperial Throne. While most will not last beyond their third generation some of these will gain Minor House status as the Imperial Throne dictates. They sometimes collect taxes and often pay tribute to Minor Houses and/or Major Houses. All pay tribute to the Imperial Throne.

It is much easier to get New House status than most common folk know. One need only do the Empire some great service and in most cases, pay for the right to petition the Throne for house status. On occasion, the petition is not necessary should the deed(s) be great enough to draw the attention of the Throne. Just what deeds will draw this attention depends on what the Throne needs at the time. While uncommon, there is a historical precedent for Major Houses bringing a petition to the Throne as a reward to a vassal family for service done in the name of the House. They become a sponsor to the New House.

New House status is like probationary noble-hood. Ten years after its third leader takes power, such a house is reviewed by the Throne and either dissolved or granted Minor House status. The quandary explored during the review is whether the House has continued to be a "noble bloodline". In theory, any House can be dissolved by the Throne but it is rare outside of New Houses. There are currently 34 New Houses, among the most noteworthy are: Casabon, Indorn, Murktan, Urgains, and Welldown.

Casabon

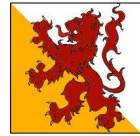
Standard:	A green and gold shield on a pale green background
House Head:	Baron Nathaniel Reid Casabon
Power Base:	Cave Bear Vale freehold in Fellice



House Casabon is in its eighty-first year. Nathaniel is very old and will soon pass his title to the Casabon's third heir, the lady Jennell Casabon. Jennell has been working on the plan for Imperial review since she was a teenager. Her main objective is to increase the iron mine's output and she hopes to find a source of silver in the freehold. With the added wealth she will expand the garrison and increase patrols. The local orc tribes have been less troublesome over the past few years. Jennell knows this will not last and the extra guards will be helpful when they return. The freehold has four settlements, one large walled town, a village and two hamlets.

Indorn

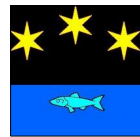
Standard: A red lion on an orange and white background
House Head: Baroness Charlotte Indorn
Power Base: The Red Mountain freehold in Celyd



The Baroness is first of her line and founded the freehold, ruling for the past thirty-six years. She has no husband and seven children, all adopted. Only two of the children are of Charlotte's bloodline, they were her sister's children. House Indorn's review would be more difficult if Charlotte named a child not of her bloodline as heir. This is a question she is wrestling with currently, she wants the best child to be the heir. At this point that is Sheldon Indorn, not of her bloodline and a half-orc, but also an excellent warrior and priest of Rakhthor. The adopted children, all orphaned by orc raiders, are devoted to her and her plan to rid the land of orc tribes. The nearby mountains provide no shortage of orcs. The freehold has one settlement, a large walled town. It sees at least one sizable orc raid every two or three years.

Murktan

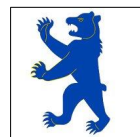
Standard: Three stars and a fish on a blue and black background
House Head: Baron Darius Wyse Murktan
Power Base: The Clear Water freehold in Sulkor



House Murktan is up for Imperial review in less than four years. At this point, it is hard to say if they will pass it. While House Murktan has performed well over the past seventy-eight years, Darius' eldest son is proving to be less than an ideal example of nobility. This jeopardizes the review. Should the boy continue to act as he is the Emperor may decide the Murktan bloodline is not a noble line and move to dissolve their House. Darius must gain control of his son or pass him over as heir in favor of a child that is better suited to the noble image in general. Such problems are among the reasons so few New Houses survive the Imperial review. The freehold has three settlements, one large coastal town, and two fishing villages.

Urgains

Standard: A blue bear on a white background
House Head: Baron Flint Seth Urgains
Power Base: The Deep Clay Hills freehold in Mostor



Flint is the second member of the House to hold the title of Baron. He inherited the title eighteen years ago. His eldest, Elizabeth Hope Urgains, has shown herself to be an exceptional heir. The freehold is one of the few with a major export and this is largely due to her efforts. The high-quality clay found in the area makes excellent pottery and brick. It is shipped out in its raw form and as pottery or brick. As it stands now only an increase in the local goblin activity could cause major issues for House Urgains. The freehold currently has two settlements, a large walled town, and a hamlet.

Welldown

Standard: A pair of keys on a gold and red background
House Head: Baron Temalo Rix Welldown
Power Base: The Manticore Wood freehold in Argos



House Welldown is in its twenty-third year and Temalo has only just inherited his father's title and power. This makes Temalo the second Welldown to hold the title. Whoever is next, be it Temalo's yet to be born heir or his sister Iris, will have ten years before the Imperial review of their House standing. House Welldown has had success in their campaigns against local hobgoblin and bugbear tribes. The biggest news in the freehold is Temalo's search for a bride. He has been more active, socially speaking, than he has over past years. The rumors are flying as to which young maiden is most likely to catch his eye. Political motivations will most likely be a factor in the union, some say more than love or looks. The freehold currently has three settlements, two villages, and a small walled town.

Fallen Houses

While noble houses will come and go, it takes more than that to become known as a Fallen House. The four universally recognized Fallen Houses were once great and powerful houses that fell to ruin within one generation. While the causes varied, a traitorous act was most often the root cause of the fall.

These houses have lost practically everything. At best such a house may maintain a minor holding such as a manor house. Most, however, are destitute and don't even have retainers. Surviving members of a Fallen House seek a return to better days and the power that goes with those days. It is not uncommon for the bloodline of these houses to have a very unflattering nickname attached to them, such as "Kin-slayers" or "Forked-tongues" as is fitting for the deed that toppled their house.

The four known across the Middle Lands are Arrnas, Endun, Fortess, and Ricdon. There are a few others that, while not as universally recognized, are still seen as members of this category. Still others have been lost to antiquity as their bloodlines died out or otherwise faded into obscurity. This is the main reason that the current four are from the past seventy-five years, the memory is still "fresh".

Arrnas



House Arrnas held the crown of Celyd before it became a republic. Many of them were involved in a plot against the Imperial Throne to seize power. Now known as "Blackhearts" for the actions of Bartimus Arrnas, a rather cruel king and the devious mastermind of the plot for power. The remaining members of this bloodline are mostly penniless and without honor in the eyes of the other Houses. A few of those, directly involved in the plot, escaped execution by fleeing to far away lands; Bartimus and his sons were not among these "lucky" few. Some 60 years later those that remain in the Middle Lands without imperial warrants hanging over them do so as a reminder of the cost of rebellion. The Arrnas standard was a blue crescent moon over a great axe on a light grey background.

Endun



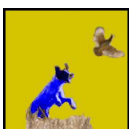
House Endun caused a financial disaster that bankrupted a dozen Minor and New Houses. Some of the Major Houses felt that economic pain as well. The assets gained by House Endun due to this subterfuge were seized by the Imperial Throne and House Endun was dissolved by imperial decree. This was one of the few times a House of this size was dissolved with the political support of nearly all the other Major Houses. Now known as "Forked-tongues" this bloodline is not now, nearly one-hundred years later, and may never again be trusted with money or the power that goes with having it. The crest of Endun is a set of black scales on a red background.

Fortess



Now known as "Mad-hats" or "Kin-slayers" this house fell under mysterious circumstances. Some say it was a curse or other fell magic. In the end, a dozen predominate members of House Fortess went totally insane within the span of four moons. For most, the insanity was as bloody as it was quick. Duke Polimus Fortess, being one of the most well-known. He slew his wife, six of the eight children and a dozen of their most loyal retainers before being killed by his own guards. The guard captain, Kyle Sunchild, later took his own life in grief for having to kill his lord. Stories like that of Polimus were repeated, again and again, with others of the Fortess line over the next few moons, until the House was in such turmoil that it never recovered. The present-day remnants of House Fortess are known for extreme and sometimes erratic behavior. Fortess flew a banner showing the tree of life circled by five stars on a purple backing.

Ricdon



Forever remember as "Blind-eyes", House Ricdon was run into the ground by a long series of poor choices that culminated in Duke Trevor Montblac Ricdon unwittingly siding with a group of moneylenders in a plot against his king and childhood friend, King Samule Roesoon. While it did come out that the moneylenders had manipulated the duke, which saved his life, House Ricdon could never shake their reputation as fools. As such the House fell into ruin and even four generations have not seen it rebuilt. It is widely believed that another four wouldn't help. A blue hunting dog flushing quail was the sigil of House Ricdon.

The Imperial House, Kalistic

Standard: The green tri-pointed leaf over a white throne on red and black
House Head: Emperor Jean-Baltist Rejun Kalistic
Power Base: The Middle Land Empire



From the time of the Empire's founding, 540+ years ago, House Kalistic has held the Imperial Throne. It has not been an easy road, from assassination attempts to outright rebellion House Kalistic has faced and won over all challenges. They are masterful adaptors and manipulators who have shown the ability to use force as needed in order to maintain control over the Middle Lands. As a whole, the members of this House have proven time and again to possess the qualities needed to rule. One-hundred-twenty-three noble families (called Houses) have sworn an oath to the Imperial Throne. Ten percent of all tax collected goes to the Imperial House.

The responsibility of granting noble status falls mainly on the Imperial Throne. There are three activities involved in this process. First is granting a title to someone, not of a noble bloodline. Second is elevating a bloodline to noble status, thereby making a New House. Finally, reviewing a bloodline's claim of nobility which is done ten years after a New House has its third head of house. While many high ranking nobles can grant a title, a noble house can only be created or destroyed by decree of the Imperial Throne.

In an average year, the Imperial Throne will receive a thousand petitions requesting a noble title. While not all of them will be accepted, about half will. As many as a dozen petitions for New House status are submitted each year. At best, only one or two will be granted. On average, one New House is up for review each year. Historically speaking, five out of seven will fail the review and be dissolved. The Imperial Throne takes noble bloodlines very seriously and is careful to weed out those that it sees as not worthy of the responsibility and honor that comes with ruling. Great care is taken to show those that failed to measure up had flaws and it was not a whim that killed their dream. At the same time, those that pass are, privately, left with the distinct impression that it was only the good grace of the Imperial Throne that allowed it. In other words, they are left feeling in debt and grateful for the good favor of House Kalistic. One way or another, the ones that don't show they see it that way will always fail the test.

Imperial Loyalty vs House Loyalty

While oath to liege and country is strong, the bonds of House (family) are just as strong. As the most powerful of the noble Houses hold lands in more than one kingdom no one wants war between kingdoms. This has led to less open warfare and more subterfuge and plotting. When there is a war, it is more likely to be between Houses than countries. For the most part, only the smaller Houses engage in war. Such a conflict between the larger Houses could easily snowball into a conflict that would pull every nation in and cause great loss of life.

The Houseless Nobles

The vast majority of nobles (about 90%) are not members of a house. They are low-level nobles who lack the backing, both political and financial, of a noble who is part of a house. Any wealth they have comes from the taxes they collect. Any political influence they have comes from who they know and who owes them favors. While many collect taxes, few are owed favors. While they are not members of a house they owe their title to one house or another. Many times, that is directly to House Kalistic. When that is not the case, it's the house that sponsored their petition. Regardless, these nobles are the pawns of noble society. They will spend their lives working for greater position and more power; their success rate is low.

Hierarchy of Nobles in the Middle Lands

What is it to be noble? Deeds are a display of one's inner self, hence noble deeds show noble blood. To have noble blood grants one status above commoners. To have a title as well, grants status above others of noble blood (assuming they do not have a greater title) and the duty to dispense the Imperial Throne's justice within the noble's lands. Not all nobles have titles as they are inherited or earned. Nobles are granted title only from other nobles, most often a king, or queen, or the Imperial Throne itself. Unless they hold a throne, or will, nobles are known in general as Lord or Lady. A list of titles (male/female) follows, shown from lowest to highest rank. This includes details of their territories and powers.

Sir/Dame

The recipient of a knighthood is someone who seeks to protect and serve the realm. This title is, most often, granted to a warrior as reward for great service to their liege. On occasion, it is granted to a non-warrior in recognition for actions that protect the realm. This title can be granted to noble and commoner alike as in most cases the actions performed show the bearer to have noble blood even if they are not of a noble bloodline. This title cannot be inherited and rarely includes a land grant beyond a small stead or manor house. Knights have no power to grant title beyond squire to others. Squire is not a title that grants nobility but it is often given to a youth of noble blood at their parents' request. Many nobles see service to a fine knight as good for their children, it builds character.

Magister/Magistra

This is the lowest of nobles with a land grant and is sometimes called a Sheriff or a Governor. It is most common for settlements under two-thousand people located in civilized areas to be overseen by a Magister. While the Magister is a noble they are commonly Houseless nobles although many Houses use the station as a place to put their lesser family members. This title is not inherited and the lands governed do not belong to the Magister but rather to a more powerful noble in who's name the Magister rules. The Magister collects taxes and is responsible for the local militia but has no power to grant noble titles. They can petition their liege, asking that someone in their service be elevated to knighthood. It is not uncommon that a Magister has a military background and they may even hold a knighthood as well. While it is rare, some Magisters maintain a small band of warriors, often only a *trident* or two.

Baron/Baroness

The ruler of a town and the surrounding lands, called a barony, which may include some smaller villages in addition to the town. The total population of the barony is usually between two and five thousand people and while multiple settlements are possible the main one is the largest and often walled. The barony is often a territory that borders the wilderness hence the nickname "Border Lord" is often applied to Barons. Due to the wilderness nature of the area, many baronies import a portion of their food as growing it locally is not always safe. Most New Houses are at this level of nobility. The land they rule is often their land only for so long as it is well governed. Such a noble collects tax and can grant the title of Knight and Magister, assuming they have a village in the barony needing one. Their title and lands are often passed to their children. It is common for them to maintain a fighting force of *company* size. After being suitably pacified for a few generations, a barony is declared a county by the kingdom in which it resides. That will naturally include elevating the local Baron to the status of Count.

Count/Countess

The ruler of a small city and the surrounding lands, one that in most cases is not on the wilderness border. While similar in area to a barony this territory is much more pacified and hence supports a larger population. Such a territory is referred to as a county. Generally speaking, a county will comfortably support a population between twenty and thirty thousand people. They are commonly spread over half a dozen settlements. The county also includes expanses of land for industrial, agricultural and livestock use. This allows many counties to be self-sufficient. Most nobles at this level are members of a Minor House. Their titles pass along their bloodline and the lands they rule belong to them. Additionally, they have the power to name others Knight or Magister. A small standing army is common. It is most often of *battalion* or *company* size depending on the size of the main settlement.

Duke/Duchess

The ruler of a medium-sized city, a stronghold and the equivalent of several counties worth of land and smaller settlements. In short, large tracts of land, which is referred to as a duchy. As such they have several Magisters and the occasional Baron and/or Count under them. A duchy will often support one or two hundred thousand people. The vast majority of nobles at this level are members of a Major House. Their title and lands are passed along their bloodline and they have the power to bestow noble titles including Knight, Magister and Baron. With the approval of their liege, they can even raise someone to the status of Count. Due to imperial mandate, all nobles are expected to maintain a military but at this level, the force required becomes much larger than for lesser nobles. In times of peace, the number of troops is roughly equal to between one and two percent of the local population. These forces are used to protect and patrol the duchy, in addition, they are expected to fight for the Imperial Throne as needed.

Archduke/Archduchess

The ruler of a major city and the surrounding area, the archduchy, which often includes a few more small and midsized cities as well as a number of towns and villages. As such they will hold domain over several Barons, Counts and even a Duke or two in addition to a slew of Magisters. These nobles can field sizable armies by calling on the forces of nobles within their domain to join their standing army which they maintain to patrol and protect the duchy. It is also expected to fight for the Empire. These are the richest and most powerful of the middle-level nobles and all are members of a Major House. They also shoulder a huge amount of the responsibility for governing the Empire.

Prince/Princess

In general, this is not a title that is bestowed. It is reserved for the children of a noble that holds a crown, a royal heir. The first heir in line is given the honorific "Crowned", e.g. to call her the crowned princess means that she is first in line to be the next queen. In the case of the Imperial House, the word "Imperial" denotes the next heir in line, e.g. the imperial prince will be the next to occupy the Imperial Throne. In cases where the noble has no children, they can give the title to anyone they wish to name their heir.

King/Queen

This is one who holds a royal crown and rules a vast kingdom populated by millions of people. They have also sworn an oath of loyalty to the Imperial Throne. Within their lands, they have near-absolute power and directly rule their capital city. The only thing a king or queen cannot do is countermand the word of the Imperial Throne. These nobles can field sizable armies by calling on the forces of nobles within their lands to join their standing army which they maintain to patrol and protect the kingdom. This army is expected to fight for the empire.

Emperor/Empress

The ultimate symbol of the Empire, the one who sits upon the Imperial Throne, and the highest power in the Middle Lands. Trade and relations between the kingdoms are regulated by the Throne as are relations and treaties with countries outside the Middle Lands. The Imperial Throne also controls the most powerful standing army in the empire. Over thirty million people are subject to imperial rule.

While things work a little differently for nobles at lower levels in Celyd, still, it is very similar. These nobles have taken on the role of military commanders and spend most of their time dealing with peacekeeping and protection. They do not collect taxes or make law, instead tax collection is the responsibility of the local council and a portion of this money is turned over to the local noble in exchange for maintaining the standing army. The council makes the laws and the noble's guard enforces them. Judging those that transgress the law is also the domain of the local noble who sits in judgment with two others appointed by the council. Sometimes this same noble sits on the local council as well. The Senate is chiefly made up of high ranking nobles, Counts, Dukes and Archdukes. Some scholars call the entire arrangement in Celyd a hoax on the commoners rather than a republic.

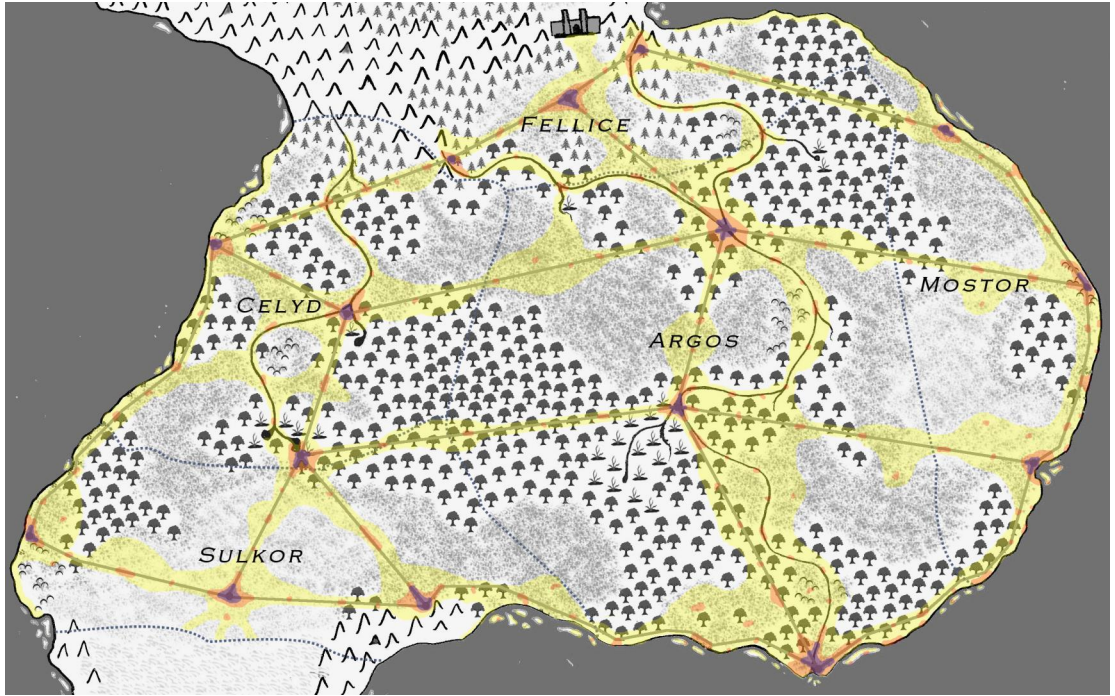
In the old tongue the same word, *tor*, is used for land, blood and family.

People of the Middle Lands

The people of the Middle Lands are diverse. As such it is not a simple matter to describe them. Some are harsh, others kind. Some are creative while others are drones. Some are kings and more are beggars. Some cheat and others have honor. In short, they are a great deal like we are, just people.

Population Distribution

The estimated 30 million people calling the Middle Lands home are spread out along rivers and coastlines, Imperial Roads, and the farmland adjacent to these places. On the right is a map that shows population, low level (yellow), medium level (orange), and high (violet) population density. That is not to say no one lives in the other areas but they are so underpopulated as to be considered unsettled wilderness lands.



The vast majority of people do not live in a city but in the smaller villages and hamlets spread across the countryside. Around 1.3 million people do live in the major cities. Another one and a half million or so live in the numerous mid-sized and small cities. Leaving a bit over 27 million other inhabitants spread out in towns and villages of various sizes across the Middle Lands. A small number of citizens live in isolated dwellings, meaning they are outside of any settlement's boundaries.

Sources of food and fresh water are large factors in population distribution as is safety and trade route accessibility. The majority of cities and towns are very close to 100% human. This is because most non-humans living in the Middle Lands have their own villages and small towns, the average small town human could go years without seeing one. In a few areas, it's possible for a person to go their entire life without seeing someone not of their own race.

Common Life

How do the common folk of the Middle Lands live? There is no easy answer to this, it depends on where they live, what they do, who rules the area, and so on. On the whole, the average untrained worker in a rural area will make about five gold coins in a week. This will be enough to comfortably support the worker should the local economy be in-line with base wages (5gp/week in this case). Furthermore, they will be able to provide a very modest lifestyle for a family. This income will cover food, a home, clothing, taxes and so on. Base wages will tend to rise with the cost of living but at a pace that is not as responsive to changes. In other words, it will take a little more time for wages to rise than it took for prices to rise. Urban area wages and cost will be a bit higher than their rural area counterparts.

General Living Conditions

What follows is an overview of different living conditions, referred to as GLC. It is meant to be a way of generalizing socioeconomic factors and condensing it into meaningful labels for your use.

- **Destitute** : a horrible existence. No home or income (or very little income) is had by a person at this level. Starvation is a real and present danger. Virtually no belongings beyond the rags they wear are accumulated. Theft and/or survival skills are required daily. Payment of tax is impossible but there is very little for such a person to pay tax on.
- **Poor** : a hard life. Small-scale farmers, unskilled labor, and the elderly often find themselves in this group. Such people are often underemployed or have an exceedingly large family to support. They are not often a homeowner/landowner. Normal shelter for such people is a single room shack/apartment or a tent. The cheapest possible food is acquired, be that purchased or grown/raised/foraged and shortages are common. Belongings are spartan, often homemade, and repaired far more often than replaced. It is a struggle to pay taxes and they are in near constant danger of losing everything to the taxman. Extra coin seems a fiction to these people.
- **Below Average** : a very modest lifestyle. Farmers and unskilled (or low-skilled) labor and the elderly often find themselves in this group. Additionally, they are sometimes underemployed or receive subpar pay or have a family to support. Food is often what is cheaply available but shortages are rare. It is not unknown for such people to own their home but it is far less common in urban areas as opposed to rural areas. The common domicile is a small, simple house or apartment. Belongings are not abundant and often repaired/patched. Taxes are a burden that sucks-up all the "spare" coin such people have. It is very hard for these folks to save.
- **Average** : basic needs are accommodated. This group includes successful farmers and full-time workers (newly skilled or unskilled), sometimes having a small family. Soldiers often fall into this category. Food is of decent quality and quantity. Home ownership is common, yet more so in rural areas. Such a home is often a comfortable small or mid-sized house/apartment. Belongings are adequate and in decent condition, not often new but well maintained. Taxes take a sizable portion of income. Saving is possible when care is used to manage expenses.
- **Above Average** : has just a little more than most. Established artisans and merchants, mid-level government officials, military officers, or highly skilled workers. Food is readily available and of good quality. The home is most often owned and commonly a mid-sized house/townhouse. Belongings are of good quality (often new) and abundant. Taxes take a sizable portion of income. Saving and even making small investments are possible for such people.
- **Wealthy** : well-off and with few material worries. Money lenders, high-end merchants, top-level government officials, low-level nobles. Food is plentiful and of excellent quality. Homes are owned and are often a family estate with lands and servants and a wide range of amenities. More than one dwelling is very possible. Belongings are of fine quality and excellent condition and exceedingly abundant. Taxes are not a burden. Saving and investing are simple matters.
- **Extravagant** : little that can be had with gold is beyond reach. Nobles and other lucky people fall into this category. Commonly, food is both excessive and exotic. Multiple homes/estates (fully outfitted and complete with servants) are owned. Large swathes of land and several businesses are owned. Belongings are plentiful, exotic and perfectly maintained. Taxes are not a burden. Saving and investing are exceedingly trivial matters.

Avg. Living Condition Cost vs Base Wage (ALCC/BW)

This is meant to be an indicator of a region's economic viability. In essence, it is the ratio of the base wage of an area vs the cost of an average living condition, that being the "average" GLC. Both the wage and cost are fluid, average, values and should not be taken as gospel. They exist only as a tool to help the GM by giving them an idea of local conditions so they can convey that idea to the PC's.

The base wage is the weekly salary of an unskilled worker. In an average town with an average economy (average supply/demand) that is about 5gp a week. In the same case, cost should be 5gp (or just a bit less than 5gp) a week. This is the theoretical ideal. So, in this case, ALCC/BW is expressed as 5gp/5gp. In practice, because so few cases are covered by that ideal, the numbers will be larger or smaller as dictated by local economic factors. Things like tax rate, supply chains, customer base, worker saturation, job availability, and so on will directly affect the numbers. In the end, there is no formula to calculate these numbers, it is a GM's judgment call.

The relationship between the GLC categories, a person's income, and the ALCC/BW is relatively straightforward. The closer a person's income is to the cost in ALCC/BW the closer they are to having an "average" living condition. The ALCC/BW shows the general tendency of the local economy to be a "favorable" worker environment. Generally, the cost (first number) should be a bit less than the base

wage (second number). But as long as they are close the common folk will not suffer to greatly and the general population will drift toward "average" GLC. As the base wage and cost drift farther apart the general population will drift away from an "average" GLC as dictated by the direction of the shift. Higher cost makes the drift move toward "poor" GLC. Likewise, a higher base wage would make the drift move toward "wealthy" GLC. Neither case is desirable, as both show an unhealthy or unsustainable economy.

A good rule of thumb is that a well-managed economy will stabilize with costs between 99 and 101 percent of wages. To be clear, having a cost that is higher than base wages does not mean that everyone is automatically operating with a weekly deficit of funds. It means that cost is such that people have to be more frugal and cannot always afford everything they need and will have to settle for a cheaper alternative in those cases.

Use the following table to assess what a person's GLC would be based on what percentage of cost (in ALCC/BW) their income is. In the case of income levels under 200% of costs, the resulting GLC can be adjusted downward by one or two categories if they are supporting a mid-sized or large family.

I/C to GLC	Destitute	Poor	Below Avg.	Average	Above Avg.	Wealthy	Extravagant
Income/Cost	0% to 40%	40% - 70%	70% to 90%	90% to 110%	110% to 300%	300% to 2500%	Over 2500%

Keeping Time

What the average commoner does to make a living is important. When they do it also matters. The wheel of the year, the calendar, drives when many of these needful things are done.

There are four seasons in a year.

Season	Description
Spring	The time of planting.
Summer	The time of growing.
Autumn	The time of harvesting.
Winter	The time of preparing.

Food production is just about the most important activity in the Empire. So many citizens are a part of agricultural work that it drives, not only the commoners, but the Empire as a whole. Hence the calendar is based around planting, growing, and harvesting. This is the way it has been for most of recorded time.

List of months in the Middle Lands.

Month	Length	Translation
Mo'Ko	30	Low spring
Fer'Ko	32	Mid spring
Ty'Ko	30	High spring
Mo'Rae	30	Low summer
Fer'Rae	32	Mid summer
Ty'Rae	30	High summer
Mo'Set	30	Low autumn
Fer'Set	32	Mid autumn
Ty'Set	30	High autumn
Mo'Helt	30	Low winter
Fer'Helt	32	Mid winter
Ty'Helt	30	High winter

There are four seasons in a year. Each of the four seasons are divided into three sections called months. This makes twelve months in a calendar year. Each month is 30 or 32 days long. A year is 368 days long.

While there is a "standard" name for each month in the Empire, some tribals have their own names. Foreigners, also have other names for the months. Regardless, the times are marked by the stars and phases of the moon and the movement of the sun. So, whatever name is given to it, the month is still what it is.

There are no standards for naming weeks or days of the week. If names are used, they are by local or regional tradition. For official Imperial needs, the year, month, and day of the month are all that is required under the law. For the average citizen, knowing the day of the month is enough. For example, when it is the 20th day of Ty'Rae the average citizen knows that by this time of the year the southern (warmer) areas have already planted their second crop of the year. Any that haven't done so will not have time to grow a second crop.

It is not uncommon for a city-sized settlement to have a gnomish clock/calendar in their main square or fort. Such clockwork devices count minutes and hours as well as days and months and years.

Noble Life

The life of a noble is not as easy as it may seem. Sure, most nobles have a measure of wealth and that can be helpful. Some even have power which can be enjoyable. But there are responsibilities and demands in a noble's life. The price of failure is high so the wise noble cultivates a few scapegoats.

At the core, nobles exist to govern the Empire. The lowest level local nobles manage local resources and collect taxes. The nobles above those see to greater goals of the Empire but in essence do the same thing at a regional level. They also keep the local level nobles in line. Above the regional level nobles are the royal nobles. They govern a kingdom and likewise keep the regional nobles in line. Again, it's the same job just at a higher level. All of them serve the Imperial Throne which guides the Empire.

Tax is collected by the noble in order to operate the government, offering protection and infrastructure. First, a percentage of the funds are given as tribute to nobles above the one collecting taxes. Then they are required by the Imperial Throne to keep a standing military force of a size mandated by the settlement's size. That will take a large portion of the tax. So long as the military force and tribute are in order what remains is used as the local noble dictates. It is completely within their power to use the funds for personal needs as well. Most do so freely. The smart ones invest some in local infrastructure.

Military resources are directed and used by the noble. They are used to protect the local population, as much from orc hoards as from criminal elements. All the forces a noble commands are subject to be called upon by the nobles above them in service of the Empire. Indeed, every citizen of the Empire is subject to being called for military service, so long as they are able-bodied.

While not all nobles see it as such, to a degree, they also serve the people they govern. Their plans and actions affect everyone below them. A bad decision on the noble's part can plunge their territory into a state of ruin. In the end, a good leader will understand that they ultimately share the fate of those they lead. So, what is good for the people is generally good for the noble.

Not all nobles are created equally. Some have land and title, others do not. Some are wealthy while others must go to moneylenders on a regular basis. Overall, nobles can be divided into general groups based on power and standing, of which there are three: new noble, untitled noble, and old blood noble.

New nobles started life as a commoner and by way of deed were recognized as having "noble blood". If the deed showed devotion to and did a service for the Empire they could be granted a noble title. Most often this is a Knighthood the rest of the time it's a Magister's seat. While history has recorded times in which even higher titles were bestowed, that practice is too rare to be considered. Neither the title of Knight nor Magister is a title that is passed to one's children so the new noble is not guaranteed to be a member of a "noble bloodline". To be recognized as a member of a noble bloodline by the Empire means being granted House status. That takes more than a single deed and often more than one family member doing the deeds. Therefore, it is not only possible but common to have a title and not be a member of a House. Nobles at this level have little in way of power or wealth but they are the most numerous group.

Untitled nobles are members of a House but have not earned or inherited a title, for instance, the second or third heir. They are still referred to by the general title of lord or lady. All other titles are more specific. For example, Knight of the Realm, Magister of Dorbank Hamlet, Baron of the Seven River Vale, and so on. Untitled nobles do as much as they can to gain a title because with a title they gain power and influence and wealth. Military service is one of the quickest ways to gain a title and many young nobles try it.

An old blood noble holds a title and is a member of an established House, i.e. minor or major. They are the smallest section of nobility and the holders of power and wealth. When people think of nobles this is the group that comes to mind.

The noble's life is full of power games and plots and fear. This is not a life for everyone, the stress can be fatal. It is, after all, a long way down from the top. Just look at the story of any Fallen House. One example of the extreme measures nobles take in pursuit of their games is hiding magic use. Arcane magic is linked with the Savage Time in the minds of many. For this reason, rule by mages is not as common because they are not trusted. So, nobles will rarely practice magic openly, it's just too risky.

Non-Humans in the Empire

The Middle Lands have a fairly sizable population of elves, dwarves, gnomes, halflings, and so on. It is, however, not commonplace for all of these races to share settlements. Even the major cities will have only a small number of non-humans, often less than 2% of the total population. The noteworthy exceptions being Balashar, Brazhale, Ghuntos, Hilldale, Mischihoon, and Vesral. Of those, only Balashar, Ghuntos, and Hilldale are part of the Empire. Non-humans count for 26% of the population of Balashar.

The smaller cities and towns are often, but not always, as lacking in diversity. Most non-humans living in the Middle Lands have their own villages and small towns. Because of this, the average small town human could go years without seeing another race. In a few areas, it's possible for a person to go their entire life without seeing another race. The most common contacts for humans are with gnomes and halflings.

The lack of diversity has had some detrimental effects on the Empire's citizens. One of these being a very insular mindset in regard to race. This is more common in the smaller settlements that lack any contact with non-humans. In these places, non-humans can easily be the focus of curiosity or hostility. It is another question as to if those feelings are openly expressed.

Dwarves have underground cities in every mountain range of the Empire. These settlements are large as the underworld is dangerous. Each having a population between five-thousand and twenty-thousand, they are often located in mineral-rich areas with access to water. While they are less inclined to seek out trade, their wares are highly desirable. Arms and armor of dwarven make are in high demand across the Empire. Due to this, human towns actively seek trade opportunities with any nearby dwarven cities.

Elves have settlements all over the Middle Lands, on the rolling plains, in the forests, among the hills, along the seaside, and by the rivers. These settlements commonly trade with any friendly nearby communities, human or otherwise. Some will produce all manner of elven wares for trade but many are not that concerned with commerce and just trade for essential items. Most have a population less than a few thousand yet there are rumors of larger elven cities in the deep unexplored forest areas. In the major cities of the Empire, elves are often the smallest non-human population. Human cities tend to be too "turbulent" for the average elf. Half-elves are more common than elves in human areas.

Gnomes are one of the races that actively seek out and join human settlements. They are also one of the least numerous of the non-human races in the Empire. A fifth of all gnomes live in human settlements. By far, Hilldale has the largest percentage of gnomes in the Empire's major cities. They do have their own smaller gnome only communities scattered in the hills of the Empire. The population of such towns is on average two or three thousand gnomes and they tend to actively trade with their neighbors.

Halflings love their communities, yet are attracted to the human settlements. They are often one of the larger segments of the non-human population in the Empire's major cities. Their own settlements tend to be in remote yet serene areas, often in the forest or among hills. Their settlements' population is on average at least a thousand and they maintain good trade relationships with neighboring friendly communities.

Orcs are one of the most numerous of the "evil" races found in the Empire. While they normally settle in hills and mountainous regions, the tribes of the Middle Lands are not that picky. They can just as easily be found in any borderland region, on the plains, in the forest, and along the coastline. They actively prey on any neighboring settlement, human or otherwise. Raids and slavery are how they survive. Sometimes they do more than raid and as a result, the population of half-orcs in the Middle Lands is alarmingly high. Some of the larger border towns have hundreds of half-orcs among their population. They are not often well treated in their home village but many find success in military service.

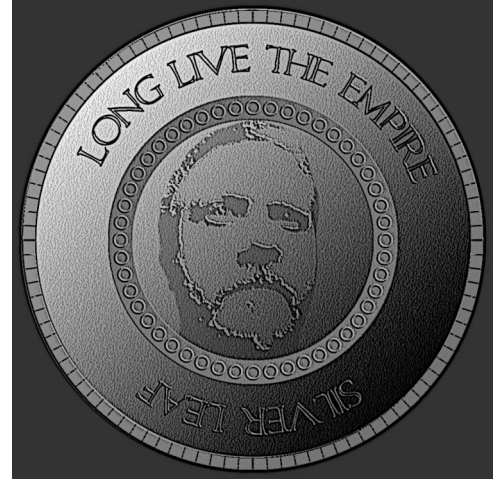
Outside of the borderland freeholds, the occupants of the human civilized areas generally don't believe in the more exotic monsters. While many will accept the existence of common monsters such as orcs, goblins, hobgoblins, troglodytes, bugbears, gnolls, and kobolds. These same people will balk at the idea of frost giants, or dragons, or mind flayers, or any other beast not commonly found in their own metaphorical backyard. These are looked at as bard tales told to entertain children and frighten folk into staying close to home. This attitude is lessened in the borderlands but not totally dispelled.

Commerce and Business

Producers, crafters, and merchants make up the key links of commerce. Producers (farmers, miners, hunters, trappers, livestock breeders, etc...) generate raw materials many of which are sold to crafters, sometimes by way of merchants. These crafters turn the raw materials into goods that are then sold to the general public. As often as not, the sell of refined goods is made to merchants who then transport and sell them to the public. Smaller settlements have fewer merchants, hence more crafters will sell direct.

Most settlements will form local guilds in order to protect product prices. They will establish acceptable prices for their wares as well as penalties for those members that try to undercut the price. Prices are set at the middle levels, this leaves prices of products sold to the general public more flexible. Guilds are, generally speaking, powerful organizations with money and at least some local influence. They use their influence to further guild goals. One of the first uses is ensuring that non-members cannot do business. A common method being higher taxes for non-members.

The larger the settlement, the more specialized the guilds. For example, a village of 800 may only have a general merchant guild while a city of 18,000 can easily have multiple guilds, one for each type of merchant (wool & cloth, beer and wine, grain, cheese, and so on). In larger settlements, crafters are as likely to form guilds as merchants are. Finally, guilds facilitate the trade they serve by matching apprentices with mentors. Successful guilds are on the lookout for fresh, young, malleable talent.



Shown below are some of the more commonly found businesses possible in any given settlement. Also shown is the frequency of shops per 10,000 inhabitants, average employees per shop, and employees per 10,000 inhabitants. Frequency is a suggestion, the city may have more or fewer shops of a given type as determined by the GM. This is not a complete list.

Shop	#/10K	E/Shp	E/10K	Description
Barbers	10	1.2	12	Hair cut, shave, trim, minor surgery all done by the barber.
Bathers	4.5	1.8	8	Operators of a public bathhouse.
Blacksmiths	5	2.1	11	A smith that works with iron and steel to make tools and horseshoes.
Bleachers	3.5	2	7	Specializes in bleaching cloth, furs, skins, and wood pulp.
Brewers	6.5	2.3	15	Specializes in making and selling beer, ale, mead and the like.
Brickers	4	2.8	11	Baker of bricks. They require a good source of clay-like soil.
Bowyers	7	1.9	13	A maker of bows. Most often made of wood or bone.
Buckle Makers	6.5	1.1	7	A crafter that specializes in buckles, buttons and other clothing fasteners.
Butchers	8.5	2.4	20	Specializes in livestock slaughter and selling the meat.
Carpenters	20	3.1	62	One who builds structures and items from wood.
Chandlers	14	2	28	A maker of candles, oil, and lamps.
Cheese Makers	6	2	12	One who makes cheese and butter.
Coopers	15	2.5	38	A crafter that specializes in making and repairing barrels, vats, and tubs.
Cutlers	4.5	1.2	5	Smith who makes and repairs cutlery from iron, copper, silver, or gold.
Dyers	5.5	2	11	One who dyes cloth, furs, and skins.
Fletchers	15	2.8	42	A maker of arrows.
Fishmongers	7.5	2	15	Specializes in preparation and sell of all types of seafood.
Furriers	40	1.2	48	A crafter who makes and repairs goods made of furs, such as clothes.
Glove Makers	2.5	1.1	3	A crafter who makes and repairs gloves (cloth or leather).

Harness Makers	5.5	2.4	13	Leatherworkers that specialize in making/repairing harnesses.
Hat Makers	10	1.1	11	One who makes and repairs hats.
Hay Merchants	4.5	1	5	A merchant that specializes in selling hay and other animal feed.
Inns	5.5	2.5	14	A boarding house, generally having 3 to 15 rental spaces.
Jewelers	11	1.2	13	Dealers of precious stones. Also knowledgeable in setting stones.
Locksmiths	5.25	1.3	7	A smith that specializes in making/repairing locks, puzzles, and devices.
Masons	18	2.8	50	One who builds structures from brick and/or stone.
Mercers	12	1.5	18	Merchant that sells cloth.
Moneylenders	2	1.1	2	Act as bankers, providing loans and a place to store money.
Painters	7	3.5	25	An artist who paints portraits, landscapes, and/or frescoes.
Plasterers	8	3.6	29	A crafter that specializes in laying and repairing plaster. Used on buildings.
Potters	15	2.1	32	A maker of pottery.
Purse Makers	9	1.1	10	One that makes purses, pouches, and other small bags.
Rectifiers	2	1.2	2	Someone that makes and sells distilled spirits.
Redsmiths	6	1.3	8	A smith that works with copper and brass.
Roofers	5.5	3.2	18	One who builds and repairs roofs.
Rope Makers	5.5	3.75	21	A maker and repairer of rope.
Rug Makers	5	4.2	21	Someone who makes and repairs rugs.
Saddlers	7	2.1	15	Crafters that make and repair saddles and tack
Scabbard Makers	8	1.3	10	A leatherworker who specializes in sheathes and scabbards.
Sculptors	3	1.8	5	An artist who makes stone statues.
Shoemakers	50	1.3	65	One who makes and repairs shoes.
Spell Shops	0.5	1.05	1	Sellers of spell components and other scroll/spellbook supplies.
Spice Merchants	6.5	1.2	8	Merchants who deal in spices.
Stationers	3	1.1	3	Sells books, paper, ink, and writing devices. Some offer copying services too
Tailors	40	1.2	48	One that makes and repairs clothing.
Tanners	5	2.2	11	Makers of leather.
Taverns	25	2.8	70	Public eateries that generally serve local cuisine and beverages.
Vintners	4	2.2	9	Specializes in the making and selling of wine.
Water Carriers	12	4.75	57	Service that brings water to others. Some manage cisterns and aqueducts.
Weavers	16	4.1	66	A cloth maker.
Whitesmiths	3	1.2	4	A smith that works with silver and/or gold. Often attached to a jeweler.
Wheelwrights	25	2.2	55	Makers and repairers of wheels.
Wood Carvers	4	3.1	12	Makes wooden implements and/or artistic pieces.
Wood Sellers	4.5	2.5	11	A merchant of lumber, firewood, and/or charcoal.
Woodwrights	9	3.1	28	Maker of wooden furniture and other common implements.

A business will only exist where there is a demand for its product and a supply of the raw material needed to make the product. Cities with more than the average number of a given shop type will most often be producing the extra for export. Likewise, cities with fewer will often import to make up the difference. Smaller towns will often combine shops, for example, the local smith would work with any metal yet they may not be great with all of them. In this way, a town that is not large enough to support a blacksmith, redsmith, and whitesmith would have one smith doing all of these duties.

Settlement Construction

Construction of settlements varies with climate, materials, wealth, and population being some of the major factors. The typical types of buildings making up a settlement includes dwellings, businesses, fortifications, temples/shrines, and municipal structures. This section will look at some examples of the materials and elements used in creating these buildings.

Brick

Having a brick or stone hearth is expensive but not uncommon in many dwellings. However, a building made entirely of brick is prohibitively costly. Just making brick in such large quantities is next to impossible without a massive kiln to fire the clay and make brick. The source of clay is important as well, some clay makes better brick than other clay. So, the combination of limited material, specialized facilities, and add in the skilled labor needed to make and use brick, then it all comes together as an expense that only the most wealthy can afford. Buildings made of brick can easily reach seven stories. More than that is rarely done as there are few skilled enough in both engineering and use of brick to do it. Also, the quality of brick used would have to be of the highest caliber with very consistent material and manufacturing going into them. This makes such structures almost unseen outside of major cities.

Earthen

Earthen buildings, cobb (or adobe, in hotter, drier climates), is made by mixing mud, straw and either sand or clay. For adobe, these are formed into blocks then sun and air dried then bound together with mud to form walls. Traditional cobb doesn't use blocks and is more sculpted as a whole but still air dried. Buildings made of earth tend to be inexpensive, well insulated, and very sturdy (when properly maintained). With a good roof and drainage, they do well in any climate, but dryer is better. While not impossible, it is not practical to make an earthen building taller than two stories. Most dwellings will be one level, having two or three rooms at most. This makes a fine choice in smaller settlements and rural area housing. For these reasons, many common folk live in earthen homes. In the coldest of places, where the earth is frozen year-round, snow and ice are sometimes used to make dwellings.

Hide

Made with hides, tents or yurts are used only in small, very new, or semi-nomadic settlements in regions that do not see much in the way of heavy snowfall. As a percentage, very few people live in such structures within the civilized lands. It is more common in borderlands and/or hotter climates. These dwellings are almost exclusively single story and, very often, single room structures. Tents sold commercially in the civilized lands are just as often made with an oiled canvas as with hides. Caravans trekking the Great Desert make common use of large canvas tents on their journeys.

Stone

Worked stone block buildings are very strong but the labor required to mine, transport, and construct with this material strictly limits its use. Even crude river rock or other rough stone and mortar buildings are many times the coin and effort of wood. For this reason, it is only used by common folk when nothing else is available and often only by enlisting the help of every able-bodied neighbor within miles. Helping a neighbor means being able to ask for help in return. Like with wood, a stone structure can vary from crude to masterwork. The number of rooms is only limited by coin and land. Often, worked stone buildings will rise to five stories. Higher is possible with good engineering but the danger is collapse due to its own weight. Larger cities see more use of stone as a building material for non-dwelling buildings.

Wood

Wooden structures are some of the most varied in the Middle Lands. They can be rough and crude split logs, or fancy and finely worked planks, it all depends on the skill of the builders and the coin spent. Found in all climates, they are only limited by the supply of local trees. While they can easily reach three stories, it is rare that they go higher than four without a master builder to design and oversee construction. All but the largest of cities don't normally build wooden structures so tall. The vast majority being three or fewer stories. The size of rooms and the number also vary greatly. This makes wood the most common choice for non-dwelling buildings in settlements across the Empire.

Basement

Basements are not common because of the problems with drainage. What is more common is a small root cellar, usually placed in the middle of the dwelling to minimize water issues. Large cities have sewer systems and storm drains that improve drainage to the point that basements are much more likely. Still, they are too expensive for many. However, some businesses will find a basement extremely useful as a storage area for goods that benefit from temperature controlled environments.

Dugout

In extremely cold or hot climates, cutting a dugout out of a hillside will help make a dwelling more comfortable year around. It only takes a few feet to make a difference so, it's common to have a half wall with a roof over a shallow dugout. In the coldest environment, the dugout is made so deep that it's basically a hole in a hill with a roof. In rural areas, when the terrain is suitable (ie hills), the dugout is almost as common as cobb dwellings. Halflings are very fond of this type of dwelling, but they take it to another level of craftsmanship. For them, building a dugout becomes a work of art.

Roof

The make of a building's roof is at least as important as its walls, if not more important. There are a few different types to choose from, the most common is thatch. Basically, woven straw or reeds, thatch is easy to work and the material is plentiful in most places. The greatest downsides to thatch are the need for high maintenance and the fire risk. Most larger towns avoid thatch in favor of shingles or tile. Shingles are most often made of wood and secured in an interlocking pattern with nails and a bit of tar. The more expensive ones are oiled or shellacked for added water resistance. An even more expensive option is tile, which is due mainly to its production similarities to brick. However, the most expensive choice of roof is, by far, tin sheets. It is very hard to make, rivaling tile or brick. Each sheet is a square between three and four feet. These sheets are placed on the roof in a similar fashion to shingles. Tin is also one of the most fire-resistant types of roof.

Settlement Size

How large a settlement is, influences many of its aspects such as wealth and the protection level it has available. This relation is roughly summarized in the following table.

Settlement Type	Population*	ALCC/BW**	Yearly Taxes***	City Guard/Army	Defenses
Hamlet	Up to 200	3gp/3gp	Pop x 15gp	militia	none
Village	201 to 1000	4gp/4gp	Pop x 20gp	militia + ½% Pop	Level 1
Small town	1001 to 2000	5gp/5gp	Pop x 30gp	militia + ½% Pop	Level 1 or 2
Large town	2001 to 5000	5gp/5gp	Pop x 35gp	militia + 1% Pop	Level 2
Small city	5001 to 10000	6.5gp/6.5gp	Pop x 40gp	militia + 1% Pop	Level 2 or 3
Medium city	10001 to 30000	8gp/8gp	Pop x 45gp	militia + 2% Pop	Level 3
Large city	30001 and up	10gp/10gp	Pop x 50gp	militia + 3% Pop	Level 4

* Population is the number of permanent residence in the city plus those within two walking hours of the city "gates".

** ALCC/BW stands for Average Living Condition Cost/Base Wage. These are given only as an idea of average numbers, an actual settlement may vary depending on a wide variety of economic factors. Look at this column as a guide, not gospel.

*** Yearly Taxes is a guide used to give an idea of how much tax a city might collect over the course of a year. It could be more or less depending on factors such as overall economic strength, number/amount of taxes assessed, vigilance of the collectors, sneakiness of the citizens and so on. For commoners, taxes are paid in goods more than in coin, especially in smaller settlements.

Yearly tax yield is linked to population, special industry, and special resources. Each such industry or resource can raise the base tax yield between 2% and 10%. Conversely, a settlement in poor condition can lose as much as half its tax yield until conditions change for the better or the settlement collapses.

Examples of special industry include the apothecaries of Rocreast, the canneries of Covehaven and the lens crafters of Foamrest. What makes these special is the fact that they are both rare and renown so traders come from across the Middle Lands for their wares.

Examples of special resources include precious metals, gemstones, spices, and silk. Anything that is both rare and valued is a special resource. That is assuming the settlement is harvesting it.

Examples of poor conditions include famine, plague, war or anything else that would affect the working populations' ability to produce. Poor conditions that persist will lead to outbound migration.

Each settlement's guard is responsible for maintaining order and protecting it from hostile forces. The militia is only called upon in the latter case. About ten percent of the population is fit for militia duty but up to thirty percent can be summoned in dire circumstances. Anyone called for militia duty cannot run farms or businesses. If prolonged, this absence can lead to "poor conditions" for the settlement.

Defense level refers to what defense systems such a settlement *should* be capable of having, they may not have it or may maintain a lower defense level but they are of a size to support it if they choose to do so. Construction and maintenance of these defensive systems will use a noticeable amount of the settlement's tax revenue.

Settlement Defenses

Defense Level	Possible Details
1	Wooden palisade or simple moat, with a small fort of wood or a stone tower.
2	Simple stone wall and a small fort of stone and wood. A moat is possible.
3	High stone wall with battlements and small keep (a more complex fort)
4	High stone walls with battlements, a moat and a large keep.

Fort

Built of wood and/or stone, forts are military installations. The basic composition has a small base of just a few buildings surrounded by basic walls or a palisade. A small tower for archer placement and lookouts is a common feature. Barracks, a storehouse, forge, stable and command center are other features often found in a standard fort. Walls surrounding a keep range from the simple log wall to rough stone and mortar construction. Eight feet is an average height for such a wall.

Keep

Made largely of stone, keeps are larger, more complex versions of forts. They often serve as home for the local noble as well. Having several towers for defensive purposes is common. Their walls are stone, taller and stronger than those that surround a fort. Most are less than twenty-five feet in height. Only the largest would have cut stone walls. Overall, the keep exists to resist siege and is built reflecting that fact.

Moat

The variety of moats range from a simple ditch, less than three feet deep, to a stone-lined trench eight or more feet in depth. Lining the moat with sharpened sticks is common. Filling them with water is only done for the deeper, stone lined variety. Without the stone-lining, the water tends to erode a moat's sides and it collapses in, partly filling the trench. Most moats are built to ring a fort or keep's outer walls. They exist to break an opponent's charge as well as serve as a barrier. The most used width is ten feet, but larger ones, spanning thirty feet have been constructed for larger settlements. While not always the case, moats filled with water are often connected to a nearby stream or river. Stagnant water is a bad thing.

Palisade

It's a wall made of tree trunks sunken into a packed earthen mound. The earth, piled up and packed down on either side of the wall, provides strength and stability. It also makes the palisade easier to build than it would be if the logs were driven straight into the ground. Standing eight to twelve feet tall, the palisade is often a temporary or starter fortification. A shallow moat is a common side-effect of construction. While not a standard feature, some palisades have a wooden platform along the interior side for defenders to stand on. This allows them to see and attack forces assaulting their position while maintaining cover.

Wall

Most walls built as fortifications are thick and stone. Rough stone and mortar are most common with cut stone being seen less often. In a typical defensive wall, the outward facing side is virtually sheer while the interior side is often tapered, giving a base that is wider than the top. At the top, a defensive wall is often several feet wide. For the smaller or more narrow walls, a wooden platform will often ring the wall near the top. This allows defenders to see and attack any force assailing the wall and still allow them to take cover behind it. The more ambitious cut stone walls used in major cities are even wider. As much as ten or fifteen wide at the top. This allows them to forgo the wooden platform and have defenders walk along the top of the wall itself, while still protected by a small secondary wall with battlements. Often, such secondary walls are built on both sides of the walkway to maximize protection from either direction.

Walls rarely enclose the whole settlement except in (or near) the wilderness lands. In most cases, they do cover enough area that a fair percentage of the population could seek shelter within them. All the major cities have walls, not so much as a defensive structure but as a display of wealth and power. Wise settlements maintain a warehouse within their walls for siege provisions.

Watch Tower

The stone watchtower is the most basic of fortifications. It is used as a mini-fort and favored for being encapsulated as well as its small footprint. Most are between thirty and forty feet tall, with a base width of about twenty feet. Some are square-based and others have a round-base. All of them have a small platform on top, ringed with battlements and useful for both archers and lookouts. While not always the case, it is not uncommon for such a platform to have a roof. The vast majority are built of rough stone and mortar, having walls that are two or three feet thick. A common style of construction has the tower's outer wall wider at the base and tapering toward the top.

Cost of Construction

The cost of building a structure depends a great deal on what materials are used and how much labor is needed. For a simple home, the labor often comes from the people that will live in it. Sometimes neighbors will help for a meal and hospitality. Materials are within sight of the building site. So, for them, things like tools and nails would be the greatest expense. That and the time investment in the building.

The same can be said for communal projects of smaller villages. For example, all the villagers get together and build a smokehouse or raise a palisade. Again, using materials close by and volunteer labor, the cost is low. Enough laborers can do either task in a matter of days so time is not a big issue. However, not all projects can be done in this manner, with the people benefiting providing the labor.

When it comes to more advanced projects professional builders and architects will be needed. Are these people available from the local labor pool? Importing them will often be more expensive. Management (supervisors or handlers) will also be important but a little less likely to be imported. The unskilled labor will often be local. All these people will need to be paid. How much they are paid will depend, largely, on skill and the ALCC/BW of the worker's area.

The building material is the next big expense. When not using what is readily available, costs jump dramatically. Rough timber costs less than milled lumber. Thatching costs less than shingles which cost less than tile. Gathered stones cost less than cut quarry stone which is cheaper than brick. Transporting any materials will add to the cost as well. This is, generally, why earthen structures can be comparably cheap, as the material is literally underfoot.

Time is also a factor of cost. To a degree, construction time can be decreased with a larger workforce. Having materials imported can increase construction time and cost. A lack of quality workers will also adversely affect the project. That effect is greater when skilled workers or architects are substandard.

Fortifications are the last construction project one would want to build cheaply. For this reason, the better military maintains an engineer corps. These people are skilled in the construction of both fortifications and siege engines. Those that leave the service can often find a lucrative career in civilian engineering.

Life in the City

In most of the "civilized" lands, settlements are spaced along simple dirt roads about eight to twelve miles apart, depending on the terrain. This is just enough that all the farms along the road are within two walking hour distance of one of the settlements. So, on average it takes half a traveling day (4 hours) to get from one settlement to the next. The borderlands are not so well populated and it could be any number of miles to the next settlement. The existence of a road is not a given in such places.

The closer to the borderlands one gets, the newer the settlements are and the more likely they are to have walls. After an area is proven "safe" for a few generations, walls are no longer maintained and may even be taken down. Unless the settlement has the coin to keep them in good repair, most remove them or just keep a wall around the oldest section of town. Even if they are not needed, having a wall will make a settlement's people feel better. This is true even when the wall only surrounds a part of the settlement.

All but the smallest of towns have some type of fort or tower. These are often used, at least, as the base for the local constables and the office, if not the home, of the local noble. In the case of smaller settlements, these buildings often do more, serving as city hall, jail, police station, and a safe haven in times of war or similar danger.

Another all but universal feature of settlements is the public square. In smaller settlements, this could be a nearby grassy field. The larger, more established settlements often have a paved square near the center of town or just outside of the local fort/watchtower. These areas are used for markets, celebrations, carnivals, important weddings, public addresses, punishments, executions, and other events that would be important to the settlement as a whole. The square is a matter of pride for locals.

Another thing about living in a settlement is the density, regardless of how small it is the settlement will be fairly compact. In the beginning, this is driven by the practicality of building a wall around the smallest possible area. Keeping it compact is necessary for other reasons, for instance as a settlement spreads out the land it takes up can't be used as farmland. Also, more infrastructure is required to cover the city as its area increases. Not everyone is comfortable how much closer together people live to each other in a city.

Water is one of the most important things for a city. Smaller settlements have central community wells. As it gets larger the practicality of wells diminishes. Often times a nearby stream is diverted to fill cisterns that feed a fountain network. These fountains can be placed where wells cannot. If a stream is not available a well and pump can supply the cisterns and hence the fountains. Such pumps can be wind or water or animal or people powered. Larger cities can have more elaborate water delivery systems, even to the point of piping water under pressure to all but the poorest of homes. Such pressurization is often supplied by gravity as water is fed from tall, above ground, cisterns. The taller the cistern the better the water pressure. The smallest used are cylinders, 10 feet wide and 20 feet tall, holding about 10,000 gal.

Sewage systems naturally follow water delivery systems. Storm drains are the basis of this system. Excess water from fountains and the like is directed into the storm drains, which helps to keep the waste people dump from building up. In the large cities, waste is piped out of homes just as water is piped in. Again, the excess water from the water delivery system is harnessed to flush out the waste conduit and carry it all to the nearby storm drain. The settlement's storm drains often empty into a stream or river which can be problematic for settlements downriver. In the largest cities the storm drains, sewers, and water supply conduits have evolved into a full-fledged tunnel system. Such a set of tunnels can attract unwanted attention from monsters looking for a home. Ooze and pudding monsters are common in these tunnels. Other vermin and giant vermin are also problematic. While the more intelligent monsters are rare, they do, from time to time, take up residence in the tunnels.

Roads are vital to the settlement. Smaller settlements have simple dirt roads. These will be marked with potholes and mud will be a big issue when it rains. Such roads have no storm drains. The next step up is the cobblestone street. Small river rocks or large pebbles are used in paving the street. It is common practice to build basic storm drains along these roads. Cobblestone is a huge improvement over dirt roads. It is much more durable but its unevenness makes for a bumpy ride in cart or wagon. As a settlement grows it will add cobblestone streets as it can. Often the main streets are done first. The more traffic or the more important a street is the more likely it is to get cobblestone treatment. The larger cities have more elaborate streets made from cut stone with high capacity, below-street, storm drains. Cut stone is even more durable than cobblestone and gives carts and wagons a smoother ride.

Random City Life Events

Life in a city is not often boring. They are vibrant and exciting places and that will draw people with a promise of a better and fuller life experience, plus a great deal more to gawk at. But just what does happen in a city? What follows are a few minor events that could occur in any settlement at any time. Roll or pick one whenever you want to add a bit of spice for the players and give them a taste of the exotic or more mundane aspects of city life.

d20	City Life Event	d20	City Life Event
1	Spontaneous street fair	11	Public speech
2	Traveling peddler	12	Street juggler – 1 or 2
3	Guards apprehend someone	13	Street acrobats – 2 to 4
4	Placard carrier	14	An accident
5	Public punishment	15	A fight
6	A duel	16	Placard carrier
7	An argument	17	A botched theft
8	Placard carrier	18	Public execution
9	Puppet show	19	Elixir monger
10	Street musician – 1 to 3	20	A funeral procession

A botched theft

Sometimes a pickpocket is seen or a street urchin performs a grab and dash. Whatever the case there is a great deal of shouting and the city's guard will show up soon. Someone may run by and it may be the thief or just a scared kid. Others may pursue the runner. Maybe the thief gets away, maybe not.

A duel

A space quickly clears in the street around two hard looking individuals. Weapons are drawn and a challenge is given by one and accepted by the other. The cause could be anything from a look to a bump to bad blood between two families. City guard often step-in when a duel endangers other citizens. Most duels end when one or the other yields but some go too far and death follows. On very rare occasions the combatants may be wizards. At such times the first bit of magic causes the clearing around them to get exponentially larger very quickly. This can cause a stampede and injuries as bystanders try to flee.

A fight

While not the event that a duel is, this is just a good ole fashion slugfest. This common brawl will generally only last a few moments before ending. Streetside vendors may have their carts disrupted by the combatants. It is rare that serious injury or death occurs due to a fight. Most often it's some blood and maybe a broken nose or some teeth. Guards will break up fights as soon as they notice them.

A funeral procession

Someone wealthy or well-known has passed away. The street fills with mourners following the deceased's remains as they are taken to their final resting place. If the person was well liked the procession may block all traffic on the street. There will often be drums and placards bearing the image of the deceased.

An accident

Something happened. Maybe a small fire or, someone fell, or a cart axle broke, or a wine barrel rolled wild, or a spooked horse bolted, or a pot fell from an upstairs window, or something else occurred. Injuries are likely, death is possible. Whatever happened, there is a crowd and everyone has an opinion about what just happened and why it happened. Helpers are most often outnumbered by gawkers.

An argument

A shouting match has erupted. Most bystanders give it a wide berth and keep going about their business. It is not likely that this will progress to a physical assault. Most often, these arguments are between two merchants or a merchant and a customer. Guards may try to defuse the situation.

Elixir monger

A traveling merchant that specializes in potions has set up in the street. Often, this person has a covered wagon or cart. Such a transport would be brightly painted and may advertise the products. A few carry their wares in boxes on a pack animal. Some of these people are frauds and others are not. The most commonly sold elixirs are herbal healing potions. These are not magical potions but, when they work, they work almost as well as the magic healing potions. On very rare occasions the merchant is selling magic potions. Sometimes this is known to them, other times it is not.

Guards apprehend someone

A nearby person is physically taken down by local constables. This can happen quickly or not, quietly or not, without bloodshed or not. However it happens, it happens, and someone, presumably a criminal, is taken into custody. How the guards deal with this is a reflection of what the criminal has done as well as what kind of people the guards are and what kind of people they are allowed to be.

Placard carrier

A person carrying a sign of some kind is walking by while hawking the placard's message. They may be advertising a nearby business, or an upcoming event, or proclaiming the end of the world, or delivering some other message. Commonly, the placard is a hand-held sign or one worn on the torso like a poncho. It is possible that the carrier could be protesting politics. Naturally, the local guard would respond to this.

Public punishment

Public punishment happens in the main square or a small square outside the jail. A person could be locked in stocks, whipped, beaten, branded, or anything like that. Just what happens depends on their crime and what the local punishment is for that crime. This offers excellent insight into the local noble and the people they govern, both from the punishment and public response to the punishment.

Public execution

In the main square or a smaller square outside the jail, someone will be put to death. Just how that happens depends on where the person is. Most settlements in the Empire use long drop hanging as the default method of execution. However, it is within the local noble's power to set the execution method to anything they desire. So, beheading, burning, crucifixion, evisceration, short drop hanging, or any other method is possible. Just as with punishments, an execution can tell outsiders volumes about the locals.

Public speech

Someone has a message and they think it is important enough to deliver a public speech. This could be informing people about the latest noble proclamation or the new fast way to a glorious afterlife. While the city guard doesn't often get involved, they will end unauthorized public speeches if there are enough complaints or it seems the subject could incite the public to violence. It is possible that an unauthorized public speech could be a political protest. Naturally, the local guard would respond to this.

Puppet show

A puppeteer with a portable stage uses puppets to tell a story for the entertainment of the crowd. Many times, these stories are taken from the *Saga of Tazral* as they are favorites in most places. [The Troll Bridge of Camdon County](#), from vol II of the saga, is very popular as a puppet show. The stage can range in size, from a small collapsible tabletop setup to a much larger and elaborate wagon bed stage. The puppet show will commonly have one or two puppeteers and a hawker to get attention and pass the hat around after the show. Some settlements are more friendly than others to street performers. The local guard will make it clear just how tolerant the settlement is.

Spontaneous street fair

Each year has many holidays during which celebrations and fairs are scheduled. But the spontaneous street fair is often a much more exciting event. Just why it is happening varies and many times the reason is not very important for the revelers. Some examples of events that can lead to a spontaneous street fair include a noble birth, celebrating a windfall, a traveling carnival arrives, visiting dignitaries, noble decree, or a military victory. Just think about it, a whale is beached next to a small fishing village, that's a windfall and once the harvesting is done, it's cause for a party. Likewise, killing the wolf that's been eating so many local sheep is another reason to break out the beer and sing some songs.

Street musician

A musician plays music to the masses. This could be a lone player or one accompanied by a friend or two. Some play for coin and others play a song or two outside a tavern to attract additional patrons before going inside for the real performance. It is possible that the musician is part of a larger traveling troupe of entertainers. If that is the case they will be trying to drum up business for the troupe, which will have set up camp at the edge of town. Some settlements are more friendly than others to street performers. The local guard will make it clear just how tolerant the settlement is.

Street juggler

A juggler performs for the people. The best will juggle knives or fire as a finale and then pass the hat around. Oddly enough, not all settlements want a juggler to use fire in their act and the guards will step in quickly if that is the case. It is possible that the juggler is part of a larger traveling troupe of entertainers. If that is the case they will be trying to drum up business for the troupe, which will have set up camp at the edge of town. Some settlements are more friendly than others to performers. The local guard will make it clear just how tolerant the settlement is.

Street acrobats

As with other types of street performers, acrobats are there to astonish the crowd and hopefully make some coin doing it. It is possible that the acrobats are part of a larger traveling troupe of entertainers. If that is the case they will be trying to drum up business for the troupe, which will have set up camp at the edge of town. Some settlements are more friendly than others to performers. The local guard will make it clear just how tolerant the settlement is.

Traveling peddler

A merchant that roams the dusty backroads to trade in goods and information. For many a remote settlement, these people bring in a vast majority of the rumors and information about the outside world. In such settlements, the peddler is seen as both a boon and a curse. The wrong rumor can start a panic. This puts the average peddler in a rough position from time to time. Most peddlers have a pack animal or two, some even use a cart or wagon unless the route they roam is too harsh due to terrain. They do tend to travel the route over and over. This allows them to build a relationship with the settlements they serve.

Life in the Country

Outside the walls of a settlement can be a dangerous place. For those living in the borderlands, this is an understatement as anything and everything could wander by the front door. Orcs, trolls, giants, just about any monstrous beast one can dream of could come by. Citizens in the "civilized" lands don't have as much trouble with this. While wild animals can be an issue outside any settlement, the long years of patrols and military cleansing keep the other monster populations down to a minimum. With that said, nowhere is totally safe. The simple fact is that, due to caves and tunneling, denizens of the Underdark can pop up anywhere. When possible most citizens, especially in the borderlands, will flee to the safety of the nearest settlement. Very few people live more than a two-hour walk from a settlement of some size.

The aftermath of an attack varies a bit from place to place and with what kind of attack occurred. Wild animal attacks generally cause locals to form groups and hunt for the animals in question. Genuine monster attacks often incite the locals to panic in the "civilized" areas. While it is a cause for concern for any citizen, these attacks will also provoke a military response. The speed and ferocity of these responses depend on the resources of the local populace. Bounties are another possibility for any attack. This is a

common response for any local noble. Generally, some token is required for proof of the kill in order to collect on a bounty. Often heads are requested for monsters and skins for animals. These items are turned in to the local guard, or some other agent of the noble, to claim the bounty.

Another factor for those that live beyond a settlement's walls is isolation. The average size of a farmstead for a peasant family is about 40 acres (a strip of land roughly one-eighth of a mile by one half a mile), so even in settled lands, where farms are nearly continuous, there is a distance between folks. This adds to the isolation even for the farms closest to their settlement. While the average farm is capable of being self-sufficient for, at least, a few weeks at a stretch, journeys into town are still required to resupply and trade. Sometimes the trip is made just for a mug of ale and some conversation.

Hunting, Herding, Fishing & Farming

Food production is, without a doubt, the most time-consuming endeavor engaged in by the general populace. From place to place the details will differ but the goals are the same. Crops are grown and harvested. Livestock is raised for slaughter. Wild animals are hunted. Rivers, lakes, and seas are fished. Forests and hills are foraged. Which and in what combination depends on local resources. For example, coastal settlements may not have the best land and water for growing large amounts of crops but they can net at least a few hundred pounds of fish from the sea each week.

What crops are grown will depend on the type of soil found in the area, the suitability of the contours of the land, water amount as well as quality, the weather, and the length of the growing season. Which animals are raised depends on climate and the land's grazing characteristics. How much fishing goes on depends on proximity to waterways, with coastal fishing having the best year around yields. Hunting is more common and fruitful in lands in or near wilderness areas. Foraging for nuts, berries, mushrooms, and the like is best in or near forested areas. In the end, each region's characteristics are unique.

Not all food is consumed locally or right away. Much must be stored for later and there are many people in the Empire that rely on food being imported. Hence producing the food is only the first obstacle, next it must be shipped, and finally, it must arrive in a still edible form, ie unspoiled. Smoking, drying, canning, and salting are common methods of food preservation performed before storing or extensive shipping. Not all settlements have the salt supply necessary to support large-scale salting. That said, any or all of these methods can be found in varying degrees in a given settlement.

Nearly every settlement has some facility for drying and/or smoking meats. The smaller ones will often build a community smokehouse. The size and complexity will vary with their needs. The simplest being a small, wooden framed hut with hide walls and a tiny stone firebox. More elaborate setups are long, narrow, stone buildings with several small rooms, each having its own external firebox. The larger communities often have several such buildings to meet the local demand. Drying can be done with a simple rack and sunshine. A low fire can be employed to speed the process. Structures built for this purpose differ from the smokehouse in that the heat of the fire is transferred without the smoke. To preserve food with salt most often means packing it in dry salt or storing it in a brine. Salted, dried, or smoked meats can last for months, some can last years if kept dry and moderately cool.

Most grains are dried. If kept dry then they can be stored for months that way. In addition to drying, some are also milled, or ground into a fine powder. The resulting flour is more compact and hence easier to store and ship. Flours made from barley, corn, millet, oats, rice, rye, or wheat are the most common food source in the Empire. Everyone eats something, often many things, made from a flour every day. If kept dry, flour can last for many months. A sealed barrel, or other vessel, can store it at least a year.

Canning is trickier, it requires some special equipment, greater consistency, and precision. When canning, in the simplest terms, the vessel is filled with food, sometimes a brine or an oil is added to displace any air, then it is heated to just under the boiling point of water. Hot enough to kill anything that would spoil the food. While still hot the vessel is given an airtight seal. As it cools, the temperature change creates a vacuum which offers additional protection from future spoiling. If not done correctly, the food spoils in the container. For this reason, as well as the process being more demanding and complex, canning is not used as often as smoking, drying, and salting. A notable exception being the Covehaven canneries. They have the process down to a science with a failure rate of less than 1 can in 10,000. The canneries produce both individual serving and multiple serving cans. Most are meats. In smaller volume, they also

make cans of vegetables and cans of fruits and cans of dried biscuits and cans of stew. These cans are shipped all over the Empire where they are sold as trail rations. They are commonly used to feed military forces while on the move. Sailors love them as they keep better on a ship than most other trail rations.

Another common method of dealing with excess food production is fermentation/distilling. Commonly, a portion of the grains, fruits, and vegetables grown are used to make spirits, beers, and wines. The scale depends, mostly, on the supply of raw materials. Otherwise, the production of alcoholic beverages is widespread, happening in many settlements even if only on a small-scale. Both wine and spirits often take years to age. Beer and ale are not commonly aged like that. Aged or not, these products can be stored for use later or sold.

The process of making cheese is very important for storing and shipping milk. Cow, goat, and/or sheep milk are produced in nearly every settlement across the Empire, but the milk has a very short shelf life, often only a few days without artificial cooling. Making milk into cheese or butter yields a product that will last longer and can be shipped with greater ease. Many types of cheese can be stored for months, with a wax coating some can last over a year if stored in a cool area. Professional cheese makers know how to make aged cheeses that will last for years, with proper storage.

In very rare cases, magic is used to purify food that has spoiled. In the major cities, this activity is more commonplace with merchants always on the lookout for casters willing to provide the service. Regardless of city size, some religious orders provide food purification as a free service. It is seen as a way to promote their religion, gather followers, and do a little good in the world. In times of extreme need, such as siege or famine, these same groups will also use magic to create food for the common good. Less altruistic groups may charge for the service.

Cuisine

Within the Empire, every region has its popular foods. As a matter of course, that tends to be what is most abundant. Spices and herbs used in cooking are true markers of the regions. Some herbs grow more easily in a given area than others. Meanwhile, everyone values salt and local sources are highly prized. It is the universal seasoning, used to one degree or another in all but the blandest of dishes. Overall there is a style that emerges using the available foods and spices and it gives a feel for the locals.

Fellice

Many areas of Fellice have short growing seasons. They need crops more likely to survive an unexpected frost. Things like beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, lettuce, mustard greens, onions, peas, potatoes, radishes, and spinach are a few of the things more suited to these colder areas. Few types of grain do so well with oats, barley, rye, and some kinds of wheat being popular. Many herbs enjoyed in the southern area just don't grow well or at all. Meat is a larger portion of a diet in the north than elsewhere. All these factors are clearly reflected in how these people cook and prepare food. Pickled beets, cabbage, and onions are common. Smoked and roasted meats, mostly pork and mutton, are easy enough to come by. Deer and elk hunts provide other meats. Cheese is very popular as is rye bread. Thick, hot stews are favored all winter. Everyone welcomes the leafy greens and berries they can get as the weather warms.

Mostor

Folks in Mostor have more and varied foods from the sea in their diets. Salted or dried fish are eaten when fresh fish is not available. Pork and beef are the more popular non-fish meats. Rice and wheat are the top two grains most people have daily. Various vegetables are common in the warmer months, herbs are also common, citrus does well in the southern reaches of the kingdom and it is easily transported along the coast. Ropes of firm taffy-like candy are found in all but the smallest of towns. These are the things that define what one thinks of in regard to food in Mostor.

Sulkor

While many areas in Sulkor are arid, it is also warm. With irrigation, almost anything can be grown there. Corn and wheat are the most common grains. Olives, dates, nuts and goat cheese are favored by many and often paired with a dry, salty cornbread. Goat, fowl, and beef are the most used meats. More than anywhere else, meat eaten here is salted and/or dried long months before consumption. Having fresh

meat is a rare luxury. Roasted honeyed nuts are the common sweets. Spices and herbs see heavy and creative use in food and drink. That marks the food of Sulkor as unique. Some of the otherwise obscure tribal dishes have also gained fame for their exotic nature as what outsiders think of when they think of Sulkor's food. Blood milk, ree worms, and fried insects being among the most well-known.

Celyd

Celyd is most known for the food of Lechwed. With the Lesmah Swamp so close there is an impressive list of foods not commonly found anywhere else in the Empire. Add to that the vast number of visiting people that pass down one of its four Imperial Roads. As such, that is what sticks in the heads of travelers and dominates their stories when they leave. While stories of pickled eggs, eel jerky, frog and cattail soup, or roasted gator are common the reality is a little more mundane. Wheat and barley are the most used grains. Fowl and fish (which includes crab and shrimp) are the meats of choice with notable amounts of pork. Butter is used to pan fry a wide range of foods. Peppery spices are common to the point that it can be hard to find a dish that wouldn't make one's eyes water. Soups are more popular than stews. Bread is thick and chewy. Candied fruit is included with almost every meal. The variety of herb teas is dizzying. Away from the swamp, more pork, rabbit, and some beef are used to replace the swamp's fish and shellfish.

Argos

Argos is steeped in deep tradition when it comes to food. Outside of the cities, folks are not interested in fancy or complex dishes. It's all about comfort food. Along the southern coast, that means shellfish stews, flaky bread, and some citrus fruit. The northernmost areas of Argos favor garlic seasoned beef and potatoes with rosemary and millet cakes, also cheese is much loved. Along the Danchu a wide range of grains and vegetables are combined with fowl, pork or catfish to make common meals often seasoned with a touch of basil or chives or mint. More remote areas use mutton rather than beef or pork. In general, soups and stews are equally liked across all of Argos. Everyone makes some type of cheese so there is always a local one. Firm and chewy sweet cakes and rock candy are loved by the children.

The larger trade cities, like Balashar or Levloe, see a curious blend of foods. In these places, the time-honored traditional dishes are given fresh faces by cooks and ingredients from afar. Additionally, dishes from far off lands make their way to the trade cities. Embraced more by the nobility and the wealthy, these cultural fusions and transplants can be wonderful or disastrous to experience.

At the Local Level

Each of the above regions is painted with broad strokes and indeed each could be broken down more showing even smaller areas, each one with their own variant of food seasoning and preparation. In the rural areas, it comes down to what is to be had locally. Anything outside of that is a novelty. There is often a local spin on alcohol as most settlements have some brewing or distilling. So, alcoholic beverages have area variations. Additionally, there are old religious concerns about food that pop up from time to time. For example, people try to eat plums daily for luck and sailors/fishers don't eat seahorses.

Cookware

Almost as important as what seasonings are used is how food is cooked. Cookware is most often cast iron or shaped clay. Iron is used over the fire while clay is more often used near the fire's base or resting on the edge of the fire's embers. The main cooking utensils are wooden spoons, iron forks, and iron tongs.

The iron cookware is much more expensive if the local smithy lacks basic casting facilities and molds. In such places, the common family has three or fewer cast iron pieces as they must be imported. Open pots, pots with lids, and flat griddles are the basics of iron cookware. With simple care, these items will last a few generations. The open pot can boil water, make soups, render fat, make soap, and generally be useful for more than cooking. A tightly lidded pot can do many of the same things plus bake bread. A flat griddle often has low sides to keep food from spilling into the fire. It is useful for cooking small bits of food quickly. A griddle is often kept warming by the fire to offer quick use.

The clay cookware is much cheaper but easier to crack or break. In general cooking use, food is warmed and cooked slowly in tightly lidded clay pots. These are placed near the fire's base or among the embers as required by what is cooking. They are very good for keeping food warm for later use.

Cooking With Fire

For homes, a common method of containing a fire is an open fire pit or open hearth. This is, in effect, a glorified campfire. The poorest of homes will have such a pit and it is often lined with whatever loose stones can be found. Smoke can be an issue and there must be an opening in the roof, giving it a place to go. In areas where the climate is mild, such a pit would be put outside to avoid smoke in the home.

The rough rock hearth and a chimney is the next step up. They often include a simple iron log rack that sits on the hearth's floor and holds the burning wood up, allowing better airflow. One or two iron swing arms used to suspend a pot over the fire, and a metal spit, to cook large pieces of meat, are common.

While more expensive, the brick hearth is far more useful than one of rough stone. It has a flat bottom that is often raised above the level of the room's floor allowing for a wide brick platform that is useful for setting pots near the embers. An iron rack mounted to the back and sides of the hearth would hold wood a bit off the floor for improved airflow and burning. Two to four swing arms are common in such a hearth as is a spit with a hand crank. The fancier ones will even have a bake-shelf along the back wall and iron doors to close over the hearth when baking. A vast majority of taverns have at least a simple brick hearth if not one suited to baking. In small villages, the people may pool their resources to make sure the local tavern has a fine brick hearth so the village has access to at least one place to bake bread.

The all iron stove is a relatively new thing and very expensive. Making one requires casting molds larger than most local blacksmith's facilities can manage. Transporting one over long distances is problematic in the best of cases as they can weigh as much as 300 lbs. Often, they look like a keg standing on end with three short legs. A small iron door on its front allows the fire to be fed. Ash collects in a lower drawer. A black iron pipe runs up from the back and serves as a chimney. Cooking is done on the flat top of the stove which gets very hot. It has many advantages over hearth cooking but lacks some of the diversity and freedoms that a hearth can offer. As a source of heat, it is far superior to any hearth. This type of stove began as a gnomish invention in Celyd and the past century has seen it spread. It's very popular in Fellice where even common people will go to great lengths to secure one.

Bakeries have special ovens that are larger than what is found in general use. The common variety is earthen or brick with iron doors and racks. A fire is stoked in a lower chamber and hot air directed into the ovens above. An all iron oven is a possibility but the cost is prohibitive for all but the wealthiest.

Clothing, Fashion, and Symbols

In many respects, the clothing of the people is as varied as they are. Common folks tend toward a mode of dress that is practical for their work as well as their environment. The rainy season will see oiled cloaks or ponchos in common use. The hot, dry season seeing lighter wear and large hats to shade the eyes. Colder areas/seasons would facilitate furs and/or heavy fabrics. The use of color will be more a matter of local custom and personal preference. In some places, only the wealthy can afford the cost of dyes, while others have plentiful local supplies of dyes which makes them more readily available to all.

Guilds often have a garment of station or a mode of dress unique to them. For example, all members of the Lamp Lighters guild wear a red sash. How it is worn varies from place to place but each region has a uniformed way. For some places, it is worn over the shoulder and across the chest. Other places wear it around the waist, still others, wear it as an armband while a few places wear it as a hat band or headband. Regardless of how it is worn, every person in the guild wears it.

Another, more uniform, guild identifier is that of the Imperial Messenger's signet ring, which is always worn on the left hand. Most often on the pinkie finger. Their guild law prohibits them from removing the ring while they are acting in an official capacity. That is due to a well-known statute of Imperial Law which prohibits undue interference with an Imperial Messenger acting in course of their duty. The Messenger shows the ring and they are allowed most places without question. It should be noted that anyone trying to show a fake ring would be in dire straits if the deception were discovered.

Government officials are another example of using mode of dress to identify people. The most common example is the city guard. By Imperial Law, the chest covering and helm of all city guard must have the city's crest or seal boldly displayed. Some cities make that part of the armor, like paint or engraving, others put it on a lightweight tabard to be worn over the armor.

Noble attire gets more elaborate as rank and wealth increase. This is largely a symbol of status or at the very least, what one wishes their status was. While styles change, a few modes of dress are classic due to their historical importance with the Imperial Family. Invoking the memory of a powerful and successful historical figure at the right time can make a difference. For example, leading one's warriors against long odds may be a perfect time to don that bright blue muffin hat adorned with ost'mir feathers. Any citizen of the Empire would immediately recall the story of Catfish Creek and the very hard fought, yet victorious, battle there.

Etiquette, Manners, and Protocol

The *World* is full of people needing to interact with one another. In every land, it all comes down to showing respect and showing the correct amount of respect at that. Manners, etiquette, and protocol are what is done, how it is done and when it is done. In the Middle Lands, there are many groups of people and each one has different ideas about what shows respect, how it is shown as well as when to show it.

Among the Empire's nobility, there are the classic rules of etiquette and protocol with minor variations in each of the kingdoms. For example, under the classic rules, when one bows to another the depth of the bow has significance as does the duration. In Sulkor what is done with the eyes (where one looks) is of great importance as well. In Argos, a bow has more flare and flourish while Fellice has a stiff formality to the bow. In another example, when a hand or ring be offered to kiss it is done differently in each land. In Argos, the kiss is done without touching the hand or ring so that only the motion is made. For Mostor the kisser's hand covers the other's hand at the last moment so that, again, lips do not touch the other's hand. Then, in Fellice, a handkerchief is employed in such a way that flesh never directly touches flesh. In Sulkor a dry kiss is an insult as is an overly wet one. There is also an acknowledgment, with most nobility, of where the other person is from. Nobles from different courts will make some allowances for "foreign" ways. Just how much is a matter of the individual and the situation as a whole. To be overly touchy on the matter doesn't reflect well on one's House or self. At the same time, insults cannot be easily put aside in all cases. Overall, the nobility is expected to act as nobles and all actions reflect on that, walking, eating, etc. Houseless nobles are most often found lacking in matters of this nature.

With commoners, matters are more simple. They don't have time or temperament for such things with one another and most only know the bare basics for dealing with nobles. The expectations change a bit as wealth increases but for the most part, commoners have less pomp to worry about. Manners are more important to them. For example, in Celyd, the weather is wetter than average and mud is more an issue so it is good manners to remove shoes before entering someone's home. In Sulkor, one honors a new neighbor with a small gift, often fresh milk. In Argos, one would offer neighbors a polite greeting upon meeting or passing. In Fellice, a newlywed husband will spend a day each week with the father-in-law just as a new wife would spend a day each week with the mother-in-law. The matter of manners is how people get along with each other and foster good relations and mutual respect. Just as with the nobility, commoners will be more tolerant of visiting "foreigners". Again, how much varies with the individual.

Within other groups, there are protocols as well. Scribes always pay, with coin or trade, for ink and writing material. A thief settling in a new city would seek out the local guild with a gift of silver or gold. Smiths wanting to set up a new shop will visit the other local smiths and offer to assist them for an hour or two. Sailors share a round of drinks and fun stories with other sailors. Soldiers share stories of home with each other, even with "enemy" soldiers outside of the battlefield, it reminds them that all are more the same than different. All these groups have ways of showing respect, some are simple, others are not.

Customs

The customs of the Middle Lands are much more diverse than one may think, considering that it is all one empire. While there are several universally celebrated aspects, there are also pockets of local and/or regional traditions. Below is some information about ceremonies, holidays, festivals, traditions, and superstitions found in the Middle Land Empire. On average, every settlement has between 10 and 20 events (ceremonies, festivals, holidays) each year. This doesn't count births, name days, marriages, and funerals. All of these events are social activities that serve to bind a community together.

Births

The birth of a child is a cause for celebration in most places. There is often a gathering of some kind. At the very least, good wishes are given. Among the commoners, food is often given to the family. The first-born child is a special occasion and the celebrations are generally grander.

Prayers are often offered and rites are sometimes performed as is custom for the local people. Among humans, a new mother will give thanks to Volios, even if she doesn't follow the New Gods. Such people often make a sacrifice to distract Tanjoom from the child. A child that gains the notice of Tanjoom will be influenced by the Fox and become more mischievous than is healthy.

Non-humans have their own rites and deities for birth. Elven ceremonies are the longest and most elaborate. Births are rare for them so the celebrations are grand. Halflings also have long festivities, including much feasting, for a birth. But that is just their way rather than a product of birth rarity. Indeed, every humanoid race welcomes their young into the world in some way.

Festivals

A festival is a celebration that will involve most, if not all of the local residents. While some have a religious basis, it is not necessary that religion be a factor. Each settlement may well have a festival or two that is unique to them. Perhaps based on some local bit of history, a great deed or a battle or some beloved local resource. There are, however, a few common festivals related to the Empire and celebrated on the same day in every settlement across the Middle Lands. There is no religious context to these celebrations but the predominate deities of the area may be honored, or not, according to local custom.

- **Father's Day** – (1st of Ty'Set) A day devoted to the memory of all those who died for the Empire. Beginning with Lord Loran Kalistic, whose death started his son's, Tazral, lifelong quest for justice and led to his forming the Empire. To a degree, every soldier who has served the Empire is honored. Families are encouraged to remember their kin lost in battle and know the sacrifice they made was important to all citizens. A common practice is making rings of local flowers to put on the graves of soldiers and any local battle memorial monument/site. Some citizens take part in a pilgrimage to the town of Father's Rest, located on the shores of the Danchu river just north of the Dothmas Hills. Once there, they visit the memorial erected by Tazral to his father, Loran.
- **Founding Day** – (18th of Mo'Rae) On this day the founding of the Empire is remembered. All citizens offer thanks for the protection and guidance of the Empire. Honor is given to the local noble and the guard. The color of the day is imperial green, often paired with white (or white and black). The tri-leaf, symbol of the Throne, adorns homes and shops as decoration and a show of support for the Empire.
- **Tazral's Day** – (5th of Fer'Ko) A day to celebrate the life of Tazral Kalistic and to honor the ideals he held up. Plays are performed based on stories from the *Saga of Tazral*. The stories picked are the ones that exalt the most heroic behavior people can display. The celebration is aimed at being fun for children and instilling in them the core values that have led to the Empire's latest expansionist phase. All the games, entertainment, and food are free on this day. The Empire allows merchants to record the cost of items they give away for free and count that toward their taxes. The penalty for lying about the amount is strong. Doing so is seen as the next best thing to treason.

Funerals

The majority of humans in the Middle Lands follow the New Gods. Which means their funeral rites are predominately those of Nisvaloon. Basically, the body is cleaned, wrapped in cloth and burned during the daylight hours when the smoke of the fire can carry the deceased's spirit into the portal of the sun and on to the next world. Passing from one fire, the funeral pyre, to the next, the sun. There are prayers that would be spoken during the burning, local tradition often makes its way into which prayers and/or how they are presented. In some places, the body is burned to ash. In other places, it is burned till only bone remains. Whatever is leftover, be that ash or ash and bone is interred according to local tradition. For some, this means a grave, or a crypt (if the person was wealthy or important), or being released to the sea, or the elements, or buried under a tree. There are many possibilities, not all of which are listed here. These rites are done so that the dead find peace and can freely move on.

There are many who do not follow the New Gods. For this reason, funeral rites vary as well. Some bury their dead. Others offer the body to nature, where it is consumed. A few send the body out to sea. Still others wrap the body in herb solution soaked cloth and leave it in the hot sand until it mummifies, after

which it is interred. Finally, there are those for whom the body is irrelevant and gets no special rites or treatment. Regardless of what rites are observed, a vast majority of the dead are handled by a group known as the Caretakers. Found in almost every city in the Empire, they act as undertakers. When a Caretaker is not available, like in a small village, the family of the deceased will take and prepare the body. They will also perform any rites that are needed in the event that a religious figure is not available.

In addition to burial rites, there is often some social gathering involved with the death. Many places will have a funeral procession. Family and friends walk the deceased to their final rest. Sometimes, there is music. Often the home of the deceased is opened up for the living to gather and mourn. When and for how long depends on local custom. In a few places, the gatherings are very upbeat and the life of the person is celebrated more than their passing is mourned. These social events are for the living.

Holidays

Holidays (holy days) are religious ceremonies/festivals that honor one deity or another. They all have some purpose in addition to being an act of faith. From place to place the details will often be different, as will the deity honored, or even the day it is held. Sometimes the differences are drastic and other times, they are minor. Additionally, these events are social gatherings.

What follows is a bit of detail about things that happen in the life of the average commoner during any given month of the year. That will shed light on what kinds of holidays they will take part in, as well as, which deities they seek to call on during these rites.

- Mo'Ko - Most farmers spend this month ploughing their fields and spreading manure into the freshly turned earth. This is to prepare the land for planting. It is the time of rebirths and awakenings. For many animals, this is the beginning of their mating season. Holidays and celebrations during this month revolve around these themes with Drazlooh and/or Nisvaloon being honored by many.
- Fer'Ko - Mating season for other animals continues during Fer'Ko. Early in the month, hens begin to lay eggs. By the middle of this month, most farmers will have planted their crop. This is the month of the trickster. If not placated, the trickster will bring a late frost to spoil the newly planted seeds. Many of the festivities in this month are aimed at pleasing whatever trickster deity the locals favor. For example, Iturr or Tanjoom or even Corhov. Other ceremonies are in relation to the early hunting season, which begins this month.
- Ty'Ko - By this point, everyone, from the people in the Cold Plains of Fellice, to the folks farming in the dry plains of southern Sulkor, will have their crop in the ground. Any last minute repair/maintenance of irrigation systems is done, this includes things like digging new ditches or clearing old ones of debris and weeds. The deities of sky, rain, and/or growth are commonly honored during this month. The first farm animal births are beginning during this month, mostly rabbits and the chickens. Bantus is often honored at this time.
- Mo'Rae - Festivals of Summer's Night are common during this month. In many inland areas of the Middle Lands, this is the first constantly dry time of the year. Irrigation is vital for crops in such places. Often the first crop of hay, used as animal feed, is harvested at this time. Ploughing of any fallow field takes place during this month. Sheep are sheared, taking their winter coat, and the first piglets are born. Deities of growth, rain, and perseverance are often honored during this month.
- Fer'Rae - Regardless of location, this tends to be a dry month. In places that are lucky enough to have a long growing season, this is also the month of their first harvest. The fields are then readied for a second crop with more ploughing and manure. Fallow fields are treated to another ploughing. Sheep and goat birthing season begins. Deities of the hunt and/or birth are commonly celebrated during this time. Bohtan is very popular this time of year, even with non-elves.
- Ty'Rae - For the areas with a climate that favors it, the second crop is planted during this time. Any planting is done before the late rains begin during the end of this month. Such areas will also take time to call on the deities by way of harvest festivals to thank them for the first crop and ask for blessings for the next crop. Raktbor and/or Janumorn are often given a sacrifice to keep the late summer storms mild.
- Mo'Set - Many of the ceremonies of autumn revolve around making sacrifices for a good harvest and/or hunt. Hunting activities pick up substantially during this time of year. Later in the month, harvesting begins for the areas that are not so lucky as to have a climate that favors more than one crop a year. Many still plant hay for use during the coming winter.
- Fer'Set - By the end of this month everyone will harvest and plant some winter hay if they can. Afterward, the final ploughing of the fields begins. Fruit tree pruning begins. The newly harvested crops are prepared for winter storage. Harvest festivals begin in earnest and feasting/celebrations will be common. Volios will be widely hailed and honored during this month.

- Ty'Set - The ploughing of any remaining fields is done. The final big hunts of the year begin. The game animals taken are smoked or salted or otherwise preserved. Most areas see the beginning of their rainy season during this month. As things die and the land sleeps, many people take this time to honor the dead. Tashrune and/or Hethrize are given homage. The northern lands see their first frost which comes late in the month.
- Mo'Helt - The time of preparation begins. Tools are mended or replaced and other general upkeep is done. Across the Middle Lands, the general weather gets wetter. The warmest of southern lands get their first frost by the middle of the month. In the north, some snow is already falling. This is one of the busiest times for the northern people. They have the least time before heavy snowfalls and makes any work they haven't gotten to all but impossible. This is also the time of year that some of the livestock are slaughtered and preserved for later. This is the month of celebrating and giving thanks for hearth and home. This is the time of year calves are born.
- Fer'Helt - For many, this is the coldest darkest time of the year. Hens stop or at least slow, their egg laying. What work that can be done indoors, by the fire, is done. Any other, non-essential, work can wait for better weather. During this, the darkest month, both Gravston and Hethrize are commonly honored. With the shortest days upon them, people look forward to the longer, warmer days to come. Both rain and snow are common all month.
- Ty'Helt - The beginning of the end of winter is a time for rejoicing. The days are getting noticeably longer and, at least in the south, the cold is beginning to recede and the winter rain and/or snow stops. People start to get outside again and prepare for the next growing season by making repairs to tools and fences and the like. People begin to stockpile manure for treating the fields in the upcoming growing season. Most domesticated horses are born during this month. It is also the time to celebrate love and hope. Ceremonies for Nisvaloon and/or Ursinah are common.

While the details vary from region to region there are four main holidays, each with a theme. The spring equinox (rebirth), summer solstice (life), autumn equinox (harvest), and winter solstice (family). While the holiday's date can vary a bit, as is practical for the locals, everyone has at least these four. In addition, there are often another 4 to 8 local holidays during the year. These will be totally dependent on the local/regional customs and culture.

Marriages

In the Middle Lands, the purpose of any marriage is to join people together and create a family of some kind. All types of unions are possible but not all types are fully accepted in every place. For example, the Jute Rhone of the northern lands practice group marriages. While they are not the only ones, they are a minority. For them, it is normal to have three or more people, all of whom are married to each other. Many people, not of this minority, see it as odd. Some others do not, even if they don't practice the same customs. It is accepted because all recognize the importance of protecting customs, even if you don't share them. It fosters a "live and let live" attitude and generally lessens conflict.

The reason(s) behind a marriage can be based on love or gain. Generally speaking, when the motivation of the participants is the dominant factor, love wins out as the reason to get married. However, when their parents control matters, the gain has more to do with marriage than love. For nobles, it is rare that they are allowed to marry for love. While commoners do marry for love it is still not as widespread as it could be. The fact is that marriage for gain is the dominant reason because arranged marriages are the most common type of marriage in the Middle Lands.

Marriage rites vary widely from place to place and by religion. It is common that someone officiates the ceremony. While this is often a religious figure, it could be a village elder, it could be the local noble or a proxy of the noble. Witnesses are another commonality. At the very least, each party in the marriage has a witness, often family. More commonly, it is an event for most, if not the whole village to come to see.

The timing can be important as well. In a few places marriages are only done on certain days/nights of the year. While other places do it as needed. Location can be of equal importance. It may be a family or local tradition that everyone is married under the same tree, for example. Or before a local idol, a several centuries old, huge statue. Or an ancient temple, now nearly a ruin.

For legal reasons, documentation is stringently required for noble weddings with copies going to all parties of the marriage, as well as to the Imperial Throne. For commoners, it is much more simple. Weddings are performed before the witnesses and the fact is recorded in the town's records. A copy of the record goes to the Empire for safe keeping, again that is done for legal reasons.

Finally, it is common to have a marriage feast and a first night celebration of some kind. The length of the festivities varies from place to place. Some of the details will vary as well. The general sentiment is to wish the newly married well and give them the best first night they could have.

As for divorce, some groups think marriage is lifelong. A few others set a duration. Regardless, nearly every group has some custom/rule for ending a marriage. How acceptable it is, depends on the group.

Name Days

While some will name a child at birth, many do not. Old superstition holds that naming a child too soon draws the attention of foul spirits and endangers the child. This is a common belief among humans. Different people have different customs regarding the naming. For some, the name day is 100 days after birth. Others subscribe to the custom that one year after birth the child is given a name. A few do not name the child until the parents "know" the child and can give a meaningful name. Whatever the case, by Imperial law, the age of a citizen is calculated by counting the person's name days rather than birthdays.

Nobles have an additional ceremony on the child's first name day. The main point is that, by performing the rite, the child is taken as part of the noble's bloodline. Only the head of the family can perform this rite. When, and if, it is done the child can legally use the family name. If it is not done, the child is labeled a bastard and has no legal standing within the House and little otherwise.

In a few tribes, the child is not named by the parents at all. The elder or wise-one or tribal leader will name all children. Sometimes this involves a vision quest to "find the child's name in the stars."

Oaths and Oath Breaking

In the Middle Lands, it is common for people to make an oath to someone else. An oath of loyalty or service being the most widespread of these. This is not done lightly as a person's word is said to be tied to their worth and sometimes more. Oaths are given in marriage ceremonies as well as on important name days. Every noble has given an oath to another, higher, noble and some even give an oath to the people they rule over. Anyone giving an oath is said to be oath-bound. However, the most well-known oath is the "Oath of the Wall" which is taken by one that will serve on the Wall. It is seen as an unbreakable oath, an oath until death and, by ancient law, anyone breaking that oath is put to death.

Breaking any oath is looked upon poorly. While there can be mitigating circumstances, not everyone is willing to hear what they think amounts to excuses on the matter. In the end, no one really wants to break an oath and no one wants someone oath-bound to them breaking that oath. The best of these people would rather release the oath than have the oath-bound break it. This is most often done for warriors that have seen to much bloody battle. Because such a person can lose the will to fight, releasing them could also save the lives of other soldiers such a person would have inadvertently put in danger.

In other cases, the oath-bound may no longer see things as they once did or they may think other factors have changed. In any case, their views are no longer in-line with the person they serve. At such times there are few choices for the oath-bound. First, is to go on and hope that a realignment comes about. Second, is to break the oath and refuse service to that person. The last choice is to become an Unbound.

Only nobles or members of a noble bloodline can become Unbound. Such a person publicly and irrevocably renounces all ties. They are seen as having no family, no title, no property (beyond what can be carried). Additionally, they serve no person, and can never give or receive an oath. They will go out into the *World* and follow only their heart. There is a long history of such people breaking away. It goes back to the tale of Kolynn the Breaker, a famed warrior who is said to have lived during The Second Fall. The tale goes that when she looked across the land, what she saw in the world made her heart bleed and she renounced all ties so that she could spend her remaining days making right what her heart believed to be so wrong. This is seen by some as an honorable path, others see it much less favorably.

When flame turns black, the Old Gods are back. -- Well-known fragment of an archaic text

Naming Things

Names have power. They define a thing as well as identify it. In the Middle Lands, names are given with care. In most places, a child is not named until it has lived for a year. In this way, the parents get to know the child and the name is believed to be more “accurate” to the person the child will become. Naming a place is not a small matter. Some believe that the future of the land can be influenced, if not dictated, by its name. It is, therefore, common to name a place based on geographical features rather than by other ephemeral factors. Using old languages is another common practice when giving a name. It adds a level of insulation that allows the name giver to be bolder than they may otherwise be.

Naming a Person

Not everyone has a “family” name. In the Middle Lands, easily half of all commoners do not. Those that do, get them one of a few ways. Those being hometown, profession, parents, and being a descendant of a failed noble house.

A hometown is a common option for people from rural areas. Such places have small populations. Hence calling someone Olivia of Ash Ridge would be enough to identify her when the next nearest person named Olivia is two villages over.

Another common last name would be based on one's parents. For example, Ethan son of John son of Henry is wordy but that could, at times, be shortened to something like Ethan Johnson. In a similar line, the now “civilized” descendants of tribals will often use the parent's tribe or clan as a family name. That can lead to last names like Crow or Dogrunner or Northwind.

In some places, it is not uncommon for a child to follow the parent's profession. This can lead to another popular method, acquiring a last name in accordance with a profession. Some examples include Hunter, Miller, Smith, Baker, Cooper, Tailor, Potter, Fisher, and Farmer.

Finally, another way commoners can get the last name is by being a descendant of a failed noble House. Over the past 500 years, there have been hundreds of noble houses that faded into obscurity. In many cases, the only thing remaining of these Houses is the name borne by its, no longer noble, descendants.

All nobles have a last name in their House name. Houses are often named in an old tongue, mostly dead ones. For the older Houses that is just the way it was, using the dialect of the time. But newer Houses did it to give themselves a sense of age seen as important for any noble house to have. Regardless, these names are based on some deed of the House's founders. For example, Dosren means “Goblin Slayer” in one ancient Luvic dialect, Casabon means “Bridge Guard” in another dead minor Luvic dialect, and Borsheen translates as “Barer of valiant boar blood” from the ancient Novaskag of that House's region.

As a final note on the names of people, from time to time a child is born with questionable lineage. Such an illegitimate child is called a bastard. Bastards do not get the family name as a child born within a marriage would. This is more important for nobles than commoners. Noble bastards will be given a bastard's last name if they get one at all. Such a name is traditionally a common, natural, object like Rock, River, Tree or Cloud. For the rest of their life, it marks them as a bastard to any hearing the name.

Naming a Settlement

Either local ties, culture, or history is often the basis of a settlement's name. So, if a battle was fought there, or near there, the newly formed village could be named for that. In some cases, they are named for a founder, especially if that person made some great sacrifice for the settlement. Naming a place for what it produces is also common. Geographical features are another theme for naming places. A few examples of names include things like, the Village of Kara's Fate, the Town of Twin Tree Hill, or the City of Ash Cove. Additionally, old languages can add an extra flair. Examples include Balashar which means “good harbor” in one of the old tongues and Mostor which means “plentiful land”.

Use the following table for quick settlement names. Roll or pick one entry from both the resource and location columns, use of the descriptor column is optional.

d20	Descriptor	Resource	Location	d20	Descriptor	Resource	Location
1	Sweet	Pine	Cove	11	Running	Copper	River
2	Red	Oak	Beach	12	Snowy	Crown	Lake
3	Blue	Foam	Harbor	13	High	Bone	Land
4	Green	Gull	Mountain	14	Low	Wolf	Wall
5	Misty	Boar	Hill	15	<i>none</i>	Silver	Ridge
6	Twin	Snow	Valley	16	<i>none</i>	Gold	Watch
7	Sunny	Ash	Vale	17	<i>none</i>	Horse	Rock
8	Black	Tree	Rest	18	<i>none</i>	Salmon	Landing
9	White	Salt	Grove	19	<i>none</i>	Apple	Mine
10	Peaceful	Iron	Pass	20	<i>Pick or re-roll</i>	Farm	Hold

Naming a Tavern/Inn

Taverns in the Middle Lands have a tradition of sporting a playful, fun name. While it is not a hard rule it is very common in settlements with more than a few taverns. The more taverns there are the more interesting the names get. As a result, the old established taverns that have been around for generations will have plain names while the new ones have witty names that try to stick in one's head.

The table below is given for times when a name is needed quickly. Roll or pick one from both the adjective column and the noun column. If desired, an entry from the prefix column can be used to add extra spice to the name.

d20	Prefix	Adjective	Noun	d20	Prefix	Adjective	Noun
1	Two	Black	Dog(s)	11	The	Happy	Orc(s)
2	Three	Green	Horse(s)	12	The Little	Scurvy	Halfling(s)
3	Four	Red	Rat(s)	13	The Blind	Rusty	Fool(s)
4	Five	Golden	Fish	14	The Old	Dizzy	Wench(es)
5	Six	White	Knight(s)	15	Cart &	Hungry	Thug(s)
6	Seven	Blue	Rose(s)	16	Cup &	Thirsty	Pirate(s)
7	Eight	Dripping	Cat(s)	17	Blood of the	Sleeping	Merchant(s)
8	Nine	Wet	Elf(ves)	18	<i>none</i>	Twisted	Boot(s)
9	Ten	Drunken	Gnome(s)	19	<i>none</i>	Spinning	Bucket(s)
10	A Dozen	Tipsy	Dwarf(s)	20	<i>Pick or re-roll</i>	Dancing	Tankard(s)

In honor of the Water Rider, sailors tattoo seahorses on their person and carve them into ships.

Military Organization

Local nobles control local military assets. There are a variety of vectors a noble can draw on to raise an army. The base for this is the militia or the peasant army. While largely untrained this is the most sizable section of any noble's army. Their equipment depends on what they have, bow or axes or scythes being the most common with armor of any type beyond leather rare. Next is the personal guard or House guard. This is generally the smallest subgroup but the most loyal to the noble. These troops are equipped and trained as best the noble or House can manage. Most are infantry and archers with light cavalry if it can be afforded. Next is the army of the domain. This is the standing army that all nobles are ordered to maintain for the defense of their land and their liege which is generally at work patrolling/policing settlements and roads. Type, equipment, and training vary but infantry, pike bearers, crossbow, and light cavalry are common. Finally, mercenary troops who are well trained and equipped professional soldiers that sell their services as needed. Holding it all together and providing leadership are the Knights who are well trained, armed and armored exceptionally well.

Basic Imperial Military Formations

Military units of the middle lands follow a basic structure that has been used for over a thousand years. The units are composed of enlisted soldiers and officers. Higher level officers are often of a noble bloodline but rarely have a title. Officer ranks are *Lieutenant*, *First Lieutenant*, *Captain*, *Major*, *Colonel*, *Lieutenant General*, and *General*. Enlisted soldiers are almost exclusively commoners. Enlisted ranks are *Private*, *Private First Class*, *Corporal*, *Sergeant*, *Staff Sergeant*, *Master Sergeant*, and *First Sergeant*. Typical unit composition and command structures are shown in the following table.

Unit Name	Count*	PVT	PFC	CLP	SGT	SSG	MSG	1SG	LT	1LT	CPT	MAJ	COL	LTG	GEN
Dagger (smallest tactical unit)	2	1	1												
Lance (2 daggers)	4	2	1	1											
Trident (3 lances+command staff)	13	6	3	2	1				1						
Company (4 tridents+command staff)	55	24	12	8	4	1			4	1	1				
Battalion (2-4 companies+command staff)	223**	96	48	32	16	4	1		16	4	4	1	1		
Army (2 or more battalions+command staff)	449**	192	96	64	32	8	2	1	32	8	8	2	2	1	1

* It should be noted that support staff is not included in these numbers. Support staff varies with the unit's size and location. They are military personnel responsible for supply, maintenance, administration, and services (such as cooking and message running). A reasonable number is 3 to 5 percent of the total count for units of company size or larger. Smaller units are self-sufficient enough to require none. Note, these are not the same as camp followers, which number 15% to 50% of the unit's size and are civilians.

** Numbers shown are based on a battalion made up of 4 companies. A 2 or 3 company battalion would have proportionately fewer.

Law and Order

In simplified terms, the basic mandates of Imperial laws demand the following of the local noble:

- Enforce the will of the Imperial Throne.
- Maintain the general order.
- Support the lawful claims of nobility.
- Ensure the safety of the Empire's citizens.
- Protect the property of the Empire's citizens.
- Sit in judgment of crimes, weigh the evidence, and deliver punishment.

Beyond this very basic outline, courts, laws, judgment, punishment, and the methods used to arbitrate vary from place to place. So much depends on the local noble as they are charged with the task of delivering justice, but how they carry that out is up to them. The Imperial Throne gives them much latitude in how courts are set up and the process of dispensing justice.

Some places have an enlightened judicial system while others are downright draconian. The courts of Mostor and Celyd are, generally speaking, known for having more complex and bureaucratic systems. Fellice and Sulkor courts are known as the most brutal courts, with a few exceptions. Argos is widely seen as the most enlightened and fair courts in the Empire. Regardless of which kingdom one is talking about, the more backwater regions often have a simpler court system and harsher standards of punishment. What is considered a crime is largely well defined across the Empire. The big ones being murder, theft,

assault, destruction of property, and bearing false witness. There are some things that are regional crimes, for example, in some parts of Sulkor damming a stream is a crime. When a crime is committed the town guard is obligated to take the suspected offender into custody and hold them until judgment can be made. This takes longer in some places than others. In general, the larger settlements will have a longer wait time during which the accused is held in a jail of some sort.

Nobles will personally sit in judgment at appointed times. How often depends on the noble, but Imperial mandate requires at least a few hours a week so they all do at least that much. At other times they delegate the task to judges. It is not uncommon for nobles, or more accurately their clerks, to "cherry pick" the cases heard during the noble's session.

How judgment is decided will vary as well. Some places use witnesses, some use testimonial, some will even allow trial by combat or trial by fire. Again, it is the local noble that sets the tone. Outside of the borderlands, many courts require a witness who is a citizen of good standing. Finally, nobles charged with a crime will often have options not extended to common folk such as trial by combat.

Punishments are not often standardized from place to place. One village may give a thief twenty lashes while the next town over would cut off a hand for the same offense. There are many possibilities for punishment. A few examples being, lashing, fines, branding, imprisonment, hanging, and so on. Some nobles can and do get very creative when it comes to punishment. The nobles of Fellice have a reputation in this area. Tales of being tied to a wild and ravenous cave bear tend to cut down on crime.

In regard to civil law, things are a little different. Petitions are filed and statements are taken. Then the local noble, or an arbiter empowered by the noble, will make a ruling based on the facts presented and the laws of the land. It is not unknown for the process to take place without the case's parties directly interacting with the arbiter or noble. It can take days, weeks, or months for a decision to be reached.

Land Ownership

The property of greatest importance is land. Most land is owned by nobles, but anyone with enough coin can buy land. While commoners can and do own land, this is not always the case. Over half of all farming families do not own the land they work. Without the coin to buy it, the easiest way to become a landowner is to claim some of the wilderness lands. As far as the Empire is concerned all the wilderness land within its borders belongs to the Empire and is only waiting for a citizen to come along and build a home on it. So, according to imperial law, any citizen of the Empire may go into the wilderness and stake a claim to a section of land in the name of the Empire.

For commoners, that means they may homestead in borderland areas designated for that purpose. Any commoner can lay claim to between 20 and 100 acres of wilderness in this way. This land belongs to the homesteader as long as they live and can work the land. It is passed on to their children so long as the family can work the land. But, by imperial law, any non-noble that fails to put the land they own to fair use may lose it to the local noble. They or their family would be given "fair value" for the land. This is done so as to get the best possible use out of the land, doing so is in the best interest of the Empire.

Nobles can also claim wilderness lands. For a noble, the standard amount they can claim is 50,000 acres but as much as 65,000 is commonly granted. The land grant is given by imperial decree. Doing this creates a new borderland territory. Then commoners can come in and homestead the areas the noble has designated for that purpose. It is often the case that the terms of the noble's imperial grant require them to live in the territory at least part-time. They must also work to make it safe for homesteading. It can take some time and a great deal of coin to get a foothold in a new borderland territory. A fort of some kind must be constructed and soldiers recruited to patrol the area. Any local monsters must be dealt with, killed, subdued, bargained with, or driven out.

The sell of land happens every day. For a commoner to sell their land they must get the approval of the local noble. While the commoner owns the land, the noble has a greater responsibility and is therefore allowed to make sure the exchange is in the best interest of their people. Most nobles will not forbid sale unless they have some agenda or the sell may have repercussions they don't like.

Slavery

Slavery is not practiced on a grand scale within the Empire. There are, however, regions that do make use of slaves. Most of these take the form of prisoners sentenced to some amount of time as indentured servants to repay a debt of some sort. On rare occasion, it can be a life sentence but that only happens in the shadier borderland freeholds.

A different form of slavery is practiced by some of the tribal humans of Sulkor. An enemy defeated can be taken "Hylee" by the victor rather than being killed. Most often, they act as a servant for a year and then return to their home. While outsiders often call this slavery, the tribes that practice it do not agree.

The truly brutal forms of slavery are found among the orc tribes. They constantly raid borderland settlements for slaves and anything else they can steal. The life of such slaves is not often long or pleasant. While not as harsh, some of the northern human tribals also take part in raiding other tribes or settlements for slaves. They often use branding to identify slaves and who owns them.

There are rumored to be places, in the Spice Kingdoms, where the slave trade is a profitable industry. The same is said of Unetor. Tattoos, brands, piercings, and collars are some of the methods rumored to be used to identify slaves in these cultures. Some claim that a black-market exist to smuggle abducted people out of the Empire for sale in these faraway lands.

Record Keeping

Recording events and information is of vital importance in the Empire. Every settlement has a chief secretary or clerk who is responsible for local record keeping. Births, deaths, marriages, census counts, crop yield, bookkeeping, property exchange, crimes, judgments, and any other event of public note is recorded. These records are kept by the settlement in a secure location. A few times a year a summary is sent to the next level of noble above the local noble. At that level, the information is condensed and passed on to the next higher level, until it reaches the Imperial Clerks. It is rumored that the Imperial Clerks use magic to manage the immense amounts of information that they are required to sift, analyze, and record.

For the smallest of settlements, a single book of 100 pages would be enough to record several years of normal activity. In a major city, the same book may only cover a single month's worth of information. The Empire requires every settlement keep at least one-hundred years worth of records but most try to keep more when they can. It is to their advantage to do so. They do this by recopying and condensing the older information so it takes less space. Space is most often the key factor in how much information a settlement can store. The smallest of settlements may be able to store a couple of centuries worth of records on a single bookshelf. While a major city would require several dozen shelves for each decade. Indexing systems become increasingly important as the volume of information rises. It is rumored that the Sage City, Sapreen, has over five centuries of city records.

Every sizable settlement has its scholars and historians. These are the people that often try to save the documents a settlement throws out. Many settlements will send these documents off to the closest university where they are sorted and stored. Vast reference libraries are built as these documents turn out to be very important for research. Tomes on genealogy, criminology, economics, and forecasting are just a few of the things that scholars produce with this information. Historians use it too, but for less abstract information. These details can often be useful in finding the reasons behind or motivations for historical events.

Education

Imperial law has (for the past 85 years) had a provision that requires all citizens have some very basic skills such as writing one's name, reading a date, and performing simple sums to name a few of them. There are other things as well. However, enforcement of these laws is so problematic as to make them almost meaningless. In the end, it reflects poorly on a noble when local commoners are seen not to meet standards. For an extreme wide-spread lack, the noble may be fined for not promoting education. To avoid such actions many a magister will at least hire a retired clerk to give weekly public lessons on reading and basic math. Some will do more and a few do less.

Generally speaking, about half of all citizens can read and write to some degree in at least one language. Mostly, that language is Common in the cities or a local language in the more rural areas. Many more can at least speak one language plus a little Common. For most people, this education is a family matter but with money comes other options and more than simple language skills can be acquired.

Books

Once someone can read, learning by self-directed study is the next step. Again, the family will play a large part in this. That and what books can be found. Most citizens have access to one or more volumes of the *Saga of Tazral*. Other storybooks are common. In rare cases, a volume or two having more academic topics may have been acquired from a traveling peddler.

Even in the smallest of villages, having a few books at the local tavern is common. These are most often books for entertainment and not academic subjects. Over the past century, owning books has become a sign of success and prosperity. As a result, some inns and taverns have taken to adding a reading room or nook stocked with a dozen or so books in an attempt to show their refinement and attract upscale clientele. In some cases, this has progressed to the point of becoming a small library with books on many subjects that patrons can read while enjoying the services of the inn/tavern. This is as often the product of an innkeeper's love of reading as a desire to improve business. Indeed, some innkeepers have a private collection of books more varied than the ones in their reading nook.

Another avenue for gaining access to books is a public library. These often get their beginning with a grant of books from a local noble or wealthy merchant or a scholar. While rare in small towns, they become more numerous in larger towns and cities. The smallest will have only a few score books while the largest, such as the Lelot Library, could have tens of thousands. Citizens can come and read books there but may not take them out. These are tired, third-hand, and worn but still serviceable books. Librarians are the guardians and they take the job seriously. Often, the public area is a reading space with a few of the easier-to-replace volumes accessible and all the other books locked away to be brought out on request and as the librarians allow. They will quickly restrict access to people that damage or remove books. As well as those that don't follow the other rules of the library.

With all that said, finding more books is not a hard thing if one has a little coin. Any traveling peddler will have a collection of two or three books for trade or sell. After all, the road is often lonely so they tend to read the stock themselves and are prone to more easily trade one that has been read or is not interesting to them. So, trading one for another is widely accepted with peddlers. Damaged books are harder to trade without adding some small coins to the deal. Then there are merchants that specialize in books. Any town or larger sized settlement could have a bookshop. In places, without a library, they will often trade books with locals just as a peddler would. They do tend to hold on to less common and/or well cared for books which are sold rather than traded.

Tutors

In even the smallest of villages, there can be found one person with more education than others have. Often an older clerk or scribe, such people will be private tutors for a price. Larger settlements will have more potential tutors with more varied skills and more prospective students as well. The most sought-after tutors are graduates of one of the universities, the Gleamdon University being the most well-known. These tutors have the widest range of knowledge often including such subjects as art, astronomy, biology, economics, history, law, mathematics, philosophy, and so on. For other, less academic skills, tutors are no less difficult to locate. Any tutor is expected to have a few books to teach from.

Apprenticeships

The most commonly found education is the apprenticeship. They happen in every settlement across the Empire and are promoted by every guild. A youth, generally no older than 12, is taken in by someone well-versed in a trade and trained to follow that trade. Commonly referred to as a novice the youth often lives and works with the teacher, called a mentor. Such training will last 3 to 7 years depending on the trade and the student's ability to learn from the teacher as well as their ability to teach. It is not common to have more than two novices at a time. When a guild is involved there is a more formalized path to follow. Once a novice has completed their apprenticeship they become a free artisan and typically strike out into the world to practice their trade and make their name apart from their mentor.

The relationship between knight and squire is also an apprenticeship. The goal, however, is a little different than with other apprenticeships, most of which are teaching a trade. A knight has demonstrated a strength of character by way of actions that lead to obtaining their knighthood. These acts show the person has noble blood. The squire is often a child of wealthy parents who, like all parents should, want their child to do well in life. Having that child spend time in the tutelage of a person that earned a title by deed, by doing the right thing, should be a fine influence on the youth. In effect, the youth is to be taught morality and strength of character. This is the main goal of the knight/squire apprenticeship. They can be short or long. Parents of influence will use that and their wealth to convince a knight to take their child as a squire. Other skills are often imparted to the squire as well, which ones depend on the knight's strengths and skillset. No title or certificate is given to the squire upon completion of this apprenticeship.

Another unusual apprenticeship is the one between mage and neophyte. This is how arcane magic is taught. In the past, there have been short-lived magic academies but they don't seem to last. There is simply too much distrust for magic among non-practitioners. The tales of the Savage Time are still told to so many children. So, the apprenticeship remains the sole method to learn the secrets of arcane magic. Becoming a neophyte is no simple matter. Just finding a mage can be exceedingly hard. Finding one willing to take on a neophyte can seem impossible. One way to locate a mage is by way of the Arcane Syndicate. The downside of that is in any given year they get far more requests for apprenticeships than there are mages wanting a neophyte. On top of that, so many of them are unsuitable candidates. The amount of dross that must be sifted makes the process far slower than it would be otherwise. Overall, about a fifth of all apprenticeships are filled from Syndicate gathered applicants. Most mages, when they deem it time, don't have to look hard to find a prospective neophyte. But they are careful and will not take the first one that comes along. And, just as in the stories, mages are prone to travel the countryside seeking out those with talent. Still, there are so very few of them. Each mage wants something different in a neophyte, simple desire and talent is not enough. Some want a youth that is all but untrained, having very little formal education so they can be shaped and molded as desired. Others want a university graduate as it saves them time they don't wish to waste imparting mundane knowledge. Most like to have something between the extremes. Above all else, the wise mage will seek a perspective with a similar outlook or philosophy. Sadly, not all mages are wise, believing they can mold or dominate the neophyte, pushing the youth into the shape desired. The results can be varied but animosity is a common outcome.

Academies

Found in the largest towns and smaller cities, an academy is where people go to advance or expand their education. Prospective students are expected to have some basic knowledge to build upon, at least reading and mathematics. Very few will take a student younger than fifteen. Also, they must pay a price.

The cost of tuition varies with the reputation of the institution and the student's ability. It is paid by the term (a three month period). A student with few funds can get a reduced rate if they are very bright and willing to work for it. Showing a desire to learn is another factor that can lead to lower tuition. Likewise, a very wealthy, dim and/or unmotivated student will be charged a higher tuition.

Different academies offer different lines of study. There are martial academies that train future soldiers and officers. Economic academies that tailor to the merchant class. A few are devoted to the arts and performance. Still others direct studies in wider areas for more general scholarly appeal. These schools are perfect for the budding scholar with aspirations of going to a university. The best ones have some tie to the Prime Order and are seen as a shortcut to Gleamdon University. Often, the head of the academy (its "Maz-Lar") is a member of the Order.

Across the Empire, there are at least a score of well-known academies having a variety of areas of study. For each of them, there is another score of lesser-known or obscure schools. Each of these hopes to grow into a university someday. Most will have between thirty and fifty students. The largest is still well under a hundred students. While a three-month term in an academy will do wonders for a person's knowledge, it takes a dozen such terms to acquire an education and a Letter of Recognition.

Universities

The greatest knowledge can be found in universities. As rumor has it, all the secrets of the world can be had in one or the other. There are only about a dozen of them in the Empire each being in or very near one of the major cities. Each has a reputation all its own. But, standing above them all is the Gleamdon

University. The jewel of the Sage City and by far the largest university in the Empire. Each term they have over a thousand students, a hundred teachers (all members of the Prime Order), and another hundred support staff.

A university is similar to an academy in some ways. They have scores of teachers which they call "Ur-Lar" and hundreds of students called "Laren". The head of the university is called an "Alur-Lar". Every Alur-Lar and most Ur-Lar are members of the Prime Order. They also require a tuition be paid for each term. It is expensive but, just as with academies, a Laren's abilities are taken into account when setting tuition.

Any prospective student must be no less than sixteen years old and pass a testing and interview process. During which they need to show significant knowledge in four distinct fields of study (such as astronomy, botany, history, languages, mathematics, philosophy, or the like). They must have at least one letter of recommendation from a past teacher (or a Letter of Recognition). Up to three such letters are beneficial. Who the letters are from matters almost as much as having them. Even with all that, acceptance is not a given as there are a limited number of seats each term. Some must reapply next term.

Once accepted, it is all too common for a new Laren to wash out the first term. Of the ones that don't, half their number will be forced out over the first year. The quickest of university programs require a dozen terms and many take more time. After some years a Laren may hope to collect a Certificate of Achievement for a university program. Across the whole Empire, only a few hundred of these are given out each year. Finding work becomes much easier with one. Pursuing a career in academics is possible with one. Seeking membership with the Prime Order is possible with a Gleamdon University certificate.

Even if the Laren doesn't complete a program, just attending a university can open doors that would have been solidly closed before. Wealthy people always want to use intelligent people for profit (financial, social, or otherwise).

Technology

While the technology level of the Empire can be broadly referred to as "Medieval era," it is a little more complicated than that. As with many aspects of society so much depends on where, in the Empire, one is. Indeed, there can be found some bits of advanced technology more rightly belonging to the "Renaissance era" and a couple of "Victorian-era" things as well. In most disciplines, the present-day technology is pure science but for a few, a little magic augments the science used by non-humans.

After the gap was sealed and magic died, science was the only option. During the chaos of that time, much knowledge was lost and knowledge of magic was actively expunged. Still, some fragments of non-magic related knowledge were saved and became the basis of current science. Without science, mortals may not have survived this era. Different disciplines would advance at different rates over the following centuries. Then, about a thousand years ago, magic was reborn. While most would have no desire to abandon science, for a few the siren's call could not be ignored. The majority that would not be lured back to magic so easily remembered the Old Gods with fear. Another war would follow. The Second Fall.

Fear of magic and the Old Gods were at the heart of it. In the end, fear would win out but that didn't change the fact that magic was back. The numbers of those that abandon science has been slowly building since then. Today, shunning magic is seen as superstitious and backward. Still, the majority of people do just that in varying degrees.

Agriculture

Concepts like crop rotation, soil erosion, fertilization, and irrigation are commonly known to farmers across the Empire. Many farmers use iron plows while some have access to steel plows. Horses are the most used plow animal with oxen and mules used to a lesser degree. Terraced farming methods, while not known to all farmers, are well disseminated in areas suited to the technique.

Careful work over at least a dozen centuries has led to a variety of horticultural secrets being uncovered. Due to this, skilled and knowledgeable farmers can easily double the yield of any crop over what a person having only basic know-how could do. With that in mind, pest control is the most pressing issue for any farmer. Across the Empire, it accounts for more crop loss than anything else.

Avionics

Flying is the province of gnomes and humans shy away from it when given a choice. Hot-air lift and, for the crazier gnome, hydrogen lift is used to a great extent. Material science is augmented by gnomish magic making things lighter and stronger than normal. This is the key to flight and a secret gnomes keep close. Other magics are used as well, a popular one being magically enhanced steam-powered engines.

Not being big on standardization, gnomish airships are all unique to the point of it being a matter of pride with their designers. The simplest resembles a Victorian-era hot-air balloon, while the most exotic comes closer to a clockwork dragonfly with a 40ft wingspan. There are even designs using rotary blades for propulsion and/or lift. Another uses steam jets in the same way. A dozen well-known airships ride the wind currents of the Empire's sky, each a work of art crewed by gnomish aeronauts.

Ceramics

There are two important aspects to the science of ceramics. The first, heat, is embodied in the use of the kiln. Essentially an oven, the kiln is used to "fire" objects made of clay and turn them into more durable earthenware products. Second is the material, clay. Some clay is better than others for ceramics, using any old mud will not produce quality earthenware. Some elements, like lead, are dangerous and should be avoided in clay used for unglazed pottery or in the glaze used for all other pottery.

Once shaped and dried, raw clay objects are put in a kiln to bake. The most basic of kilns are made with earth, packed hard in a dome shape and heated with a roaring fire. These are most often used as a temporary solution to bake brick that will be used to make a more substantial kiln.

The design of a kiln ranges from the simple brick or earthen dome to the more elaborate multi-chamber walk-in models used in larger settings. Such kilns are often on a hill-side with the fire at the low point, allowing the hot air to move to the progressively higher chambers which are heated to different levels. They are commonly called a "climbing" kiln. The lowest chamber is hottest and used for glazing and firing high-quality items that need more heat, the most upper (and largest) chamber gets much less heat and is used to speed the drying/curing of raw clay objects and/or lumber. The lumber is often scrap that will be used to make charcoal which is in turn used to fuel the kiln fire.

Once fired, a clay object can function in a range of mundane uses. However, it has not yet reached its most useful form. Until a fired clay object is sealed with a glaze and fired again, it is of limited value. The fire melted glaze is what makes a ceramic bowl or pot waterproof. It also allows for beautiful decoration with a range of colors and patterns. The glaze requires knowledge to create safely, such things as lead must be avoided in a mug's glaze more stringently than in the clay used to make the mug.

Brick, tile, cookware and many other items are possible in the Empire because of widespread use of kilns.

Clockworks

The gnomes of the Empire have secrets they keep only for themselves. The making and understanding of complex clockworks is such a thing. They don't get there with pure science, hidden gnomish magic is used as well. This magic just extends the capabilities of the constituent parts, making them more durable, work longer, and work dependably. The magic is not an active enchantment, it's more a matter of magic being used to enhance basic materials. So, a detect magic spell is all but useless.

Given all that, a very smart and skilled human could take a clockwork apart and duplicate it, given time and study and tools. But that duplicate, lacking magic enhancement, would fail totally or work poorly before quickly breaking while the original will work flawlessly for many decades. Such is the nature of the most common gnomish clockworks, the town clocks used in so many settlements across the Empire. As is normal with gnome made devices, each is different in size and shape but all track at least the hours of a day and the day of the month. A few do more, tracking years in great detail by way of the movement of stars and moon and sun. A rare few will even tell, to the exact minute, the next day's dawn and dusk.

Fireworks

Called Sky Fire in the Empire, the craft is known to one small group among the Way Ash'non. They are extremely secretive and devoted to halting the spread of this knowledge because they understand the

danger of it. That said, they will put on shows if their conditions are met. The most important to them is that none but they are allowed within a thousand feet of the show's platform. The platform is most often set up behind a screen and in the middle of a clear field. Short metal tubes on the platform are used to fire packages of black powder into the sky where they explode with a wide range of visual effects.

Sky Fire shows are a rare spectacle for citizens in rural areas. Meanwhile, major cities will often have at least one display each year. Displays take place at night, at least an hour after sundown. These shows will last between twenty minutes and an hour. Regardless of time and rarity, when publicized, people will travel for days to see one. Each one is always a little different as the artist among the Way Ash'non that make Sky Fire have variations of technique they employ to give a personalized flair to the visuals.

Sky Fire is never sold. The components are never sold. The knowledge is never sold. The only way it is experienced is by way of a show. Shows performed exclusively by Way Ash'non. The "magic" is theirs.

Medical

Setting broken bones, staunching bleeding, breaking fevers, and minor surgery are all things that medical science used in the Empire can handle. Yet the science in this area has been stunted by the spread of divine magic over the last thousand years. For a time after sealing the gap, humans relied on medical science for all healing. Janice, an apothecary and alchemist, who lived not long after the Savage Time, is credited for modern medical science. She spent a lifetime uncovering the ancient arts from pre-Savage-Time texts and experimenting with it until she understood the human body on a level not seen since before the gap was sealed. Then she made sure to spread that knowledge and she was very successful.

While there are many people who work the art by rote, there are plenty who are educated in the science and understand the "how" and "why" of it. That's thanks to Janice and her books. The brewing of herb potions that really work is also attributed to her. The best of these is as good as a magic healing potion. Some scholars have a theory that her potions work better now than in her time because magic is touching the *World* again. That is not a popular theory even if the evidence for it is good; not many like the idea that some herbs may have quasi-magical properties.

Around a thousand years ago magic began to return signaling the reign of pure science would end. Divine magic made its appearance among followers of the New Gods in short order. The Second Fall would plunge the people into the chaos of war. Over the next couple of centuries healing magic would be the reason magic, in general, was begrudgingly tolerated. Healing what science could not is a powerful argument for magic. These healers would spread across the land and with each passing year, little by little, a few more people would stop studying science.

Even if the relatively easy path of healing with divine magic has hindered the development of medical science, it hasn't wiped it away. Mostly because there is still a basic distrust of magic which even healing magic can't overcome. The more rural areas are prone to embracing that distrust quicker and harder. Such people work to avoid any magic and among them can be found practitioners of medicine.

None with real knowledge of medical science uses things like leeches or bleeding or mercury. These are the tools of charlatans. Sadly, the traveling snake oil peddlers do roam the land in search of marks.

Mining, Smelting, and Metalworking

The process of mining ore requires one dig into the earth. In ages now long past, all the easy to reach ore was gathered. The same can be said of many resources, all the easy to get bits were used in a now forgotten era. So for this reason, mines run deep because they must. Dwarves dominate in this field and their techniques for mining are superior. Human mines lack their level of refinement. They do, however, have some skill with methods of ventilation and water pumps critical to mines. Typically, human mines don't run as deep as those of the dwarves. One consequence of that is humans rarely encounter coal so they don't know the use of it. Hence, humans only have charcoal to work with as an abundant fuel. Dwarves are, of course, fine with not sharing the coal. They use it for smelting and their steam-powered digging engines. Humans must rely on hands and shovels and picks.

Various ores containing iron, copper, lead, tin, silver, and gold are commonly gathered by humans. Before they can be used, they must be smelted. Heating the ore, sometimes with flux, to melt it and separate

the metal from the dross is the basics of smelting. Iron is the hardest of these to process. Mainly because it requires a higher temperature to melt than the others. Making it into good steel is even harder.

A hot hearth fire, like what many blacksmiths use (about 1600 degrees), is good enough to melt all the common ores except iron. It can still do a good enough job to produce bloom, a spongy version of iron made by smelting at these lower than melting point temperatures. The bloom can then be hammered into wrought iron and then used to make tools. Casting iron in molds requires it to be melted and that means a blast furnace is needed.

Not every smithy has a blast furnace. They are expensive, being made of brick. The ones in common use in the Empire are roughly eight-foot tall cylinders with a ceramic crucible at its base. They move air using a single or double bellows which are often powered by a waterwheel. Human or animal powered bellows are hard to maintain for the length of time needed for the blast furnace to do its work.

The bellows push large volumes of air in at the cylinder's base. A fire, using hardwood charcoal, burns inside and heats the iron ore and flux set on top of it. Often other layers are stacked above that, charcoal, ore, flux, over and over. The air pushed in near the fire stokes the flame and makes it burn hotter than it would with natural airflow. With temperatures approaching 3000 degrees in the furnace, the iron melts and collects in the crucible. Dross floats to the top and can be poured off leaving near pure, molten, iron behind. That can, in turn, be poured into ingots or casting molds with equal ease. Ingots are for use later; heated in any blacksmith's hearth fire they can be shaped into tools with hammer and anvil.

Turning the iron into steel requires purifying the molten iron and perfecting the distribution of carbon in it. More heat is required for that process. Airflow is key as well. Human steel production is limited to small batches by the difficulty of getting and maintaining the high temperatures needed to burn off the remaining impurities. Dwarves using coal/coke and magic have an easier time managing this. That is a prime reason why dwarven metalwork will remain superior to that of humans for the foreseeable future.

It should also be noted that versions of the blast furnace can be used to make high-grade glass. Such glass is clearer due to fewer air bubbles which is possible only because of the higher temperature. The molten glass can then be gathered, shaped, and even blown. Once shaped the glass goes in an oven to cool. Glass must be cooled very slowly, often over the course of hours, or it will break.

Printing Press

The printing press has been held secret by the Copyist Guild of Balashar and the Scribe Guild of Sapreen. This is done by imperial order. The power to print books is not taken lightly. Rather than have it freely used across the Empire it is tightly controlled. This has worked well for the past half-century. The guilds lobby the Emperor to keep it this way as they enjoy the coin they make using it exclusively. They argue that once it is out any old thing could be printed on a mass scale and that could be harmful to the Empire.

These movable type presses are not very advanced and there are only about a dozen in existence so far. Still, each one of them could print twenty copies each hour. Because setting up the movable type is the most time-consuming part of the process they have learned that making fewer than 300 copies in a run hurts efficiency. Additionally, the ink used is a little thicker than that used for writing.

As guarded as they are, it is a hard thing to keep secret. In all likelihood, it cannot remain so forever. Already, the guilds have had to plug at least a half-dozen leaks over the past twenty years. They keep that fact to themselves, the Emperor may not think well of their actions should they come to light.

Steam Engines

As it stands, with only science to aid them, humans would not be able to build useful steam engines. Their metal-crafting skills are not up to the task. Aside from that, they don't even know the engines exist. Both gnomes and dwarves don't have this problem. The dwarves have the skill to pull it off and the gnomes use magic to make stronger than normal components that rarely explode. Dwarves use steam engines in mining machines. Gnomes use them to power devices they build. Neither group speaks of it to humans. The idea of humans with steam engines is frightening to the other two races.

Wheels, Water and Wind

The waterwheel is the most used labor-saving device in the Empire. Mills, foundries, mines, basically any place (pumps, crushers, blowers, saws, drills etc) that needs a crank turned for days at a time can do it with water power. This is a safe and reliable technology that has been in use for many centuries.

Wind power is a little bit newer. It's also not as dependable because the wind stops blowing at times. However, in some places it is invaluable. Along the coast, near and in mountains and atop hills, all these places tend to have more steady wind-flow. While they are not as powerful as a waterwheel, they are far better than nothing and a wind-powered wheel can be used in many of the same ways as a waterwheel.

One braid for home. Two for love. Three for far to go. Four never to wear or then to stare into raven eyes so black and cold. -- Ancient children's rhyme

Example Settlements and Territories

What follows are a few example territories and some of the settlements within them. This illustrates how to use the information from the preceding sections to construct local areas. It starts with smaller examples and then they get progressively larger. Each example includes information on geography, settlements, leaders, commerce, and military.

The Village of Red Oak Grove

Population: 837

ALCC/BW:4.02/3.99

Located just off the Imperial Road, less than two days east of Rocrest, this village was founded over two hundred years ago and is known for the wool they export. They also have a small inn which brings in travelers from the road. The area is far from the wilderness so it is fairly safe. With the main road so close they also see regular patrols from both the Imperial Guard and from the Rocrest Guards whose domain extends just past Red Oak. There are even occasional patrols from the local Countess, located ten miles down the road. Finally, the local constables are in the village every day keeping the peace and watching for danger.

The settlement is on a hilltop. It is centered around the Old Watchtower, a stone tower thirty-five feet tall which houses the local office of the constables, the city clerk's office, and the magister's office. The square outside the tower is used for public addresses and other such displays and gatherings. Including the Oak Roof Inn and Tavern, there are around two dozen businesses in this central section of the village. About half the local population also resides in this area. The others are spread out in farms and ranches within a mile or two of the village.

Dornect Miller was a local man, a commoner, who served the Countess as a guard for twenty years. He excelled, becoming an officer of the guard and rising to the rank of Major. When he retired, he was granted a knighthood for his exceptional service to the Countess and her House. A few years after returning to his childhood home, Red Oak Grove, the village's Magister passed on and the Countess heard a petition favoring Miller as a replacement. She agreed and Sir Dornect Miller was granted his second title, Magister of Red Oak Grove Village, and empowered to govern the village. He has done so for the past eight years. His time as a guard commander has been useful. While the village only has five constables, they are still the only local guard and its first line of defense. Until Miller took over they lacked a leader with a military background and one who understood what they needed to do their job. As a result, they are now a better trained and equipped guard. Magister Miller has been good for the village but he does have his shortcomings. For example, he is not the best at diplomatic resolutions or finance.

While this is not a wealthy village, they do well for themselves. Of the roughly sixteen-thousand gold pieces of tax collected each year, about half of it goes to the higher nobles, the Emperor, the Queen, the Duke, and the Countess. The Magister uses about a quarter of the remaining coin for paying, training, equipping, and facilitating the local guards. What is left goes to maintaining the local roads, keeping the tower in good repair, paying clerks and other government workers, and providing for Miller's needs. Any money that remains after all that is put aside and saved for emergencies.

The Halovir Freehold

Population: 1781

ALCC/BW: 3.57/2.66

The Isle of Halovir, as it is known by the locals, is found within the bounds of Sulkor influence. It is east of Rascool, in the Inner Sea and very near the mainland's coast. With an area covering a bit less than five square miles, this is one of the hundreds of tiny islands, too small to show on the map, that dots the coastlines. The population is divided among the island's three small villages. Virtually everyone here fishes. Those that don't, tend olive and lemon groves found in the island's interior. These three things make up Halovir's major exports, which they trade for many other goods they can't produce themselves.

Fishing provides the bulk of local food for these people. Many go out on the sea before dawn and return just before dusk. Sea salt, extracted by sun-powered evaporation, is used to preserve what will be exported. But for local use, fish is sun-dried or smoked when it is not used fresh. Other products of the

sea are gathered for export if they are found in the normal course of events. Ink sacs and pearls being two examples of things taken as they come.

The land here is rocky and not very good for crops. While yields are poor, there are enough small plots of fair soil that many people grow vegetables for personal use. Grains are much less common, as such nearly all flour is imported. Water for what crops there are is provided by wells and rain. The rains can be fickle and the well water is a bit brackish, both factors contribute to poor yields. Still, there is often just enough water for the people and the groves. What little there is beyond that goes to the vegetable patches and the sparse livestock. Apart from a few goats, for milk and cheese, and chickens for eggs, there are no farm animals. No one has an ox or horse so all ploughing is done by hand. Overall, it's not an easy life on the isle but the clear blue sea and warm weather make Halovir a place of beauty.

Omi, a local beverage, is made from fermented goat's milk. Sometimes, the milk is combined with a few other ingredients for added "kick" (like castoff lemons or olive pulp) and allowed to ferment in sealed vessels. Weeks later, after it has ripened, the vile substance drained off is bottled as omi. It is not exported as the taste is something that one must grow to "love". No one loves it, not many like it, but it's often the only alcohol and, after a time, one gets use to it.

The isle is governed by a council composed of three members from each village. The three are, one elder having the village's vote. A second who is likely to be the next elder, advises the current elder and can vote in the elder's absence. Finally, the junior advises on the dissenting view. There are no magisters because, technically, Halovir isn't part of the Empire. They are one of a few hundred "protectorate" freeholds scattered across the Empire. Most of these are annexed within a generation or two. Halovir has the rare distinction of being one of the oldest protectorates, having held that independent status for the last ninety-two years. Being both a poor district and remote have allowed for this. Tax is still collected as the County of Coral Bay, the seat of the nearest powerful noble of the Empire, is owed a yearly tribute. A small watch is also maintained from these taxes. They are few but still have the responsibility of dealing with crime and the occasional sahuagin raid. The current elders are Yasmin Sufar (58yo rep of Mulcun-wo village), Ahnass Nuf (55yo rep of Relaz-tor village), and Laiha Nizar (62yo rep of Bhojay-dim village).

New people are rare. There isn't much to attract them and not much room for them. The families here have been in the area for generations. Some go back one-hundred-fifty years. As quiet as it is, there is one little-known claim to fame for Halovir. Over the last hundred years, five notable pirate captains began life as children of this isle. Rumor has it that one or two may have retired there as well.

The Barony of Bone Pass

Population: 3144

ALCC/BW: 5.01/5.31

The barony is located in the mountains of Fellice, a few days north of Ghuntos, and was founded only forty-three years ago. It is a borderland territory with a great deal of orc activity and hence, not the safest of places to live. As a result, there is only one settlement and it is surrounded by strong stone walls. They do not grow much food here but do have some livestock, most of their food is imported. Naturally, the supply caravans are targets of orc raiding. The attraction for settling here is the silver mine.

Being far from the main roads, there are few patrols from outside. As is the case with most borderland territories, there is no safety net as help is not close at hand. The only guards are the local guards, the only law the baron's law. The baron's law is very strict and his punishment is harsh. In extreme cases, criminals are often sentenced to hard labor in the mines. Due to the remote location, the city guard is thrice the size it is required to be under Imperial Law. So, one hundred warriors work for the city guard and they really have their work cut out for them. The orcs are unrelenting and the miners love a good bar fight. There is never a dull moment for the guards. They face each day with a grim determination, all the while waiting for the next big orc attack. Wondering when they will feed the high pass' Field of Bone.

The town, called Sutter's Hold, is ruled by Baron Clive Hig Sutter. The second head of House Sutter, a New House, he has ruled for sixteen years and is doing well so far. His stronghold is on high ground and ringed by a stone wall. The surrounding town is also walled and has seen numerous orc sieges over the years. While there are businesses they are largely reliant on imported raw materials. The major exceptions being lumber, furs, skins, and wool. All of which are abundant locally.

House Sutter formed only thirty years ago. Clive's father, Anton Sutter, and his older brother, Markus Sutter, came to this wilderness valley forty-three years ago. Both had already been knighted for their actions in service to House Borsheen. The brothers proceeded to gather people, bringing them to the valley and building a settlement in order to mine the silver found here. It was not easy, there were titanic battles with all manner of local monsters, and it ended up costing Markus his life in a battle with trolls. A little over a decade later Anton petitioned the Imperial Throne for House status and was approved. He became the first Baron of Bone Pass. Now Clive, son of Anton, is Baron of Bone Pass and he continues his father's work by trying to expand the settlement, strengthen the guard, and quell the surrounding wilderness. It should be noted that when Clive gave the order to add another thirty permanent guards to the city watch he could have just as easily used those thirty warriors to form his own House guard. He opted not to, as making them part of the city guard avoids many questions of his House building its military unnecessarily.

The silver mine has been key to building the barony and it has made the locals well off. In addition to silver ore some copper, zinc, and lead are also extracted from the mine. While silver is the driving factor, these other metals are very useful and add to the mine's value. Thanks to this prosperity, taxes are over one-hundred-thousand gold coins a year. About thirty percent goes to more powerful nobles. Another forty percent is used for paying, equipping, training, and facilities for the city guard. The remainder is used to maintain infrastructure and keep House Sutter's needs fulfilled. The Baron uses a portion to attract new settlers to his domain, he wants the population to increase by fifty people every year.

The County of Sweet River

Population: 22,881

ALCC/BW: by settlement

Found on the northernmost stretch of the Yahsur river is a tributary called the Sweet River, which runs through the relatively new county called Sweet River County. Twenty miles downriver the Imperial Road crosses the Yahsur and another two hundred miles down river is the capital of Celyd, Southflo. The county has five settlements, three on the river and the other two a few miles inland. The largest, Mahlcam's Bridge, is less than a mile from where the Sweet joins the Yahsur, it is also home to the Countess Sahrah Lo Teshren, the seat of House Teshren, and it acts as the shipping hub of the county. To the south, the area along much of the Yahsur is well populated, while not as densely populated as the Danchu, it is enough to provide a safe area that makes the river easier to travel on. The northernmost reaches of the Yahsur are not as well populated and are still classified as borderlands. Sweet River is the northernmost civilized area and it has only been declared "pacified" for about forty years.

Being far from the Imperial Road, the only regular outside patrols they see are the Duke's and they only come up the Old River Road every few weeks. Once or twice each year a Republican Guard patrol will pass through the area. Apart from those patrols, the county handles its own security. When combined, all the city guards in the county number two-hundred-ten warriors. Each day there are at least three *tridents* from various city guards patrolling the county's roads. Because the surrounding land has been largely pacified and cleansed of aggressive monsters this is enough to keep order and maintain safety in the area. The most problematic safety issues are from criminal elements and the rare river creature.

Mahlcam's Bridge, the main settlement, has a population of nearly nine-thousand people. Its ALCC/BW is 6.31/6.27 and the city guard has ninety members. The city has walls but they have not been needed in over seventy years and the city has expanded beyond the old walls. There is a walled castle on high ground as well, it is used by the Countess and city guard. There is a thriving business sector, with hundreds of merchants and crafters, supplied by local producers of raw materials. Many of these producers are in one of the county's other, smaller, settlements. Meadow Run, Keller's Watch, and Silk Grove are towns in the county with around four-thousand people each. The Village of Chanter's Hill, the smallest settlement, has under a thousand people. Another few hundred people live in isolated domiciles scattered around the county but too far removed to be part of one of the settlements. Each of the smaller settlements has its own city guard, fortifications, businesses, and magister. Both crop and livestock production are higher than needed for local use.

House Teshren is just over ninety years old and was raised to Minor House status only twenty years ago. Zeck Jen Teshren, the founder of the House, took over the failing territory just after the previous baron's

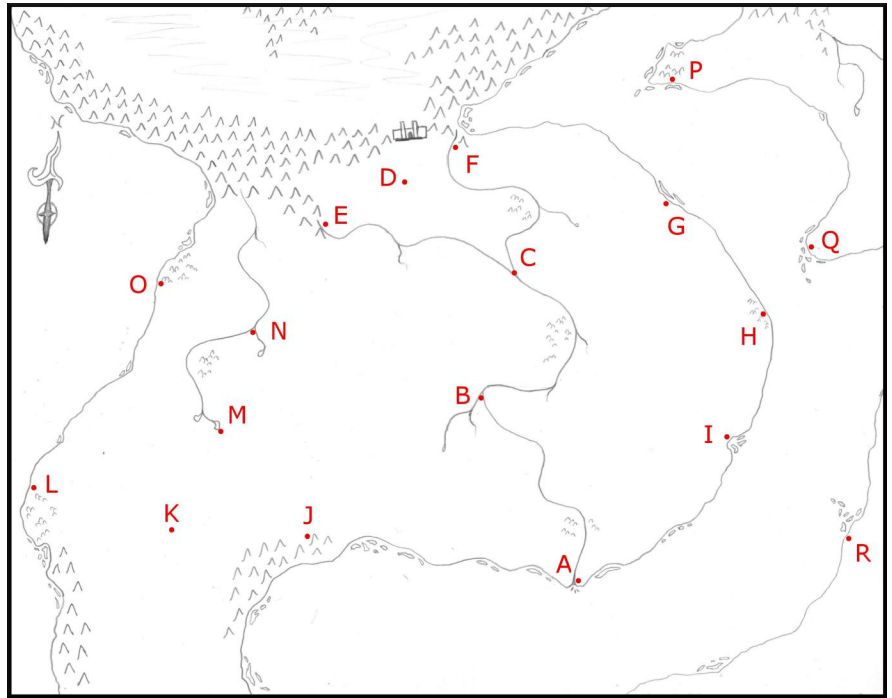
house was dissolved. Zeck was able to pull the barony back together and put it on the path to being declared a civilized territory. Zeck's successor, Baron Ohmai Teshren, was elevated to the title of the Count of Sweet River forty-two years ago. Twenty-one years later, Count Reese Mi Teshren, the third head of the house, successfully navigated the Imperial Review process and saw House Teshren become a Minor House. Everything was going well until last year when a tragic accident took the lives of the aging Count and his two children. This leaves only his eldest grandchild to rule the county. The newly elevated Countess, Sahrah Lo Teshren, is barely sixteen years old. There are questions as to if she will be able to run the territory and more questions regarding the nature of the events that led to the death of the old Count. House Teshren is on shaky ground at the moment. The Countess must not only deal with the affairs of state but ensure the continuation of her line all while deflecting the advances of distant cousins and neighboring nobles. She is currently hiring guards for House Teshren and is looking to fill thirty positions. That would expand Teshren's guard to forty. It has been said that not having a sizable guard may have contributed to the events leading to the Count's death.

The people of this county are moderately prosperous. The main export is foodstuff which heads upriver to borderland territories that are unable to produce all they need for themselves. Apart from that, the county makes a dozen other products for export, none of which are extraordinary but do sell well enough. Some go north to the borderlands but most of it is part of the regional trade with other, nearby, counties. All the taxes collected in the region would total over eight-hundred-thousand gold. Between tax collected in Mahlcam's Bridge and the noble share of taxes from the other four settlements, the Countess has direct control of half a million gold a year. One-tenth of that is enough to provide for all the needs of the Mahlcam's Bridge guard. Another thirty percent goes to the higher nobles. The rest is used for maintenance and infrastructure. Of course, some of it is used by the Countess and House Teshren for their needs.

Major Cities and Centers of Civilization

There are too many villages, towns, and cities to name, much less detail here, so this section will deal with the major ones. What defines a major city? Well, all are centers of population, trade, culture, wealth, and power. Each of these cities is a living, growing thing. As such what is put down here is only a starting point. This map shows the location of each of the 18 major cities. All these cities are centuries old, many are older than the empire itself. A little information is then given for each one of them.

The basic stat block has only population and ALCC/BW. A few cities have the extended stat block with more details. I'll add this to more cities as time allows.



The population is the number of permanent residence inside the city plus those living within two walking hours of the city "gates". Divided into zones, the *Inner* is everyone inside the "gates". The *Middle* is everyone beyond the gate yet within a one hour walk. The *Outer* being those beyond a one hour but less than a two hour walk. This can be clearly seen in the population by zone table of the extended stat block.

Population by age category simply shows demographics of the city's population by age. Some cities will tend to have a younger population while others draw older citizens or have an aspect that leads to longer lives. Higher birthrates can also be shown here.

Population by labor type includes several categories, shop workers, trade workers, city employees, city guard, religious workers, agricultural workers, livestock workers, and other manual laborers. *Shop workers* are often the owners and their employees. These could be crafters and their apprentices as the situation dictates. For example, a tavern's workers would be the barkeep, server(s), and cook(s) while a tailor's shop would be just the tailor and maybe an apprentice. *Trade workers* are other crafters or skilled laborers that don't have or don't need a shop, like sailors, miners, guides or foragers. *City employees* work for the city's agencies and often serve as clerks or bureaucrats or tax collectors. *City guard* are the protectors and peace keepers (or enforcers) of a city. *Religious workers* are the people tending temples and shrines in the city, they often seek to offer spiritual guidance to the populace. *Agricultural workers* covers farmers and experienced field-hands. *Livestock workers* includes livestock caretakers, breeders and handlers. Hunters and fishers also fall into this group. *Other manual laborers* is a catch-all for unskilled physical laborers. These people may haul stone or work pumps or harvest crops or load cargo. The work is often, but not always, seasonal or fair-weather work.

ALCC/BW is Average Living Condition Cost vs Base Wage. (see the section on ALCC/BW for more information)

Structures and building by type are meant to give a very loose idea of how many buildings are in the city. This is useful in conveying how hard it could be to wander until "X" type of building is found. If players want to wander around until they find a clerk's office or a temple or tavern this gives an idea of just how hard or easy that may be.

The shop breakdown will include the most common shops but not all shops. Things like, general markets, curio shops, pawn shops or other local specialty shops are not shown in the breakdown. They are, however, accounted for in the shops/markets total given above the breakdown.

A. Balashar

City Statistics

Population: 135,267

ALCC/BW: 11.70 / 11.79

Population by Age Category					Population by Zone		
Childhood	Adulthood	Middle Aged	Old	Venerable	Inner (inside gate)	Middle (<1hr walk)	Outer (<2hr walk)
44638	37875	31111	15218	6425	94687	33817	6763

Population by Labor Type

Shop Workers	Trade Workers	City Employees	City Guard	Religious Workers	Agricultural	Livestock	Other Manual Lab.
15488	5749	1691	4058	1015	21034	17247	4396

Buildings/Structures by Type

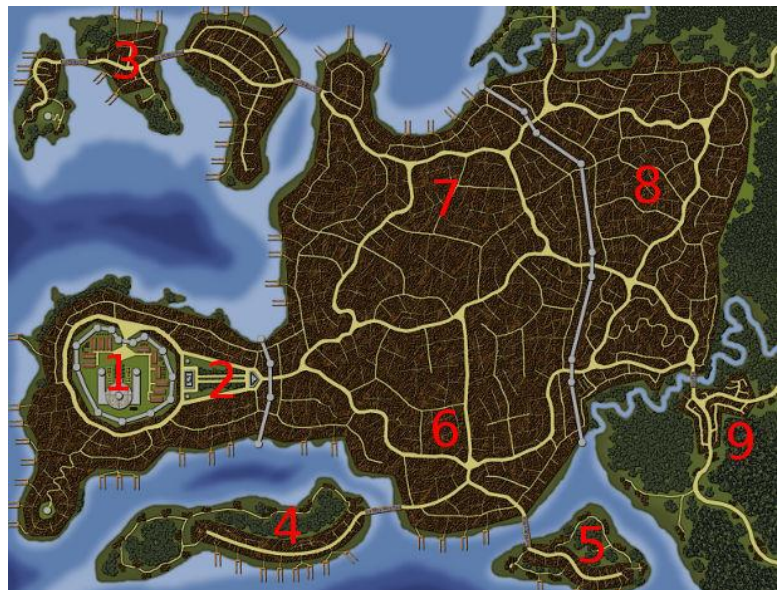
Shops/Markets	Warehouses	Municipal	Temples	Shrines	Military	Residential
8257	646	85	14	68	81	20189

Shop breakdown in Balashar over all zones. While most shops favor the Inner zone, others will drift outward as needed/required.

Bakers	162	Carpenters	271	Harness Makers	74	Painters	95	Saddlers	95	Taverns	338
Barbers	135	Chandlers	189	Hat Makers	135	Plasterers	108	Scabbard Makers	108	Vintners	54
Bathers	61	Cheese Makers	81	Hay Merchants	61	Potters	203	Sculptors	41	Water Carriers	162
Blacksmiths	68	Coopers	203	Inns	74	Purse Makers	122	Shoemakers	676	Weavers	216
Bleachers	47	Cutlers	61	Jewelers	149	Rectifiers	27	Spell Shops	7	Whitesmiths	41
Brewers	88	Dyers	74	Locksmiths	71	Redsmiths	81	Spice Merchants	88	Wheelwrights	338
Brickers	54	Fletchers	203	Masons	243	Roofers	74	Stationers	41	Wood Carvers	54
Bowyers	95	Fishmongers	112	Mercers	162	Rope Makers	74	Tailors	541	Wood Sellers	61
Buckle Makers	88	Furriers	541	Moneylenders	32	Rug Makers	75	Tanners	68	Woodwrights	122
Butchers	115	Glove Makers	34								

Balashar is a major trade hub located on the southern coast, at the mouth of the Danchu river, and the seat of the Empire. Goods from lands across the Inner Sea come in and go upriver while northern goods coming down river head out for places such as the Spice Kingdoms. The harbor of Balashar is the busiest in the known world. The Danchu docks see an average of 120 river vessels a day (mostly barges) and the Seaside docks average another 50 coastal vessels and as many as 25 deepwater vessels a day. On top of it all the city's fishing fleet, employing ships of all sizes, provides a near constant stream of vessels entering and leaving the harbor. Just watching the harbor accommodate this daily activity is an awe-inspiring spectacle.

The city is home to the queen of Argos, House Dorell, and the Imperial Throne, House Kalistic. Each has a palace; the Imperial Palace at the west end of the Heart Boulevard and the Queen's Palace on the east end. The Six Pillars of the Empire are spaced along the Heart Boulevard. Five of them are one hundred feet high. The sixth being forty-three feet high. Each year a one-foot section, decorated with carvings denoting defining moments of the year, is added to the sixth pillar. As with all the other pillars once it reaches a height of one hundred feet a new pillar will be started. The ceremony for adding a new section is part of a week-long holiday celebration held each year in remembrance of the founding of the empire. Every city in the Empire holds some type of celebration this week. The only commonality to these fairs is the theme of celebrating the Empire's birth. It must be noted that the birth of Balashar, itself, predates the Empire's by several centuries.



1. Imperial City – This area houses the castle, city guard headquarters, Imperial Army barracks, strategic stores, imperial administration offices, the Emperor's Court, Argos' royal court, and a great many other diplomats, nobles, and officials. This is where the government operates from. Security is tight with regular city guard, Imperial Guard, and Imperial Elite Guard operating in the area. Still, with so many government offices, there is a level of accessibility that is maintained.
2. Heart District – Politically speaking, the most powerful of the Empire's denizens live here. It is said that, in the Heart, one cannot throw a stone without hitting a noble. Shops and businesses in the district are high-end and tend to be overpriced. Heart Boulevard is magnificent and a sight that every citizen wants to see at least once. Running the area between the Imperial Palace and the Royal Tower, often called the Queen's palace, it is lined with manicured trees and breathtaking statues. Also, the Pillars of the Empire, five of which stand about one-hundred feet high, run down the Boulevard. The docks in this district are most often used by the military and nobles. Very few trade vessels dock here. Also, the harbor pilots operate from these docks. Each incoming vessel of an appropriate size has a harbor pilot board it out in the bay. The pilot then directs the vessel to a dock in accordance with the Harbor Master's Office. Orders and updates are communicated to the pilots by flag, or mirror, or signal lantern. Smaller vessels are given orders on where to go by the pilot but are not boarded. A hill on the southwestern-most section is the lighthouse's location. Known as Heart's Flame, it stands as a beacon for seaward vessels. It is also the office of the Harbor Master who coordinates shipping traffic by telling which ship to go to what dock.
3. The Sisters – The collective name of three islands on the north side of Balashar is the Sisters. A large amount of river traffic docks on the islands. Many are traders and some are local fishermen. The Sisters are named for three women of historical significance, none of whom were, in life, sisters or even from the same time in history. The island of Anneahlyn houses the lighthouse known as the Sisters' Flame, which contains a satellite office of the Harbor Master. Anneahlyn, a companion of Tazral's from the sagas, has been best remembered for smiting giants and offering her vast wisdom to Tazral at important moments. The island of Marrah was named for Marrah Ves Joon, a famed explorer from well before the Empire's time. The stories of her adventures, at least the ones that have survived, are well-known in the Empire. Finally, the island of Janice is named for an apothecary and alchemist who lived only a few centuries after the Savage Time. She is credited with discovering many of the healing herbs used today which is important because it allowed healing without a dependence on magic.
4. The Eel – Many seafaring vessels dock here. Also the home for many local fishermen. It is known to be a rough area. Rumor has it that The Grif, Balashar's thieves' guild, is based here.
5. The Conch – Almost exclusively an area for local fishermen. A few seafaring vessels may dock here if both the Seaside docks and the Eel docks are overloaded.
6. Seaside District – This is the section of the city south of Heart road and between the Inner Wall and the Outer Wall. Most of the vessels that dock here are seafaring trading ships. There are a wide range of areas to be found in this district, the good, the bad, the ugly.
7. Danchu District – The section of the city north of Heart road and between its walls. Much of the Danchu river trading traffic docks here. The northernmost peninsula has a hill called High Bay.
8. The Blend District – The Blend has a very high percentage of non-human inhabitants. It is also a very busy trading district with many shops and markets. Where the buildings of other districts are mostly made of stone and brick, over half of the ones found here are still composed of wood. That makes fire an extra danger here. This district is still slowly expanding toward the eastern hills.
9. The New District – The latest expansion, this district got the needed building approvals only three years ago. Building has been slow but steady with city officials taking what some call an unhealthy amount of interest in what buildings and businesses are moving to the area.

B. Rocrest

Population: 58,000

ALCC/BW: 10.33/10.30

Located where the Danchu forks off the Lestare river, which leads into the briny waters of the Grey Marsh to the south-west. The Grey Marsh is the largest marsh/swamp region in the Middle Lands. The Danchu runs another 500 miles where it meets the sea. Rocrest is a trading city that is known for its apothecaries and herbal research which thrive due to the city's proximity to such a flora rich marsh/swamp. Tribal wood elves from the western forest often come here to trade. It is not uncommon to find halflings and gnomes from the Dothmas Hills trading here as well. Rocrest was founded after the Latter Formation Wars, in 23 MLE.

C. Levloe

City Statistics

Population: 89,237

ALCC/BW: 9.70 / 9.90

Population by Age Category					Population by Zone		
Childhood	Adulthood	Middle Aged	Old	Venerable	Inner (inside gate)	Middle (<1hr walk)	Outer (<2hr walk)
29448	24986	21417	11155	2231	40157	22309	26771

Population by Labor Type							
Shop Workers	Trade Workers	City Employees	City Guard	Religious Workers	Agricultural	Livestock	Other Manual Lab.
10238	4685	1115	2543	611	16509	11155	3391

Buildings/Structures by Type						
Shops/Markets	Warehouses	Municipal	Temples	Shrines	Military	Residential
5442	344	56	8	41	51	16225

Shop breakdown in Levloe over all zones. While most shops favor the Inner zone, others will drift outward as needed/required.

Bakers	107	Carpenters	178	Harness Makers	49	Painters	62	Saddlers	62	Taverns	223
Barbers	89	Chandlers	125	Hat Makers	89	Plasterers	71	Scabbard Makers	71	Vintners	46
Bathers	40	Cheese Makers	54	Hay Merchants	40	Potters	134	Sculptors	27	Water Carriers	107
Blacksmiths	45	Coopers	134	Inns	49	Purse Makers	80	Shoemakers	446	Weavers	143
Bleachers	31	Cutlers	40	Jewelers	98	Rectifiers	18	Spell Shops	4	Whitesmiths	27
Brewers	58	Dyers	49	Locksmiths	47	Redsmiths	54	Spice Merchants	58	Wheelwrights	223
Brickers	36	Fletchers	134	Masons	161	Roofers	49	Stationers	27	Wood Carvers	36
Bowyers	62	Fishmongers	67	Mercers	107	Rope Makers	49	Tailors	357	Wood Sellers	40
Buckle Makers	58	Furriers	357	Moneylenders	18	Rug Makers	45	Tanners	45	Woodwrights	80
Butchers	76	Glove Makers	22								

Where the Nocmal river flows from the north into the Danchu river from the west is Levloe's current location. From here, the Danchu flows another thousand miles into the Inner Sea. The main and oldest section of the city sits on a high bluff between and overlooking both rivers. Bridges span each river and connect the Old City district with the Nocmal (northern) district and the Danchu (southern) district. Known as the gateway to Argos, Levloe is important both for trade and as the northernmost stronghold of Argos. It is also known for good wine. The vineyards are plentiful to the south of the city. In general, Levloe is more spread out than other cities. More people live outside the gates than within.

Currently, there is major construction occurring to reinforce the Old City river walls. These walls have been placed to maintain the bluff and keep the rivers from undermining it. The city has an interesting history in that it has moved three times since being founded about four-hundred years ago. The site of the first incarnation of Levloe was washed away in a flood during 207 MLE. The city moved up river but was again wiped out by a massive flood in 258 MLE. Higher ground was utilized for the third founding but the bluff was not correctly maintained and was undermined by the river. In 414 MLE it collapsed in the middle of a spring night, sending a full quarter of the city plunging into the Danchu. Over 10,000 citizens lost their lives within a few minutes. The site was abandoned the next year as it was deemed too unstable to rebuild upon. The current site is fastidiously maintained and very innovative techniques have been employed to minimized erosion. The citizens have not, and may never, forget the Collapse.



1. The Bull – On the highest ground rests the Archduke's home and castle. This stronghold is also the city guard headquarters and the prison resides in its dungeons.

2. The Old City – Oldest section of the city and where most of the trade happens, hence shops dominate the twisting streets. The wealthy citizens live in this area as well.
3. The Danchu District – The southern district and where most Danchu cargo is loaded and unloaded. Many of the wineries for which the city is famed are found in this district and south of the city. There are even a few small vineyards here.
4. The Nocmal District - Most Nocmal cargo is loaded and unloaded here. Also, known for showcasing the northern wares that pass through. Cuisine featuring ice peppers is a favorite. Rumor has it that a variety of illicit experiences can be found in this area.
5. The New City – This district has the highest percentage of non-human populations in the city. While not exactly poor, there is less visible wealth here.

D. Murath

Population: 62,000

ALCC/BW: 10.22/10.45

The capital of Fellice is located centrally in the Cold Plains due south of the Dragon's Backbone Mountains. This city serves as a military stronghold first and foremost. It sits on the Fellice Plateau about forty feet above the surrounding plains. A web of beacon towers is centered here and stretch across the plains. They use a signaling system to transmit messages regarding the immediate need for troops in the frontier regions. Non-emergency requests use more traditional communication lines. Murath has existed, in one form or another, in its current location for the past thousand years. It is believed to have had its beginnings as a tribal center for trade. Possibly, having religious meaning as well. A great deal of the early history has been lost so the identity of the original founders is a subject of debate among scholars.

E. Ghuntos

Population: 51,000

ALCC/BW: 12.05/12.10

Ghuntos is the western stronghold of Fellice and guardian of the Dagger Mountains. A copious number of mines are found in the area making this a wealthy city. Fine steel and high-grade silver are transported along the Danchu to the rest of the world. The high and thick walls of Ghuntos make a suitable defense against most any foe and give the city's denizens a sense of safety. While many elements of the city's populace would love to project the image of Ghuntos as a "metropolis of cultural riches" the miners and other "real" people of the city project their own style. This is a city of many layers. It is also a relatively new city, having been annexed by the kingdom about 30 years after its founding in 144 MLE. Only about 40% of the local mines are human run enterprises. The remaining mines are owned and worked by dwarves who sell a portion of the ore produced to Ghuntos. As a result, there is a significant dwarven presence in and around the city. The Danchu starts its 1400 mile run to the sea here.

F. Jortice

Population: 31,000

ALCC/BW: 11.70/11.73

This, the eastern stronghold of Fellice is located on a mountainside in the Dragon's Fang Mountains, close to the source of the Nocmal river which flows about 500 miles where it merges with the Danchu river. The city is nearly inaccessible. That coupled with hidden mountainside terraced farmland, accessible only from within the city, and the river flowing through a ravine above before falling within the city's walls mark Jortice a challenge to lay siege to. The city is divided into two sections (low city and high city) by the mountainside's switchback flow. Trade is secondary here. This city has been a haven since its inception and founding during the reign of the Flayer Prince, over eleven-hundred years ago.

G. Foamrest

Population: 32,000

ALCC/BW: 9.20/9.15

This city is renown for its harvesting of oilfish, production of fine ink, and master lens crafting. There is a major naval presence here, both Imperial and Mostorian, sending dozens of ships on pirate patrols. Foamrest is called, The Red Harbor, for the large Imperial contingent of War Sails based here. This was not always the case. In fact, three-hundred years ago, over half the traders sailing into the harbor would have been classified as pirates under current law. Foamrest was a smaller city then and could not afford to turn away any but the most blatant of pirate traders.

H. Sapreen

City Statistics

Population: 188,732

ALCC/BW: 11.44 / 11.20

Population by Age Category					Population by Zone		
Childhood	Adulthood	Middle Aged	Old	Venerable	Inner (inside gate)	Middle (<1hr walk)	Outer (<2hr walk)
64169	54732	44352	21232	4247	109465	41521	37746

Population by Labor Type							
Shop Workers	Trade Workers	City Employees	City Guard	Religious Workers	Agricultural	Livestock	Other Manual Lab.
21660	8965	4058	5851	1038	23592	20289	25007

Buildings/Structures by Type						
Shops/Markets	Warehouses	Municipal	Temples	Shrines	Military	Residential
11532	782	203	14	69	117	28169

Shop breakdown in Sapreen over all zones. While most shops favor the Inner zone, others will drift outward as needed/required.

Bakers	226	Carpenters	377	Harness Makers	104	Painters	132	Saddlers	132	Taverns	472
Barbers	203	Chandlers	264	Hat Makers	189	Plasterers	151	Scabbard Makers	151	Vintners	75
Bathers	85	Cheese Makers	113	Hay Merchants	85	Potters	283	Sculptors	65	Water Carriers	226
Blacksmiths	94	Coopers	283	Inns	104	Purse Makers	170	Shoemakers	944	Weavers	302
Bleachers	66	Cutlers	85	Jewelers	208	Rectifiers	38	Spell Shops	11	Whitesmiths	57
Brewers	123	Dyers	104	Locksmiths	99	Redsmiths	113	Spice Merchants	123	Wheelwrights	472
Brickers	75	Fletchers	283	Masons	340	Roofers	104	Stationers	73	Wood Carvers	75
Bowyers	132	Fishmongers	142	Mercers	226	Rope Makers	104	Tailors	755	Wood Sellers	85
Buckle Makers	123	Furriers	755	Moneylenders	38	Rug Makers	94	Tanners	94	Woodwrights	170
Butchers	160	Glove Makers	47								

The capital of Mostor is a trading city but is known to house the best libraries in the Middle Lands. Largest among the libraries is the eighty-eight domes of the Lelot Library which is owned by the Gleamdon University and run by the Prime Order. The sprawling walled complex spans parts of several city blocks and sports above street bridges connecting the sections. Sapreen, the Sage City, is one of the few cities having a concentration of wizards higher than normal. Some say there are over a hundred in the city at any given time. Mining the stone quarries and trade with Rekton are major sources of income for the city.

1. The Citadel – Houses the city's stronghold, the council's hall, the Archduchess's manor, the city guard operations center, their barracks, and strategic store warehouses. As is the case with any stronghold, the Citadel sits on the highest ground in the area.
2. The Old City – Highbrow citizens and businesses dominate this walled section of the city.
3. The New City – Also known as the Book, many of the libraries for which Sapreen is famous are found here. This includes the Lelot Library and the Gleamdon University.
4. Dock District – This area is devoted to trade and commerce. There are many sailor taverns here.
5. The Central City – Merchants buy and sell everything the city has to offer here.
6. The South City – A less prosperous section of the city populated by workers.
7. The West City – Also nicknamed "Magic Town", this area has drawn a large population of wizards. In truth, there are only a few score wizards living here but they are very publicly wizards.
8. Quarry District – Many businesses dealing with the quarries that surround Sapreen are here. There are strong ties to the South City as most of the workers live there.



I. Covehaven

Population: 115,000

ALCC/BW: 9.90/9.88

The city of Covehaven has both a major fishing industry and a substantial trade hub. One thing that sets fishing here apart is the fact that they preserve and can a fair portion of their stock. Each can includes a key so no can opener is required. The secret canning process ensures a shelf life of up to one year, longer in cooler environments. Salted, smoked, dried, and spiced fish are canned year round. In addition, the same technique is applied to some fruits, vegetables and other meats on a smaller scale. All these items are popular rations for soldiers and sailors alike. Covehaven brand canned rations are known and trusted across the Middle Lands and beyond. In scholarly circles at least, Covehaven is known for a more important reason. It is the oldest still occupied city in the empire. While the name has changed several times, the original city was called Jhanfruzzahltok. It is believed to have been founded more than fifteen-hundred years ago and to have served as the seat of the Moon Empire. It is common for new construction within the city and surrounding area to unearth bits of ancient items. Historians are always willing to part with some silver or even gold for such items. On rare occasions, ruins are unearthed. This will send the local scholars into a frenzy of activity as they clamor for the opportunity to study the site. Such a study will delay the new construction so city officials will not always grant them the chance.

J. Rascool

Population: 71,000

ALCC/BW: 14.81/15.27

At the edge of the Nojala Mountains is the trading city of Rascool. Gold and precious stones are mined just south of the city and then moved out on trade routes all over the Middle Lands. The wealth of this city has made a large upper-class, many of whom pursue a life devoted to art, music and the like. Well over 80% of these mines are owned and operated by humans. The remainder being dwarven mines. There has been tension with the dwarves over mineral rights in the area so relations are strained. In general, the dwarves want very little to do with the humans of Rascool.

K. Ahlabim

Population: 102,000

ALCC/BW: 12.83/12.90

Known as the gateway to the spice road, all land-based trade with the Spice Kingdoms starts in Ahlabim. As dictated by the White Sands Accord all caravans are escorted by tribal scouts comprised of representatives of the clans whose territory they will pass through. This is the basis of the travel dues paid to each clan as outlined in the treaty. Caravans are required to bring in all the water they will need for each crossing. Ahlabim is also known for its master glass blowers.

L. Shalamahkib

(sha-lam-ah-kib)

Population: 91,000

ALCC/BW: 9.80/9.77

The harbor of Shalamahkib transports goods to and from the coastal towns of Celyd and has done so for the past seven hundred years. The Sea of Storms makes this one of the most dangerous trade routes in the Middle Lands. This also makes it the most profitable. A southbound sea route is exceptionally difficult as the storms along that coast are even more deadly than the ones to the north. One of the most notable things about Shalamahkib is the yearly bard competition. In truth, it is open to all manner of entertainers, singers, dancers, musicians, poets, jesters, and so on. The Archduchess, Clarin Avants, has sponsored the competition for the past 28 years. Hence the name of the event, Clarin's Competition, and the nickname given to the winners, Clarin's Choice. During the month-long event, entertainers perform in inns and taverns and on street corners across the city. Those that manage to draw significant public attention are invited to perform for the Archduchess. The best of those perform during the final week to massive crowds in Noble's Square, just outside the Archduchess' palace. Of those, the top five entertainers, chosen by the archduchess, each receive one-thousand pieces of gold, a bronze medallion, and bragging rights for their victory.

M. Lechwed

City Statistics

Population: 121,885
ALCC/BW: 10.64 / 10.71

Population by Age Category					Population by Zone		
Childhood	Adulthood	Middle Aged	Old	Venerable	Inner (inside gate)	Middle (<1hr walk)	Outer (<2hr walk)
42660	35956	28034	13712	1523	103602	14626	3657

Population by Labor Type							
Shop Workers	Trade Workers	City Employees	City Guard	Religious Workers	Agricultural	Livestock	Other Manual Lab.
13956	10056	1524	4266	914	19197	9141	11274

Buildings/Structures by Type						
Shops/Markets	Warehouses	Municipal	Temples	Shrines	Military	Residential
7422	684	76	12	61	85	18192

Shop breakdown in Lechwed over all zones. While most shops favor the Inner zone, others will drift outward as needed/required.

Bakers	146	Carpenters	244	Harness Makers	67	Painters	85	Saddlers	85	Taverns	305
Barbers	122	Chandlers	171	Hat Makers	122	Plasterers	98	Scabbard Makers	98	Vintners	49
Bathers	55	Cheese Makers	73	Hay Merchants	55	Potters	183	Sculptors	37	Water Carriers	146
Blacksmiths	61	Coopers	183	Inns	67	Purse Makers	110	Shoemakers	609	Weavers	195
Bleachers	43	Cutlers	55	Jewelers	134	Rectifiers	24	Spell Shops	6	Whitesmiths	37
Brewers	79	Dyers	67	Locksmiths	64	Redsmiths	73	Spice Merchants	79	Wheelwrights	305
Brickers	49	Fletchers	183	Masons	219	Roofers	67	Stationers	37	Wood Carvers	49
Bowyers	85	Fishmongers	91	Mercers	146	Rope Makers	67	Tailors	488	Wood Sellers	55
Buckle Makers	79	Furriers	488	Moneylenders	24	Rug Makers	61	Tanners	61	Woodwrights	110
Butchers	104	Glove Makers	30								

Found on the southern border of the Lesmah Swamp the city of Lechwed is a thriving trade hub between north and south. They are known for perfume and rare herbs. The perfume district demands large quantities of fragrant materials, fresh, dried, and magically packaged. Alcohol is also in high demand by perfumers. The center of the city was transformed into a magnificent public park after so much of it burned in the fires set on the order of Bartimus, the black-heart. Now called New Dawn Park, it is the site of weddings, fairs, markets, and celebrations year round. It also has several memorials to those that gave (or lost) their lives during the rebellion and monuments to the rebellion's heroes.

1. Lake Docks – Also called Lakeside, this is the main dock area for the city. A large majority of the cargo coming down or going up the Yahsur river will pass through this section. After dark, the streets get a little rougher than normal. Along these narrow and twisting roads, many places can be found for the sailor seeking entertainment.
2. The Overlook – Built on the highest ground, this is a fort at its heart. The view of the city and lake is stunning. Republic Hall and the other buildings here were once part of old Bart's palace. Now they are used by the city council, the guard, and several other government officials. The Regent lives here at least a few months of the year, being in Southflo for Senate sessions a minimum of four months of the year but often more. The jail and city guard headquarters are also here, both are underground and well away from the council members.
3. Four Square – Four Imperial Roads meet in this section of the city. This is the city's trading hub and it boasts an impressive array of merchandise. The great square has near constant markets with goods from across the Empire on display. There are even night markets as weather allows.



4. The Nose – The smells coming out of the city's perfumers lay heaviest in this area. There are dozens of scent makers here as well as others that use those scents to make their products. Many distillers are also in the area as well as herb dealers. The Lesmah Swamp supplies them all. The strength and persistence of the local odors make this an unpleasant area to live in. Many find it overpowering within a few hours.
5. New Dawn – Centered around the New Dawn Park, this district was heavily burned during the fall of Black Bart. A large section of it was turned into a park. Numerous monuments line its shady paths along with gardens and hedges that are open to all citizens of the Republic. The main paths are lit from dusk to dawn and are rather safe. But it's not unknown for a crime to take place in darker areas well off the main paths.
6. Hillside – The second highest hill in the area is a wealthy district with homes and shops for those with gold. Many well-off merchants and lesser nobility dwell here. High on the hill, there is less chance to get more than a brief and hence pleasant whiff of aroma from the north side of the city.
7. Freeside – The workers' district has seen great improvements over the past few decades. New schools, public bathhouses, clinics, and several other public works projects have enhanced the lives of people here since the fall of Black Bart. The walls on the north side of the district have been painted with beautiful images and words of remembrance in honor of the dead whom Bart hung there so many years ago. Every Freeday Festival the lower eight feet of the wall is open for repainting during the week-long event.

N. Southflo

Population: 66,000

ALCC/BW: 8.79/8.83

This trade city is surrounded by some of the most fertile farmland in the Middle Lands. They produce exceptional wine and spirits with a myriad of subtle flavors. Southflo is the capital of Celyd and the seat of the Senate. It was founded over 800 years ago or, as some contend, re-founded. Near the end of The Second Fall refugees from many lands came to the area this city now occupies. Some historians think the city was founded as a city of outcasts. Another, not so minor, claim to fame is the city's role as a backdrop for a very popular story, To the Surprise of the Silk Princess found in the *Saga of Tazral*, vol IV.

O. Hilldale

City Statistics

Population: 35,447

ALCC/BW: 8.80 / 7.90

Population by Age Category					Population by Zone		
Childhood	Adulthood	Middle Aged	Old	Venerable	Inner (inside gate)	Middle (<1hr walk)	Outer (<2hr walk)
10634	10989	8153	3988	1683	26585	5672	3190

Population by Labor Type							
Shop Workers	Trade Workers	City Employees	City Guard	Religious Workers	Agricultural	Livestock	Other Manual Lab.
4082	3279	443	1063	266	8862	2659	1861

Buildings/Structures by Type						
Shops/Markets	Warehouses	Municipal	Temples	Shrines	Military	Residential
2175	166	22	4	18	21	5291

Shop breakdown in Hilldale over all zones. While most shops favor the Inner zone, others will drift outward as needed/required.

Bakers	43	Carpenters	71	Harness Makers	19	Painters	25	Saddlers	25	Taverns	89
Barbers	35	Chandlers	50	Hat Makers	35	Plasterers	28	Scabbard Makers	28	Vintners	14
Bathers	16	Cheese Makers	21	Hay Merchants	16	Potters	53	Sculptors	11	Water Carriers	43
Blacksmiths	18	Coopers	53	Inns	19	Purse Makers	32	Shoemakers	177	Weavers	57
Bleachers	12	Cutlers	16	Jewelers	39	Rectifiers	7	Spell Shops	2	Whitesmiths	11
Brewers	23	Dyers	19	Locksmiths	28	Redsmiths	27	Spice Merchants	23	Wheelwrights	89
Brickers	14	Fletchers	53	Masons	64	Roofers	19	Stationers	11	Wood Carvers	14
Bowyers	25	Fishmongers	27	Mercers	43	Rope Makers	19	Tailors	142	Wood Sellers	16
Buckle Makers	23	Furriers	142	Moneylenders	7	Rug Makers	18	Tanners	18	Woodwrights	32
Butchers	30	Glove Makers	9								

Renown for its gnomish clockmakers and hillside mines, Hilldale is a thriving seaside city. This is one of the few cities in the Middle Lands to have a substantial non-human population. This is also a major hub for the gnomish airships. It is a common sight to see them in the sky above the city. The city's gnomish wonders attract many spectators. The Clock Plaza being its chief draw, boasting over five-hundred clocks of gnomish make and design. The range and complexity of these spring powered marvels of ingenuity is a sight to behold. The city is full of such sights so it also attracts like-minded people. The city's population of tinkers and alchemist is, relatively speaking, huge.

1. Dove's Roost – The stronghold of the Duke and the base of operation for Hilldale's city guard. The castle sits on the highest hill and commands a breathtaking view of the city and harbor below.
2. Dove District – The oldest section of the city is a blend of business and residential areas which house the finest Hilldale has to offer. This area is densely populated and very diverse. While a majority of it is composed of decent neighborhoods, there are a few shady places.
3. Trade District – The heart of Hilldale's commerce is located here. Anything that comes through the city can be purchased or sold here. Both the Clock Plaza and Brown Field (the dock for airships) are found here. The Central Docks, the most used docks in the city, are a major part of the district. All manner of neighborhoods can be found here, the good, the bad, and the ugly.
4. North Docks – These docks have grown to be a shady area. It is said that some of the vessels docking there lack the proper paperwork.
5. Trade Island – Almost exclusively a warehouse district, this area is known to be exceedingly busy day and night. Second only to the Central Docks, a huge number of ships dock here.
6. Wares Row – This area is the fastest growing section of the city. The South Docks see their fair share of traders. There are just as many warehouses here as on Trade Island, yet there are more bars and taverns. Wares Row caters to the ship's crews as well as their cargo. This has led to the district's reputation as a bit of a rough area.
7. Clockwork District – Gnomes and tinkers and alchemist are concentrated in this area. Travelers often make a point of seeing this section of the city. It is spectacular and sometimes frightening.
8. Lighthouse Isle – On the highest point of the isle, stands the harbor's lighthouse. Nicknamed "Sentinel" and standing over 100 feet tall, it's light can be seen from sundown to sunup for miles.



P. Brazhale

(brahz ale)

Population: 21,000

ALCC/BW: 7.55/7.75

Technically not part of the Middle Land Empire, this city is on Rektor rather than Keltor. This is a major trading center populated mostly by dwarves and gnomes with a fair number of humans. The harbor entrance is a massive cave mouth that leads to underground docks and tunnels to the city. Ships too large to enter the cave, like the Unetor Wave Mistresses, dock outside the cave mouth, at the outer annex, a mostly human section of the city. Many of the Gnomish Smokers call Brazhale their home port. The black rock mines in the nearby hills make refueling them easier here. These mines are the only known source of black rock.

Q. Vesral

(vez rahl)

Population: 29,000

ALCC/BW: 9.01/9.10

Technically not part of the Middle Land Empire, this city is on Rektor rather than Keltor. This is a major trading center populated mostly by dwarves and gnomes with a fair number of humans. It is also one of the few mostly above ground settlements dwarves occupy. The large stone keep, Battle Mound, dominates the city. Its stones are a famous example of dwarven work, both strong and beautiful in a harsh and angular way. Below ground are several layers of dwarven made tunnels that many of the dwarves and gnomes live in. The above ground section is mostly human but has a few additional examples of wonderful dwarven stone masonry scattered among the human-built structures.

R. Mischihoon

(miss chee hoon)

Population: 11,000

ALCC/BW: 6.99/6.95

Technically not part of the Middle Land Empire, this city is on Soltor rather than Keltor. Surprisingly small, this seaside city exists solely as a trade center. It is divided into two sections, the foreign quarter along the docks, which is completely walled off with strictly regulated access, and the high quarter, surrounding the foreign quarter on three sides, which is off limits to non-elves. The elves are deathly serious about this. Any non-elf that tries to leave the foreign quarter, in any way other than a boat heading out to sea, faces a death sentence. Established in 219 MLE, Mischihoon is the most heavily regulated city in the known world. Every aspect is controlled by its elven owners, population, new construction, trade and so on. The foreign quarter is built on an artificially raised section of land that was part of the bay floor when the city was founded. Rumor has it that the elven magic responsible for this feat was engineered in such a way that it could, at the whim of the city rulers, be "turned off" allowing the foreign quarter to slip quickly beneath the waves again. The elves will not publicly address this rumor other than to comment on the imagination of humans.

I deny you salt, fire, and sheaf. So it shall be. Let none give you succor. -- The Rite of Exile

Guilds, Orders & Armies of the Middle Lands

There are a variety of groups in the Middle Land Empire. Each has an agenda and serves a purpose. Their motivation, leadership, and membership vary. While not all character classes are welcomed in every group, many are more diverse than one would think.

Military Entities

Devoted to warfare and open to the vast majority of citizens, the military entities fight and die to defend the Empire. Most battles are on a small-scale, averaging a total of between two and three thousand warriors. History, however, is full of epic battlefields having several hundred thousand combatants. Most modern battles are not against humans but the bestial hoards of orcs, goblins, and the like.

House Guard

The House Guard is loyal to its House first and foremost. They serve as personal guards to the House leadership and protectors of their homes. In times of war, they are one of the elite forces that comprise a noble's army. Size, strength, equipment, and training of the guard are direct products of the influence and wealth of the House it serves. Houseless nobles can have a personal guard that fulfills the same role.

New Houses, being near the bottom of the noble ladder, have the smallest guard but they also have limited need for a guard because the family is small and they have few holdings to protect. Twenty to thirty is common but in rare cases, as many as fifty can be employed. If such a number is sustained for too long the New House's sponsor may look at increasing tribute required as they obviously have so much extra coin. Unjustified buildups can draw attention from more powerful Houses, in addition to the sponsor. Maintaining a House guard is a bit of an art form, too small and the House is in danger of not being able to protect itself and its holdings, too big and political consequences are sure to occur.

Minor Houses are established and will have a larger guard. Most have two or three estates to guard, the family members that live in them and various other holdings. It is not uncommon to have fifty guards. While that will be enough for the majority, the more powerful houses classified as Minor Houses could have as many as two-hundred guards. These would be spread across half a dozen estates and as many as thirty family members. Again, when a large number of warriors are retained in the guard, that house draws the attention of more powerful houses. The scrutiny can be uncomfortable and lead to requiring increased tribute to a more powerful house or the Imperial Throne itself. Such steps are often taken to quell a rising power.

Major Houses have significant holdings and, hence, require a larger guard. The low side is about five-hundred and some have as many as twelve-hundred. A Major House may have a dozen or more estates and as many as a hundred family members to protect so the larger numbers are warranted. Again, if even a Major House maintains a guard that is too much larger they will draw the attention of their peer houses and maybe even the Imperial House. Plots and additional taxes are possible responses when a Major House appears to be building military forces without cause.

The cost of employing, training, and maintaining a guard varies with the local economy. In general, the common guard would be paid enough to give them an "average" GLC while officers draw enough to fall into the "above average" GLC. Better officers would be paid more but would provide better leadership and training to the troops. Add to that the cost of equipping them all and the repair and maintenance to the equipment. Finally, the facilities they need to do their job have a cost. For example: Assuming an ALCC/BW of 5gp/5gp, an average cost to employ a guard of 100 would be in the neighborhood of 30,000gp a year. That doesn't include the cost of equipment or facilities or better than average officers.

Army of the Domain

The army all nobles are required by Imperial law to maintain is the Army of the Domain (or Realm). The size is determined by the base population of an area, most often a city (see Settlement Size). They will act as city guard/police in addition to patrolling the realm. Just as with any other organization, the Army will have a reputation based on its actions and leadership. Monetary cost is similar to that of a House Guard. For example, a city of 50,000 citizens is mandated to maintain an army of fifteen-hundred as its

guard which would if assuming an ALCC/BW of 10gp/10gp, cost about 850,000gp a year just to employ. That is a significant cost but an average city of that size would collect in the neighborhood of 2.5 million gold a year in tax. Most often, training and equipment are not as high quality as what would be put into a House Guard but the cost is still significant, mostly due to the size of the Army.

Imperial Guard

The Imperial Guard is the largest, best equipped standing army in the Middle Lands. They have excellent training on top of this. Currently, they number 10,000 which are composed of medium infantry, pike bearers, archers, and cavalry. Of that total, one quarter is assigned naval duty and the rest are land-based forces. Each major city, other than Balashar, has a full *battalion* contingent, over 200 warriors. Balashar will usually have a bit more than four full *battalions* of Imperial Guards in/near the city at any given time. The remaining fifty companies will be out on patrol. Most of their time is spent traveling the Imperial Roads. Assignments rotate every few months with soldiers spending a vast majority of their time in areas they are not from. The leadership believes this lessens the likelihood of favoritism. Meanwhile, the naval forces patrol the shipping lanes. The purpose of patrolling is to give the Empire's citizens a sense of safety. The Emperor believes it important to be in the minds and lives of as many citizens as possible, in a favorable way. As such, the patrols are a high priority. The standard Imperial Guard uniform is white and green, officers have silver or gold trim. A common nickname is "Green Shields".

Imperial Elite Guard

Then there is the Elite Guard charged with the personal protection of the Emperor. Numbering 500 they are composed of heavy infantry, pike bearers, archers, and cavalry. They never recruit noble blood. They stay close to the Emperor. They handle special assignments and other, high level, high risk, duties for the Imperial Throne. An assault on or showing disrespect toward an Elite is the same as doing it to the Emperor and is a severe crime. Elites rarely deal with people unless there is a problem so most see them as hard and unforgiving, a persona they seem to cultivate. Their uniforms and armor are green and black and white, the imperial colors. The only nicknames they tolerate are "White Swords" or "Elites". Should a commoner address one, and wish to be respectful, they will most often call them "Master/Mistress Elite".

Mercenary Companies

Mercenary companies are also military bodies but often have a more diverse membership. They are not overly common, yet that may be more of a longevity issue. There are three widely known companies, the Blue Swords, the Wessroth Company and the Iron Storm. Together they have a few thousand warriors that are comprised mainly of medium infantry, crossbow infantry, pike bearers, light, and medium cavalry. Each group also has a small keep or two in semi-remote areas to house and train their forces while keeping them away from major population centers. There are dozens of small nomadic companies with less than 100 warriors each. Their equipment and training vary wildly as their reputations do. The cost to hire a company depends on who they are and what the job is. The better the reputation of the company the more they can, and most often will, demand in payment.

Blue Swords

The Blue Swords are the oldest and most prestigious mercenary company with over two centuries of history. They are known and respected across the Middle Lands as an elite fighting force. The current commander is Rostell Sunchild, a descendant of Kyle Sunchild. Blue Swords maintain their numbers at about eight-hundred, divided into *battalions* of one-hundred. Five *battalions* of infantry, two heavy (one of which are pike bearers), two medium and one light armored (the scouts). One *battalion* of medium cavalry and one each of archers and crossbows. There is also a ninth *battalion* for siege weaponry but it only has about twenty members. They also employ up to two-hundred camp followers when on the move. These civilians serve as cooks, grooms, blacksmiths, laundry service and the like.

Iron Storm

The Iron Storm is little more than a moderately controlled barbarian horde. They number between twelve and fifteen-hundred warriors of mixed type but leaning very heavily toward medium infantry. Their berserker tactics are feared. Every officer of the Iron Storm is a worshiper of Rakthor and as such, they proudly wear his red swirl tattoos on their faces and torsos. Prior to any battle, the Iron Storm holds a ritual bloodletting conducted by their witchdoctor during which they work themselves into a blood frenzy.

If possible, this ritual is done in front of their intended target. It is a very effective fear tactic to watch over a thousand warriors ritualistically working themselves into a lather and tearing apart blood sacrifices under the direction of a scary looking witchdoctor. The Iron Storm is led by a masked warrior known only as the Jun Wolf. It is believed that this person is not the original Jun Wolf but rather a symbolic station that is taken by the strongest warrior.

Wessroth Company

Named for their general, Nathen "Bloody Bastard" Wessroth, the Wessroth Company has grown to around six-hundred warriors. Most of which are infantry and archers. They also maintain a sizable group of mounted scouts. General Nat, as his warriors call him, is known as a tactical genius that few want to stand against. While being well over 60 years of age, General Nat is a vibrant man and still a remarkable swordsman. Rumor has it that he is the bastard of some unnamed noble house. No one smart says so to him. If it is true then Wessroth is not his family name but a bastard name he was given or, more likely, a name he took himself, as bastard names are most often names of common things like rock or tree or river.

Other Companies

While there are dozens of other companies, some stand out for one reason or another. Their time may be short or long. Their commanders may be brilliant or fools. Their hearts may be strong or black. They all have a story. They will all spill blood for gold.

* Blood Moon is the name of the mercenary group and the name of the ship they crew, a wind runner. This mercenary group has letters of marque and reprisal from several coastal nobles. Their standing mission is combating piracy in the Inner Sea but they do side jobs from time to time. One of those more recent and noteworthy tasks was taking out a group of sahuagin accosting some fishing villages. The Moon's captain, Rachel Dewitt, is a woman with seawater for blood. She has been sailing for over twenty years and commanding Blood Moon for the last four. Aboard this ship is fifty crew.

* Fire March is an unconventional mercenary group of recent origin, less than two years old. They are based in Ahlabim and provide "extra" protection to caravans but what is unusual is that they offer a counterstrike service. In recent years, the number of caravan raids from unbound clans, clans not bound to the White Sands Accord, has been increasing. Naturally, more mercenaries have come to offer protection for caravans. The Fire March, commanded by Hazzin Aklu Yeats, is offering to strike back. They investigate caravan raids and attack the unbound clan responsible in retribution. This is a kind of legal grey area, so as long as they have good evidence the powers that be allow it. However, some are calling this an unwarranted escalation that only serves to damage relations. Yeats is, like many members of the March, part desert tribal but not part of a tribe. For such people, in most cases, a parent or grandparent was a tribal that left or was expelled. The Fire March has eighty-seven members making up six *tridents* that they use to carry out investigation and counterstrike operations.

* Prion's Lances is a relatively new group under command of Sergeant Willen T. Prion. The Lances number forty-three warriors. Divided into nine *lances*, most of which are light cavalry, plus command staff. They specialize in scouting/reconnaissance missions. Currently, the Lances are engaged as a recon unit for a border lord south of Grey Marsh, tracking Lizardfolk movement in the area. By most accounts, Sergeant Prion is a bit of a loud mouth and generally abrasive. This does not bode well for the company as repeat business is important.

* The Sons of Gravston, Winter Beard's boys one and all. Most would call them more a mob than a mercenary company. The Boys like to drink and "have fun". They move from freehold to freehold, keeping to the borderlands as much as possible. For all the trouble they cause the local constables, none will say they don't fight well. One just has to point them with care. Over the past twelve years, the Boys have more than made a name for themselves fighting just about every manner of beasts that plague the common borderland freehold. It should be noted that while membership does fluctuate and is mostly male, there have been many noteworthy Daughters among the ranks of the Sons. Currently, there are seventeen members led by Cleric Yonhan Montomm. They are diverse, seasoned and very well equipped.

* The Wind Blades have, over the past five years, been making a reputation for themselves fighting bandits, goblins, orcs, and all manner of beasts for some of the freeholds in western Mostor. Their Captain, Lana Tollbren, resigned her commission with the Sapreen Guard after the Marren Street Riot during which she refused what she called an "unlawful" order. The details of this incident are unclear and the rumors are conflicting. Several key members of the Wind Blades are former members of the Sapreen

Guard who also resigned not long after the riot. There are currently twenty-seven members of this group, two full *tridents*. They are a mix of medium infantry, archers, and pike bearers.

Shadow Organizations

Men and women of the shadows take what others have. They respect only their own law rather than the laws of cities' and nobles'. The lives they lead can be brutal and short, but enough of them find wealth to inspire others to walk the same shadowy path.

Assassins

Anyone who kills an individual for gold or gain can be called an assassin. While it is very illegal, it is also surprisingly easy to find someone willing to do it. However, if one seeks a professional, the only route is to find a member of the enigmatic Order of Kodar. There are many rumors surrounding the Kodar. Some say they steal children in the night to replenish their numbers. Other whispers claim they are servants of an unnamed dark god and sell their souls to feel no pain and live for a thousand years. It is rumored that its members are devoted followers of a very complex and secret code of conduct. Monetary payment for the services of the order varies with the job and the client's ability to pay. Some claim the Kodar will kill for nothing if the target is "special".

Bandits

"In my youth, there were two things I loved, the open road passing underfoot and the clear warm sky overhead," Tazral Kalistic – The Troglodyte Menace of Oak Hollow, from the *Saga of Tazral*, vol II. While those words do outline what many love about travel on the open road, what they don't love can generally be summed up in one word, bandits. These are the shadowy denizens of both Imperial Road and forest path who seek to liberate objects of value. Most operate in small groups of three to twelve, but solo operatives are not unknown. Larger groups, while not unheard of, tend to draw the attention of law enforcement much faster so they don't generally last.

Pirates

Some would say pirates are just bandits of the sea. In a very narrow way of thinking that may be true, but pirates operate on a much grander scale than a petty band of bandits. The risk is higher as is the reward. Pirates also have a more defined code. Every pirate ship is directed by its captain but they are truly controlled by their code or articles. These articles are drawn up when the crew comes together. While they may share some general features every crew has their own set and each pirate on-board agrees to follow them when they join the crew. The articles are designed to give the crew a clear set of rules regarding behavior, loot distribution, punishment, dispute resolution, and so on. A great captain understands the importance of a good set of articles that allow the crew just enough say and freedom to keep them happy and enough order to make running a tight ship possible. An example set of articles:

- I. Every crew member has a vote in affairs of the moment; has equal title to the fresh provisions, or strong liquors, at any time seized, and may use them at pleasure, unless a scarcity makes it necessary, for the good of all, to vote a retrenchment. The captain dictates punishment with crew consent.
- II. No striking one another on board, all quarrels to be ended on shore. Any quarrels not so ended shall be ended by rule of the quartermaster. Such rule may include reasonable re-compensation, declaration, and/or a duel (to blood or death). Duels held on shore.
- III. Crew that desert the ship or their quarters in battle are guilty of an act punishable with death or marooning.
- IV. No person to game at cards or dice for money aboard the ship.
- V. The lights and candles to be put out at eight o'clock at night: if any of the crew, after that hour still remained inclined for drinking, they will do it on the open deck.
- VI. Every crew member is entitled to one day of rest in every eight. Schedule to be taken by the quartermaster. In times of emergency, rest days can be suspended.
- VII. Crew shall keep their personal gear and weapons clean and fit for service.
- VIII. None will talk of breaking up the crew, till each has a share valued at least one-thousand gold coin. If in pursuit of this business, any crew should lose a limb, or become a cripple in their service, they will have eight-hundred gold coin, out of the public stock, and for lesser hurts, a proportionately lesser amount. The crippled crew member is then put ashore as the Captain sees fit.
- IX. The captain and quartermaster to receive two shares of loot: the master, boatswain, and gunner, one share and a half, and other officers one and a quarter. All other crew to receive one full share.

- X. No crew member is allowed a lay companion on board, be they spouse or not. Such relationships between crew members are not allowed for the harmony of all. Any crew found guilty of making unwanted advances will receive forty lashes to their bare back. Furthermore, any crew that lay with another without their consent shall be put to death.

Hands down, the most important thing for any pirate crew is the reputation of their captain. The right reputation can be the difference between an opponent's crew fighting hard and not fighting at all. Also important to piracy, in general, is the infrastructure that supports their trade and that goes well beyond common fences. There are remote island towns that subsist and even flourish trading in pirated goods.

Thieves

Every city has its thieves and they tend to organize. As a result, every city of a respectable size has at least one thieves' guild. A city with more than one will, generally, not stay that way for long. The struggle for control may be short or last years but it will end when only one guild remains in the city.

A thieves' guild is much more than a group of pickpockets. It is a complex network of support for a group of thieves with specialties ranging from pickpocketing to cat burgling to strongbox cracking to long cons to extortion and so much more. This support network includes information gatherers, law enforcement turncoats, fences, smugglers, equipment specialist, crooked bureaucrats, masters of forgery, and any others that may facilitate the art of thievery. Moreover, if there is an illegal activity happening in the city, the guild is there with fingers in pies.

Like any other organization, such a guild has both rules to follow and dues to pay before membership and its benefits are given. The rules vary a bit from guild to guild but an example set follows:

- I. **Article of Silence** - Applying to all members, past or present. Members shall not speak of guild businesses to nonmembers. Members shall not reveal the workings of the guild. Members shall not reveal any locations related to the guild. Members shall not name any other member of the guild as such.
- II. **Article of Shadow** - Avoid drawing unwanted attention to yourself or the guild in general. To that end, members should avoid trivial murder. Kill only if required to do so. Deaths are, in the long term, bad for business.
- III. **Article of Loyalty** - Members must follow the commands of guild leadership to the best of their ability. No job is undertaken without guild consent. Unless ordered otherwise, each member should respect guild protection and not act against those under said protection.
- IV. **Article of Duty** - In order to maintain good standing a member must promptly pay all dues and fees. It is the duty of any member to bring information that may be of use to the guild to the attention of leadership. This includes information regarding the member's job plans within the city's boundaries. Additionally, it is the duty of every member to follow all articles of the code.
- V. **Article of Advancement** - Promotions are given at the discretion of guild leadership. Upon the new moon, any member may challenge the guild leader for control of the guild. Said challenge to be a contest chosen by the three senior-most members who are not involved. The price of failing the challenge is death or banishment, at the discretion of the guild leader.

Depending on the guild and the goods and how much planning the guild did for the job, between 20% and 80% of any given haul goes to the guild in the form of dues and fencing fees and information fees. While this may seem unfair at first glance two things should be noted. First, items fenced via the guild are safely smuggled out of town and sold in distant lands as is necessary. The more common items are easier to fence locally while unique items are close to impossible and hence must be shipped to far away places. Second, the thief's cut is naturally smaller in cases where the job was planned and/or researched by the guild and merely executed by the thief. These two things are very costly activities for the guild but both greatly reduce the chance that anyone is apprehended and imprisoned. Not getting caught is, generally speaking, just about the most important thing on any thief's wish list.

So, this is how the gold flows in nearly every guild, at least the major streams of gold. Thieves pay the guild for membership. Smart merchants pay the guild for "protection". The guild bribes guards and city officials in order for their operations to go more smoothly. The guild pays "specialist" to apply their skills as needed. There are other minor inbound and outbound streams of gold but they are not always applicable.

Getting in as a member can be an adventure in and of itself. A prospective must first make contact. This is done by making your presence known to the guild, either by seeking out a guild member/associate or by committing illegal acts until the guild takes note and approaches. The latter method is risky as some guilds may just kill the interloper. The former method, being preferred, is facilitated by the use of Thieves' Cant symbols/signs pointing the way to an introduction contact. This is generally not a direct contact but a "polite" way to get guild notice. Once contact is made, the prospective can petition for membership.

It is not uncommon for the guild to do some form of background check, at least checking with their law enforcement contacts. The process can take weeks or longer in some cases. In the intervening time, the prospective is often accepted on a probationary bases and is often assigned a "mentor" who is expected to instruct them on what is required by the guild. At this point, the guild is not collecting dues or offering benefits to the probationary. The probationary must still earn the guild's trust. How long that takes depends on a wide range of factors but in general, it is never less than one week and at least one or two "jobs". Naturally, any jobs will be guild approved, with a vast majority of profit going to the guild.

Once accepted, the soon-to-be-member must undergo some ceremony. The details will vary from guild to guild but it is at least a witnessed oath of loyalty and sometimes a "job" or other test of skill. Afterward, dues are paid and the new member is welcomed into the fold.

The structure of a thieves' guild can and does vary widely from city to city. In general, there are members and a leader. But it is rarely that simple and complex command chains evolve all too often. It would not be unreasonable to have two or three layers of "senior" members between the common thief and the guild leader. It is also not unheard of to have a council in place of a single leader.

Finally, the interactions of guilds based in different cities are limited. Most will, at least, have lines of communication set up with neighboring guilds. As it is mutually beneficial, guilds will often have deals set up for moving "hot" goods to other cities for the local guild to offload.

Religious Orders

There are more religious organizations than one could count with any ease. What follows are just a few. Some minor, some major but it is just a fraction of what is out there.

The Caretakers

Undertakers and followers of Nisvaloon. These are the people that prepare the dead for their final ceremony. While many citizens of the empire would have a ceremony based on the New Gods, Nisvaloon in most cases, not everyone follows that path. The Caretakers realize this and do their best to prepare each body in a manner befitting that person's culture and religion. There is always at least one Caretaker in any given city with a population greater than five-thousand. It is rare for a town of less than a thousand to have one. In towns without a Caretaker, bodies are prepared by family or friends.

Maven

The wandering crones of Hethrize roam from village to village. Maven will, when asked, sit in judgment over and settle any civil dispute once they have heard both sides. They will also judge criminal actions if the town, as a whole, consents to be judged by Hethrize in return. The ceremony performed in such an instance is said to draw the eye of Hethrize. All the old stories agree that it is not a good idea to catch her eye as most everyone has done something that the Crone will judge wicked. As any child knows, the wicked are taken to the Underworld in the Skull Bearer's basket. It is custom to offer food and shelter to any lone, elderly, traveling woman as they may be a Maven and judge the person wicked for their wanton lack of decency and compassion toward others.

The Red Guard

Also known as the Knights of Tashrune or the Red Knights. These holy warriors seek to perfect themselves and make a better world while following the teachings of the Red Wolf, Tashrune. Each pursues excellence in martial skills, understanding the war mindset, tactical knowledge, and philosophy of life. In understanding war, they learn that war's root cause comes from an imbalance, most often a lack of justice. In other cases, it comes down to fear. They learn that war is not a solution and should be avoided if possible. At the same time, they learn the tactics and martial skill needed to wage war on a level beyond the average warrior. This combination of strength, knowledge, and skill gives them a special perspective.

The Red Guard goes out into the *World* with a mission. They bring justice to the wronged, protection to the weak, and devotion for life to all. Like Tashrune, they value strength, wisdom, and respect for life (knowing when to take it is as important as knowing when not to take it). They often walk the *World*

alone or in pairs. Larger groups are uncommon outside of the order's base of operations, a castle called the Den in the central hills of Celyd on the Yahsur river, downriver from Southflo. All prospective members must journey to the Den and train for three to seven years. This study is for the mind, body, and soul. It is not easy and many fail. Those that succeed become holy warriors of Tashrune and are blessed by him.

Seers

An order devoted to Bantus, the Seers wander the Empire and offer their services as oracles where ever they go. Seers have a way of looking at things, an insight into the workings of the universe, that they are willing to share. As with all things, there is a price, but gold is rarely more than a small bit of it. There are many tales of Seers answering questions for commoner and noble alike. Those tales rarely have a happily ever after ending.

Intellectual Bodies

Just as warriors, rogues, and priest have organizations, so do academics. Even in smaller settlements, there are a number of local groups of scholars, most average between four and seven members. They are most often little think tanks or just informal groups of friends that come together for conversation and general intellectual stimulation. The larger ones, however, are some of the most dangerous groups in existence. Their membership will span several cities and they often have both knowledge and considerable power.

The Arcane Syndicate

This is the one and only wizards' guild in the empire and there is little they will not do to keep it that way. They are open to all arcane casters but only the pure arcane casters advance far. The Syndicate's main concern is with limiting access to the power of magic for any outside force. Nowhere is this more important to them than in the field of warfare. They will do what is needed to keep any mage from being a tool of some government or noble. The power of any mage is for that mage alone and the Syndicate exists to protect mages from any outside forces seeking to "enslave" their power.

While no mage is forced, all are invited to join. The more powerful a mage gets the harder it is not to join. Some spells and raw materials and other resources are found only in the hands of the Syndicate's members. While it is not impossible to advance without being a member it will be more difficult. Also, training could be more expensive for non-members.

It is widely believed that the Syndicate strongly binds all its members by some form of oath. Possibly an oath of a magical nature but that is pure speculation. One possible reason for such rumors is that it is virtually unheard of for a mage to leave. When asked, if they say anything at all on the subject, mages will say that "membership is very beneficial."

One service offered by the Syndicate is aimed at helping members in need of some gold if they are willing to cast a spell or make an item. Often, some noble or another wealthy person will want a spellcasting or a magic item. The Syndicate negotiates with them, finds out what they need, sets realistic expectations regarding the request, and offers solutions/alternatives. At least half of the requests are without merit and the Syndicate makes sure that frivolous requests are understood by all parties to be just that. For example, a request for a pen that never runs out of ink for some noble's clerk is not going to be fulfilled as it is frivolous and if produced in quantities would have an unnecessary negative economic impact on both makers of pens and ink. The Syndicate discourages mages, members or not, from providing such services independently citing its filtering and negotiation efforts as invaluable to the process. Indeed, the members that have done it independently agree that giving the Syndicate a 10% cut, more if they provide the materials, is worth what they bring to the process. It is a headache to deal with such requests. By way of the Syndicate, some requests are fulfilled and many are not. Also, the service requester and the service provider have minimal direct contact because the Syndicate acts as an intermediary. A wizard can make a little gold if they need it without undue headache. And, in the end, the Syndicate controls the vast majority of new magic item sells and spell casting for hire.

The internal workings of the Syndicate are known only to its members. And even then, only the senior members have knowledge of the Syndicate's goals and methods. What is publicly known is that members pay dues and there are seven circles of membership, the first circle being for the most junior and the

seventh the most senior. There is speculation that there are levels beyond that but nothing has been confirmed. Rumor has it that the Syndicate has secret libraries all over the empire and perhaps even a stronghold deep in the Argos wilderness.

The Prime Order

This is a group of scholars who operate the Gleamdon University and fill the role of Prime Advisors to the powerful. For the past six-hundred-twenty-eight years the Prime Order has been based in Sapreen but the earliest evidence of it can be traced back eighteen-hundred years to documents outlining doctrines very much like key doctrines the Order was founded upon. The basic tenant of the Order is that knowledge must be harnessed to temper and direct power for a greater good. As far as the Order is concerned the Savage Time came about because of an unbridled lust for power. When all is said and done the Order aims to see that mistake is never again repeated. They wish to direct leadership down a wiser path. Members of the Order are forbidden the pursuit of power in and of itself; that is their highest crime. Those found guilty are reprimanded and, in extreme cases, can lose their position and prestige within the Order.

The Prime Order operates the illustrious Gleamdon University, which has been educating students well over five-hundred years. Gleamdon is the largest and the most famous of all universities in the Empire. Every member of the Prime Order is a trained scholar and sage who graduated from the Gleamdon University. Yet only a fraction of Gleamdon University graduates are members of the Prime Order. The Order's dedication to education is well-known, in addition to the higher curriculum, the University will teach local children that seek knowledge. These children tend to be one of the larger pools from which the Order replenishes its numbers. They grow up steeped in the Order, so it can easily become a way of life for them.

For over six hundred years the Order has taken requests for Prime Advisors. If they grant the request, a member of the Order is assigned the role. A Prime Advisor is bound by oath to provide truthful council in service to their "chosen entity". In this way, it is assured that a Prime Advisor will seek to offer the best advice and never lie or withhold information when advising their "chosen entity". Such an entity is traditionally a city, or an organization, or a fortress, or a noble house, or in very rare cases a person. The Prime Advisor of an entity is bound for life and is disgraced should their advice lead to the entity's end, which is the main reason a person is so rarely chosen. There are several hundred Prime Advisors stationed across the Empire. Each one services a powerful entity and has influence over what actions that entity takes.

While it is a highly desirable position, not all members of the Order will become Prime Advisors. A Prime Advisor is expected to be well versed in matters of history, philosophy, law, economics, tactics, herbology, biology, alchemy, magic theory and all other forms of lore. True, a few may dabble, but none are dedicated practitioners of magic as that would be a pursuit of power for its own sake, which is something the Order frowns upon.

These recent centuries have been the most peaceful and stable time since before the Savage Time. A great deal of that is due to the Order and the Prime Advisors in particular. Each is dedicated to the ideals of the Order and work hard to see that leaders do not become consumed with lust for power. The Order sees magic as a tool, a dangerous one, but still a tool. This has led the Order to have a few goals that complement some of the goals the Arcane Syndicate has. While they don't work together, they do find themselves working toward the same goals from time to time. For example, both groups do not want to see magic abused by rulers.

The Tinkerers' League

Inventors of all types are drawn to the Tinkerers' League. The League also welcomes smiths, clockmakers alchemist and other specialized artisans of similar ilk. This is a very gnome heavy organization, in fact, its mother chapter is based in Hilldale, a city famous for its Gnomish inhabitants. The League has a chapter in nearly every major city across the empire. While not all smiths are members the most ingenious and innovative ones often are. For that reason, even the smallest of towns could have at least one member.

Dues are moderate, as the purpose of the League is more a network to facilitate inventors inventing. The exchange of knowledge and expertise is the main method the League uses to get this done. Leadership is

elected locally. When a decision is required on a larger field, the leadership of the affected chapters get together and vote on a course of action.

Trade and Service Groups

There are many other guilds, groups, and organizations that have an impact on the daily lives of the Empire's citizens. Any group of merchants or crafters or service providers can and eventually do organize. The most common motivation for this is economical. Here are some examples of groups within a settlement that often organize. These are not the only ones to be found.

Lamp Lighters

As a settlement grows, they do many things to combat crime. It turns out that one of the simplest methods is to deny the criminal an easy place to hide, the darkness. A common solution is a Lamp Lighters guild. The earliest phase of this type of guild is lamp bearers, who walk with people while carrying a lamp. They are not guards. The next step is when the main street is fitted with lampposts. In the hour before dark members of the Lamp Lighters guild go around lighting the lamps or candles in the lampposts. Not all streets get this treatment, just the most used ones. How long the lights are tended depends on the settlement. Most don't keep them lit past midnight and lamp bearers are still active in the unlit areas. There are a few cities that have areas which are lit from dusk till dawn. Such a thing is rare.

Balashar has the "High Bay" district which is the only area in the Empire to be lit by magic. It was something the Lamp Lighters guild argued against. The Arcane Syndicate had denied similar requests several times over the prior century so it was a surprise when they allowed this one. It has been made clear that the Syndicate will not do this in other places. That suits the Lamp Lighters as magic lighting would put them out of business.

Gong Farmers

As a settlement grows, one of the biggest challenges it faces is sanitation. Good sanitation is vital to the general welfare of the populace. It cuts down on disease and makes for a more pleasant environment. A huge hurdle to sanitation in a society that depends heavily on work animals is excrement in the streets.

Once a settlement begins to pave its roads and have storm drains, it becomes a candidate for having a Gong Farmer guild. It is the job of the Gong Farmers to remove excrement from the streets and keep the storm drains clear of debris and flowing well. As the city grows and adds sewers, the duty of the Gong Farmers extends to them as well. When a sewer system is plagued with an overabundance of vermin, it is the Gong Farmers that are charged with clearing them out. They often hire adventurers for this work. In the larger cities, they even harness the power of ooze, pudding, and slime monsters to dispose of waste. This is one of the most dangerous guilds to work for. Not only is the accident rate high but the danger of attacks by sewer monsters is higher than the public knows. Gong Farmers also end up supplying a large amount of the local fertilizer demand. In short, they are in the waste disposal business. There are often ties to the local thieves guild but when that happens, great pains are taken to keep it hidden.

Transportation Guilds

Trade and commerce are powerful economic forces. But before an item can be sold, it needs to get to the marketplace. Every settlement has people that transport goods. From the basic workers that load wagons and barges to the wagon drivers and riverboat pilots. Anything coming in or going out has to be loaded/unloaded or moved by them. When these people organize they become a powerful group within the community. This doesn't often happen in the smaller settlement but as they grow it becomes inevitable. It happens even sooner for places that are trade hubs, including settlements on major rivers or very close to one of the Imperial Roads.

Water Carriers

Water Carriers is the common name for any organization that manages water delivery services in a settlement. Every settlement with a population over a few hundred will develop a guild of Water Carriers. In the beginning, they physically carry vessels of water from the well to people that lack the time to do so or need more than is practical to fetch on their own. There is a fee for this, so not everyone can or will need to use the service. Often bakers and tavern owners are their first customers.

As the settlement grows, more and more people will have need of their services. Somewhere along the line, as the settlement grows beyond the size where wells are practical, the Water Carriers begin to build water-carrying infrastructure to aid them. Cisterns are constructed with pumps to keep them full, later fountain systems are added to get water to more places in the ever-growing settlement. By the time they reach city-sized, the Water Carriers are piping water directly to their biggest customers. With more growth, the pipe systems get more comprehensive allowing more customers to get a higher level of service at a lower cost. Finally, the largest of cities see their Water Carriers guild reach the point where they maintain a system of cisterns and aqueducts and pumps and pipes that supply the daily water needs of hundreds of thousands of people. In some rare cases, they also handle crop irrigation.

The engineering involved in a high-end water delivery system is impressive but not as complex as some may think. The basis of a gravity pressure water system is a group of aboveground cisterns. These are most often built in the form of cylindrical stone or brick towers. The smallest is about 10 feet wide and 20 feet tall, holding about 35 thousand gallons of water. The largest, commonly used, being 40 feet tall and 20 feet in diameter and holding around 300 thousand gallons. In any of these cisterns, the walls are thicker at the base and tapering toward the top. Each cistern feeds one or more pipes near its base. For the large systems, it is typical to have a few big main cisterns feeding many smaller cisterns that in turn then feed the pipe network for the general population.

The force of gravity pressurizes this network of pipes, but it is not constant. As more people draw water from the pipes the pressure drops. Also, as water drains from the cistern the pressure diminishes. This is countered as much as possible by quickly getting water into the cistern to replace what is flowing out. Water pumps are used to keep the main cisterns topped off. One of the more common pumps is the water screw as it works well and is simple to maintain. Other devices used to move water include the waterwheel, chain pump, and piston pump. All pumps can be powered by wind, water, or labor.

However complex the system, their basic service only gets water to the customer on a reliable and timely basis. This means that the average citizen if they have water piped to their home at all, will have one small access pipe with a valve. The water pressure is weak, just enough to fill a basin. But it is better than carrying buckets. However, the more common scenario in a large urban area is that each apartment building has a water pipe filling a large basin in a central courtyard and the residents go to it and carry what they need back to their apartment.

Normally, once the water gets to the customer the Water Carriers' job is done. But the wealthy customer will often want to buy better services. Examples include things like personal mini cisterns to increase water pressure, water features (like fountains) in their home, and a larger supply for a private bathhouse.

Overall, the local Water Carriers will become more important as the settlement grows. Indeed, they are among the most powerful group in any of the major cities of the Middle Lands. Most cities learn the hard way that, as they grow, it is vital to keep this group happy or take over their infrastructure as public works. This is the route that several of the largest cities have taken.

Xorn Brokerage

Named for the city it began in, the Xorn Brokerage is a group of foreign moneylenders from the Spice Kingdoms who have spread across the Empire. While there are many groups for moneylenders in the Middle Lands, none are as powerful and wealthy as the Xorn. They have offices in the largest 100 cities of the Empire. With satellite offices in Rektor and Unetor, they have the largest coffers in the known world.

Exact and harsh yet impersonal, the moneylenders of Xorn are known for business sense. They do not show favoritism, ever. They do not take risks without information and careful calculation. Little things like morality don't get in the way of profit where they are concerned. So, when a noble needs to borrow vast sums of gold, there are none better suited to the task than the Xorn. That assumes the noble can afford the price of their services. If so, then that war can be funded or the destroyed grain stores can be replaced. Be sure of one thing, there is a cost and the Xorn will have what's theirs.

There have been those who didn't think they should pay back the loan. Not one has lasted more than a year. Each had their lives systematically destroyed by the Xorn. Then they died, poor, broken, friendless and often, by their own hand. None of it can be traced back to the Xorn Brokerage, but the facts remain.

Geographical Regions of Interest

This section will cover areas of interest across the Empire. Which areas are more a matter of renown, rather than size or location. Old tales and the promise of tomorrow's adventure are conjured in equal measure by these names. They are the names children hear when wanderlust first strikes them.

Between Land

The Between Land is not part of the *World* in any physical way. It is said to be the shadow of the mortal realm (the land of the Fey) and hence touchable when all other worlds are closed. Myth says, there are places where the mortal realm and this shadow touch, allowing passage between them. These places move with moon, stars, seasons, and the will of the Fey. Some will say a ring of toadstools or where three elms grow together make doors when the stars are right. Others claim a full moon reflected on a remote pond is a gateway. Still more stories have other methods, trace the hollow in the ancient tree, waterfalls under the harvest moon, sleeping in the branches of a willow tree.

Whatever the method, getting in is no guarantee of getting out again. The stories all say skill, luck, and boldness in the correct moments are needed. Carrying a bit of iron or salt or grain could also help. Few can claim to know where or when such doors will open but when they do it's not often a good thing. It is believed they can open anywhere. Yet some places, like the Hills of Par-dan-ro, seem to have more tales.

Descriptions of the Between Land vary but it's often dark and forested. Hills are possible, as are ponds or rivers. Sometimes it's warm as a summer eve and other times snow and ice grip the Land. Weather is said to be erratic with clear sky turning to rain or storm with alarming speed. The stars are not the same and the moon can vanish without warning. The sun will rise and set as it sees fit.

The Fey themselves are as varied as the land and as unpredictable as its weather. The tales say to watch the words used, be polite, and take not food nor drink nor gift without giving in return. There is danger in debt. To steal is to die or end up wishing for death. Time itself can be a punishment in the Between Land.

Cold Plains

The central area of Fellice is flat grasslands having few trees. This is mostly due to soil type, density, and depth. Add to that a short growing season and less regular rainfall than other areas. While far from an arid land there are years when rains break on the mountains more than these plains. Also, there is little to stop cold winds coming down the northern mountains. It is both beautiful and equally deadly.



The vast expanse of grassland makes for perfect livestock grazing. Many of the southern reaches are well suited to some crops. The other areas being too cold and/or having soil that is shallow and poor for anything other than grass. Wild herds of shaggy buffalo can be found roaming these plains.

The people have a mixture of love and respect for this unforgiving land. Its harshness is seen as proof that soft people would not be welcome but those of strength belong there, working with as much as on the land. They miss it when away and feel a pull to return, telling stories and singing songs to ease longing.

Imperial Roads crisscross the Cold Plains with the towers of the Central System built along them. Settlements tend to be close to these roads. In some areas going more than ten miles from the road puts one in wilderness. Orcs, gnolls, and goblin worg riders are common in these less populated places.

With all the dangers there is much for people to worry about. Fortunately, digging a foot or two down reveals stone and that is why nearly every settlement has at least a charge breaking wall if not a full-sized defensive wall of stone. The earthen cover is often used to build cobb homes on the rare higher ground even as the stone beneath will serve as walls around them. The holes left by such mining operations can be formed into moats or they become ponds and small lakes used to irrigate crops during dry times.

Dagger Mountains

Starting at the Sea of Storms and running parallel to and a bit south of the Dragon's Backbone Mountains before jutting southward, the Dagger Mountains are noticeably smaller (averaging around 7,000 feet) and geologically older than those northern mountains. Most of them are covered in trees and with the tree line at around 9,000 feet that means, when they have them, all but the tallest have trees from root to crown. The majority are fir trees of one type or another.

The mountain people that live here have many harsh conditions to overcome. Winter is cold and snows are heavy. In the deep days of winter it gets so cold, trees crack as their sap freezes. The sharp and booming report created by that is the source for many a tale. Outside of the lowlands, roads are rarely better than a rutted cart path. The rare patrols often stay in the lowlands or valleys. Beasts roam the land in great numbers as much of this remote region is unlikely to ever be more than borderlands. Those people that are strong enough to live here become formidable in their own right. War is almost constant between the human tribes, which includes the Mursha. The Iron Storm is said to be made up of warriors from these various tribes. When they come out of the mountains all others are well advised to beware their leader, the feared Jun Wolf.

The few areas that civilization will encroach upon have valuable resources. Silver, iron, gold, and gems being the most notable. Most of the latter two are in the hands of dwarves but small amounts are held by humans. More unclaimed minerals are in places too strongly held by orc, goblinoids, ogres, hill giants, and various other creatures of the Underdark. Caves, tunnels and abandoned mines from ancient times are used as lairs and make the Underdark beings the greatest threat of the area. It is also the one people know the least about. There are tales of whole villages vanishing in the night.

With all the dangers and harshness there is another side to see. Just as the snows build through the winter, they recede as the weather warms. This meltwater feeds streams and rivers flowing into the lowlands. Hundreds of them spider out and feed forest and farmlands across the Empire. Both of the two largest rivers, the Danchu at the point and the Yahsur at the hilt, get their start from snowmelt in the Dagger Mountains.

Danchu River

The Danchu river runs from the Dagger Mountains all the way to the Inner Sea (1,460 miles). Balashar sits at the mouth and Ghuntos is near its source. Between the two cities, the river winds its way east and south through the lands of Fellice and Mostor. It is fed by thousands of small tributaries all along the way. At the same time, much water is diverted to irrigating thirsty farmlands near and far.

Marshes, floodplains, hills, and forest dot the river's banks along its route. Winter ices the surface in the north but it rarely freezes over. During the summers the flow lessens yet never stops while snowmelt and rainstorms feed it in spring. Flooding often happens but most have learned the river well enough that they don't settle those places which regularly do flood.

A major population of humans lives along the Danchu making vast stretches much more welcoming than they would be otherwise. There are many small settlements and several large ones. Commerce flows on the great river so, barges and other river vessels are a common sight. In the less populated areas lizardfolk, boggards, mudmen, and the occasional troll roams. River beast like giant eel, poisonous frogs, crocodile, and great gar are regularly spotted all along the river's length. Pirates are not as rare as people would like and cause as much problem for traders as any monster.

Dothmas Hills

These hills, near the center of Argos and on the west side of the Danchu's course, cover an area of nearly 5,000 square miles. They are renown for being home to so many gnome and halfling settlements. Dozens of them are spread throughout the hills with halflings in the vales and gnomes on and under the high hills they mine. While mostly grassy land there are still many stands of trees to be found and the far southern reaches of the hills are covered thickly in trees.

Settlements have terraced farmland and rolling pastures for livestock. Of such, goat and sheep are the most often seen domesticated herd animals. Gnomish airships are more often seen here than almost anywhere else in the Empire. These settlements have a special relationship with the Empire. While they are part of it they mostly govern themselves as they see fit and while they send gifts to the Imperial Throne they do not send tribute or taxes. Any tax they collect is used locally for local issues.

The Stouthearts, protectors of the Dothmas Hills, are the only guard and the bulk of their work is directed to keep goblins and orcs out. As such the hills are one of the safer areas in the Empire when it comes to monsters and wild beasts. That's not to say, there are none, but there are undoubtedly fewer about.

Dragon's Backbone Mountains

Far to the north, deep within Fellice, is a massive mountain range constructed of great black rock that has been thrust up into jagged formations reaching toward the sky. Long ago, glaciers came with such fury that they cut that mountain range in two. The section, to the west of the break, is called the Dragon's Backbone Mountains. These dizzyingly high peaks average 22,000 feet.

Fir trees are liberally sprinkled over these mountains and thick in the lowlands. The tree line is around 9,000 feet so above that sees no trees. The snow never stops for long and avalanches are common. Most of these mountains keep a white cap all year. The exception being volcanoes, of which there are a few. The most recently active one has been sending up ash clouds somewhat regularly for the past twenty-five years. There are areas of lava flows as well. Indeed, the extent of volcanic activity in the region is most likely greater than it appears. Some volcanoes have been inactive so long that no one on the surface knows they aren't normal mountains.

There are not many mines in these mountains to spite the fact that the amount of mineral resources to be found is staggering. Of the mines that do exist, most are dwarven with a notable number of human enterprises in the areas near the Cold Plains. It should be noted that due to different skills and techniques the dwarven works are, in general, deeper mines while the human ones are more shallow and less extensive overall.

The dangers in this region go well beyond the environmental. Many monsters and wild beasts roam with total impunity. Tribes of orcs are numerous marauders, yeti trek, giants (including stone, frost, and fire) range, dragons soar, and even more fantastic creatures can be found. No one wishing anything like safety spends time near, much less in, these mountains.

Dragon's Fang Mountains

The Dragon's Fang Mountains extend down the shoreline of the Ice Sea, the Inner Sea, and then into Fellice proper. These peaks share many characteristics with those of the Dragon's Backbone Mountains. They are largely dark stone and very tall, averaging 18,000 feet. Fir trees cover the slopes up to nearly 9,000 feet and the snows collect heavily on the higher ground. Avalanches are even more frequent than in the Dragon's Backbone Mountains. There are, however, fewer obvious volcanoes but volcanic activity as a whole is almost as widespread. In many places lava flows, regularly reaching the sea, cause great gouts of steam made more extreme by the cold water temperatures.

The icy winds coming off the northern sea sweep these mountains without mercy. This makes winters here harsher than anywhere else in the Empire. Storms come in the winter to pile up snow and ice for days at a stretch. Those nights can kill a piece at a time, over a matter of hours and even if one gets inside soon enough, it can still cost some toes or even a nose. Only the foolish venture out in that and only the lucky live to talk about it.

Very few mine this remote region. In the far southern reaches, both human and dwarven mines exist but much of the central and northern areas have no such activity. That is not to say there is no activity up there, just that humans and dwarves aren't the ones doing it. The seaside dwelling Mako are some of the few humans known to live within the range. Other inhabitants of the region include orcs, duergar, griffons, remorhaz, wyverns, taers, giants (frost, fire, stone), devil dogs, ice trolls and dragons. All manner of animals call these mountains home as well, from wolves to the large white northern bears to dire birds of prey, there is no shortage of wild beasts.

Fellice Plateau

At some point in the distant past glaciers moved across the Cold Plains. There are a few places this ice didn't reach or bypassed for some reason. These spots are marked by plateaus. The largest one being the Fellice Plateau, which covers nearly 300 square miles and stands between 40 and 80 feet above the plains. None of the others are so large, most are under 30 feet and less than a few square miles in area.



Naturally, these places offer high-ground advantage to anyone willing to use them. Unfortunately, few of these plateaus are both stable and suitable to long-term settlement. Access to water is most often the thing that stops or severely limits settlements on plateaus. The Fellice Plateau has lakes enough to support the population of Murath. It also has space for farms and livestock with room leftover.

Grey Marsh

The Grey Marsh is just under 20,000 square miles making this the single largest marsh in the Empire. It is fed by the Lestare river. Its bulk lays south of Rocrest, near which the Lestare forks off the Danchu river. As the river feeding it flows south, it floods lower lands which have higher than normal concentrations of salts in their soil making the water slightly briny and many of the plants a bit gray.

As unlikely as it seems, this environment yields a surprising and varied array of plant-life. A vast number of useful plants grow here. They are harvested by herb hunters who sell their bounty in nearby Rocrest. The occupation is a dangerous one. The deeper one goes into the Grey Marsh, the greater the risk. For this reason, much of the marsh remains untouched. Still, an astounding amount must be harvested to meet demand. Most years this demand is not completely fulfilled. As a result, the harvesters can demand a hefty price for their services. As is common, the cost is passed on in all the products these plants are used in.



Without all the water, this area would be a series of rolling hills and shallow valleys. With the water, it's more like a series of close, sparsely wooded, winding, islands surrounded by a few lakes, many ponds, and streams connecting them. The water is not often more than a couple of feet deep but it is treacherously deceptive with the "deep" spots seeming to move solely to defy mapping efforts. The water can go from "waist deep" to "over your head" in half a step. This is only one of the reasons to avoid wading the waters.

The wildlife is another factor. Insects that bite and sting are a constant issue in the warmer months. Leeches of various sizes can be a problem most of the year. Giant frogs, water snakes, crocodiles, and tigers are commonly sighted. Then there are the monsters, lizardfolk being one of the more common. Boggards, stirge, harpies, shambling mounds, ogres, and trolls are some of the many other possibilities.

The many dangers of the region mark it as a place few will seek out. At the same time, there is a hidden beauty to this land. It can come upon one at any moment. Like a will-o-wisp over the water reeds at dusk; equal parts of beauty and deadly.

Hills of Par-dan-ro

Located in the thick forests on the southern border between Mostor and Argos not far from the sea. These forested hills cover an area of a few hundred square miles. It's a narrow band of hills varying between five and seven miles wide and paralleling about fifty miles of coastline yet never closer than fifteen miles from the coast. Mist and fog are commonplace in the hills. Apart from a few fishing villages on the coast, there are no settlements in the area. Many believe that is no accident and that the hills harbor spirits.

Over the generations, many tales have come out of these hills. Fey or the restless dead being the top two subjects of the stories. Another major theme being that civilization has no place there and never will. As extolled by poets, it is a land on the edge, the edge of land and sea, the edge of civilization and wilderness, the edge of two countries. As such, it seems natural to think of it as a place of crossings. It is said the Between Land bleeds through here more freely than in other regions.

Pixies, dryads, sprites, satyrs, leprechauns, treants, indeed fey of all stripes can be found in far greater concentrations in and around the Hills of Par-dan-ro. As can a variety of lesser undead, skeletons, zombies, banshee and other restless spirits. At the same time, many other monsters avoid the area, orc, goblinoids, kobolds, gnolls and the like are much less likely to venture into the hills. Even trolls and ogres don't seem to stay long in the area. Apart from all that, the normal complement of animals roam here.

Much less well-known is the fact that druids name this a place of power and a land to be guarded. One of the great rings is here and druids travel to the hills as a place of worship. To say it is secret would be too strong a term, more accurately, druids do not speak openly of it. There are always at least a few druids here and gatherings of a few dozen to a hundred or so occur with regularity.

Lesmah Swamp

The Lesmah Swamp covers 6,700 square miles of southern Celyd. The Yahsur river never reaches the sea, instead, it empties into two large lakes, collectively called the Many Deeps. People say the bottom is more than two hundred feet down in places. The lowlands surrounding these lakes take on constant overflow. Fissures in the lakebed and others around the swamp suck much of the water underground. Where and when it resurfaces is unknown.

Much of the swamp resembles thin forest covered with about two feet of



water. Only very shallow draft boats can be used in these areas. That's not the case if one sticks to the river or lakes where the water is deeper. Trade barges make their way down the river and across the lakes to the southernmost shore and the city of Lechwed. They don't venture into areas where the water is more than about twenty feet deep.

Sucking muck and quicksand is common enough that wading the waters would be a dangerous endeavor. Then there are the fissures and the danger of dropping into one of these where currents can drag a person down never to be seen again. There are still people that risk themselves to venture out into the Lesmah Swamp. They fish the waters of the lakes and river, harvest shellfish, and hunt the great frogs and waterbirds. Others gather some of the many useful plants. All these things are sold in the markets of Lechwed. Any willing to take risks can venture out and gather what's needed for the marketplaces.

The environmental dangers are many but they are not the only dangers. The wildlife is also hazardous, to begin with, biting and stinging insects are a constant issue, more so in the warm months when they swarm. Leeches of various sizes latch on to any warm skin they can get to. Giant frogs, water snakes, alligators, great spiders, and large predators are commonly sighted. Boggards and lizardfolk are often encountered. Fet'louse, stirge, shambling mounds, trolls, and ogres are also known to roam the swamp. The most feared are the Yellow Musk Creepers, they take the unwary, kill them and use the bodies as puppets. The vines will grow up tree trunks surrounded by bodies of victims too decayed to any longer be of use to the vines while fresher victims shamble about with new sprouts protruding from ears and other breaks in the skulls. The rare band of orcs or gnolls will often fall victim to such vines.

Nocmal River

At its source, the Nocmal river runs through the city of Jortice and from there out of the Dragon's Fang Mountains. By the time it leaves the mountains the water runs red. This is due to the iron-rich rocks of the area. Along the 520 mile journey, it loses its red and becomes clear long before merging with the Danchu river by the city of Levloe.

There aren't farming villages for the first two hundred miles of the river. The climate is far too cold for growing food. However, logging the extensive forest of various fir trees is done in that area and log-riders take the wood south to the mill towns spaced along the river's length. That lumber is then shipped downriver as well as across the Cold Plains. That is a place where lumber is not locally abundant and it is much needed for all building. It is also used to build boats and barges which are sold or used for more shipping both here and in any number of places to the south.

The river transforms as the fir trees give way to deciduous trees. Just as it's done on the Danchu, water is siphoned off almost as fast as tributaries add it. That water, no longer red, feeds the farmlands and livestock and villages. There are more people with settlements closer together but it is still not as populated as the shores of the Danchu, even up until the point they join.

The less settled areas, being more prevalent than they are on the Danchu, see more monster activity. Orcs, gnolls, boggards, ogres, lizardfolk, and even hill giants are often encountered along this river. All along its length river beasts like giant eel, large lizards, and great gar are regularly spotted. As with most major rivers, pirates cast their shadow over the waters.

Nojala Mountains

The white rocks of the Nojala Mountains stand east of the Great Desert and average 15,000 feet high. They are a rain break, blocking moist air from the Inner Sea. This air releases most of its water while getting over them. That water becomes snow which collects on the peaks. When it finally melts a majority returns to the sea in the east and precious little makes its way west. What does come west feeds the tribal settlements at the base of these mountains. They make full use of that water.

While there are trees, they are spare and small with none growing above about 7,000 feet. Most of the vegetation on these slopes are shrubs and grasses. Even in this hot climate, some snow settles on the peaks, more of it on the eastern peaks nearer the Inner Sea. This lack of water keeps the land arid. There are volcanoes, but only one has had recent activity. In years past, lava would flow down its slope. Currently, the mountain is silent, as if waiting.

Most of the mines are in the northern section as very few in the desert do much mining beyond the small-scale. Of the mines that do exist in the north, most are human with a notable number of dwarven enterprises. Outside this northern section, all the big mines are dwarven. It should be noted that due to different skills and techniques the dwarven works are, in general, deeper mines while the human ones are more shallow and less extensive overall. A large amount of gold and gemstones are mined here.



The dangers from climate, while extensive, are only a close second to the monsters and wild animals. Orcs, gnolls, firenewts, goblinoids, hill giants, ogre magi, zombies, and skeletons being known to attack the unwary. Giant creatures (beetles, spiders, lizards, scorpions, fire ants, and hawks) alongside the more mundane wolves, hyenas, boars, leopards, jackals, and bear also roam. Hippogriffs, mummies, and pterodactyl are rare but are counted as some of the most dreaded things in the mountains.

Rasfenie Mountains

The striations of red rocks forming the Rasfenie Mountains stand on average 20,000 feet and line the western side of the Great Desert. They act as a rain break, blocking the violent storms from the sea. Most of the rain simply washes back into the sea but some becomes snow on the high summits. Of the melt from such snow packs, what little makes its way east is much prized by desert tribal villages that make their home on the edge of the mountains.



The western mountains see more trees but they are still not what anyone would call thick growth. Shrubs and grasses are much more common where the soil is not too sandy. Windstorms are a regular occurrence and they roll out from these mountains to the rest of the Great Desert sending tons of sand into the hot, dry air. Just as with the Nojala Mountains there is one known volcano, Mt. Scarroth, which is almost 30,000 feet and overshadows every other mountain in the Rasfenie Mountains. Indeed, this is the highest known peak in Keltor. Rivers of lava flow day and night yet little ash is released from the mound.

Very little mining happens in these mountains. Most of them are too far into the desert to be accessible. Dwarves have all but one of the major mines in the region. There are a few small-scale human operations run by desert tribes but these are not commercial enterprises. They only mine what they need.

Ogrillon, firenewts, and orcs are the most common marauders in the area. Giant lizards and scorpions are problematic but many other more common predators and venomous snakes call this home. Undead of various types are more numerous here than elsewhere. Unknown to most, near Mt. Scarroth fire giants live in their greatest concentration outside the Spice Kingdoms.

Tynhare Plains

Most of the central plains in western Mostor are rolling grasslands that are a bit arid. The Tynhare Plains includes all this land plus what sections spill into Argos. Much of it is covered by tall grasses, some of

which can grow to four feet in height. Wild herd animals roam, eating this grass. Tribals (both human and elven) hunt here in large numbers as do natural predators including many large cats. Not all the tribes are as friendly as the Horse Runners but all do wage war with orcs, gnolls, and the goblinoid tribes found here. A large number of other beasts and monsters also roam the Tynhare Plains or soar above it.

The human and elven tribes of these plains are varied. Some are more peaceful than others and a few are as warlike as any orcs. For the most part, these tribes are not large and, as such, their conflicts with freeholds don't generally go beyond simple raiding. However, open warfare does happen between the tribes. Regardless of which type of conflict they are engaged in, the tribes fight from horseback more than any other way. Bows and spears are favored weapons with shields larger than a buckler rarely being used. As such, their tactics tend toward lightning fast attacks followed by a quick retreat. These "hit and run" campaigns are designed to wear the opponent out, dealing damage in small bits that add up all too quickly. Tribes most often wage war over local resources, herd hunting rights and water being the top two. A new freshwater spring can lead to years of conflict among neighboring groups.

Water is the biggest hurdle to making much of this land more appealing as farmland. So, apart from a few sections, most of the Empire's settlers are near the major Imperial Roads or the coastline. Still, freeholds are common on these plains due to vast stretches of grazing land for livestock and a few spots of water or some rich mineral resources that can be found. Fine stone, silver quartz, and salt being at the top of that list. While these are rare, they will spur development of a freehold when found.

Wild Hills

Also known as the Wild Wood Hills, this small range of just a few hundred square miles is located in Sulkor's north-east forests, south of the Wild Wood Road which is the Imperial Road that runs between Rocrest and Lechwed. These hills have resisted settlement but attract attention from the adventurous. There are legends of ancient ruins and lost treasures all over the area. The few settlements that do extend into the hills don't seem to last. It's as if the land itself wants no company here. Some claim the spirits living here drive normal folk mad and plant wild ideas in their minds.

Few creatures of better than animal intelligence live here, this includes monsters. As such, encounters with them would be rare. Still, even with such low numbers, gnolls, kobolds, and hill giants remain dangers to any that venture into the hills. Lesser undead are also known to inhabit the forest and hills. Animals are another issue, the predators of these hills often grow to dire proportions and rage into surrounding areas. Some claim that even the tree squirrels are bloodthirsty! Scholars are unsure as to what causes the strange animal behaviors yet few come to study it firsthand.

All this is set in a backdrop of a beautiful land. The hills tend to have thick forest covering them but some are cleared, often from a past (failed) attempt to settle. Small lakes and ponds in the valleys give rise to morning mist and evening fogs. The sound of wild songbirds fills the air by day and wolf song by night. The rainstorms are often accompanied by thunder and lightning. Afterward, rainbows are an almost regular sight among the Wild Hills.

Wild Woods

This dark and ancient forest covers many tens of thousands of square miles of Celyd, Sulkor, and Argos. If not for the Wild Wood Road none would go there willingly. That single band of civilization clinging to the road represents all the progress of the Empire in penetrating the Wild Woods. There has been a push in the past hundred years but it is unlikely to change much in the near future. Better than 85% of all freeholds here fail within five years so eager settlers are getting harder to find for this area when other places are less dangerous. This land remains indomitably wild.

The old growth of the Wild Woods is surrounded by lesser forests which locals may call by the same name even though it may not be, strictly speaking, true. Collectively, these woods span from the Grey Marsh in the west to the Lesmah Swamp in the east and then from the plains of the tribals in the south to those in the north which are thick with farmland. Within these bounds, the land is more or less flat with only the occasional small group of hills. In many spots, small freshwater springs make ponds or small streams. In other areas, meadows thrive in the spaces cleared by last year's big fires. Smaller fires are common as dead leaves and brush burn off leaving trees mostly intact. This is the area known as the Wild Woods.

The dominant feature is, of course, the trees. There are many types to pick from and they grow ever so large here. It is not so unusual for the forest canopy to be more than a hundred feet up. While no one species of tree is supreme, there are patches of one type or another across the woodlands. These patches tend toward trees of similar mature height. Some of the more common types (and sizes) include:

Alder (L)	Briar (S)	Hawthorn (S)	Myrtle (L)	Rowan (M)	<u>Wild Wood Sizes</u> Small (<= 50ft) Medium (<= 100ft) Large (<= 150ft) Huge (> 150ft) These trees sizes are larger than normal (35',70',100',100'+).
Apple (S)	Cherry (S)	Hickory (L)	Oak (H)	Thorn (L)	
Crabapple (S)	Chestnut (L)	Larch (L)	Pear (S)	Walnut (L)	
Beech (M)	Elder (M)	Maple (M)	Plum (S)	Willow (M)	
Birch (M)	Elm (H)	Mulberry (M)	Poplar (H)	Yew (M)	

While they look like trees seen elsewhere the main difference is size. Both height and girth are affected making any tree in the Wild Wood grow larger by any scale. In the deepest areas are said to be trees hundreds of feet tall and so wide ten people couldn't link hands and make a ring around the trunk.

Undergrowth is rare as much of it is choked out by lack of sunlight. Only areas of tree-falls or fires have much undergrowth. Such growth is as often poisonous as not. The lack of small plants means fewer small animals are found. This makes the predators hungry and aggressive, ready to take any meat they can find. Worgs, bears, wolves, and tigers are but a few of the ravenous beast to be found in the woods. Stirges, giant spiders, and varieties of lycanthropes are said to call these woods home. Indeed, just about any monster can be found somewhere in this vast forest.

Then there are the elves. They claim this place above all others and their tree villages with their wood and rope bridges are said to be spread throughout the forest. Rumor says that somewhere out there is a shining city of elves. Its grandeur is legendary, yet none that seek it have returned to tell the tale. If such a place exists, its location would be highly guarded. Of course, there are many other claims made about the Wild Woods. The number of things that are supposed to be found within is astounding. Lost cities of the ancients, a secret stronghold of the Arcane Syndicate, ruined temples to just about any dark deity one can name, wizard towers, abandoned castles, and so much more are all rumored to be out there somewhere. It all draws treasure hunters, many of whom are never seen again.

Yahsur River

Coming out of the Dagger Mountains and flowing into the Many Deeps and Lesmah Swamp, this river spans close to 670 miles. The cold winter winds will often freeze up to a foot of the surface water. Large chunks of ice break off and flow south with the current adding hazards to spring river traffic. Numerous tributaries join it as it runs its course to the city of Lechwed. It supplies the farmlands of Celyd with water as well as acting as a major trade route.

Still, the population is not as dense as that along the Danchu river and there are more sparse areas in which monsters live. The numbers of lizardfolk, boggards, orcs, gnolls, goblins, and ogres are noticeably high. There are even tribes of the elusive nomadic centaurs roaming hills near its banks along the southern reaches. It also has its share of river beasts like the flesh-eating screaming eels and giant pikes. Finally, where there is trade by water there are pirates not far behind. The Yahsur river has its share of dangers. Even with all these, the population of the Empire expands here and the land draws ever more settlers eager to make a home from the wilderness.



Into these borderlands the Red Guard ventures out, seeking to bring peace and justice. They are more active here than in most other areas of the Empire. That may be because the Den, their home fortress is found downriver from Southflo, in the hills near the Yahsur's banks.

Travel in the Middle Lands

Like any other civilization, travel is the key to commerce and that is the life's blood of any city. In the Middle Lands, it is no different. Most common folk travel by land but they don't normally go far. Waterborne travel is mostly for merchants and nobles. A very, very few brave souls can travel by air.

By Air

Every major city has a small pegasus stable with between three and six riders and mounts at any given time. These are imperial message runners and are used almost exclusively for state business. It is possible for anyone to hire one of these messengers but the prices are extreme and state deliveries take priority every time. It is also possible that the local lord has blocked public access to the messengers. This can be done for a number of reasons ranging from state security to the noble's whim. Of the money collected for a delivery, 85% goes to the imperial coffers and the rest to the rider. Payments are made to the local office of the imperial post rather than directly to the rider.

The only route for public air travel would be the gnomish airships. While the gnomes of Rektor are exploring extremes in gnomish design in relation to sea travel, the gnomes of the Middle Lands are working on air travel. There are a dozen or so airships, crewed exclusively by gnomes, traveling the Middle Lands. They circulate between the gnomish settlements and the major human cities. Scheduled routes are not a big thing with the gnomes of the sky. They value freedom and look at the airships as the last place remaining to anyone that truly wants to be free. The gnomish sky captains, called Brown Coats, will take any job if it looks like fun and/or a challenge, they just want enough gold to stay in the sky.

Their ships vary wildly with no two looking, much less operating, the same way. All are steam-powered to one degree or another, use very little or no magic, and emit large clouds of black smoke and/or steam but there the similarities end. Some look like zeppelins, others like clockwork hot air balloons, bugs such as dragonflies are another common look, and still others defy description altogether or make one doubt their own sanity when looking too closely at the contraption. They use anything from hot air to hydrogen to spinning blades to get off the ground. Additional forward movement is supplied by various propellers or flapping wings or steam jets. Most citizens think it insane to ride in one of these monstrosities.

The list below gives general stats for the airship types found in the Middle Lands. The speed listed is squares/minute under normal conditions (square = 30 ft.). Divide speed by three for miles/hour. While the ceiling for most craft is about 8,000 ft, high wind tends to be an issue above 4,000 ft.

Airship Type	Speed*	Ceiling**	Length	Width	Crew	Cargo	Cost	Ship HP ***	Maneuverability
Hot-air lift	15	8,000 ft	var	var	4 - 6	2 tons	?	500	clumsy
Hydrogen lift	20	8,000 ft	var	var	4 - 6	3 tons	?	600	poor
Rotary blade lift	30	8,000 ft	var	var	4 - 6	3 tons	?	700	average

* Wind speed and direction will affect airship speed. Speed adjustments for wind flow vary, as a rule of thumb add/subtract one square for each mph of wind depending on direction. Weather can affect flight conditions, rain, fog, hail, lightning, and other meteorological events slow down or even ground an airship. Airships will want to avoid strong winds (+20 mph) as it will damage the vehicle. This is done by changing altitude. Wind speed and/or direction can vary within a few hundred feet of elevation.

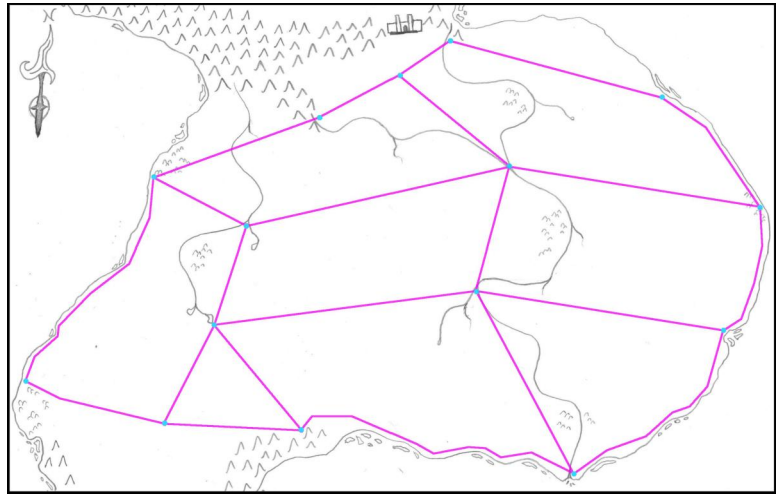
** Operating above the ceiling is possible if the crew has gear to combat cold and low oxygen conditions. At heights of more than twice the ceiling, airships begin to experience technical issues. These vary from design to design but most are due to changes caused by a lessening of atmospheric pressure and/or extreme cold. High winds will generally keep airships well below the ceiling.

*** Airships reduced to half hit points should land. If it doesn't, all piloting checks have a penalty as determined by the GM.

By Land

Walking is by far the most common land-based transportation mode. Others include cart, wagon, mount, caravan and so on. While not all commoners can afford a riding horse most can afford some type of pack/draft animal even if it is only a mule or an ox. Carts are inexpensive and a travois can be made practically for free. The existing network of roads is impressive. They range from basic dirt trails to the empire build stone trade routes and even ancient brick masterwork roads.

All the major cities of the Middle Lands are connected by a network of Imperial Roads, shown on this map. They are patrolled by local lords and elements of the Imperial Guard. Note that the map shows only a general line for the road, not the exact path. These main roads are wide, paved and kept in good condition. As a result, travel speed on the road can be maximized and foul weather is not as much of a hindrance as it would be on a dirt road. Many villages and towns have been built along these main roads with the sole purpose of providing services to travelers. Some have even grown beyond that to produce products for trade.



Beyond the main roads, there are smaller local roads that are maintained by the local lord. Most of the time these are not paved but are simple hard packed dirt. In poorer or remote districts the roads get progressively cruder. Patrols are less common the farther one gets from the main road. Finally, there are places in which one can find part of an ancient road. Such roads were old centuries before the empire was born. These are made of cut stone rather than the cobblestone of the Imperial Roads. It is not uncommon for a village or town to mine the stone from these roads as it is of fine quality and well cut. Such strong, well cut, stones are of value in building.

By Water

Water is still the primary means of moving goods, this is mostly due to the high population density along coastlines and rivers. River ships are common and most have both sail and oars. One mast is the norm for such vessels. On the eastern coast, the vessels are built for speed and cargo capacity and most lack oars. Due to the relatively mild weather in the Inner Sea, these ships are not built to stand against the kind of storms that can strike in the Vast Sea much less the ones in the Sea of Storms. The west coast makes a very different ship. There, durability is prized above speed and cargo. These vessels are made to take as much damage as possible and still make it to safe harbor. In game terms, most of the ships made in the Middle Lands and used on the Inner Sea would be classified as coasters while ships made by the people of Unetor, for example, would be seafarers.

In some of the major coastal cities the denizens often times see vessels from other lands. Ships from Unetor are both huge and strangely rigged. Their four-masted ships use sails and rigging of a design completely foreign to Middle Land sailors. The wood they use is said to be spell and steel strengthened, Ironwood. Rumor says some of them use even larger vessels with up to six masts on the Vast Sea.

The gnomes of Rektor have, by far, the strangest vessels. Their ships are built of metal and spew smoke and steam from large pipes in their decks. Some have massive waterwheels attached to the vessel's aft or on both sides while others have what the gnomes call "automated oars". Still stranger, are the ones that have no oar, sail, or wheels. They just churn the water behind them and move as if by magic all the while filling the air with black smoke. It is said this black smoke is made by burning a mysterious black rock. Many people dismiss this as some traveler's joke.

The elven ships of Soltor are rarely seen but there are tales of glowing white hulls and gossamer sails and speed twice that of the fastest Middle Land sailing ship. Some say the elves store wind on these ships. It is commonly believed that their hulls and masts are made of mystical living wood that heals damage.

Water Vessel Types

River Barge – This can be anything from a raft of lashed logs to a flat-bottomed boat for cargo. Barges rely on the current and the use of poles to steer when going downstream. A simple collapsible mast and sail provide locomotion for upstream travel, which can be very slow. Again poles are used to guide and push the craft. This type of vessel is practically useless on the open sea but a lake is another matter. Cargo is stored on the main deck, out in the open. Tarps are used to cover and protect such cargo. A

small tent-like aft cabin is the all-purpose crew area (mess, sleeping area, and so on).

Ice Raider – It resembles a Viking longboat. Having a long slim body, a single mast, oars, a ram, and limited icebreaking ability make this perfect for the Ice Sea. The Mako tribe uses them to raid shipping lanes in the northern parts of the Inner Sea. While it can travel on many rivers, it is often used in open water. These vessels have two levels including the main deck so cargo space is at a minimum. The main deck has space for the rowers, twelve on each side. This leaves the rest of the crew to operate the sail, rudder, and perform any other needed duties.



Merchant Girth – This wide-body design is favored by merchants for its cargo capacity. One or two masts and a bank of oars on each side make this a craft for hauling large loads at a slow and steady pace. They can navigate rivers as well as coastal waters with equal ease. Typically having three levels, including the main deck, the lowest level is all cargo space. The next level is crew space and rower stations (35 on each side) and secondary cargo. There is often a small aft cabin on the main deck which is subdivided for use by the captain and mates or paying passengers.

Wind Runner – Fast and light, these ships are like sloops. They have one mast and some have oars. This type of vessel is a favorite for pirate use due to its speed, excellent maneuverability, and overall versatility. Their shallow draft allows easy use on most rivers. Most of these have a large (taller than normal) lower level used for cargo. It is common that a portion of the cargo level is subdivided into two levels, the upper being for crew use and the lower for cargo. Some designs do this fore, some aft, but more common is to use the outer hull area leaving an inner section about 8 ft. wide that's full height and rigged for cargo. Most designers see the latter option as better for overall balance and stability. The designs that use rowers, double crew sleeping area with rowing stations. Without rowers, a crew only needs to number twenty yet pirates often run with forty as the extra hands are useful for fighting.

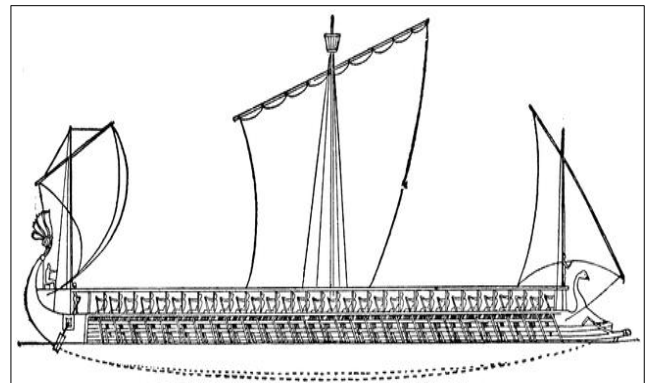
Spray Seeker – A medium-sized vessel having two or three masts that resembles a schooner. While not unheard of, oars are rare for these ships and largely ineffective. They can travel at respectable speeds and are able to make use of the deeper river channels. These vessels are most at home in the ocean. In addition to the main deck, they often have three levels below deck. All sport an aft cabin on the main deck and some have a fore cabin as well.



Storm Rider – Produced mainly by those on the western coast of the Middle Lands, these ships are built to weather storms and rough water. While of a similar size and configuration to the spray seeker, they are not as fast and carry a little less cargo but their rough weather survival rate is several times better. This is due to a wider stable design, better construction methods (also more expensive) and different rigging. Unlike other ships, the design of the Storm Rider is much more uniform due to relatively few shipyards producing them. They all have two masts and three levels below deck and an aft cabin on the main deck.

Wind Beast – A large sailing vessel with massive cargo capacity and three or four masts. They can be likened to a barque. These ships are not designed for river use and hence will often run afoul in all but the deepest of river channels. Below the main deck is three levels. The lower two being devoted exclusively to cargo storage. The uppermost being crew space and supplies and secondary cargo storage. A spacious aft cabin on the main deck is standard.

War Sail – The red warships of the Middle Land navy resemble a trireme with three masts. They are huge, powerful, fast and not build for cargo. All are equipped with a steel ram, two ballistas (one fore and one aft), a catapult mid-ship (mounted on a turning wheel) and a mobile Greek fire launcher. There are two levels below the main deck. A great deal of that space is devoted to the one-hundred-forty rowers, twenty sailors, and forty warriors standard to the war ship's crew. All that leaves little room for cargo.



Wave Mistress – Used exclusively by the people of Unetor, these vessels are made for long voyages in the open sea. They are larger than most any other sailing vessel known in the Middle Lands and use a very complex sail and rigging design that allows for great speed and wind management abilities. Most have between four and six masts and four levels below their deck. This gives them an impressive amount of space for cargo.



Elven Silk Sail – Exclusive to the elves of Soltor these are hands-down the fastest sailing ships known. Long and sleek, having up to four masts and equip with silk-like sails and rigging these vessels are unlike any that humans have ever produced. They employ a design somewhat like a catamaran for stability and speed. The tradeoff being there is very little space for cargo. It is rumored that the elves have some even faster vessels that are reserved for elven nobility.

Gnomish Smoker – The only known metal ships are made and used exclusively by the gnomes of Rektor. They are steam-powered, burning wood, charcoal or coal. These vessels are fast and made to last. Aside from that each one is different in design and is decorated according to the taste of the gnome that built it. Most have two levels below the main deck. The first having gnome sized crew quarters and supplies and an “engine” room (often located mid-ship or aft). The lower is a large (taller than normal) cargo only area. The main deck often has a two-story structure mid-ship which is outfitted to suit the ship's needs. In the way of drive systems, some use a paddle wheel, others employ an automatic oar rowing system and still others make use of a drive shaft and propeller design. Many are also equipped as icebreakers. Some are cargo vessels, others passenger ships and some are just fishing boats. Many humans question the wisdom of traveling in one of these boats that by the look of it should not float much less move.

Vessel Details by Type

The ships of the Middle Lands have evolved under conditions that value speed and cargo space over durability and stability. The largest factor in this is the weather of the Inner Sea. Major storms are rare so wider more stable vessels are not needed there. The list below gives stats for the unique vessels of the Middle Lands. The speed listed is for sailing with oar speed is in parentheses if applicable. This speed is squares/minute (square = 30 ft) under normal conditions. Divide speed by three for miles/hour. Sailing speed can be maintained 24 hours a day while rowing speed can only be maintained for 10 hours a day unless more rowers are used.

Below are basic stats, they can be converted to any edition as needed.

Ship	Speed*	Length	Width	Crew	Cargo	Cost	Ship HP	Construction
River Barge	3(6)	25ft	15ft	5	12 tons	600 gp	600	1 week
Ice Raider	13(9)	60ft	10ft	30	10 tons	15,000 gp	2500	1 month
Merchant Girth **	12(6)	85ft	15ft	100	70 tons	15,000 gp	2000	2 months
Wind Runner **	15(8)	70ft	20ft	40	60 tons	17,500 gp	2250	2 months
Spray Seeker **	14	80ft	22ft	20	100 tons	20,000 gp	2500	2 months
Storm Rider **	12	75ft	25ft	20	90 tons	30,000 gp	3000	3 months
Wind Beast ***	16	95ft	25ft	25	125 tons	40,000 gp	3000	3 months
War Sail ****	17(9)	155ft	15ft	200	25 tons	75,000 gp	2750	4 months
Wave Mistress ***	18	120ft	30ft	35	200 tons	90,000 gp	4000	4 months
Elven Silk Sail **	27	75ft	15ft	15	35 tons	?	5000	?
Gnomish Smoker **	22	85ft	30ft	10	150 tons	?	3000	?

* In the case of river currents add or subtract the river's flow factor from the speed as necessary for the direction of movement. In other words, add when the vessel is moving with the current and subtract when moving against the current. Speed adjustments for river flow varies, slow currents being 1 or 2, medium currents are 3 or 4, and fast currents would be 5 or more. Weather can affect river flow, e.g. heavy rain or snowmelt as well as drought. Faster currents can be dangerous and damaging.

** Can be fitted with a large ballista or a small catapult.

*** Can carry both a large ballista and a medium catapult.

**** All have two large ballistas, a large catapult, steel ram, and a greek fire launcher.

Safety on the "Road"

For the average citizen, it is safety that makes the Empire a good place to live. The Imperial Throne has long recognized this fact by making regular patrols, both Imperial and by local forces, a high priority. As a result, travel within the "civilized" lands is about as safe as it can be. However, the borderlands are another story. The risk is much greater there. Additionally, there is no protection in the vast wilderness.

In the civilized areas, most citizens don't travel a great deal, with the vast majority of daily trips being under two miles. These people almost never have an issue unless it's a random footpad. A non-humanoid attack, something like goblins or owlbears, would be all but unheard of and would most likely cause a local panic once word got out. It would also generate a military response from local nobles and Imperial forces. This does not mean monsters never invade these safe zones. After all, the denizens of the underworld can make an appearance almost anywhere. The smart ones don't announce themselves and dumb ones have, over the years, learned to avoid some places. So, even this form of infringement is not a common event.

Once outside the safe zone, the monster attack frequency rises dramatically. Longer trips increase the chance one will enter the wilderness areas. Going more than twenty miles is all it takes in many places. As safe as the civilized lands are, they are a small section of the overall area of the Middle Lands.

Travel by air or sea is another matter. Patrolling these areas is a more complex task, hence the "safe" area is much smaller when it exists at all. So, it is much easier to enter "wilderness" areas and therefore encounter monsters. Piracy on the high seas is more common than most would like it to be. In contrast, air travel sees almost no piracy but has more than enough wyvern attacks to make up for that.

The level of safety seen in the civilized lands is, relatively speaking, a new thing. Over the past 200 years, the Empire has increased its efforts to stabilize and cleanse areas it controls. While this has had an impact on commerce it has also had a dramatic effect on the population, doubling growth rate. This, in turn, is allowing the Empire to expand at a greater rate than before. Some sages estimate that the Empire's population will triple over the next century. That would drive an unprecedented expansion into the wilderness areas. No doubt, it will lead to additional conflicts.

The Crone was not always fair.
Tanjoom, the Fox, leaps upon the air.
Knocking her prized skulls to and fro.
Harried she said, "I'll take mortal pox if you'll be but a fox and stand with paw upon the rock!"
Laughing as he soared to pluck out one more.
The Fox feared not to give up his fleet feet.
Sure that he was still a match for she.
"Crone be it known that you take more than you are owed!"
Chasing a bouncing bone her voice thundered,
"Fine! As well I'll leave the ones who are fare and take none too sudden."
Laughter in his eye he agreed to the prize,
"A fox I'll stay and you will go away to take only the wicked upon their day and with you goes that
pox, done, done, and done!"
-- excerpt from The Fox and Crone (thrice translated)

Communication in the Middle Lands

A key feature in any civilization is long-range communication. The speed and accuracy of a communication network will impact many aspects of a civilization. Most noticeably, military and economic factions are highly affected. There are several methods of sending information across the empire. None are cheap and few are instantaneous. All have pros and cons.

Messengers

The backbone of the communication system is the messenger. Commonly called Runners or Riders, they take a correspondence and deliver it to a designated location within a predetermined timeframe. Most often, the message is written down but sometimes, as a security measure, it is memorized by the messenger. Other means, both magical and mundane, can be employed to ensure the message is protected from prying eyes. There are several different groups that handle deliveries.

Private Messengers

Every settlement of more than a thousand people has a few messengers for-hire. Sometimes they are organized and sometimes not. Anyone can hire such a messenger but it is expensive. The longer the distance and the tighter the timeframe the greater the cost. There is also a price difference for reputation. The established, reliable, and discreet messengers can and do charge a premium for their services. For the average messenger, most of the runs they make will be short, quick, local runs taking no more than a day or two. On a good road, a messenger on foot can travel 24 miles a day. On a horse, they can cover 40 miles a day. One can expect to pay a reputable messenger 2 to 7 gold per travel day depending on the delivery timeframe and the size of the delivery. Local service, say within the current city is much cheaper. On average, a few silver coins can get a message delivered anywhere in that city.

It should be noted that the vast majority of these messengers operate on foot or on horseback. There are, however, a rare few with other means of conveyance. Special mounts, magic items, gnomish airships, spells, special abilities, and so on. Naturally, such people can offer their services as messengers on their own terms. The more fantastic and/or rare the mode of transportation is will affect both the cost and availability of the service.

Imperial Messengers

Every major city has a pegasus stable with up to six riders and mounts available at any given time. Used almost exclusively by government officials, the imperial messengers, Flyers, are professional, fast, and very expensive. When not engaged in government work an Imperial Messenger can be contracted to make a delivery for others. It is not uncommon for the local ruler to suspend this service in the interest of government needs, official business always has priority. The Flyer can normally cover 96 miles a day in fair weather. A minimum of 250 gp is required to retain the service of the Flyer for a single day. In some very rare cases, a Flyer will make a delivery for a much-reduced fee. It must be for an extremely good cause and of great importance. It should also be noted that the relationship between rider and pegasus is profound. Like the pegasus, the rider must be good-aligned. It is more a partnership of equals as rider and mount have chosen to work together. There is a strong bond of friendship and respect between them.

Signal Networks

Fellice has the two largest signal networks in the Middle Lands. The largest is the Central System, a network of signal towers that run the length of the kingdom. It is used only for military purposes and operated by military personnel. Should a settlement be attacked or be in imminent danger of attack they can send a runner to the nearest tower which sends a signal for military aid. The towers are equipped with horns, gongs, mirrors, and large signal lanterns to transmit coded messages between towers as the situation requires. A signal lantern is basically a bullseye lantern with a shutter that one can flip open and closed very quickly. This allows the operator to flash a coded message using something like a Morse code. If it's a clear night they use the lanterns, a foggy day means horns and gongs, a sunny day is for mirrors, and so on. Each tower is no more than five miles apart and there are 129 of them. They mostly follow the Imperial Roads. A complex protocol is used for messages to ensure accuracy and validate

authenticity. Because exercises are common, they are adept at quickly relaying messages with the protocol. It is easily possible for a signal to be relayed to the Hub in Murath from anywhere in the system in just a few hours.

The second largest system is used by the towers on the Winter Wall. While they are not operated by the same people they use the same signal methods. Their message protocol is less complex but it is only used by the Winter Guard for their own purposes so it doesn't need the same flexibility as the one used by the Central System. A signal can run the length of the wall, 114 miles, in an hour.

Finally, signal networks are often employed by a city's guard. For most cities, whistles or bells carried by guard patrols are common. In larger cities, the city guard towers use mirrors and/or signal lanterns. These systems are much cruder than the Central System or what is used on the Winter Wall but they can get by with that. A city's guard will most often only use these signals to request more guards rather than for complex two-way message exchange. There are exceptions, for example, Balashar. Their guard towers are equipped with a mirror/lantern signal system and their protocol is complex enough that they can use signals to relay orders to every guard in the city in a handful of minutes. Everything from guard movement and dispersal to status bulletins and special reports can be transmitted.

Spells and Magic Items

Magic is not a common means of sending communiques. For that reason, it is not the backbone of the communication network that it could be. Outside of the major cities, magic is not even an option in most cases. That being said, for emergencies most settlements will have at least a one-shot method of Animal Messenger if they don't know of a local caster able to do it. Why is it like this? Just as with warfare, users of magic do not wish to be forced into servitude and have their abilities abused and perverted. In some cases, the Arcane Syndicate will provide spell casting services but it would have to be for a good reason. Below is a list of spells that are, in some way, useful for communication. This is by no stretch of the imagination a complete list.

Animal Messenger – Sends a tiny animal (commonly a hawk, owl or raven) to a spot. It can carry a small message tube. 50gp

Magic Mouth – Speaks a 25-word message when a condition is satisfied. 200gp

Illusory Script – Writing that can only be read by the named recipient. 100gp

Dream – Send a message in a dream. 500gp or more

Programmed Image – An illusory image that appears and speaks a message when a condition is satisfied. 700gp or more

Overland Flight – A longterm flying spell allows one to cover 64 miles a day (base speed of 40 ft). 500gp or more

Teleport – Instantaneously send a messenger hundreds of miles. 1500gp or more

Magic items are used by nobles and government officials for high priority communications. Similar stumbling blocks exist for magic items as for using spells. Again, the Arcane Syndicate is the source for most new magic items. A list of example items follows; this list is not complete.

Boots of Teleportation – Teleport three times a day.

Broom of Flying – Will provide overland flight at a base speed of 40 ft, 30ft if carrying more than 200lbs.

Carpet of Flying – Will provide overland flight at a base speed of 40 ft, 30ft if carrying more than a light load.

Helm of Teleportation – Teleport three times a day.

Wings of Flying – Will provide overland flight at a base speed of 60 ft.

Scrolls, Potions, Wands – Many spells that are useful for communication can also be made into a scroll, potion, or wand.

While magic is not widely available to the public, it is reasonable to assume that high-level government officials and wealthy individuals may have access to such resources. That will depend on where they are. After all, all the gold in the world will not help if they are in some tiny village in the middle of nowhere and need a Dream spell.

One part blood. One part moon's dew. With it spin a web of hate true. -- Call of the Kodar

Sayings and Curses

Emotional exclamations born of a people's culture do a great deal to influence and even direct that culture's future while simultaneously reflecting its past. In the Middle Lands, there are many different sayings and curses. Just as with many cultures, the artful curse has religious, anatomical, and/or scatological references. Some are more promenade in one region or another or more offensive to one group or another.

Here are a few along with a bit of information about them.

- Black Petal - A reference to the vengeful black petal on Ursinah's lily. Often whispered sometimes shouted. A fearful expression in the face of violence, frequently a person's last words.
- Blood's Oath - An angry exclamation invoking the god of war and storms, Rakthor.
- Bouncing Skulls - Exasperated and blasphemous curse describing the jostling skulls in Hethrize's basket as she carries them to the Underworld. This one is very offensive to many people.
- Eater's Breath - Very vulgar curse pertaining to the foul breath of Gorn the Devourer.
- Fading Fire - Exclamation of sorrow or regret and a vague reference to Nisvaloon. Fading Light is an alternative in some places.
- Fate's Book - A minor curse invoking the book of Pangu. Often used in reference to a past vice likely to be repeated. "Fates book, lad, I'll never drink another drop!"
- Father's Rod - A vulgar curse referring to Kohlot's genitals. This is very vulgar to those that fear or dislike the Old Gods.
- Flayer - A very bad person. One who likes to hurt others. Harking back to the Flayer Prince, an historical figure known to maim and murder with ease.
- Grabbing Tan's Tail - Said about someone that seems to be looking for the worst kind of trouble.
- Green Tits - Vulgar exclamation of pleasure, favored by sailors. Seen as disrespectful to Volios.
- Kris - One that takes advantage of others in financial matters. A swindler. A reference to Kris Jan Endun and his role in stealing so much from so many people. Very offensive to moneylenders and merchants. Used also to call shame on greed and the greedy.
- Mad Blood - Fearful expression, often used when seeing something bizarre. This is the closest most would get to a Meklidozrin reference.
- Hammer's Bell - General all-purpose curse used by blacksmiths regarding Kelgal's hammer. Hammer's Blood, a more vulgar variant liable to make a dwarf very angry if used in their direction.
- Raven's Eye - A mildly vulgar expression. A euphemism for anus.
- Rail Grabber - A derogatory term used by sailors for any non-sailor. It has multiple inferences.
- Spinner - The worst of deceivers, Untah. A liar who knowingly harms others with their lies.
- Sweet Green - Thankful oath to Volios. Also used in seeking protection or seeking peace.
- Tan's Tail - A minor curse often used when mischief is believed about. That feeling which is like catching a glimpse of Tanjoom's tail vanish around a corner.
- Tash's Teeth - An angry exclamation, favored by soldiers. Tashrune's teeth are bared in anger.
- White Beard - A mildly blasphemous exclamation about Gravston's beard.
- Wild Horn - Expression of excitement generally referring to Bohtan. Mildly vulgar as it is also a euphemism for male genitalia.

Rumors

In the absence of a perfect system of communication, information spreads by way of word of mouth, which gives plenty of opportunities for augmentation or mutation to occur. So, every settlement has a rumor mill fed by local gossip and passing travelers bringing outside information in. It is a rare thing to come across a rumor that is 100% true. Most are only half true in the best of times and false rumors are as common as chickens on a farm. Regardless, rumors can lead to all manner of adventure. What follows are samples of some rumors. Feel free to alter any details to suit your needs.

- Bandits are robbing travelers on the north road. Some of whom are being taken as slaves.
- For two nights, grave robbers have been seen in the old cemetery. They work for a necromancer!
- Two towns over, fire rained from the sky just the other night.
- A traveling merchant passed through trying to sell a treasure map.
- There is a giant nest in the ruins of an old watchtower to the east. It has a huge golden egg in it.
- Hethrize took the miller's naughty boy two nights past.
- Ditch diggers in the next county unearthed an ornate and jeweled chest. No one can open it.
- A neighboring town is being overrun by ghosts. They are said to come from the mine.
- The goblin tribes are massing in the south. They are bound to attack.
- Massive dogs with flaming eyes have been seen in the woods. Sheep and cattle are dying.
- Someone poisoned the smith in the Town of Ash River.
- The adventuring band called Six Hoods is dead, it was a river monster that did 'em in.
- River pirates are recruiting in White Fork.
- There are ruins a week from here that have started glowing in the night.
- An ogre destroyed the old bridge west of town.
- A rare white stag has been seen in the woods.
- A mudslide has uncovered some old ruins in the hills.
- The tournament was rigged against the Knight of Misty Grove.
- The Baron's brother returned and was promptly exiled before the week ended.
- The city watch is taking coin to look the other way.
- There is a tavern called the Cart & A Drunken Fool, its basement has hidden compartments full of treasure. The owner was a pirate and this is her ill-gotten loot.
- The villagers of Rochai Pass are getting sick and dying.
- An assassin was killed trying to murder the Countess. She lost her most trusted guard.
- Ships coming to Gull Harbor don't always have their cargo paperwork in order.
- A scholar of the Prime Order has come to town and is asking about some unusual river rocks.
- A traveling carnival is setting up camp just outside of town.
- The king's bastard is killing guards on the king's road. They say he is angry at his father.
- A gnomish airship crashed in the forest. It was carrying gifts for the queen.
- The desert sands hide ruins of a city larger than Balashar!
- The temple of Meklidozrin has been found in the heart of the Lesmah Swamp.
- Vagabonds in the low quarter are disappearing, no bodies, no one knows where they are going.
- There is a tower in the deep forest, it holds vast riches from another era.
- The Count's son-in-law is a vampire. That's why all the local maidens are disappearing.

The Empire's Statistics

Here are some rough numbers to help define the *World*. This is just here to give me an idea of things. It is not gospel and can change on a whim. There is a great deal of rounding happening here. The real numbers would be less perfect.

1,160,000 square miles of land in the Middle Land Empire.

75,000	square miles settled along the coastline.
50,000	square miles settled along rivers.
125,000	square miles settled along the Imperial Roads.
100,000	square miles of "other" settled lands.
100,000	square miles of borderlands, in the process of being settled.
100,000	square miles of tribal lands, human and non-human.
600,000+	square miles of Imperial wilderness (claimed but unsettled).

100,000 square miles of farmland, used for non-livestock food production.

50%	Grains - (Barley, Corn, Millet, Oats, Rice, Rye, Wheat)
15%	Pulses - (Green Beans, Peas, Lentils, Lima Beans, Mung Beans)
15%	Roots/Tubers - (Carrots, Onions, Potatoes, Turnips, Radishes, Yams)
12%	Vegetables - (Cabbages, Cucumbers, Lettuce, Peppers, Tomatoes)
8%	Fruits - (Apples, Berries, Pears, Grapes, Melons, Plums)

Two acres feeds one person for a year. Each sq mile has 640 acres.

125,000 square miles of farmland, used for livestock habitat & food production.

80,000,000	Fowl, eggs and meat (chickens, ducks, and geese). 2,000 sq miles
10,000,000	Rabbits, meat. 1000 sq miles
12,000,000	Pigs, meat. 20,000 sq miles
9,000,000	Sheep, wool and meat. 20,000 sq miles
7,000,000	Goats, milk and meat. 20,000 sq miles
3,000,000	Cattle, milk and meat. 30,000 sq miles
6,000,000	Work Stock, used for labor (horse, mule, donkey, ox, etc...)

On average, each citizen consumes 1,500 lb of foodstuff each year.

550	Grains
150	Pulses
160	Roots/Tubers
140	Vegetables
50	Fruits
200	Dairy (milk, cheese, butter, etc...)
160	Fowl (eggs and meat, but mostly eggs)
50	Pork
20	Beef
30	Other Meats (fish, goat, sheep, wild game, etc...)

There are a great many assumptions here. First is the location of the citizen. As example, someone living in a fishing village may well eat 100 lb of fish in a year and much less pork and/or beef. Someone growing fruit trees would often eat more than the 50 lb an average citizen gets. Also, a poor citizen may get 1/2 or even 1/4 of the meat the average person gets as it is more expensive than plant matter. Such a person would eat more plant matter, dairy, and/or eggs in place of the meat.

700,000 square miles of forest, much of which is wilderness.

300	mature trees per acre (could be as much as 400 in thick forest)
150	square miles of forest gives one tree/citizen (640 acres/sq. mile)
200	cubic feet of wood in average mature tree, trunk & limbs
200	cubic feet of firewood/year used by household for cooking
200	cubic feet of firewood/year used to heat household (more in north)
600	cubic feet of firewood/year (all uses, average/household) Using a good iron stove will cut needed wood by 20% to 30%.
450	square miles of forest/year covers all household use
2,000	square miles of forest/year needed for industry (charcoal, smiths, bakers, taverns, etc.)

800	square feet for average household's living space, includes animals
6,500	board feet of wood used to build the average living space
550	cubic feet of wood used to build the average living space
800	cubic feet of wood used to build a medium-sized watercraft
3,000	square miles of forest/year needed for building
10,000	square miles worth of new trees mature each year. Trees can take between 15 and 50 years to mature, depending on type of tree. Not all of these trees are in a forest, includes trees everywhere.

30,000,000 citizens, this does not count tribals as they are not citizens.

Citizens by age

9,000,000	children
8,000,000	in the Adulthood category
7,000,000	in the Middle Age category
4,000,000	in the Old category
2,000,000	in the Venerable category

Citizens by race, this is not representative of areas outside the Empire.

900,000	halflings
800,000	gnomes
250,000	half-elves
200,000	half-orcs
2,000,000	dwarves
700,000	elves
25,000,000+	humans

Most of the non-humans are in separate settlements from the humans. While some of these non-human settlements have allowed themselves to be annexed by the Empire not all of them have. The numbers above reflect the non-humans living in the human settlements as well as the annexed non-human settlements.

30,000 nobles, this includes nobles of all types and levels.

700 - 800	Major House nobles
1500 -1700	Minor House nobles
200 - 300	New House nobles
27,000+	houseless nobles (almost all are knights and/or magisters)

375,000 members of various armies

10,500	Imperial forces
8,500	Major House forces
8,000	Minor House forces
750	New House forces
75,000	houseless forces
10,000	mercenary forces
260,000+	city guard forces

1,000,000 adventuring types

10,000	arcane casters
150,000	divine casters
300,000	rogue types
500,000+	warrior types

On average, in a 5 person group, only 5% of groups would have an arcane caster, 75% of groups would have a divine caster, 50% of groups would have two rogues, and 50% of all groups would have three warriors.

20,000 settlements

18	major cities, most with a population over 30,000, avg 72,800
50	cities with a population between 10,000 and 30,000, avg 15,000
100	cities with a population between 5,000 and 10,000, avg 7,500
2,500	towns with a population between 2,000 and 5,000, avg 4,000
5,000	towns with a population between 1,000 and 2,000, avg 1,500
12,000+	villages with a population under 1,000, avg 700

There are about 400,000 people in isolated dwellings, not part of any settlement. Also, 850,000 people are wanderers or itinerant workers having no permanent domicile.

3,000,000 citizens are traveling on any given day, trips are more than 2 miles

Travel Distance

70% Journey is between 2 and 5 miles
20% Journey is between 5 and 100 miles
10% Journey is of more than 100 miles

Travel Safety

95% No threatening encounters.
4% Encounter with monsters (orcs, owlbears, wolves etc..)
1% Encounter with criminals (bandits, pirates, etc...)

Middle Lands Population Estimates Over Time, All Humanoids (citizens, non-citizens, Human, Elf, Dwarf, Gnome, Halfling, Half-elf, and Half-orc)

6,000,000	100 SC (Simple Calendar)
9,000,000	700 SC, 0.07% growth/year from 100 SC
12,000,000	1000 SC, 0.09% growth/year from 700 SC
20,000,000	1500 SC, 0.10% growth/year from 1000 SC
30,000,000	1900 SC, 0.10% growth/year from 1500 SC
36,000,000	2000 SC, 0.18% growth/year from 1900 SC
40,000,000+	2050 SC, 0.21% growth/year from 2000 SC

Deaths per Year

2045 SC	264 deaths per 10,000 populace.
2046 SC	261 deaths per 10,000 populace.
2047 SC	257 deaths per 10,000 populace.
2048 SC	259 deaths per 10,000 populace.
2049 SC	263 deaths per 10,000 populace.
2050 SC	262 deaths per 10,000 populace.

Appendix A - Other Places

While the focus thus far has been the Middle Lands of Keltor there is more to the *World*. This section is here to give a rough idea of the lands beyond Keltor's Middle Lands.

Keltor

In addition to the Middle Lands, there are two other main sections of Keltor. The Northern Wilds and the Hot Lands.

The Northern Wilds are known as the Ice Kingdom or Winter's Kingdom by their inhabitants. They are mostly nomadic tribes of humans and they are hardy; possessing a rich culture and history. Their lives are hard but they relish it and believe themselves stronger than the soft southerners of the Middle Lands. In general, they are content to live their lives out of sight of the Winter Wall and its Winter Guard. They are happy to let the Middle Landers wallow in ignorance behind their wall as they have done for the better part of the last four hundred years.

The Hot Lands is a name used exclusively by Middle Landers that know no better. Its inhabitants name it the Southern Kingdoms or, more commonly, the Spice Kingdoms. These lands see a regular trade with the Middle Lands by sea and by trade route in the Great Desert, which they call the Dry Land. The Spice Kingdoms are known for spices of all kinds but salt is their greatest export by volume. In the far south and west, there is rumored to be a massive, dark, jungle said to hold secrets of a lost kingdom and giant lizards larger than a manor. The south has been greatly romanticized by those in the Middle Lands and is known for its beautiful and exotic cities as well as art and high culture. Bards of this land are well liked.

The population of Keltor, as a whole, is primarily human, however, all the races have an indigenous population somewhere in Keltor. The elves have tribes in the Middle Lands, the Ice Kingdom, the Dry Land, and the Spice Kingdoms. There are small dwarven cities found in most of the mountain ranges of Keltor. Gnomes and halflings can be found in villages located in some of the remote hills and vales scattered around Keltor. Orcish tribes roam all the wilderness lands with equal fervor.

Rektor

Is a land of mountains and hills that is dominated by dwarves. There are substantial numbers of humans and gnomes living there as well. As a group, the people of Rektor seem to prefer staying close to home. Dwarven metal work is second to none and the work done by the dwarves of Rektor is believed better than "common" dwarven works. The gnomish City of Steam, found here, is legendary across the Middle Lands and beyond.

Soltor

This seemingly wildland is populated almost exclusively by elves and a few halflings. They are largely xenophobic and will not welcome visitors from other lands outside of the few trading cities they have established on their coastline. Little is known of this land and its people. Ships that attempt to make landfall outside the boundaries of the established trade stations are greeted by a group of elves within hours of landing. The greeting is not warm and the travelers are told to leave with all possible haste. In cases of emergency, help is freely given so as to hasten the intruders' departure. Those refusing to leave will find the elves not opposed to (and rather good at) the use of deadly force. Their treaty with the Middle Land Empire, the Treaty of Song, allows for this.

Unetor

The smallest of the major land masses, Unetor is renown for its shipwrights and fine wine. The people are predominately human and organized into a confederation of small city-states overseen by a council of nobles that rarely agree but are competent rulers. It is said that some of these people have ventured to the far end of the Vast Sea.

Appendix B - Tribes of Keltor

Not all the information here should be known to the players at the start of the game.

There are a variety of tribes spread across the *World*. In the Middle Lands, these tribes are not part of any kingdom and hence owe no allegiance to any noble or House of the Middle Lands. While the majority are nomadic, not all are. Thinking of them as primitive would be inaccurate. To be sure, they have different cultures and some of their traditions may seem backward yet they will often have knowledge of surprising subjects. There have been instances of scholars rediscovering lost knowledge from these tribes.

Tribes of the Great Desert

There are two major tribes and several smaller ones, some of which are elven, within the desert. The nomads are easily the larger tribe.

Cliff-dwellers

The mountains on both sides of the desert are home to clans of cliff-dwelling tribes. While not a single tribe they are closely related and see one another as allies on good days. Conflicts are not unknown. Marriage between members of different clans is fairly common. These clans identify themselves by the location of their sept (hold or village), e.g. Dew Valley Clan or Dawn Rock Clan or the like. A clan builds its sept close to water, most of which is snowmelt. The water is key to the clan's life. It enables them to farm and raise livestock. Their architecture is rather advanced, the cities are small but well planned.

Nomadic Clans

The nomad tribes are also clan-based with some being friendly and others not. Clan names are most often a color and a desert feature, e.g. Red Rock Clan, Blue Sand Clan, Yellow Spring Clan and so on. With resources being limited, war between clans is not uncommon. Common threats include giant scorpions, sand spiders, dust fey and sandstorms. Young warriors are given as a rite of passage the task to slay a giant scorpion and make armor from its chitin. Mounts are commonly used by the nomadic clans but the type varies from clan to clan. Some of the mounts used are: camels, elephants, jor lizards, and horses.

The trade routes to and from the Spice Kingdoms have created, among the clans, a group of "haves" and "have-nots". Clans with territory used by the routes directly benefit from the White Sands Accord and gain both wealth and status. The other clans are poor in comparison and unhappy about it. This gives rise to caravan raiding by these clans. The most dangerous leg of the trade route is the Dead Sands, a large area of unclaimed desert land that caravans, pressed for time, can cut through. This area is unclaimed for good reason; it is the harshest area of the desert with no water and vicious electrical sandstorms that can last for days. There is nothing there so no one goes there if they can avoid it.

Tribes of the Middle Lands

There are four main tribes native to the Middle Lands and a fifth not. These are largely nomadic (or semi-nomadic) tribes and are not at all closely related. The number of offshoots is very small.

Bimcho

A tribe known as the Bimcho live on the open plains of Sulkor. They are nomadic hunters who in centuries past were warlike. While those tendencies have been suppressed they are still unpredictable and even dangerous at times. They commonly use both horses and elephants, the latter being a holy animal.

Horse Runners

The Tynhare Plains of Mostor are home to the nomadic tribe known as Horse Runners. These people hunt the wild herd animals of the plains from horseback. It is said they do everything from horseback. Sometimes they will raid a freehold or caravan. Mostly, they are peaceful. The horses they raise are highly valued for their speed and stamina. While it has happened on rare occasions, the Horse Runners will not often trade their horses to outsiders.

Mursha

The mountain range between Fellice and Celyd, known as the Dagger Mountains, is a harsh land. In the hills surrounding the Dagger Mountains live the Mursha. Their villages are semi-permanent and they tend to winter in caves. The Mursha are a deeply spiritual people seeing their relationship with the land as a symbol of their worth as a people. "Treat the land as your brother." In their rite of passage, they employ a fungus that grows deep in their winter caves which when imbibed as part of a ritual "shows the face of the brother" to them. They wear furs and use herd animal urine to mask their scent when hunting.

Razlanchi

The western forest of Argos, near the borders of Celyd and Sulkor, is home to the Razlanchi. They make their villages high in the old trees and live in harmony with nature. Before hunting they pray, asking for both permission and forgiveness for the life taken. After the hunt, another ritual is performed to offer thanks. Some of these tribes are elven, marriage between members of the human and elven tribes are not unheard of. The offspring of such unions are well treated by their tribes.

Way Ash'non

Called "Wagon People" by outsiders, the Way Ash'non are unlike the other tribes detailed in this section in that they do not originate in the Middle Lands. Speaking a largely unknown dialect of Hemtopie, it is believed they came from the Spice Kingdoms. Historians have no accounts of them beyond a few hundred years ago. A nomadic and matriarchal people, they have a reputation that varies widely. The women lead and handle business while men of the troupe are a bit foppish and pretty and prone to flirt at every turn. While they commonly mend broken items, perform music, sing, and entertain with their magic (known as Sky Fire), there is a more sinister side to the stories as well. Some think them overly secretive, not very trusting of outsiders, set in their strange customs, and overall insular. A few claim they are no more than thieves and advocate they be driven away or hunted down. The Wagon People are known to be pacifists as a whole and will run rather than fight. They roam the roads in small groups, most often with no more than twenty members, and offer their services where ever they go. No one really knows just how many there are but estimates have been made of between three and ten thousand.

The Way Ash'non do not easily share their culture or history with outsiders. What is commonly believed to be their story is recorded in one moderately well-known tome as follows:

"Long ago, in a faraway land, the Ash'non were warriors. Not like any known today, they knew the ways of war like a leaf knows drifting on the wind. None could match let alone better them. They were known for their unbending sword and also for unbending word. The Blood King, ruler of the land, came to them and demanded they fight his war. One cannot know the ways of war like the Ash'non did and not know when it is unjust. The Ash'non stood as one and said to the Blood King, "Your war is unjust, we will not fight it!" To show the strength of their resolve, they swore the Oath and renounced the ways of war for all of time. In his rage, the Blood King shouted across the land, "A hand of gold for each head!" The Ash'non would not fight back. The only paths to them, stand and die with empty hand or run to another land. Some stood their ground and let it be washed with their blood. Time was purchased with the blood and with it, the others fled. The Blood King's bounty followed, so the Ash'non found the roads and spread themselves like pollen on the wind. The Blood King's rage followed them. For a hundred years they could not stop and the wind carried them on. When the Blood King's bone and kingdom turned to dust it too was taken upon the wind to the four corners of the *World*. The Ash'non found they still could not stop as the Blood King's madness was in the dust and his Curse followed them."

Most people only know that they fled a war in some far off land and none will pick up a blade in violence. The Way Ash'non will not share much more than that. What they keep secret is not even known to all of them. Only the leaders and lore keepers know all of it. Yes, in times now long past they made war and they were very good at it. The "magic" Sky Fire is no magic at all. It is based on a gray powder that is highly volatile and dangerous to work with. They discovered its making as part of their warfare. They used it for war once. Upon seeing the devastation they created with this new tool, they were sickened. As a people, they changed, giving up war and devoting themselves to keeping the secrets they unearth from ever being used for war again. That is why they travel the land, to make sure no one else discovers the secrets they keep. They are devoted and will covertly take any actions to contain the secret.

The Sky Fire is closely guarded. They make very little of it. Only they use it and only for entertainment. No outsiders are allowed to help with a Sky Fire performance. Nothing of its making is written down.

Tribes of the Northern Wilds

There are three major tribes in the northlands. While there are a number of small tribes as well it is difficult to tell when these are truly independent tribes and when they are an offshoot of a major tribe. Oral tradition is a huge part of all northern tribes. Many of the tribes have lore keepers that preserve their clan's lineage and history. Storytellers are well respected and new stories are valued.

Central Clans

The central tribe is really many clans, all of which are named after the clan's spirit totem. They refer to themselves as the People of the _totem_, e.g. People of the Snow Leopard, People of the Mastodon, People of the White Wolf and so on. They roam the Ice Kingdom and hunt various herd animals on the tundra. Threats to them include wolves, bear and ice giants. Some of the clans of this tribe delight in taunting the Winter Guard and will often make a game of it, seeing how long they can remain hidden and how many minor wounds they can inflict.

Jute Rhone

The north-west coastline is home to a tribe of whale hunters calling themselves Jute Rhone (Ice Runners). On the northern edge of the Sea of Storms, the storms are no less fierce but are a little less common. They regularly contend with polar bears and ice giants. Jute Rhone practice plural/group marriage, with family units consisting of 3 or more adults who are mutually married to each other. The women are the primary hunters, as extra body fat and stamina are needed to survive the cold, harsh environment for long journeys across the ice. Parenting is dependent on the gender of the child, boys are only raised by men and girls are only raised by women. Girls are taken along for the hunt beginning at a very early age, but male children are left at home with the fathers to learn other skills, such as weapon making, carving, building and so on.

Mako

On the mountainous northeast coastline, lives the Mako tribe. They see themselves as predators of the sea and their longboats are feared. The Ice Sea freezes over for two or three months each winter during which the Mako's are quiet. During that time ice giants can raid here but don't do so often as it is far from their home. While this tribe hunts seal and whale they also launch raids south into the Inner Sea. They trade with some of the dwarves of northern Rektor.

There are also a number of smaller tribes, most of which live in the mountains around the Frozen Waste. Some are human and a few are elven. They are generally hostile toward the Winter Guard who have a long history of attacking on sight.

Appendix C - Language

The *World* is vast. As such, it has many languages even among humans. These languages are divided into family groups, each of which has a number of regional dialects that share commonalities. At the very least, basic communication is possible by those that speak dialects of the same language family. Within a language family, the general rule is that the farther removed the regions of two dialects are the more difficult communication becomes.

Human Language Families

There are five language families for humans. Three are spoken on Keltor, one north, one middle, and one south. The other two families of human languages are spoken by the people of Unetor and Rektor.

Novaskag

Spoken in the northern area of Keltor, predominately in the Ice Kingdoms but also bleeding down into Fellice. After the Winter Wall was built it cut off the north and restricted access to the majority of Novaskag dialects. Only one dialect, called simply Skag, is still spoken south of the Winter Wall. It's seen, by citizens of Fellice, as a low language used by bumpkins living in remote mountain villages near the Winter Wall. North of the Winter Wall, it is the dominant language having at least a dozen dialects. These are spoken by the various human tribes of the Ice Kingdoms. Cross dialect understanding is very basic for Novaskag.

Luvic

This is the language of the Middle Lands, as far as humans are concerned. There are half a dozen major dialects, all of which can communicate with some difficulty. The major dialects are:

- Danchu Luvic (a.k.a. Imperial Luvic) - Dominate along the Danchu river area, in both Fellice and Argos.
- Inner Luvic (a.k.a. Eastern Luvic) - Spoken across Mostor and along the eastern shore.
- Mountain Luvic (a.k.a. Northern Luvic) - Heard across Fellice and in northern sections of Celyd.
- Storm Luvic (a.k.a. Western Luvic) - Popular along the western coast of Celyd and Sulkor.
- Plains Luvic (a.k.a. Southern Luvic) - Almost exclusively used in the inland areas of Sulkor.
- Yahsur Luvic (a.k.a. Republic Luvic) - Used in the interior of Celyd and along the Yahsur river.

Among the major dialects, communication is possible but only with simple, direct language. Another dozen dialects are more removed or older and are spoken in remote areas. They can be hard to understand, even for a fluent speaker of one of the major dialects.

Hemtopie

At least four dialects are used in the Spice Kingdoms. Also, a few other dialects are spoken by the tribes in the Great Desert. Most citizens of the Empire can't tell one desert dialect from another and refer to them collectively as Mobu, which is the name of one of those desert dialects. The other two being Tope and Wu. Among all the major dialects communication is possible only with simple, direct language.

Asurten

There are three major dialects of this family spoken by the humans of Rektor. All have minor influences from the Dwarven language. It is believed that Asurten shares its origin with Hemtopie as the two follow structures that are either very close by design or an amazing coincidence of circumstance.

Quy

There are only two major dialects of Quy in existence, low (Quy pronounced ku-WAY) and high (Quy pronounced KO-whi). Both of these are spoken exclusively in Unetor where language is tied closely to social status. Slaves have what amounts to a minor dialect which they are forced to speak. It's based on Low Quy but with more focus on clear speech.

Quy is unique in that the dialects have been engineered to enforce ideas of social class. High Quy uses the formal and ancient forms along with strict rules of pronunciation and enunciation and emphasis. This gives it a crisp and clear sound. While Low Quy only uses the formal forms when speaking to an elder or a noble but is otherwise muddier with a looser structure. It has more variance in how it sounds but is generally much less crisp and can even sound mashed, slurred or muffled. Finally, the slave dialect is very restrictive, having, what amounts to no first-person pronouns or proper names for any slave. For example, slaves are not be allowed to say, "I am." They would have to say something like, "this slave is." The common command, "speak slave" is meant to be a two-fold demand, both to speak and how to speak.

All speakers of Quy understand all the dialects but, generally, speak only their own. Only the elite may speak High Quy without risk, a slave would die, a commoner could be beaten or imprisoned. A noble would be sullied speaking Low Quy and the idea of speaking in slave's tongue would make them ill.

Non-Human Language Families

The other racial languages each have one family for the race and up to a dozen commonly known dialects that are still spoken. The dialects tend to center a little less on geographical regions and more on groups like clans or tribes or bloodlines. While these groups do tend to cover a certain area, they are not really confined to it. It is older groups and/or the isolated ones that have their own dialects. Newer ones speak the dialect of the group they broke off from. Most settlements are exclusively one dialect or another.

The languages of non-humans don't tend to have the variance of human languages. In other words, dialects don't vary as much. Therefore, understanding is not as much of a problem for speakers of different dialects. Generally, there may be issues with communicating high concepts but not many other problems with day-to-day speech. Among scholars, there are many theories as to why that is. They range from humans having a shorter lifespan than most other races to humans having chaotic tendencies that lead them to seek/produce changes in all things.

Dwarven (Devairrik)

The language of dwarves is ancient. While it has evolved over the centuries, the most archaic dialects known are not so different as to be totally incomprehensible. Dialects are known by clan names. Only the oldest of clans have a dialect. Indeed, there have been no new dialects in more than 800 years.

Elvish (Estollin)

In its written form, there is only one version of Elvish in use. It's at least 4,000 years old. All the differences are in the spoken form. For this reason, elves can always communicate in writing. Indeed, their documents tend to be long affairs, either flowery in prose or exact in detail. The dialects are spoken by the different sub-races of elves, for example: High Elf, Dark Elf, Wood Elf, Aqua Elf, Wild Elf, and so on. Each has a different spoken language. There are dead dialects of Estollin and they are very old.

Gnomish (Tecken)

Gnomes have three major dialects currently in wide use. One is Ancient, the others being Dawn (spoken in Rektor) and Dusk (spoken in Keltor). Ancient is spoken by historians and other scholars, it was the language used by gnomes before the Savage Time. Tecken has structures for exacting measurements.

Halfling (Looh)

Halflings have one language. There are no dialects. Halflings take comfort in home, they don't like home to change. This mindset has kept their language from deviating with isolated groups. When they have to splitup, the smaller groups hold to their ways and language tenaciously. Groups that fail, don't survive it.

Orcish (Gom)

Orcs are unique. Their spoken language seems to be, in some strange way, innate. Regardless of where they are born, within a year, the young orc is speaking and the language is always the same. Why this happens is unexplained. A famous experiment, done by an ethically-challenged sage, raised newborn orcs in "silent isolation" and found they had the same language development as the control group orcs having a "normal" upbringing. Written language, when used at all, is different from tribe to tribe.

Special Languages

In addition to the verbal languages (like Common), there are some strictly symbolic or non-vocal languages in use. Thieves and warriors use such languages.

Trade Tongue

The common Trade Tongue, called Common, has evolved to facilitate better communication for trade and is widely spoken in all major trade areas, the more remote places having it to a lesser degree. Knowing Common means you don't have to know half a dozen other languages.

While the history is not widely known, the roots of Common reach back to before the Savage Time. In its ancient form, Ag'rune, it was the language of knowledge from that time. As a result, all the academic works predating the Savage Time were written using it. For that reason, anyone wanting to learn from and study those books had to learn the language. Enter, the Prime Order.

The Prime Order kept that ancient language from totally dying out. They used it as their language of knowledge and education. The books they wrote were written in it. About seven hundred years ago, as the Prime Order began to spread across the known lands, Ag'rune was spread as well. It was resurrected. As their influence expanded, so did the use of that language. When they opened schools and began teaching, they taught Ag'rune. The children of the wealthy would learn from them. And, as the Order could, they would teach more and more children, regardless of status.

Everywhere the Prime Order went, Ag'rune followed. But it was when Sapreen became the official home of the Order, just over five-hundred years ago, that changed the game. Sapreen is, just as it was then, a hub of trade on the Inner Sea. It was a simple matter for the Order to encourage their language of knowledge and learning to become the language of trade as well. Over the two hundred years following that, Ag'rune would morph into Common. It evolved, changing and becoming more of an amalgamation, adding words from other languages. Roughly three hundred years later, Common is the Trade Tongue and the language of educational institutions, as well as the language books are published in. Half of all the Empire's citizens speak it. Because of the Order's dedication to education, 1 in 4 citizens can read and write Common. At least that many more are literate in another language.

The current trend shows that Common has been displacing more and more human languages over the past two hundred years. This is expected to continue as the momentum shows no sign of slowing. Indeed, it is projected that the Empire will, for all practical purposes, have no other human languages in another two centuries. This is in sharp contrast to the last thousand years, at the beginning of which scholars estimate that over 50 human languages saw popular use. Having one language emerge as the dominant human tongue is having a positive effect on human cohesiveness and cooperation.

Battle Sign

Some warrior clans/groups have developed a complex set of hand signals for use during battles or other times in which vocalization is not tactically advantageous. Such battle languages are group specific and closely guarded secrets as knowledge by the "enemy" would compromise the language's tactical usefulness.

While not often a full-blown language, these are sets of signals that will allow relay of orders using hand and head movements. Armies often have simple drum beats or horn signals for the same purpose. Coordination is of vital importance when strategies require timing movement and actions of large groups.

Thieves' Cant

Thieves' Cant is not a language like any other. It's a many-faceted system of covert communication that is regulated to the point that there are no separate dialects. There is a verbal aspect to it, which is based on an ancient and otherwise dead language with roots in the elvish tongue. Even if someone knew that language it would do them little good as the way words are used is code like. In other words, the original definition of the words used is not the same as what they mean in the context of Thieves' Cant. Think of it as a highly specialized form of slang.

In addition, there is a non-vocal aspect of the language. Thieves often need to communicate without speech, often without being physically there. Symbols are used for this. Sometimes they are written on a wall like graffiti, other times a series of physical objects arranged in a very specific way. Thieves are sneaky, so are the signs they leave for one another. As a result, the signs are designed to be in plain view yet go unnoticed by the uninitiated. Finally, there is a simple set of hand signals used for times when thieves need to make silent exchanges while on the job.

Thieves don't tell/teach non-thieves the Cant.

Dead Languages

There are also a number of dead languages, some of which are dialects of existing families and others being of completely different, now extinct, families. Even if such a dead language is a dialect of a currently used language family it can easily be so far removed by time as to be completely foreign. To be clear, a dead language is no longer spoken for the purposes of everyday communication. Such a language may still be known by historians or other scholars and yet remain "dead" for all practical purposes.

While not really common, there is a well-documented practice of using words from dead languages for naming places. It is true that some of these places are so old that they may have been named before the language died, however, in many cases, it is done to make the place seem older (more established) than it really is. The borderlands in Mostor see this more often than other areas.

It is also common for ancient dead languages to find use in magic and rituals. Indeed, while Ag'rune, the bases of Common, was the language for knowledge, it was not the language of magic. Any scraps of magical text that have survived the Savage Time would be in any of a dozen, now dead, languages. Other dead languages are used to encode magical works of this age. It is likely that the more powerful/dangerous the magic is, the more obscure the dead language. Or possibly, the more paranoid the writer is.

Appendix D - History

Not all the information here should be known to the players at the start of the game.

The recorded history of the Middle Lands goes back about 2000 years to the "Savage Time". In this era, it is said that "war raged and blood flowed and the sun hid while Death walked the land in mad glee". Records are spotty up until the last 500 or so years when the Empire was founded. Some of the gaps are huge, covering centuries. The more recent times, such as the era of the Twelve Kingdoms, have smaller gaps. A basic timeline of eras, as defined by scholars, is shown to the right.

The Simple Calendar Timeline		
The Savage Time	ST	1 - 50
The Fall	TF	51 - 100
The Dark Time	DT	101 - 400
Era of the Bandit Kingdom	BKe	560 - 600
Era of the Moon Empire	MEe	620 - 750
The Burning Years	BY	750 - 900
Rise of the Flayer Prince	FP	915 - 925
Breaking of the Hoard	BH	933 - 950
The Second Fall	SF	1010 - 1075
Era of the River Kings	RKe	1220 - 1390
The Twelve Kingdoms Era	TKe	1391 - 1513
Rise of the Empire	TKe	1498 - 1513
The Middle Land Empire Era	MLE	1514 - 2057

The standard used by scholars and historians is the Simple Calendar (SC). It starts with the Savage Time, or at least where they think the Savage Time started. Most SC dates are not exact, at least the ones in the distant past aren't, but it gives a useful scale for historians. Most people are only concerned

with the current era, the Middle Land Empire era (MLE). Naturally, these calendars are used by people of the Middle Lands and people in other lands have their own calendars. It is currently the year 543 MLE.

The Savage Time

Nearly all information regarding the Savage Time and before has been lost. It is blocked from magical divination to this day due to the effects of powerful ritual magic and divine intervention. The Savage Time was the culmination of the Plane War during which mortals challenged the old deities and lost. The lands were besieged by all manner of extra-planar creatures set loose on the *World* by deities displeased with the mortals that sought their death. The end of the Savage Time came when a band of powerful magic wielders of all types came together and performed a ritual which sealed the planar gap and sucked nearly all the magic from the *World*. The results were that all planar travel became impossible and the gods could not touch the *World*. All the extra-planar beings ravishing the *World* were cut off from their home plane and died. Magic energy could no longer flow into the mortal world and magic died. As a side effect, the death of magic killed every significant user of magic on this plane. Only the neophytes, lacking a significant link to magic, survived the process; yet many wished they had not. The ones that lived remained in pain for the rest of their lives. Centuries later, the binding began to fade and magic slowly returned to the *World*, but the damage was done. Much of the knowledge of magic and its use was lost. Even now, with nearly a thousand years of effort, much of that knowledge has yet to be rediscovered.

As to the old deities, they are diminished but they go on. Severing the link between their worlds and the mortal world injured them greatly. But they did allow the ritual to happen, at least some of them did. The wisest of them saw that ritual as the only way to end the war without killing all the mortals. They have taken steps to see that mortals do not learn too much about the time before the Savage Time. In addition, they have allowed and even perpetuated the belief that extra-planar travel is not possible. In truth, it is possible now that the binding is nearly gone.

In the time before the Plane War mortals lived in fantastic civilizations based on magic so far beyond what is practiced currently that they would call today's magic nothing more than parlor tricks. There were cities magically endowed for the good of all citizens and responding to their needs. Buildings grown by magic from steel and crystal that were nearly as tall as mountains. Flying wagons for every family that could race several hundred miles a day. Instant communication systems allowing people to speak with anyone anywhere in the world. Common travel to the moon and flying cities. All these things and the other unnamed wonders of that time led to the hubris of mortals. In their folly, the mortals challenged the deities in a desire to gain power and dominion over all worlds. This failed and harsh punishment followed.

In the end, magic was taken from the *World* and all the grand cities of that time crumbled to dust, at least the ones that survived the extra-planer assaults. While some ruins remain there is not enough for the mortals of today to truly see the extent of their ancestor's glory. This is what the Old Gods want.

Forging the Prime Order

During the Dark Time a new organization formed with the goal of preventing another Plane War. In the view of the founding members, it was an insatiable desire for power that caused the war. They believed that while it is not possible to remove this desire from everyone a few could be trained to resist it. Furthermore, if those few were well-educated and placed close to those in power they could temper and direct the power to less destructive ends.

In the early years, the term "organization" could not really be applied. It was more of an intellectual ideology. Time was required for the ideas to spread and a true organization to form around these ideas. It was not until The Second Fall that a formalized order formed and a true organization was born. This was the birth of the Prime Order. Yet the order still did not exist in its modern form. It would take another two-hundred years for a Prime Order close to what is known today to evolve. It was this evolution that would enable the relative stability seen in the era of the Twelve Kingdoms and, to a greater extent, the current era. The last six-hundred years have been more stable thanks to the Prime Order and the influence its members exert on leaders.

The Rise of the Empire

The Middle Land Empire had its beginning in 1498 SC on the shores of the Danchu river just north of the Dothmas Hills. There the Lady Zhana Kalistic, along with her son, witnessed the assassination of her lord and husband Loran Kalistic. On that spot just as dusk was falling, his son the young Lord Tazral Kalistic took his father's sword and stood over his cooling body swearing to bring the ones responsible for this murder to justice. Later, a monument would be erected on the spot by Tazral in honor of his father. To this day the site is tended by the residents of a nearby town called Father's Rest.

Tazral's journey would span fifteen years and bring about the fall of the twelve kingdoms putting him on the throne of the newly formed empire. Books have been written about his exploits and while scholars may debate the accuracy of the tales, most citizens of the empire know of them having grown up hearing and/or reading the stories. This makes the *Saga of Tazral* (all six volumes) the most widely published work in the empire. Children, over the past five centuries, have taken the stories of valor and honor with their mother's milk. This has been integral to the adventurous spirit fostered by the empire which has led to an expansionist and innovative mindset.

Tazral ruled the empire for forty-two years during which he proved again and again to be both wise and strong. During this time the empire was solidified and the noble house system was created. The system would be instrumental in building the empire's power base. Tazral was most proficient in using it as a tool of control and manipulation of the noble families.

The Winter Wall

Construction of the Winter Wall began in the year 71 MLE. The decision to build this mammoth was not a simple or arbitrary one. It took a decade of war and the death of tens of thousands of warriors to instigate the undertaking. Finished in 134 MLE, sixty-three years and over twenty-two million pieces of gold were consumed in building it. Fifty-thousand workers labored night and day erecting the largest freestanding stone structure of the era. Over seven-thousand lost their lives doing it. The Winter Wall spans one-hundred-fourteen miles and stands an average of two-hundred feet high. At its top the wall is about thirty feet wide, the base is four times that width in most places.

The events leading up to this began with a push to settle the north. It was soon discovered that the north was already occupied and the tribes living there did not take kindly to the incursion. After a brief negotiation between imperial representatives and several clan chiefs, the representatives were sent back to the emperor, at least their heads were, and a barbarian hoard swept in to crush the settlers and drive them back south. Thus began a conflict that would last eleven years.

In retrospect it is very clear that the northern tribes had no interest in taking lands to the south, only

keeping the land they already had. Nearly every year the empire would launch an offensive north with ever increasing military force and before summer was out they would have been crushed by overwhelming counter-force. It was during the ninth such action that imperial anger turned to fear when the hoard did not stop after routing the invading force. In this year they continued south and sacked a dozen settlements in Fellice, some of which were rather large. Less than a year later construction began on a project the empire was sure would strike awe and fear in the northern tribes, the Winter Wall. It would be built along the northern fortress line.

The northern fortress line was a stretch of land between the mountains, selected for tactical advantages, upon which a string of fortresses had been erected and served as a staging area for northbound military operations. First, a temporary wooden palisade was made, behind which work on the true wall began. Not knowing what to make of this activity the tribes watched for a while. Once they realized what was happening the barbarians laughed. As they saw it, a wall was useless as the mountain passes would allow them to attack the south anytime they wanted. It was a great joke to them and for the next twenty years, they would tweak the emperor's nose by launching all manner of night raids over, under and around his incomplete wall.

There were a variety of obstacles for the imperial engineers to overcome not the least of which was the quality of stone used for the wall. It took a great deal of trial and error to make something that large out of stone. For instance, the sheer weight of the wall made it impossible to use the same type of stone from top to bottom. Hard, dense stone was used for the base with progressively lighter, less dense, stone used higher up. Additionally, the wall could not be solid stone as that added unnecessary weight making the stress on the foundation more extreme than allowable. A series of stacked arch structures make sections of the wall hollow, thereby decreasing the mass. Even that bit of mass saving engineering was not enough, in the end, the stone had to be strengthened with magic in order to achieve the dimensions and strength demanded by the emperor.

The now complete wall is in truth one large fortress. The upper twenty feet of the wall has rooms, passageways, and north facing arrow slits built in. The deeper hollow sections created by the internal arches form tunnels. These are used to house light rail tracks which serve as conduits for transporting supplies and personnel quickly along the length of the wall. These tunnels also serve as inspection passages the engineers use to keep tabs on the walls condition. On top of the wall, a series of twenty-foot tall watch towers runs its length, one every two miles. That's a total of fifty-eight towers. Each is equipped with signal fires, mirrors, bells and horns for raising alarm. Each can house up to ten warriors comfortably, twice that if necessary. At the base, on the south side, are six keeps. Each can house two-thousand warriors plus the support staff needed for them.

Fully garrisoned, the Winter Wall can contain over thirty-thousand troops plus support personnel. Currently, there are fewer than three-thousand warriors and another five hundred support staff. This is a source of great anxiety for the commanders of the Winter Guard. As they see it, northern hoards could attack at any time and they feel underfunded and generally not prepared to repel an assault.

Song of the Elves

The summer of 211 MLE saw the Inner Sea become a battleground between the Kingdom of Mostor and the Silk Web Kingdom, a.k.a. the Soltor elves. This war began with expansionist elements of House Canitus landing on Soltor late in 210 MLE with the intent of establishing a settlement. The elves living there were, and still are, a rather xenophobic lot and did not take kindly to the intrusion. When their warnings to leave were not heeded the elves killed every inhabitant of the new village and burned it to the ground. So began a conflict that would quickly escalate over the next few months taking hundreds of lives and disrupting a significant portion of trade in the Inner Sea.

Understanding the enemy is paramount but it was very difficult for human to understand elf. Elves see centuries as humans see decades. Their long memory took the vast majority of elves to Soltor in the early part of the Savage Time. There they remain to this day, sequestered away from the rest of the world and determined not to allow non-elf settlement of Soltor. The one exception being a tribe of halflings that have some claim to Soltor. The elves keep secret what is held in their memory. So, the humans had little to no understanding of their elven neighbors or elven motives. This led to war.

House Canitus retaliated against the elves and the elves went on the offensive. The combat steadily escalated over the next year. While there was considerable bloodshed resulting from the clash between naval forces of Mostor and the Silk Web, it was the economic impact that would draw imperial attention. Trade in the southern section of the Inner Sea slowed as the elves began to attack all human vessels indiscriminately. Basically, any human ship coming within fifty miles of the Soltor coastline was in danger of being attacked. By making use of Keltor's elven tribes to liaise, House Kalistic made contact with Soltor and directly negotiated the Treaty of Song to restore peace to the region.

The treaty is verbose, the main thing that it does is provide trade routes that open Soltor to the rest of the world. The city of Mischihoon being established as a direct result. Another main point is that anyone making landfall outside of Mischihoon is subject to elven law which will classify such parties as invaders. Under elven law, invaders can be repulsed by any means necessary.

Establishing the Spice Road

The spice road has been around for many centuries but it was not formalized until the White Sands Accord was signed, during the winter of 382 MLE. Prior to that caravans made deals directly with one clan or another in order to cross the Great Desert.

These clans provided guides and extra guards in exchange for gold, water, and other products valued by the clan. Other clans would then attempt to lure the caravan away, even going so far as to attack and kill the first clan's scouts out in the desert and then approaching the caravan to strike a deal and get them out alive. This made for a tense climate and many wars among the desert clans over territory violations and poached caravans.

These wars, while not constant, escalated in violence until the caravans themselves became valid targets and trade via the spice road was made too dangerous to be profitable. At this point, House Roesoon took a personal interest in the situation. They stepped in and backed the White Sands clan in a bid to pacify several other clans and build a safe route for trade. With the pen and the sword, House Roesoon forged a set of alliances with other clans. The treaty was easy to work out at that point. All the clans taking part would profit greatly. The newly enacted White Sands Accord would make these clans powerful as well as wealthy. Other clans would be attracted to join in the treaty as well. This allowed trade routes to expand.

Under the treaty, every clan gets a fee for allowing a caravan to move within their territory. In exchange, they provide guides and extra guards while the caravan is within their territory. Two White Sands guides remain with each caravan for the full journey. These people are responsible for making sure the treaty is honored and that the caravan has a guide should they pass into the unclaimed land. If that happens the other clan's guides and guards may leave if they wish to, as the treaty states.

The treaty, in addition to laying down rules for fees and movement in the Great Desert, also outlines rules of behavior for anyone in the caravan. These provisos are there to smooth relations between the people of the caravan and the clan guides and guards. Such activities as a morning greeting to any that offer one and which foods are not allowed and set times of day for pauses and which plants must never be damaged go a long way to fostering good relations with the desert clans. They see respecting their culture as a direct relation to how well they themselves are respected. Caravan workers that fail to follow the rules are quickly dismissed from service as the caravan can be fined for not living up to the treaty. By far the harshest rule is that caravans must carry in all the water they will need and cannot resupply from water sources found in the desert without special permission from the clan owning that source. As water is a matter of life and death to the clan, such permission is rarely given.

Eventually, the treaty was frozen because each time a new clan was added it would cut the amount of compensation for all the other clans. This has led to open hostility from some of the clans that want in and are denied. At times such a clan has been known to raid a caravan or two a season in way of revenge. There are currently five distinct routes that are part of the White Sands Accord. Each has advantages and disadvantages. Some are faster or come out closer to one southern city than another or have a smaller chance of bandit encounters. All routes have dangers; the beasts of the desert and the restless ones[‡] have no respect for tribal boundaries.

[‡] The term "Restless Ones" is used by desert people as a general reference to undead.

Out of all this, House Roesoon also got some special treatment. Caravans backed by them get a substantial price break on passage fees. As to the fees, all of them are collected in Ahlabim and distributed to each clan in bulk, eight times a year. Four of those times, the fees are taken to the clans and the other four times representatives of each clan go to Ahlabim to collect. Record keeping is meticulous on both sides and in the event of a discrepancy, third-party arbitration is used to settle the matter. So far the system has worked out well and both sides have profited under the treaty.

Founding a Republic

In 478 MLE, King Bartimus Arrnas puts a plan into motion to take the Imperial Throne from House Kalistic. He was cruel and ruled by fear, both traits for which his people resented him. This resentment was the key to his downfall. While King Arrnas worked on his plan, Lord Gavin Nentus worked on a counter movement to overthrow him. Many influential citizens of Celyd sided with House Nentus and the revolution gained both form and momentum.

Once hard evidence of House Arrnas' plan was in Lord Nentus' hands he took it to the Imperial Throne along with his plans to overthrow King Arrnas. Presented with the problem and a convenient solution that would keep imperial forces from being tied up in a protracted war, the rebellion gain imperial consent and a level of legitimacy that drastically increased its chance of success. In less than a year's time, House Arrnas found itself alone and in a pitched battle for survival. The fact that no help was given by the Empire told House Arrnas that their secret plans for taking control of the Empire were not as secret as they had hoped.

With his desire to take the Imperial Throne dashed and the looming possibility of losing his kingdom, King Arrnas enacted desperate measures to retain his power base. Thousands of rebels were executed in the most public and horrible manners possible. Their corpses hung from Lechwed's walls was suppose to take the, mostly peasant, rebel army's will to fight. However, the effect it had was not the one King Arrnas had wanted. The rebels were enraged and more citizens joined them. By the end, an army of over one-hundred-thousand peasants and warriors from other Houses stormed the city of Lechwed. Entire sections of the city were burned, under orders of King Arrnas, killing masses of rebels and non-rebel commoners. It was a bloody battle and would be remembered for generations.

Former King Bartimus Arrnas was captured and quickly killed by a peasant mob. It was a very bloody death made all the more humiliating in that it was at the hands of commoners. Stories say, he was ripped apart by the mob's bare hands and pure hate. House Nentus quickly took steps to carry out covert orders from the Imperial Throne, killing all the heirs of King Arrnas. Then the turning point came. House Nentus surprised everyone by fulfilling a promise it made to various key commoner players in the rebellion. They suggested and backed a reformation plan that would make Celyd a republic rather than reinstalling the traditional monarchy.

There has been speculation that a rebellion based more in the power of the commoners caused no small amount of fear in House Nentus that a similar event would occur should they buy off the major commoner supporters rather than fulfill semi-secret promises to back an alternate form of government. In the end, it was the need for imperial support that altered the reformation plan and allowed nobles to maintain the level of control they have. There was a big difference between overthrowing a cruel king with the empire's support and breaking away from the empire altogether.

In the end, House Arrnas was torn apart. The nobles of Celyd retained a fair portion of their power and wealth. The commoners were appeased. House Nentus gained considerable power and wealth. The peace of the empire was maintained and a republic was born.

It is worth noting that the mostly peasant army that took Lechwed was, and still is, the largest army put to field in the history of the empire. Wars are most often fought on a smaller scale. Prior to this event, the distinction of largest fighting forces mobilized was held by the Latter Formation Wars of 14 MLE during which all sides fielded an estimated 63,000 warriors. Historically speaking, a typical battle during MLE would have 4,000 to 6,000 combatants total.

Appendix E - Magic

Not all the information here should be known to the players at the start of the game.

While magic is not unknown in the Middle Lands, it could be called rare outside of the major cities. The same is true of magical items. Potions are common enough in most places (at least the herbal-based healing variety) but magic weapons and the like are rare beyond major population centers. Being unknown to most, magic inspires fear as easily as awe in the common people.

Divine magic is the most common by far but it's not so common that everyone has access to it. In fact, herbal remedies are how the common folk get by. The average person can easily go their whole life without having been healed of any disease or injury by divine magic. A large city will typically have several hundred casters of divine magic among its populace. A small town is lucky to have one. Expressed as a ratio of divine casters to the general population 1:200 would be a fair estimate.

Arcane magic is very rare. The average large city may only have a few dozen casters of arcane magic at best. An estimated ratio of arcane casters to the general population would be on the order of 1:3000. As a side effect, most common folk have no idea what an arcane caster is capable of and hence wild rumors abound. This leads to fear and the possibility of hostility toward arcane magic users in the more remote areas of the Middle Lands. The smart wizard will keep a low profile in such remote regions. All wizards remember that legends told by commoners say magic was responsible for the Savage Time.

The use of magic in warfare is limited. This is both a factor of how rare it is as well as an active campaign by users of magic to avoid being tools in the hands of nobles and other wagers of war. Due to this, exceptionally few wizards will even think of setting up a school in a city not ruled by wizards. This does not mean a wizard will not take an apprentice or two regardless of where they live. Those that dare open true schools in unapproved cities will find an endless stream of wizards coming to close it down by whatever means are necessary. Priests are not so extreme but they also have a faith to spread as well. They tend toward frightening nobles and leaders with retribution from their deity should the noble try to force a distasteful service from the priest. All firmly hold that casting spells is not a business and doing so for gold is generally distasteful. This makes spellcasters for-hire rare.

Why is magic so rare? The history includes a major fall of civilization and during this time a great deal of knowledge was lost or repressed. The knowledge base of magic had to be rebuilt, almost from zero. The major part of this rebuilding did not begin until about 1000 SC which was when the barrier that cutoff magic began to significantly breakdown. Rebuilding the knowledge base is a slow and painful process that was made more arduous by lingering fears of the role magic played in the fall. That makes spells that breach the dimensional barrier even harder to come by. Add to that the extra limitations imposed by practitioners of magic on how they spread their knowledge. As a result of all these factors some spells, normally seen, will not be readily available to PC's or NPC's. Some of the restricted spells include:

Antimagic Field	Ethereal Jaunt	Plane Shift
Astral Projection	Etherealness	Scrying, Greater
Banishment	Forbiddance	Shades
Contact Other Plane	Gate	Shadow Conjuration (All)
Delayed Blast Fireball	Limited Wish	Shadow Evocation (All)
Dimensional Anchor	Maze	Spell Immunity (All)
Dimensional Lock	Miracle	Summon Monster (II to IX)
Disintegrate	Permanency	Summon Nature's Ally (II to IX)
Dismissal	Planar Ally (All)	Wish
Elemental Swarm	Planar Binding (All)	(Any other spells that breach planes)

It is not impossible to get these spells but it is very hard. Their secrets are closely guarded. It should also be noted that summoning spells that call up local monsters can be excluded from this restriction. Such spells are more like a charm or teleportation and don't reach into another plane.

The Death and Rebirth of Magic

During the Savage Time, magic died. It was not an accident, or at least it is believed that it was not an accident. When the gap between worlds was sealed, the flow of magic energy into the *World* was halted. The world of mortals was closed off and the Old Gods could no longer touch it. Their shock troops, powerful creatures native to the lands of the gods, were trapped in the mortal realm and hence cut off from their home and the source of their power. Many died of the shock. The remainder were crippled and likely easier to kill. But the damage was not confined there. The mortal spellcasters also had a link to magic that mirrored their strength with it. When that link was severed they experienced a shock to the system. The stronger the link the greater the shock and the more likely they were to die. However, all did not succumb immediately, some took days to die. But die they did, all but the neophytes. From this point on no one could use magic and the knowledge of magic was lost to the chaos and war that followed.

Luckily, the seal was not permanent and over time it broke down. At that point, magic was born into the *World* again. Historians commonly count the time between when the gap was sealed and the seal broke to be about one thousand years. However, no one knows for sure. Regardless, the time was great enough that nearly every scrap of knowledge dealing with how to use magic was lost to the ravages of time.

The Magic Road Back

The rebirth of magic was not immediately apparent because no one knew how to use it. The first to notice would have been the most faithful among worshipers of deities. The New Gods would make their power known, first to their devout followers and then, more slowly, to the rest of the world. It would take years for most of the remaining mortals to realize magic was back. During that time some scholars, seeing divine magic return, would start down the path to rediscover arcane magic. The path is long, very difficult, and is still being trod to the current day.

When the Savage Time ended some of the surviving neophytes of magic recorded the little they did know about magic. Some would even attempt to preserve the more advanced tomes of their mentors. The vast majority of these efforts failed to save much information. The scraps that do make it are pitiful shadows of the massive library of magical knowledge that once existed. A surprising source for rebuilding the knowledge base of magic were the old folktales. Many held clues and bits of knowledge about magic and how it worked. Still others would become the inspiration for new spells.

Not everyone wanted magic back. The Second Fall was caused by the war between those that wanted magic and those that preferred magic remain dead. There was much fear that magic would again lead to cataclysm. Wars between these factions ravaged the fragile emerging civilizations of the *World* for many years. In spite of all this, magic was back and people were relearning how to use it.

Magic Theory 101

Presented here are the basics of magic theory in the *World*. To begin with, all magic involves the manipulation of magical energy. Just what that energy is, is a question scholars have struggled with for as long as there has been magic. There are many competing schools of thought on the subject. None are fully correct and all have their followers.

Some have tried to call it the essence of creation. While this is a fantastic idea, it is ultimately incorrect. Magic creates and magic destroys, this is undeniable. So by its neutral nature, it cannot be simply named the essence of creation.

Others name magic an elemental force. This is a little more useful but is still not correct. To call it elemental implies it must exist and is part of the *World*. Sealing the gap was proof that magic is not an innate part of the *World*, it flows in from elsewhere. The *World* can exist without it, at least for a time. So it is not elemental in the sense that it is not of the *World* nor is it required by the *World*.

Still others try to define it as the manifestation of will. While it is true that willpower is needed to focus and control magical energies it cannot be said that magic is solely a force of one's will. Again, the sealing of the gap proves that magic is not created within the boundaries of the *World*. So it is not simply the manifestation of will.

Finally, there is the idea that magic is the energy of chaos and hence the instigator of change. This is not the most popular of ideas for most and it shares the same faults as the essence of creation idea. There is, however, an allure to this school of thought. It attracts many people that feel like misfits. It also attracts the insane and the worshipers of Elder Beings, the dark gods of chaos.

In the end, there is no one concept that explains what the energies that make magic happen are. The debate continues and shows no sign of ending soon. Two things can be agreed upon. First, magic is the ultimate tool of mortals. Using it, a mortal can alter any aspect of themselves or the environment in which they exist for a limited time. Second, magic *is*. Even if what it is and where it comes from are not fully understood.

The Nature of Magic

Magic is an illogical blend of all things, a finite expression of the infinite, and the ultimate contradiction. The energies of magic do not have a single source. They flow through the *World* in unseen torrents. Waiting, needing, to be tapped and become an act of magic. These energies are a blend of energies from several different planes. They are mixed together while passing through the Veil. It is this blending that makes magic so versatile and makes it greater than the sum of its parts.

The Veil is the curtain between worlds. It prevents all the worlds from bleeding together. Without the Veil, anyone would be able to see what was happening in any world and walk between worlds with a simple step. Fortunately for the sanity of all sentient beings, the Veil does exist. It must be actively pierced when one passes from one world, or plane, to another. The one thing it does not stop is the vital energies that each plane exudes. These essential energies flow out from all planes and into all other planes. The Veil blends them all together and they become what is called magic. Oddly enough, magic is the only tool that can pierce the Veil, allowing physical entities to cross between planes or worlds.

So, in summation, every plane of existence has an outbound flow of its essential energy into the Veil and an inbound flow of every other planes' essential energy. The Veil, which separates every plane from every other plane, combines these inbound flows. This folding and melding of all types of energies creates magic energy within a given plane or world. Hence, magic exists in every world the Veil touches.

As a side note, it was the portion of the Veil surrounding the mortal world that was changed during the event known as "sealing the gap." That event interrupted the flow of energies which create magic in the mortal realm. Because only a small section of the Veil was changed, that being the section surrounding the mortal world, the change could not last. The unaltered majority of the Veil resisted this disharmony in itself and the altered section was eventually returned to a consistency that matched the whole. This took time, but as the Veil repaired itself and the altered section got closer to normal, magic began to slowly flow back into the *World*.

How Magic Works

While magic is magic there are various forms of it. To begin with, there is arcane magic and divine magic. Divine magic is a gift from one's deity based on faith and devotion to that deity. Arcane magic relies on intellect and focus to tap directly into the flow of magical energies that course through the *World*. Both types can be divided into subclasses: abjuration, conjuration, divination, enchantment, evocation, illusion, necromancy, and transmutation. These are often called schools or realms or spheres of magic.

A wielder of magic uses a spell to perform an act of magic. Arcane magic spells use mystic symbols, words, gestures and other items in a variety of combinations to seize, channel and focus magical energies thereby generating the desired effect. For divine magic, the spell takes the form of a prayer in which the power of a deity is called upon and the caster is a conduit for the magical energies sent. Often, a holy symbol is used as a focus for the prayer.

On very rare occasions, a divine spell will not produce the effect requested. In such cases, the deity, or an agent of the deity, sends a different effect or none at all. This happens for one of two reasons. First, when the caster is being punished for a major transgression of some kind, in which case a lesser effect (or no effect) is sent. Second, to reward a truly faithful worshiper with an effect above and beyond what was requested. This is very rare but it can happen when casting spells using divine magic.

Unexpected things can also happen with arcane magic. Spell failure is the most common source of these events. While 95% of all spell failures result in nothing happening, the remaining 5% can get very interesting. Just what happens depends on the spell that was attempted. For example, a failure casting an invisibility spell may cause one's clothing to become invisible or a random object/person to become invisible instead, or the caster glows fluorescent green for a while. Different spells would have different failure effects. As such it is recommended that the GM take each occurrence as it comes and make a roll to decide if the overall outcome of the failure will be good or not.

Custom Spells

The following spells are unique to the *World*. Some are useful others are just for flavor.

Chaos Blessing

School: transmutation
 Level: sorcerer/wizard 1
 Casting Time: 1 standard action
 Components: V, S
 Range: touch
 Area: one creature
 Duration: 1d3 rounds + 1 round / level
 Saving Throw: Will negates
 Spell Resistance: yes

The affected creature is momentarily surrounded by a mild distortion, like a heat mirage. For 1d3 rounds, starting with the round it was cast and thereafter at the beginning of each round before anyone has an action, one random effect from the following table will affect the target creature.

d%	Effect	d%	Effect	d%	Effect	d%	Effect
01-08	+1 to Strength	25-32	+1 to Intelligence	49-55	+1 to Attack Rolls	77-84	+1 to Fortitude Saves
09-16	+1 to Dexterity	33-40	+1 to Wisdom	56-62	+1 to Damage Rolls	85-92	+1 to Reflex Saves
17-24	+1 to Constitution	41-48	+1 to Charisma	63-76	+1 to Willpower Saves	93-00	+1 to Initiative

All effects will expire at once when the spell ends.

Chaos Curse

School: transmutation
 Level: sorcerer/wizard 1
 Casting Time: 1 standard action
 Components: V, S
 Range: touch
 Area: one creature
 Duration: 1d3 rounds + 1 round / level
 Saving Throw: Will negates
 Spell Resistance: yes

The affected creature is momentarily surrounded by a mild distortion, like a heat mirage. For 1d3 rounds, starting with the round it was cast and thereafter at the beginning of each round before anyone has an action, one random effect from the following table will affect the target creature.

d%	Effect	d%	Effect	d%	Effect	d%	Effect
01-08	-1 to Strength	25-32	-1 to Intelligence	49-55	-1 to Attack Rolls	77-84	-1 to Fortitude Saves
09-16	-1 to Dexterity	33-40	-1 to Wisdom	56-62	-1 to Damage Rolls	85-92	-1 to Reflex Saves
17-24	-1 to Constitution	41-48	-1 to Charisma	63-76	-1 to Willpower Saves	93-00	-1 to Initiative

All effects will expire at once when the spell ends.

Prepare Ground

School: transmutation
Level: cleric 5, druid 5, sorcerer/wizard 5
Casting Time: 1 hour
Components: V, S, M (herbs, oils, and incense worth at least 1,000 gp)
Range: touch
Area: 100-ft. radius emanating from the touched point
Duration: 3 hours/level
Saving Throw: none
Spell Resistance: no

This spell aligns the magical energies of an area so the flow is more beneficial for performing rituals. Within the affected area, the performance DC of the ritual is lowered by 1 point. Should the spell's duration end before the ritual is completed then any remaining concentration checks are made without the adjustment to the DC that this spell affords.

Straw Man

School: transmutation
Level: bard 1, cleric 1, druid 1, sorcerer/wizard 1
Casting Time: 1 round
Components: V, S, M (twine and 1 cubic yard of straw or the like)
Range: touch
Effect: one animated construct
Duration: 3 round/level
Saving Throw: none
Spell Resistance: no

A bale of straw or hay or similar grass is animated. The resulting construct is a small, dimwitted, humanoid servants that can be commanded to perform simple tasks or attack adversaries. When the spell duration ends the magic holding the construct together slips away and it reverts to a plain pile of straw.

Straw Construct I

N Small construct, created from 1 cubic yard of straw
Init +2; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0
Defense AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex)
hp 15 (1d10+10)
Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0
Immune construct traits, magic
Weaknesses vulnerable to fire
Offense Speed 30 ft.
Melee 2 fists +1 (1d4+1)
Statistics Str 13, Dex 15, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1
Base Atk +1; CMB +1; CMD 13

Straw Men

School: transmutation
Level: druid 4, sorcerer/wizard 4
Casting Time: 1 round
Components: V, S, M (twine and 1 cubic yard of straw or the like per construct)
Range: touch
Effect: two animated construct + 1 additional / 2 levels (max 7)
Duration: 3 rounds/level
Saving Throw: none
Spell Resistance: no

One or more bales of straw or hay or similar grass are animated. The resulting constructs are small, dimwitted, humanoid servants that can be commanded to perform simple tasks or attack adversaries. When the spell duration ends the magic holding the constructs together slips away and they revert to plain piles of straw.

Straw Construct II

N Small construct, created from 1 cubic yard of straw
Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0
Defense AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+4 Dex, +2 Natural)
hp 27 (3d10+10)
Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +1
DR 2/magic; Immune construct traits, magic
Weaknesses vulnerable to fire
Offense Speed 30 ft.
Melee 2 fists +6 (1d6+3)
Statistics Str 16, Dex 18, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1
Base Atk +3; CMB +5; CMD 19

Straw Horde

School: transmutation
Level: druid 6, sorcerer/wizard 6
Casting Time: 1 round
Components: V, S, M (twine and up to 3 cubic yards of straw or the like per caster level)
Range: 100-ft.
Effect: see text
Duration: see text
Saving Throw: none
Spell Resistance: no

One or more bales of straw or hay or similar grass within 100 ft of the caster are animated. The resulting constructs are dimwitted, humanoid servants that can be commanded to perform simple tasks or attack adversaries. When the spell duration ends the magic holding the constructs together slips away and they revert to plain piles of straw.

The horde works a little differently from the rest of the line. To start, multiply the caster's level by three. This is the pool that is used to "purchase" constructs for the horde. The cost is one point for each hit die of the construct created. The base duration is 1 round/level but that can be altered using points. Add up to two points for each construct to increase the duration to as much as 3 rounds/level. Any of the Straw Constructs (I to IV) can be created as part of the horde. Example, a 12th level wizard uses Straw Horde. The pool is therefore 36 (12 x 3=36). The wizard could call 36 Straw Construct I's for 12 rounds. Or 18 Straw Construct I's for 24 rounds. Or 2 Straw Construct IV's and 3 Straw Construct II's for 36 rounds (wasting 1 point because it's not enough to buy another construct for that duration). Or any combination of hit dice + duration modifiers that is equal to or less than the pool. Unused pool points are lost.

Straw Construct III

N Medium construct, created from 2 cubic yards of straw
Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0
Defense AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+3 Dex, +4 Natural)
hp 42 (4d10+20)
Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +1
DR 3/magic; Immune construct traits, magic
Weaknesses vulnerable to fire
Offense Speed 30 ft.
Melee 2 fists +8 (1d8+4)
Statistics Str 18, Dex 16, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1
Base Atk +4; CMB +8; CMD 21

Straw Construct IV

N Large construct, created from 3 cubic yards of straw
Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0
Defense AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +6 Natural)
hp 74 (8d10+30)
Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +2
DR 5/magic; Immune construct traits, magic
Weaknesses vulnerable to fire
Offense Speed 30 ft.
Melee 2 fists +13 (1d10+5)
Statistics Str 20, Dex 16, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1
Base Atk +8; CMB +14; CMD 27

Ritual Magic

Spells are specialized and quick forms of magic. But magic is more complex, more powerful, and more dangerous than standard spells allow. They are only the tip of the iceberg. Ritual magic is the next level, more advanced and open, yet substantially more difficult and dangerous. It is believed that anything is possible with ritual magic. For example, while no details have survived, it is believed that some intricate and potent ritual was used to seal the gap.

Just about anything is possible with ritual magic so long as the price is paid. That price can be very steep. Special items are gathered, exotic equipment is used, and tremendous amounts of effort are expended in performing a ritual. On top of it all, the knowledge of how rituals work and how to make them is highly restricted due to fear. Fear of what has happened, fear of what people will do, fear of the Old Gods, fear of...the unknown.

So, as closely as some spells are guarded, all rituals are guarded even more closely. While spellcasters, in general, may know the possibility of using ritual magic the details are very nearly impossible to get. For most, the research must be done independently. True, there are legends of tomes containing lost knowledge. But if such sources are out there they are so tightly controlled that their very existence is no more than a myth.

All spellcasters do get the most basic training in rituals without realizing it; magic item creation. While it has been heavily formalized and somewhat disguised as standard spell casting, the creation of magic items shares more with ritual magic than most people realize. Making this connection is not something that everyone does but it is generally the first step one takes on the road to learning ritual magic.

Designing a Ritual

But before a ritual can be performed, one must have a ritual to follow. For most, that means they have to research and design it themselves. Once designed, it is often the case that no one knows if the ritual will work because it has never been tried before. A vast majority of these first attempts fail, a few fail spectacularly. It is not easy to design a ritual that works. This is mostly a factor of there being no "how to" guides for creating a ritual and everyone has to start from almost zero. Designing a ritual is a process that requires gathering clues of how things may work, based on what is known of magic theory, without knowing if it will work that way. Sometimes clues can be found in the strangest of places, folktales, history, genealogy, bestiaries, metallurgy, and any number of other texts that are unrelated to magic or magic theory. It's a huge puzzle and all the pieces are hidden.

Designing a ritual requires the researcher to have the following:

- Ten levels in a pure spellcaster class (mage classes or priest classes)
- Skill in spellcraft, minimum of 5
- Knowledge of magic (arcane or divine), minimum of 3
- The ability to create magic items of some kind other than potions or scrolls
- An extensive library, such as one found at a university or a large city. Most personal libraries are not adequate for this task.
- A research assistant is optional but they can give aid. No more than one assistant is useful.

The parts that make up a ritual are very similar to the parts that make up a standard spell. There are vocalizations, gestures, materials, and tools (focus devices) that work together to tap into, direct, and focus the magical energies called up by the ritual. Another important component is time. It takes time to perform a ritual. This is mostly because of the amount of power being drawn. If a caster tried to draw the same amount of power in a standard spell they would risk literally bursting into flame. The minimum amount of time required is six hours but rituals can last for days. During a ritual, the performer is not able to eat, drink, or sleep due to the near constant activities they must perform.

Three of these factors, time, cost of materials, and special tools, can affect the research DC and the performance DC of a ritual. Each of the three generating as much as a 1 point increase or decrease to the DC. For both material cost and tool rarity the research and performance DC's are affected in the same way, i.e. the more expensive/rare materials and tools make both the design and the execution of the ritual easier. However, for performance time, the relation is that increasing the research DC will decrease the performance DC and vice versa.

The cost of materials will run at least 500 gp for the simplest of rituals, with more complex rituals easily costing 10,000 gp or more. What matters most is that these items have some relationship to the ritual's effect and they are consumed by performing the ritual. It is often possible to use alternate materials that are more or less expensive. The cost of tools (or focus items) can be high as well. They are often masterwork items made from exotic materials. Tools can be substituted with more or less expensive/rare alternatives just as materials can. Sometimes questing is required to get the best tools. For both materials and tools, if an alternative is selected it is done during the research phase. From then on it is locked in and the ritual must be performed just as it was researched.

Additionally, the time taken to research the design of a ritual will affect the research DC. Taking more time to thoroughly research the design can decrease the DC by up to 2 points. Likewise, failing to put enough time into research can increase the DC by as much as 5 points. It may take several weeks to research the design of a relatively simple ritual, the really complex ones can take years of research. Research time need not be contiguous so long as notes are taken. In these cases, the loss of the notes means the research has to start over. Research cost a minimum of 500 gp a week.

The DC required to create a ritual is judged by the GM on a case by case basis. The absolute minimum DC for a ritual is 30 and that would be for a very simple one. It could quickly reach 40 or more. This depends largely on the ritual's end effect. As the effect's complexity, scope, and power increase the DC goes up in accordance. Then all the other factors are added in, tools, materials, time, research effort, and aid. Taking 10 or 20 is never an option when designing a ritual. Failing the DC roll by 5 or less means that the researcher will not know the ritual's design is faulty. They will think everything is OK but, when performed, the ritual will automatically fail.

In summation, the design DC is set by:

- Looking at the end effect of the ritual. This gives the base DC. The minimum is 30 and values should go up in proportion to the end effect's power, scope, and complexity.
- Adjust for research resources. In most cases, an adequate library will generate no adjustment. A poor one increases the DC by 1 to 5 points. An excellent library may reduce the DC by 1 point.
- Adjust for design parameters. By opting to use more expensive materials, rarer tools, or extend the casting time of the ritual, its design DC can be reduced by as much as three points. The opposite is also true. These changes will also affect the performance DC of the ritual, with materials and tools having the same adjustment and time having the opposite adjustment.
- Adjust for the amount of time taken for researching the design. Rushing the research increases the DC by between 1 and 5 points. Taking extra time decreases the DC by 1 or 2 points.

Once the DC has been established, a spellcraft roll is made against it. Bonuses can be applied for synergy and if the optional research assistant was successful with their aid check. On rare occasions, there may be other bonuses (or penalties) to apply. If the roll succeeds the design is sound. If it fails the design is faulty in some way. Sometimes that flaw is obvious, sometimes it is not. Failing by five or less means the flaw is so minor that it may be unnoticed. Failing by more than five means the faults are so obvious that the designer is immediately aware. Regardless, such faulty rituals will always fail if they are performed.

Anyone, other than the original researcher, with 10 levels as a pure caster can review a ritual and thereby make a spellcraft check to notice any flaws, the DC is 30. This review takes at least one week of uninterrupted time to study the ritual and an adequate library for "fact checking".

Executing a Ritual

The first thing about any ritual is that it is a test of both mental and physical endurance. Rituals are basically long and drawn out spells. During a ritual, the performer (or caster) is not able to eat, drink, or sleep due to the near constant activities they must perform. The base DC is set by the amount of time it takes to cast the ritual. The minimum DC is 29. For every six hours, or fraction, of casting time up to 24 hours add 1 to the DC. Beyond that add 1 point to the DC for each 4-hour interval, or fraction, up to a total of 48 hours. Rituals with casting times beyond 48 hours add 1 point to the DC for each hour, or fraction, beyond the 48th hour. That reflects only the mental strain of the ritual. Rituals are very hard and dangerous, the DC should reflect that. A base DC over 50 should not be unusual for a powerful ritual.

Any effects from lack of food, drink and/or sleep are another matter. Chances are that someone with the resources to design and perform a ritual will have the resources needed to at least partly mitigate simple lack of food, drink, and sleep (such as a ring of sustenance). If such resources are not available the GM may impose additional penalties to the later concentration checks in order to reflect hardship caused by lack of food, water, and/or sleep during the ritual. As a guideline, it is suggested that the first check be made normally and each check after that have an increasing penalty to reflect the lack of one or more of these. Naturally, someone lacking just sleep would have an easier time than someone lacking food, drink, and sleep so the penalty should reflect that. Additionally, it would be possible to die from lack of water in just a few days and a complex ritual could take that long to cast. This is yet another of the many reasons that those who take part in rituals must plan things out.

In addition to the effort required, the cost in coin can be very high as well. When the ritual is designed it can be designed around more (or less) expensive materials and tools. While that decision cannot be changed later, it still affects the performance DC accordingly. More expensive components decrease the DC while cheaper ones increase it. Additionally, the casting time can be altered during the design phase and that will also affect the performance DC. While this may seem to duplicate changes to the DC for casting time it does not. This change reflects that the effort of the casting is more (or less) stressful than it would be normally.

Assistants can also help lower the performance DC. Up to six assistants can be utilized and each one will lower the DC by one point. Note that this is not the same as giving aid, which is not possible for a ritual. An assistant must have 5 levels as a pure spellcaster and a spellcraft skill of at least 3. These assistants have important, but minor roles in the ritual. They lend their voices to the chants, they bring materials or tools to the caster at the correct time, they clear things away as needed, they facilitate the ritual by seeing that things move forward in an orderly fashion. As their roles are minor they are afforded the opportunity to eat, drink and even nap so long as it does not interfere with the ritual.

When executing a ritual two other key things must be addressed, "when" and "where". Both the location and time the ritual is performed can affect the DC of success in a positive or negative fashion but in most cases, they will have no effect at all. In general, a one-point adjustment to the DC for "when" and another for "where" are possible. A favorable place may be a place attuned to magic or to the type of magic being performed, for example, a necromantic ritual may find a recent battlefield a favorable "where". Likewise, a ritual to promote growth may find the spring equinox an ideal "when" and the winter solstice the worst "when". Finally, if the location is prepared with a Prepare Ground spell the DC can be lowered by 1 point.

In summation, the performance DC is set by:

- Looking at the ritual's casting time. The base DC is 29. +1 for every 6 hours of casting time, up to 24. +1 for each 4-hour interval between hour 24 and 48. +1 for each hour beyond the 48th.
- Adjust for design parameters from the research phase. This adjustment can be up to three points.
- Adjust for any assistants. -1 for each assistant, maximum of six.
- Adjust for time and location. Can adjust the DC by 1 point for both time and location, but it is most often zero for each.
- Adjust for casting a Prepare Ground spell. This is optional.

The performer of a ritual must have ten levels as a pure spellcaster. In order to cast the ritual a concentration check is made against the ritual's performance DC once for every 8 hours, or fraction of 8 hours, of casting time. If all the checks are successful then the ritual was successfully completed and the willing target gets the effect. It should be noted that an unwilling target may get a saving throw and any spell resistance must be overcome first. Spell resistance is reduced by the ritual's power, 10% of the performance DC rounded down. Regardless of success, the material components are used and the caster burns a number of spell slot levels equal to one half the performance DC, rounded up. For example, a 10th level wizard has 4 first-level spells, 4 second-level spells, 3 third-level spells, 3 fourth-level spells, and 2 fifth-level spells for a total of 43 levels of spell slots. So that 10th level wizard performing a ritual with a DC of 42 would have to use 21 levels worth of spell slots. They do get to choose which slots are burned. So to meet the requirement of 21 in this example they could pick the two 5th level slots, a 3rd level slot, and four 2nd level slots. Hence, until they have time to rest it would be as if those slots, burned by the ritual, had been used to cast spells.

Ritual Failure

There are two main causes of failure. First, missing one or more concentration checks during the normal casting of the ritual. The second is having the ritual interrupted. Additionally, if the performer stops the ritual for more than one combat round it is considered automatically interrupted.

Any action by, attack on, or interruption to the performer that would require a concentration check for general spell casting provokes a concentration check in this case as well. Calculate the DC of the interruption as if it was on a 10th level spell and compare it to the performance DC of the ritual, use the higher of the two as the DC of this concentration check. Failing the concentration check means the ritual has been interrupted and fails. It should be noted that taking out assistants will not necessarily interrupt the ritual, unless the performer is in some way directly affected, but it will increase the DC of any remaining concentration check as the bonus for that assistant is no longer available.

The backlash from a failure can be deadly. In essence, a great deal of magical energies are bound up in the ritual and if it fails those energies are released in an uncontrolled fashion. They strike out in random ways with unpredictable results. But just as with spell failure, the details of a ritual's failure depend on what effect the magic is trying to achieve. The GM should roll d100 on the following table to get an idea of the severity of the failure's backlash, add 10 to the roll if the failure was due to interruption. In the end, the exact effect is determined by the GM.

d%	Backlash Level	Notes
01-10	Minor, beneficial	The ritual didn't work anywhere near full power but something along the lines of the desired effect happens.
11-60	Minor, detrimental	The negative effect is localized to the target and is not immediately life-threatening. No save is possible.
61-90	Major	Anyone within 100 feet is affected by a nasty backlash. If the effect is damage, no more than 15d6 is done.
91+	Catastrophic	Anyone within 1000 feet is affected by an explosive backlash. A minimum of 15d6 damage.

For minor detrimental failures, only the target is harmed and no save is possible because they were open to the ritual affecting them in the first place. Both "Major" and "Catastrophic" effects may have a saving throw. It depends on the effect and is up to the GM.

Example, Ritual of Immortality

One of the most commonly sought after enhancements is an end to aging. This is, relatively speaking, a simple ritual with a simple effect; stop the aging process in one creature. So, successfully completing this ritual means the subject will not age another day in their life.

Design Phase

The primary factor in the research DC is the end effect. This one is simple and straightforward but its duration is effectively infinite. That is the main reason the base DC is set at 35. Now to adjust it for all the other factors. The researcher opts not to adjust the cost of materials or tools or change the casting time so no DC change is incurred. The library used is adequate but no better, no DC change there. It is decided that extra time will be taken to research the ritual. Looking for the two point bump, the research time is doubled. Working together, the player and GM have negotiated that the research DC for this immortality ritual is 33, it will cost 1,000 gp for the materials, another 1,000 gp for the tools, the casting time will be 18 hours, and the research time will be 10 weeks (but that is doubled to 20 in this case). The cost for research is 10,000 gp (500gp x 20 weeks). With the details worked out a spellcraft check can be made. In order to maintain secrecy, the researcher does not seek the aid of an assistant. The roll is made against a DC of 33 and it is successful. The researcher has created a ritual.

Performance Phase

As the researcher is confident of the newly created ritual, they proceed with performing it. All materials are located and procured. Tools are created or procured. Four assistants will be used, only four because that's all that can be found who can be trusted with knowledge of this ritual. The location and time of the ritual's performance are set. The GM has determined that a favorable celestial alignment occurs every 4 years and the next one is in 3 months. The ritual will be performed to coincide with it. Before the ritual begins a Prepare Ground spell is used on the area. So, the DC begins at 29, +3 for the casting time (18 hours is less than 24 so the casting time adjustment is $18 / 6 = 3$). For a base of 32. Now add in the other adjustments. With four assistants, subtract 4 from the DC, so now it is 28. Timing the ritual to coincide with a favorable celestial alignment subtracts 1 from the DC reducing it to 27. Prepare Ground grants another reduction of 1 point to the DC, now at 26. With an 18 hour casting time, three concentration checks are required by the performer to successfully complete this ritual. All are at a DC of 26. It's close, but these rolls succeed. The target of the ritual, in this case, the performer, will no longer age.

Failure Phase

While no failure occurred this time the GM did jot down some ideas for failure, just in case. For minor beneficial failure, age at half speed for ten years. For minor detrimental failure, target immediately adds 50% to their physical age. A major failure would double the physical age of everyone within 100 feet, save for half the aging. A catastrophic failure would increase the physical age of everyone within 1,000 feet to within one year of their maximum age, save to not die immediately from shock.

Magic Items

Just as with spells, some magic items are very hard to come by. Anything that breaches another plane or dimension will be very nearly impossible to locate. That has to do with lost knowledge as well as major limitations on who knows the spells they are currently based on. Casters who have the knowledge needed to make such items also have the knowledge that it is a bad idea to have such items floating around. Between the Arcane Syndicate and the New Gods, there are plenty of hints that these items should not be created without a very good reason.

Some of the items that are almost impossible to get are listed below, this is far from a complete list:

Amulet of the Planes	Efreeti Bottle	Ring of Three Wishes (or any # of wishes)
Candle of Invocation (No Gate effect)	Elemental Gem	Staff of Passage
Cloak of Etherealness	Iron Flask	Strand of Prayer Beads (No Summoning beads)
Cubic Gate	Ring of Djinni Calling	Well of Many Worlds
Dimensional Shackles	Ring of Elemental Command	

Alternate items are available in some cases. For example, both the Candle of Invocation and the Strand of Prayer Beads can have alternate versions which don't include the restricted effects (Gate/Summon). This can be the case for many items with multiple effects where only one or two are on the restricted list.

Artifacts, being unique items, can be exempt. These items predate the Savage Time and would have been scattered across the *World*. There is no telling where they might be. That, in-and-of-itself, is enough to limit use of these items. It also makes them even more desirable that they are virtually the only items around with the restricted spell effects.

Intelligent Items

A permanent magic item can be invested with intelligence when it is created. In this case, "permanent" means an item that is not a one-shot item or one that requires charges to function. The basic process is that the essence of some intelligent being is bound to the item. Many think of this as "dark magic" because the soul bound is often taken without consent. The [Tale of the Hate-Filled Blades](#) found in the *Saga of Tazral*, vol V, includes an account of the forging of an evil intelligent blade that included the sacrifice of the man whose soul would be bound to the sword. While the story has no details of the magic used to do this it still publicly illuminates ideas of magic theory that are unsavory, to say the least.

In practice, the essence can come from a local source (some ritual death) or it can be pulled from elsewhere. When the essence is from a local source there is at least an idea of what kind of intelligence and personality the item will be imbued with. The same cannot be said when the essence is randomly pulled from the Afterlife or some other plane. In these cases, the intelligence can be from anything. The results of this type of binding can be just as random. On top of all that, it is possible for the bound intelligence to be driven insane by the binding process or by failing to adjust to "life" in its new form.

There are records suggesting times in which the subject of the binding was willing. While this may remove some of the moral issues it does not guarantee the subject will adjust well to the binding. Insanity rates may be lower for such bindings but it still happens.

Memories are another factor. It would seem that different methods of binding affect memories in different ways. For one method, the memories are preserved while another way would eradicate most memories. Again, this can be good or bad in terms of personality and insanity rates. Stripping away most of the memories of a person could expose an entirely different personality or make them as soulless as a clockwork automaton.

Overall, the average citizen will have little knowledge of intelligent magic items apart from what Tazral's stories hold. Regardless, it is likely that fear would be the chief emotion generated in the common citizen. To say these items are rare would be an understatement.

Custom Magic Items

The following magical items are unique to the *World*.

Bow of Arrows

Aura: moderate conjuration; **CL:** 9th **Slot:** none; **Price:** 90,600 gp; **Weight:** 3 lb;

Description

This appears to be a normal composite longbow, with a minimum strength modifier of +2. It has no enchantments that alter to hit or damage rolls. However, should the bowstring be fully drawn without an arrow nocked, one will magically appear, nocked and ready to fire. Such arrows are silver tipped but otherwise normal. An arrow created by the Bow of Arrows last only 5 minutes after being fired. If not fired it vanishes when the bow's string slackens. There is no known limit to how many arrows can be created.

Construction : **Requirements:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, major creation; **Cost:** 45,300 gp;

Mirror of Wellness

Aura: strong conjuration; **CL:** 12th **Slot:** none; **Price:** 42,000 gp; **Weight:** 25 lb;

Description

This item resembles a normal mirror in an ornate metal frame. It measures about 3 feet long and 2 feet wide. The mirror can be hung or placed on a surface and then activated by speaking one of two command words. Once activated, the next creature reflected in the mirror's surface has that command word's effect discharged upon them. If more than one person is reflected, the target is random. The first command word's effect cures 3d8+12 points of damage (as cure serious wounds) and can be called upon twice each day. The second command word cures almost any abnormal condition and 120 points of damage (as heal) but can only be used once each week. The mirror is fragile, has a hardness 1, and 5 hit points.

Construction : **Requirements:** Craft Wondrous Item, heal, cure serious wounds; **Cost:** 21,000 gp;

Stone of the Courier

Aura: strong illusion; **CL:** 11th **Slot:** none; **Price:** 118,800 gp; **Weight:** 1 lb;

Description

This rare and prized item resembles a rough shard of crystal about 4 inches in length and 2 inches wide. A close inspection with a magnifying lens shows tiny runes etched into its surface. They are so numerous that such work would take weeks with a jeweler's toolset to produce. There are also two command words written as tiny as the runes. The first is used to store a message in the stone. The second command replays the message currently held in the stone. The message takes the form of an illusionary version of the speaker projected within five feet of the stone. The words and gestures are reproduced in detail but nothing around the speaker is included. Speeches of up to 10 minutes can be recorded. No spell can be cast and no command words can be used in the message. The message can be replayed by repeating the trigger. Only one message can be held at a time. Any old message is destroyed when a new one is set.

Optionally the message can be "addressed to" someone, then it only triggers when the second command word is used AND the stone is held by the person to whom it is addressed. That person is named at the time the message is recorded.

Construction : **Requirements:** Craft Wondrous Item, programmed image; **Cost:** 59,400 gp;

Tablecloth of Heroes

Aura: strong conjuration; **CL:** 12th / 20th **Slot:** none; **Price:** 26,000 gp / 43,000 gp; **Weight:** 2.5 lb / 15 lb;

Description

This item appears to be a very finely crafted tablecloth. Once each day, when the tablecloth's command word is spoken, it will spread itself on the nearest suitable surface, worst case being the ground. If a table is not there, a great table will materialize beneath the cloth. A number of fine banquet chairs will form around the table, assuming none are already there. A number of place settings will appear on the cloth, how many depends on the tablecloth's type. Finally, a magnificent feast will appear, enough to feed one person/place setting. This meal has the same benefits and limitations as the one created by a Heroes' Feast spell. When the meal is over, be that completed or interrupted, all the place settings and feast remains vanish. When the cloth is removed from the table, it reverts to its original condition and any conjured furnishings vanish.

The command word is often stitched on the underside of the cloth. There are two varieties of the tablecloth, a lesser and a greater. The lesser measures 7 ft by 15 ft and is made for a table 4 ft by 10 ft which seats twelve people. The greater tablecloth is more ornate, measures 25 ft in diameter, and is made for a roundtable 20 ft in diameter which seats twenty people.

Construction : **Requirements:** Craft Wondrous Item, heroes' feast; **Cost:** 13,000 gp / 21,500 gp;

Valmir's Charming Vest

Aura: faint conjuration; **CL:** 7th **Slot:** chest; **Price:** 33,650 gp; **Weight:** 1 lb;

Description

This item appears to be a finely crafted and classically stylish vest. Three times a day, when the wear reaches in to the inner pocket they will find a "token of affection" there. What this token is varies from vest to vest and is decided upon when the vest is created. It is generally a small, ordinary item made of non-living organic material, like a flower or a tiny wooden figurine or a fresh sweet-cake. Whatever the item, it will be inexpensive, generally costing less than a few silver coins. The item will vanish after seven hours. The original vest first created by the roguish Valmir produced a single, freshly cut, long stemmed, red rose of a breed known for its pleasant aroma.

Construction : **Requirements:** Craft Wondrous Item, minor creation; **Cost:** 16,825 gp;

Appendix F - Deities

In the past, just after the Savage Time, many people could have been called misotheist. Things are in the process of changing and it's taken generations for that change to come as far as it has. Now, there are a number of religions in the Middle Lands and hence a number of deities being worshiped. Every race has their own deities but some are worshiped by members of more than one race. What follows are many of the major deities of the Middle Lands. The list given for each race is not a complete list.

Dwarven

In their great halls under the mountains, the dwarves live. They forge, drink, and worship in the name of their many gods. These gods of the deep earth are both hard and just. While each dwarven clan may have one favored most, all are honored in turn.

Kelgal

a.k.a. The Smith

Kelgal is the goddess of creation and all dwarven smiths pay homage to her. Indeed, any dwarf that crafts or creates will hold the Smith in high regard, saying her prayers and performing her rites. During the War of Creation, rivers of giants' blood flowed from the field of battle and Kelgal took that blood and soaked her hammer and anvil in it. Then she pounded hammer upon anvil and with these bloody tools shaped the *World*. In honor of that, the symbol used by her followers is a red anvil. There are many other tales of her, most showcase her creative way of thinking things out and her power in fighting the giants.

Larhelm

a.k.a. Earth Shaker

In the deep caverns can be found the "Heart of the World" and here sits Larhelm upon the Under Throne. King of the gods, legend says that when a dwarf dies they go to the Heart and stand before his throne and there, Larhelm, will judge the course of their life. He will ask of them, "Have ya been a just and good dwarf, living by the laws of the ancestors?" Then he will see their life and know their heart. If he is pleased they go to the Afterlife and sit at the great feast in the "Halls of Gold" sharing strong dwarven drink with friends who died before. If, however, the course of one's life is not true then "The Pit" awaits where they shall toil day after day, never to gain a bit of gold, or a sip of ale. His symbol is the ancient Dwarven rune for "earth throne" which is most often inscribed on a disc of volcanic rock or obsidian.

Yuretgolen

a.k.a. Orc Cleaver

Yuretgolen became the god of war and revenge when the giants and orcs attacked, killing his brother Marloam and a thousand of his clan members. Their blood flowed from the battlefield and it was not cool blood, it did not flow in fear, it flowed hot with rage. Yuretgolen stood upon the blood-soaked stone and drank in the hot rage of all his dead clan. The rage lit his eyes with a bright fire and that gaze fell upon the giants and orcs like a white-hot hammer! The weight of it killed many. The ones that survived the moment would still know his rage as he brought "war unlike any the giants have seen" in retaliation for his brother's death. Thus began the War of Creation.

It is said that none know the depth of his rage toward orcs, giants, and all the goblinoid races. The devoted carry a battle axe as his symbol and use it in his name. To etch his name on the axe is to set one's life against those he hates so. That dwarf will then be named a Cleaver and be granted great strength of rage in battle. In return, the warrior is sworn to seek them out and kill the beastly and craven creatures where ever they roam. This is often done by those that lose their kin to orc raids. As such, they don't plan long lives and intend to soak the road to death with the blood of Yuretgolen's foes.

Elven

Their villages in forests and in far-away lands are not open to outsiders. This is where the elves honor their gods and the trees are their temples. Gods of wind, rain, flower, bird, and beast are all honored by the elves. They do not openly speak of religion to outsiders as it is a private thing for them.

Bohtan

a.k.a. Wild Runner

Bohtan is the god of the hunt and all wilderness land and beasts. Far back in the mists of time when the *World* was new, Bohtan came unto the land and in seeing it fresh and new before him he wept tears of joy, for the sight of it filled him with soaring pleasure. He saw how all the flowers and trees and animals of the land and birds of the air and fish of the water fit together, life feeding life feeding life in circles within circles guided by the great cycle of seasons called time. The beauty of it all stunned him. In his wonderment, he threw himself into the Hunt as an expression of joy, in celebration for the perfection of creation. From that day to this he runs the wild places, hunting to the sound of his horn, high and sweet.

The stories say that any who encounter him hear his horn and are likewise overcome by manic joy and pulled into the Hunt until they see the next dawn. Their nature will determine their place, as hunter or prey. His symbol is a hunter's horn.

Nishrah

a.k.a. Dream Speaker

Nishrah is the goddess of visions and inspiration and she rules in the land of dreams, a place we all touch when we sleep. The Dream Speaker, while elvish in origin, crosses all boundaries and is worshiped by people of all races. It is said she can speak to any that sleep, speak to them as they touch the land of dreams. As she rules dreams, her half-brother, Corhov, is Lord of Nightmares. The lore is full of stories of her and her brother, the consummate trickster, clashing. He is often looking for a way to usurp her and take over the realm of dreams. Nishrah is also the deity of arcane forces. Her symbol is a blue star.

Tuzale

a.k.a. Mother

Among the elves, Tuzale is the goddess of life, growth, and renewal. She is the embodiment of life and a beauty so fierce, all that who see her would swear loyalty for the simple favor of her smile. She is queen among the elven gods and there is no king. She rules supreme and guides the land in growth and spreads the seeds of life far and wide while the seasons turn. As part of the cycle of renewal, every 84 years, she takes a beguiling elven male to serve her as consort. At this point, the old consort becomes a member of her Drone Guard for all eternity where he swears to protect and serve the Mother until the end of time. Her symbol is the crocus, its color changes during the phases of the major cycle.

Gnomish

The gnomes love their hill-top homes and the tunnels beneath them. They worship gods of hill, stream, and wild knowledge. Their strange genius builds mind-bending monuments to their gods. Indeed, the temples are wondrous to see and inspire awe with their complexity.

Arnuf

a.k.a. Great Builder

The gnomish god Arnuf is their god of knowledge and crafting. He is a master artificer of all known disciplines. The Great Builder lives in his flying clockwork castle which roams the skies high above the *World*. He spends his days working on all manner of devices and gazing through his telescope which is said to show him any place he would care to see in wondrous detail.

Arnuf, like the best of artificers, wishes nothing more than to make the world a better place. He seeks to build all the machines that should be built. By his reckoning, a good thing is a thing that should have already been built. Weapons are not good things in his eyes. Those devoted to him seek communion so they can help build his machines. They wear amulets bearing his symbol, a cog, and spring.

In an age long past, Arnuf, seeking to satisfy his curiosity, built seven divine machines to explore the seven mortal aspects. None of the stories agree on what the seven aspects are, but the machines roam the *World* and seek ways to observe these aspects in mortals. The lore says they appear from time to time in the most unusual places. Some will soar upon the air, another swims beneath the waves, one is said to burrow under the earth, and still others, walk the land on legs or roll on wheels. Yet any of them can hide themselves from mortal eyes, becoming a mere shimmer seen only at the edge of one's vision.

Ortho

a.k.a. Stonewall

Ortho is the gnomish protector god and when need be, the avenger. He comes to gnomish warriors in times of great need and takes one as his avatar. As such, it is said that Stonewall lives in the heart of every warrior gnome to live since the Exodus. As a symbol of service to him, a gnomish round shield is fitted with a spike and worn into battle.

Known for tenacious fighting against long odds, Ortho has a way of coming out on top in the end. He promises that no defeat is forever for the gnomish people, so even when the battle goes poorly and warriors fall, he will come into the hearts of all gnomes that bear steel in his name and vengeance will be theirs. If not today, then tomorrow. If not this battle then the next.

Qurin

a.k.a. The Healer

Qurin is the goddess of healing magic and her skill is beyond that of any mortal. It is said she cured the sun of a fever and the wind's bad breath. She will grant power to heal to any that devote themselves to healing the hearts and minds of all. She cares not for divisions or sides for all suffer and know pain equally. As such, Qurin has followers not only among gnomes but with dwarves and some humans too. Her symbol is the half moon, often worn as a stylized ring.

Halfling

Hearth and home are the holy things in any halfling's life. As such their temples are more a shrine, built into each home. The love of food and drink and fine company often serve as rites among the little folk. They freely share this with friends and family, doing so is also a method of worship for them.

Drazlooh

a.k.a. Land Mother

She is the goddess of crop, herd, and health. While no physical form is ascribed to her, she is a she for she could be nothing else. She is life itself in all its guises and varied forms. Halflings celebrate her and give prayers in her name, from the farmer in the field to the shepherd in the pasture. Their songs are their prayers and they dance to bring cheer for themselves as well as her. Each season there are rites of honor and thanks given to celebrate her. Growth and prosperity are provinces of Drazlooh. The symbol used by her followers is a sheaf (a bundle of grain stalks).

Iturr

a.k.a. The Trickster

Iturr is the god of luck, pranks, and deceits, from the harmless to the deadly; he is the manifestation of trickery. Halflings, as with all their deities, associate no one physical form with him. They see him more as something akin to an elemental force. They would say he is the palpable desire we all share to glue a desk drawer shut or replace the sugar with salt or any number of other mischievous actions. Others say that statement tells a great deal about halfling behavior in general. Rogues and illusionist are often among the followers of the Trickster. They use a dagger with a secret as his symbol. For Iturr, the secret is the fun part.

Zaphkah

a.k.a. Home Father

Zaphkah is the power of the hearth, the flame itself. He is the god of hearth, home, and hospitality. Just as with the others, no form is attached to him. It is said that one can feel his blessing in a home that honors him well, it comes as peaceful warmth felt by welcomed guests. Zaphkah promotes strong ties to family, friends, and community. All of these things are valued by any halfling.

For the devoted follower of Zaphkah, meals in ones home take on a ritual quality. Not in a stuffy or rigid way but as an expression of joy and bonding with friends and family. The hearth is the symbol of Zaphkah, often a piece of hearthstone is used by priests as a holy symbol. Their magics tend toward powerful wards and protections.

Human - New Gods

These are the majority of gods worshiped by humans since the end of the Savage Time. When humans turned their backs on the Old Gods many of them found that they still needed something to inspire them and give faith and hope. So, other deities were embraced to fill that spiritual void. What mattered most, at the time, was that these deities have nothing to do with the carnage of the Savage Time. What are now called the New Gods, ironically, came from older pantheons that were no longer worshiped. Others came from tribal cultures. A few were co-opted from other races. In the end, humans of the Middle Lands were very flexible when it came to finding new deities. Faith and belief were important and finding something to believe in again was necessary in those dark times. The same is true today, a few humans can be found worshiping just about any deity in the Middle Lands even if they are outside this pantheon.

So, the New Gods are kind of a hodgepodge and until the seal broke they were worshiped without being able to interact with their followers. When the seal did break they reached out to their followers and gave the most devout among them the gift of magic. Without that, it would have taken far longer for people to see magic was back in the *World*.

Bantus

a.k.a. The Seer or Light Bringer

Bantus is seen as the god of knowledge and wisdom who rules the realm of reason. It is said that during the Dark Time only the knowledge preserved by Bantus and his followers stood between all mortals and death. So it's not uncommon to hear people say there would be no science without Bantus. He is worshiped by many intellectuals and rites to him are performed across the land. Temples in his honor are found in every sizable city of the Empire. His symbol is a lantern, often etched on an amulet.

The Seer is often depicted as a man of mature age having two heads, one owl and one raven. It is said he was born of the union between a mortal and an unnamed deity. As such, he straddles the world of mortals and that of the gods, seeing both with equal ease. He is credited with ending the Savage Time and is hence one of the few Old Gods still widely worshiped.

Gravston

a.k.a. Winter Beard or the White Man

Gravston is a harsh deity. He is believed to watch and, from time-to-time, wander among people during hard times or in remote and unforgiving places. Seen as a god of struggle and strife, he is often depicted as a gnarled, old man with snow white skin and a great beard. Gravston is a harsh god who helps only those he respects and Winter Beard respects only those with the will to fight. He is less interested in fighting battles than in fighting the difficult circumstances that arise in life. The devoted must never surrender.

Originally, he was a tribal deity of a brutal and warlike tribe of nomadic northern plainsmen and a harsh judge of his followers. During the Dark Time worship of him spread among people who would learn to take a strange solace in their suffering. Temples in his honor are never ornate, he would not have them if they were. The ironstone is his symbol and it is often shaped into a disc with a bearded man's face on it.

Hethrize

a.k.a. The Skull Bearer or the Crone

Hethrize is a death goddess and she takes the wicked to the Underworld. A common depiction of her is that of a giant old crone burdened with a very large basket of skulls on her back. She is said to come in the night and scoop up the wicked, throw them in her basket and cart them off to the Underworld. Also said, is that she loves the sound made by a wicked person as they thrash among her skulls seeking escape. The clacking of dry bones is her music and her symbol is a skull.

When she gazes upon a mortal, Hethrize judges their actions and life. Indeed, it is said that few have lived a life in which Hethrize would fail to find some act she could name wicked. Legend has it that a person judged wicked will hear her cackling when they have drawn her notice. Few are brave enough to build temples to her and most spend their effort in avoiding her attention. There are a variety of superstitions and customs devoted to keeping her eye away. The old stories have pitted Tanjoom against

her and they say it was he who forced her to take only the wicked and leave others be. For this, she hates the Fox and his clever ways.

Janumorn

a.k.a. Water Rider

Janumorn is a god of the sea and bringer of good luck who is most worshiped among the western coastline's settlements. For this reason, any who sail the Sea of Storms would do well to honor Janumorn. The Water Rider is said to appear as a laughing man riding a horse of living water which dances across the sea spray off the waves. Down to the smallest, every settlement on the west coast will have at least a shrine to him if not a full-sized temple. There are many on the east coast as well, though the calmer sea there doesn't bring as many converts.

The seahorse is his symbol and a holy animal. Boats and shrines are both decorated with the animal's image and sailors (and pirates) often have tattoos of them around their navel for his blessing. Any that depend on the sea for their bounty tend to honor him for the good luck he can bring. Both dawn and dusk are holy times for his followers and the devoted will observe rites and/or prayers during these times.

Nisvaloon

a.k.a. Mother Sun

The sun, fire, and rebirth are the blessings of the goddess called Nisvaloon. She is the savior of all mortal souls and the one who leads the newly dead away, bearing them into the next life. Many people worship her and build temples in her honor. Such temples and followers can be found across the Empire. She is the sun and that is her symbol. As such the sun is incorporated into all shrines and temples.

As her followers see it, each day the Mother Sun rises into the sky and she takes up the souls of the newly dead, then at sunset she ushers them out of the mortal realm and into the afterlife where they can be born anew. It is said that by burning the dead, their souls are lifted up to her upon the smoke. Her followers will only burn their dead when the sun is up. They also start each day with a morning ritual of greeting the sun.

Rakthor

a.k.a. Blood Bringer

The power of Rakthor is felt in raging storms and the heat of battle found on fields of war. He is traditionally shown as a naked man drenched in blood, his face is a mask of rage and fury. The stories say he is prone to bouts of berserker rage when in battle. Warriors fond of brute strength are more prone to worship the Blood Bringer but any of them will likely murmur a prayer to him before a great battle. It is said that Rakthor's greatest temple is in the heart, so while there are temples built in his honor, they are few with respect to the number of people that pay homage to him.

The warriors most devoted to him tend to have swirling red tattoos in honor of his blood-soaked image and some will add more of them for each battle they've fought. None, however, are more frightening and well-known than the Iron Storm's commanders who have such tattoos on both face and chest. Rakthor's symbol is a battle axe, often covered in blood.

Tanjoom

a.k.a. The Fox

Tanjoom is a god of wit and agility of both mind and body. He is a schemer and a trickster, some say he created laughter. Traditionally, he is said to appear as a dark blue fox yet, the oldest tales say he could take any form or gender. It is believed that he remains a fox due to a bargain made with Hethrize to the benefit of all clever mortals. There are thousands of stories about the Fox and his antics. It is said that he leads hunters to their death and teaches naughty children the art of malicious mischief. Some stories are benign but most end poorly for those that catch the Fox's eye, yet all have a quality of twisted justice.

There are few large temples devoted to Tanjoom yet many small shrines can be found in most cities and towns. Naturally, rogues, messengers, and bards will honor him. Indeed, anyone seeking fleet feet or a clear head and fast tongue will have words of praise for the Fox. His symbol is the laughing fox and followers will often wear it on a medallion or ring.

Tashrune

a.k.a. The Red Wolf

The god of strategy, justice, and the hunt; the Red Wolf values both strength and wisdom. The Wolf teaches that it is not enough to have a strong sword arm, one must have a mind able to see when, where, and how to use it best. There are many temples and shrines built in the name of Tashrune and his followers are often seen across the land. Schools of martial strategy often use his teachings as well. There are orders of warriors devoted to these teachings.

He is seen as a powerful and cunning red wolf. There are many stories of him and all have a common thread of wisdom in regard to conflict or hunting. They show the good of knowing when and why to take life as well as when not to. Some stories use Rakthor and the blood-lust he inspires as a nemesis to Tashrune's wisdom. His symbol is a racing wolf of red, commonly worked into a sword's blade.

Ursinah

a.k.a. Dusk Lady or Three Face

Ursinah is the goddess of love, lust, and revenge. She is often described as a woman in a dusk colored cloak; she has three faces beneath her hood. Each face is the embodiment of one of her aspects and only the one currently controlling her is shown at any given moment. The face of love is fair and beautiful, the face of lust is wild and manic, while the face of revenge is dark and cold. Stories of her often include an element of vengeance for the women wronged by men.

There are temples and shrines dedicated to her across the land. Most settlements have at least one and her followers are many. She is very popular among women, most especially women seeking revenge. If they have the means, such women will display a small statue of a hooded woman in her home. The Dusk Lady's symbol is a golden lily with one black petal and one red petal. This is often worked into a brooch or pin, or sometimes a medallion.

Volios

a.k.a. Green Woman

Volios is the goddess of birth, growth, and the harvest. She is the spring wind on a warm day, gentle and good. Traditionally, she is described as a green-skinned woman, most often nude, and full of life. There is no settlement in the Empire without at least a shrine devoted to the Green Woman. Everywhere there are crops to grow or women that wish to have children, there are worshipers of Volios.

She is also a fertility figure, as such, worshipers will invoke her name in marriages and planting rituals. They thank her for births and at harvest festivals. The well-known stories are heavy on the theme of humans finding their place in nature rather than seeking dominance over it. Her symbol is a fruit tree, most often a plum tree. It is said that to eat a plum is to receive her blessing.

Human - Old Gods

The Old Gods are no longer widely worshiped because they are blamed for the destruction during the Savage Time. All that is generally known is that they punished the people of the *World* because of the way magic was being used. To this day, mothers whisper legends of the Savage Time to frighten children and make them wary of the Old Gods.

Some scholars think that the stories which have survived to the current time are not representative of the Old Gods. The surviving stories show a distrust and unease between mortal and immortal. Regardless of if the legends are wrong or right or have only the smallest grain of truth left in them is irrelevant. It all serves to keep the Old Gods alive in the hearts and minds of the people.

While the Old Gods are mostly forsaken not everyone has turned from them. Some of the remote tribes worship them as do some of the citizens of the Middle Lands. It is not overly popular to call upon them but, in most places, it is not forbidden either. Very few settlements have temples for them, however, some ruined temples can be found in the wilderness. There are even secret societies devoted to them. To be worshiped or feared makes little difference to the Old Gods so long as they are remembered, that is all that matters to them.

Bantus

a.k.a. The Guide

In the old pantheon, Bantus was a lesser deity and had a different role. He was seen as an advisor to mortals and immortals alike. Additionally, the role of seer was not as prevalent in these old stories. The surviving stories paint Bantus as being at odds with many of the other deities. Even though they seek out his council, they do not often follow his advice, at least not the first time around. This would lead to many "learning moments" and the story often ended with them doing what Bantus suggested in the beginning. The main reason they are reluctant to heed his advice is his mortal blood. The old era stories involving the advice given to mortals didn't often go as badly. Most of the time, they would try to follow his advice but mortal flaws would lead them astray. In the end, the old era stories were about learning.

Foel & Til

a.k.a. The Lovers

These two are the spirits of loving relationships. Sometimes good ones and sometimes damaging ones. The stories of Foel & Til have them living life after life after life and each one is a different tale of love. Love of family, love of a friend, love of a spouse, love of riches, love of vices, unattainable love, disastrous love, obsessive love, and many more. These stories explore love, lust, passion, and obsession.

Hajout

a.k.a. Mother

Wife of Kohlot and goddess of family, oath, and home. According to legend, she created the mortal world from the formless void of chaos. In the beginning, it was a strange place, responding to her slightest whim. Only she could walk in it until her husband tamed it by bringing order to its chaotic nature. This was symbolic of the union between spouses bringing focus and order and stability to their lives.

Islynnas

a.k.a. The Trickster

In the old tales, Islynnas spares no expense to poke holes in the ego of anyone that appears too full of themselves. The Trickster's form is always different, female, male, humanoid, or animal, it's all possible for Islynnas. It is said that the Trickster was a supporter of Bantus, but some claim that was just a ploy. On occasion, a well-educated rogue may pick up worshipping Islynnas. Sometimes they are rewarded.

Kohlot

a.k.a. Father

Ruler of the gods and champion of order and laws. He is said to have given order to the newly created world. The stories say many of the lesser deities were fathered by Kohlot, some with Hajout and others not. He is never a creator on his own but he speaks order into things, making what others create more useful. Some old stories claim he was gravely wounded by an unnamed avatar of chaos.

Mononik

a.k.a. The Warrior

The goddess of conflict, competition, and strategies. In their unadulterated form, the ancient stories of competition always have her or her symbolism in them. It is said that Mononik reveled in the Plane War and wished to prolong it. She felt the conflict could push mortals to a new level of development. Possibly, taking them a step closer to immortality. It is said that she stood against Bantus and his desire to end that war.

Pangu

a.k.a. The Chronicler

The god of fate and death, Pangu records the life and deed of every living being in his great book. It is said that he writes the major course of your life at the moment of your birth, but the details he leaves to you. Also said is that, if one can steal the page of their life from his book, then their life would be so rent and the world would change. He was one of the few Old Gods that stood with Bantus yet he did not fare as well after the dust settled. Outside of a few small enclaves, he is no longer worshiped by humans.

Rajhahl

a.k.a. The Builder

All acts of creation are attributed to Rajhahl. Inspiration, epiphanies, spontaneous pontification, and general glibness were believed signs that a person was touched by Rajhahl. These traits were as often bad as they were good. Some of the oldest tales say Rajhahl was the first of the Old Gods. Others say that which is called Rajhahl is not a deity like the others but a force, primal, eternal, and without motive.

Watlen

a.k.a. The Traveller

Sometimes seen as male, other times as female, Watlen is a manifestation of the seasons and weather and the open road. The wanderlust that grips some so relentlessly was said to be the blessing of Watlen. In the old tales, people so touched by the Traveller were destined to have great adventures. Of course, such a blessing gives no promise of success, there are more than a few tales of people dying horribly.

The Elder Beings

Legend says these creatures are from the "time-before-time". They are old and have knowledge beyond that of any other being. They are often seen as being formless or having a form so bizarre that the mere sight of them, would break a mortal mind and induce madness in the viewer. The stories would seem to show a lack of concern for mortals and the lives they lead. To spite their aloof and nonchalant manner, when their attention is drawn they tend to bring a chaotic element to the lives they touch. Forbidden knowledge and madness are common themes in these stories.

Ahjifrohme

a.k.a. The Witness or Whisperer of Secrets

At the moment of Creation, Ahjifrohme was there. For this reason, all the secrets of creation were his to observe, his to know, and now his to share. If one is willing to search, he may reward the seeker with a bit of that most deadly knowledge. It is said that there is a canyon that was carved by a river of blood which flowed from the primal battlefield during the moment of Creation. When the high moon wind rushes down this canyon it brings the words of Ahjifrohme and the secrets he keeps. It is believed that a seeker must find the wind and stand within it. Some also say this wind brings madness as well as knowledge. There is much debate as to the location of this canyon and few are brave, or foolish, enough to go looking.

Meklidozrin

a.k.a. Watcher of the Veil or Keeper of Madness

Meklidozrin is the formless guardian of the Veil. The Veil is the curtain that separates worlds and dimensions. All who touch the Veil are seen, and any that dare breach it risks drawing Meklidozrin's wrath. Stories say that before the Veil was erected everyone could see into every world and none were without at least a touch of madness. Meklidozrin's vigil keeps both unknowable madness and knowledge from the world. The mortal mind is, for the most part, not equipped to hold this knowledge. There are tales of arcane masters foolish enough to violate the Veil, none of these ends well.

Zenchu

a.k.a. The Sleeper or The Destroyer

Said to be the destroyer of worlds, Zenchu sleeps. It is lucky for all that the Sleeper should do so, indeed, all should wish the slumber never ends; for when it wakes, it will kill the *World* again. Some say the Savage Time was the result of Zenchu almost waking. Stories put the Sleeper deep underground or in the deepest ocean and they warn, that a great sound of slow and deep wind will be the breath of the Destroyer as it dreams. "The air moves such that it is felt deep in the chest and frost lines the walls, for that wind is cold, it comes from a place the sun has never warmed." It is said that, while only a fool will seek Zenchu, the wise will bow to Zenchu.

Underdark Deities

In the world under there are many races of intelligent beings, some more intelligent than others. Most of them have religion and hence deities to worship. It is not uncommon for the same deity to be worshiped by several different races in the Underdark. What follows here is a few of those.

Gorn

a.k.a. The Devourer or The Hungry

Gorn is a great and ravenous beast, who often takes the guise of a nude extremely muscular giant humanoid with obsidian skin, coarse white hair (almost fur) trailing from his crown and down his back like a mane, massive hands with long fingers ending in powerful claws, a wide mouth full of sharp shark's teeth, and eyes like burning coals. It is said his roar can crack the earth and his teeth can rend steel. The constant rumbling growls issuing from him are the sounds of his never-satiated stomach. He is forever seeking meat for nourishment and strength to fight the "Deep Worms" who are his eternal foes. So he roams the endless dark tunnels, eating, fighting, searching; these are the things he will continue to do until the sun goes dark and the seas freeze.

As all know, Gorn commands and the faithful follow! The most zealous of Gorn's followers practice the ritualistic consumption of their strongest enemies. In this way, they seek to take the strength of their foe and use it in future battles. Indeed, even if they don't perform the ritual, many followers eat their dead and dead enemies for strength. Gorn's symbol is the ever-ravenous mouth.

Labnoz

a.k.a. The Father Flayer

The Father Flayer often appears as an unnaturally tall and slim humanoid with tight ropy muscles. His head is elongated and smooth having a face thick with scar-tissue, the eyes are grotesquely sewn shut and bone spurs are worked into the flesh of his cheeks, forehead, and throat. Ritualistic tattoos, scarring, and bone spur piercings cover his freakishly proportioned body. He wears pale leather garments made of the skin of his victims. His voice is oddly deep, rich, melodious, and beautiful, all the better to deliver his honeyed words. He sees himself as a teacher of higher understandings.

Labnoz teaches that pain is existence and by way of pain, all things are known. While he appears blind, he has no difficulty sensing anyone within 60 feet regardless of concealment. Even as far out as 100 feet, it's hard to avoid his notice. Up close, it is said, he can see into one's heart and know their pain. Pain gives him his "sight". In a deep and dark place, he sits upon his throne of flesh in a hall lit by fire, fueled by oil rendered from the fat of his victims. Before his throne, lies the Wheel of Pain, from which none escape. Those he puts on the wheel are there to learn; pain teaches all.

Ritualistic piercing and scarification are common acts for the followers of Labnoz. Through these activities, they seek expansion of the mind and consciousness. Acts of extreme self-flagellation are often used to induce visions in the Father Flayer's name. A circle with an "X" in it is the symbol of Labnoz, it represents the Wheel of Pain.

Untah

a.k.a. The Spider or The Spinner

Untah is the great demon spider, the spinner of lies, it sits upon its web and listens to the strands quiver in response to events in the World. In this way, it knows much of what happens. Its goals are unfathomable by any mere mortal mind, yet one thing is clear, it actively seeks to covertly influence and direct the actions of mortals on a grand scale. In a thousand tiny ways, it seeks to push key mortals along a path of its choosing.

Even laid out in detail, the past actions of the Spinner show little that can be called a master-plan, indeed, some parts seem to run contrary to other parts, but all of it is foul, with every end serving some evil. Understanding this alien mind more deeply than in a general way is well beyond most. It is believed that to study it's ways too long and too deeply, opens the mind to insanity. The Spider attaches webs of foul spirit energy to anyone it can influence. By way of the web, it speaks orders to and listens to these vassals, where ever they may be.

Deceit and plotting are like breathing to followers of Untah. As a result, these followers tend to be more intelligent than average and more devious. Traits like stealth, patience, and cunning are valued by the faithful of Untah and poison is a commonly used device. Secret societies and cults are used by followers on the surface while below, with the creatures of the dark places there is no need for such subterfuge. Untah's symbol is a web.

Other Deities

While there are dozens of popular deities found in the World, there are also hundreds of others who are less-well-known and less-wide-spread. Their origins are as diverse as they are but, many are from times now long-past and others are known mainly within small groups. Still, every day, thousands of mortals will say prayers and perform rites to honor one or more of them. What follows are a few of the deities that are not worshiped by vast masses yet still have a dedicated, if small, following in many places.

Cernoz

a.k.a. The Singer or Memory

The modern incarnation of Cernoz is that of a god of beauty and emotion by way of art, music, song, and story. The ancients saw Cernoz as the guardian of memory who preserved past events and deeds in amber. It was said that he would sing of the deed or event and his voice would form an image of finely carved amber describing it in the palm of his hand. These miniatures would be placed upon a shelf in the "House of Known" so they can be experienced, again and again, never to be forgotten. One of the oldest of the known dead languages the word sernoz translates as "helpful memories" which, some scholars claim, may be a clue to this deity's origins.

There are many small groups that are devoted to him. Artists tend to know and honor Cernoz to some degree. Currently, the highest concentration of worshipers lies in and around the city of Shalamahkib.

Eohgin

a.k.a. The Sky Queen

Eohgin rules the sky and her breath, the wind, is felt by all. Often, she is shown as a woman with beautiful bird-like wings in place of arms. It was said that her eyes were like the night sky, dark yet with a multitude of stars within them. She brings the season and is both kind and harsh in equal measure.

Today, her followers are scattered, like leaves on the wind. She originated, among the nomadic people who roamed under a star-laden sky over plains now unremembered to this age. There are tribals that highly honor her even now.

Sehthar

a.k.a. The Reaper or The Firewalker

The most ancient of stories that survive speak of Sehthar as a god who was old even then. He is a god of death and, to a lesser extent, fire. In the modern era, his followers are often violent and embrace death by feeding him the lives of their foes. There are even tales of orcs, gnolls, goblin, and other monsters worshiping Sehthar in his most violent visage. It is whispered that the Order of Kodar follow him in their own fashion and hence gain power over death.

Necromancers often honor Sehthar by rite and/or deed. It is said that the undead are his hand in the mortal world. Places plagued by them are commonly avoided if not fled totally. That fire, is often the only sure way to destroy undead is not lost on his followers. The Reaper will take all in due time.

Xanathurr

a.k.a. The Unseen or The One Who Walks Behind

Xanathurr is the avatar of fear who is always there, just behind, yet never seen. It has no form other than the one most feared by the viewer. Few will worship this god, indeed, the cults that do tend to spring up around the Unseen are twisted and sinister in nature. Along with Gorn and Sehthar, Xanathurr is known to find worshipers among monsters as well as humans of an evil disposition.

An old master's riddle says, "It cannot be seen, it cannot be felt, it cannot be heard, it cannot be smelt, it hides behind stars and under hills and empty holes, it fills." Devotees of The One Who Walks Behind say it is not a reference darkness, as is commonly believed, but to Xanathurr.

Appendix G - Creatures

Not all the information here should be known to the players at the start of the game.

Not all monsters are found in the Middle Lands. In fact, when compared to other areas of the *World*, the Middle Lands have a lower density of monsters and less variety. With that in mind, remember that the GM can do as they like.

Creatures of Keltor

Below is a list of creatures indigenous to the Middle Lands of Keltor and a recommended encounter frequency. Encountering any creature is always possible thanks to summoning and the like. This section is broken into three groups, above ground creatures, underground creatures, and normal animals. It should be noted that the lack of extra-planar creatures is due to this world's history.

Above Ground Creatures

Allip	Rare	Gorgon	Rare
Animated object	Rare	Gray render	Very Rare
Ankheg	Very Rare	Griffon	Rare
Ant, giant	Uncommon	Hag	Rare
Assassin vine	Uncommon	Halfling	Uncommon
Banshee	Rare	Harpy	Rare
Basilisk	Rare	Hippogriff	Rare
Bee, giant	Uncommon	Hobgoblin	Common
Beetle, giant	Uncommon	Homunculus	Very Rare
Beholder	Very Rare	Hydra	Rare
Blink dog	Uncommon	Ice troll	Rare
Boggard	Uncommon	Kobold	Common
Bugbear	Common	Kraken	Very Rare
Centaur	Uncommon	Lamia	Very Rare
Chimera	Rare	Lich	Very Rare
Chuul	Very Rare	Lizardfolk	Uncommon
Cockatrice	Very Rare	Locathah	Uncommon
Crocodile, giant	Rare	Lycanthrope	Rare
Devil dog	Rare	Manticore	Uncommon
Dire animal	Uncommon	Medusa	Rare
Displacer beast	Rare	Merfolk	Uncommon
Doppelganger	Uncommon	Mimic	Uncommon
Dragon, chromatic	Very Rare	Mind flayer	Rare
Dragon, metallic	Very Rare	Minotaur	Uncommon
Dragon, true	Very Rare	Mohrg	Rare
Dryad	Rare	Monstrous vermin	Uncommon
Dust Digger	Uncommon	Mummy	Very Rare
Dwarf	Uncommon	Naga	Very Rare
Eagle, giant	Uncommon	Nymph	Uncommon
Elf	Uncommon	Octopus, giant	Rare
Ettin	Rare	Ogre	Uncommon
Frost worm	Very Rare	Ogre mage	Rare
Gargoyle	Rare	Ooze	Rare
Ghost	Rare	Orc	Common
Ghoul	Uncommon	Owl, giant	Uncommon
Giant, Cloud	Very Rare	Owlbear	Uncommon
Giant, Fire	Very Rare	Pegasus	Rare
Giant, Frost	Rare	Phase spider	Rare
Giant, Hill	Rare	Pseudodragon	Rare
Giant, Stone	Very Rare	Purple worm	Very Rare
Giant, Storm	Very Rare	Rakshasa	Very Rare
Gnoll	Common	Remorhaz	Rare
Gnome	Uncommon	Roc	Very Rare
Goblin	Common	Rust monster	Uncommon
Golem	Very Rare	Sahuagin	Uncommon

Satyr	Rare
Shadow	Uncommon
Shambling mound	Uncommon
Shield guardian	Very Rare
Shocker lizard	Uncommon
Skeleton	Uncommon
Spectre	Rare
Sphinx	Rare
Sprite	Uncommon
Squid, giant	Rare
Stirge	Common
Swarm	Uncommon
Taer	Very Rare
Treant	Uncommon
Troglodyte	Uncommon

Troll	Uncommon
Trollhound	Uncommon
Umber hulk	Very Rare
Unicorn	Very Rare
Vampire	Rare
Vampire spawn	Uncommon
Wight	Uncommon
Will-o'-wisp	Uncommon
Winter wolf	Uncommon
Worg	Uncommon
Wraith	Rare
Wyvern	Rare
Yuan-ti	Rare
Zombie	Uncommon

Normal Animals

Ape	Uncommon
Baboon	Uncommon
Badger	Common
Bat	Common
Bear, black	Common
Bear, brown	Common
Bear, polar	Uncommon
Bison	Common
Boar	Common
Camel	Common
Cat	Common
Cheetah	Uncommon
Crocodile	Uncommon
Dog	Common
Dog, riding	Uncommon
Donkey	Common
Eagle	Common
Elephant	Uncommon
Hawk	Common
Horse	Common
Hyena	Uncommon
Leopard	Uncommon
Lion	Uncommon

Lizard	Common
Lizard, monitor	Common
Manta ray	Common
Monkey	Common
Mule	Common
Octopus	Common
Owl	Common
Pony	Common
Pony, war	Uncommon
Porpoise	Uncommon
Rat	Common
Raven	Common
Rhinoceros	Uncommon
Shark	Uncommon
Snake	Common
Squid	Common
Tiger	Uncommon
Toad	Common
Weasel	Common
Whale	Common
Wolf	Common
Winter wolf	Uncommon
Wolverine	Common

Underground Creatures

Aboleth	Very Rare (Uncommon underground)
Boggard	Uncommon
Carrion crawler	Rare (Uncommon underground)
Choker	Very Rare (Uncommon underground)
Cloaker	Very Rare (Uncommon underground)
Derro	Very Rare (Common underground)
Drider	Very Rare (Uncommon underground)
Dwarf	Uncommon
Fungus	Uncommon (Common underground)
Giant, Stone	Very Rare (Rare underground)
Gnoll	Common
Gnome	Uncommon
Goblin	Common
Grick	Very Rare (Uncommon underground)

Kobold	Common
Mind flayer	Rare
Morlock	Very Rare (Uncommon underground)
Ogre	Uncommon
Ooze	Rare (Common underground)
Orc	Common
Otyugh	Rare (Uncommon underground)
Phase spider	Rare
Purple worm	Very Rare
Roper	Rare (Uncommon underground)
Skeleton	Uncommon
Troglodyte	Uncommon
Troll	Uncommon
Umber hulk	Very Rare
Zombie	Uncommon

In the above list, more than one encounter frequency is listed when above and below ground rates differ.

Extended Creature Details

This section has more details dealing with the creatures that live in the Middle Lands.

Boggards

Boggards stand 5 feet tall and weigh close to 200 pounds, however, they tend to look shorter due to a hunched posture. While they are often found in swampy areas, the boggard also inhabits rainforests, damp caves, and any other places that are wet and shady as they need to dampen their skin often. Another key factor will be spawning pools which boggards will want to protect.

In the Middle Lands, boggards are a bit smarter than the normal variety, gaining a +1 to intelligence. This translates to better tactics. In particular, their use of "the chorus". This strategy is used to maximize the usefulness of their Terrifying Croak ability. The first three rounds of any combat one-third of the boggards use their Terrifying Croak. In this way, they ensure maximum fear. Additionally, when their numbers are great enough, they will employ their Sticky Tongue to pacify an opponent, by making grapple attacks with a minimum of three boggards using their tongues on a single opponent and working together in the grapple. Coupled with ambush tactics, this makes boggards a more feared opponent.

Boggards form organized bands and are always led by a large and powerful individual. On average, these groups number 30 to 40 boggards. They will make small settlements of mud huts. While they are aggressive, they do not often seek raiding with the fervor of goblins or orcs. The exception being when their shaman motivates them with religious rantings of star alignments and the like.

The boggards have their own, rather primitive language, but about 1 in 8 can converse haltingly in the common tongue, though their vocabulary is rather limited. They are held in disdain by sahuagin, who will occasionally raid a boggard settlement for sport and out of sheer malice, eating any captive alive. Lizardfolk will rarely associate with boggards, though there is no open hostility towards them.

Bugbears

Standing about 7 feet tall and weighing, on average, 400 pounds, the bugbear is the largest of the goblinoid races. It could be argued that they are the most vicious, mean, vile, and cruel of the goblinoids as well. Their sadistic streak is often used by the hobgoblins who employ bugbears as executioners, torturers, and elite shock troops.

Bugbears do not build large settlements, their nature is too volatile for that. When they do settle, it is in ruins that are in some way significant to their shaman, meaning it's an evil place aligned to dark powers. Even then the bugbears will have goblins or kobolds to do the grunt work. Outside of these rare cases, bugbears are known to take temporary shelter in caves that are convenient to them, meaning close to settlements they want to attack. Hobgoblin settlements will often have space put aside for the bugbears they hire. The bugbears will stay as long as it is "fun" and profitable. That works for the hobgoblins and the goblins, after all, no one wants to be around bored bugbears, least of all goblins.

Centaur

Centaur average 7 feet tall and about 2,000 pounds. They live in semi-nomadic tribes on the plains and in the forests of the Middle Lands. These tribes average around 20 to 30 mated pairs and another 20 to 30 young centaurs and another 10 or so elders. For the most part, centaur tribes have peaceful interactions with their brethren. They are natural storytellers with a rich oral history. While they do keep written records, it is considered a backup for the oral tradition. The legends of centaur prowess with the bow are not without base. While bow hunting feeds most centaur they do grow some crops as well. Their herb gardens are almost as legendary as their abilities with a bow.

Centaur are not generally friendly with dwarves. They tolerate gnomes and halflings. They are friendly with elves and like wood elves. Humans have a special place in the hearts of most centaurs, a place filled with deep hatred. Centaur history says humans are the cause of the Savage Time and the centaur nation suffered greatly during that era. The great old cities were destroyed and the centaurs were scattered. Additionally, the centaur bloodline was cursed. They call this curse the Sorrow. According to the old tales the curse demands that any city they seek to build will fall until "no stone stands upon another". All

centaur believe this to be true as there are many stories of centaur since that time trying to start cities and having them destroyed at every turn. So, this leaves the centaur, as a people, feeling bereft and vagabond like. They still blame humans and as a result, the hatred of them is widespread. While they do not go so far as to attack humans on sight, they are unpleasant toward them and will use the slightest of provocations to justify an escalation of hostility.

Both strength and wisdom are valued by the tribe so leaders tend to have both. Centaur have no settlements larger than a village and under centaur law, no settlement may have more than three-hundred occupants and nothing is built from stone. In this way, they try to avoid the Sorrow using methods that seem to have worked in the past. Still, even with these measures, they abandon their settlements every ten to twenty years and go start another. There is no set timeframe for this, it just happens when the tribe's elders see the omens.

Lone centaur do roam the land and from time to time they will enter the settlements of other races. This is more common in elven settlements and very rare in human settlements. The ones that venture into human lands have managed to let go of their anger, or at least they control it well. If they have not then they don't stay long. The exception being the Forlorn, centaurs that have been exiled for one reason or another. Most often this is done to centaurs that are too progressive of mind.

Cyclopes

These beasts are all but unknown in the Middle Lands. They are more common in the Spice Kingdoms and on very rare occasion found inhabiting the warmer islands in the Inner Sea. While finding a cyclops on one of these islands is rare, it is even rarer that the explorer gets away from them. There are legends of ruins in the deep south jungles of the Spice Kingdoms which are supposed to be from a mighty and long dead cyclops civilization.

Standing around 16 feet tall and weighing in at 3500 lbs, the cyclops is most often encountered alone. Little is known of their social structure. They appear to know the ways of metalcraft and some of the oldest myths of the southern kingdoms say they were once renown for such work. The Terror of Cyclops Island found in the *Saga of Tazral*, vol IV, provides what most citizens of the Empire know of these creatures. That impression is of an angry and brutish beast more than ready to kill and eat hapless travelers who find themselves shipwrecked on the wrong isle. So far, no one has contradicted that image.

The reality is that the lone cyclops on an isle is often there for a reason. Most spend a decade or three alone in a remote setting before starting a family. Some want the solace of solitude to hone a craft. Some want to meditate upon a life experience. Others are mad from glimpses of the future. Whatever the reason, at some point they will return to the far southern jungles and one of the small villages there.

Living at most two centuries, the population of each village number from a few dozen to a few hundred. They are lead by the strongest mated pair and an elder starwatcher, their version of a witchdoctor. In addition to metalworking, they tend to excel at stonework and foresight lore (reading stars and other forms of divination). Those that return from very long solo sabbaticals tend to become starwatchers.

Derro

The derro is a degenerate race of small stature. Some believe them distant cousins to gnomes or possibly a twisted cross between humans and dwarves. They inhabit the great subterranean realms of the Underdark. Although the derro hate light and suffer pain and injury from contact with sunlight, they still venture to the surface at night, driven by their dark needs. Secret shafts are used to raid and steal and kidnap humans and other surface dwellers for slaves or experimentation, some rumors say that a few are actually eaten as well.

Doppelgangers

Sick, twisted, depraved, these are words commonly used to describe the demeanor of doppelgangers. Lusting for power and influence, they infiltrate the societies of other creatures using their shapeshifting ability. Collecting wealth and enjoying power their assumed position affords them for as long as possible. Most often, this is not a long-term endeavor and the doppelganger will stay only as long as it feels secure and it is of benefit to the doppelganger. When leaving, they will take as much with them as possible.

Not all doppelgangers are depraved and debaucherous freaks. Many are content to spend some time impersonating a political figure, using that position to rob the community blind, and then quietly slip away to the next opportunity. But it's the sensational stories that are the ones to spread and be remembered. So, many, if not most, doppelgangers are less extravagant than those in the stories.

Dragons

Legend says that dragons were born in the "time-before-time" when there was only the sky and the *World* was not yet made. Indeed, it is said that the last of them created the *World*, an act born of grief that eased the Dragon's pain. Whether this is just another in a long line of creation myths or what "really happened" is unknown. There is little doubt that a dragon, as is known in current times, could be capable of creation on that scale. Still, some speculate that the last Dragon was real and that it also created a race of dragons in its image if not in the same magnitude of power.

So, the creatures known as dragons are great and mighty winged reptiles of vast cunning and capable of extremely long lives. When the gap was sealed, they too felt the effects. For them, it was a bit different as their magic is more from them than from beyond. When magic was pulled from the *World*, dragons were forced to sleep, sustained by magic locked within their blood. They slept a thousand years until the day magic returned. Even then, many continued to sleep deeply in their remote and lost lairs. There is no record of a mortal discovering any such ancient lair. From about one thousand to around three hundred years ago there are only a handful of historic accounts of quarrels between dragons and people. However, the last three hundred years have seen scores. Dragon scholars argue that the increase is due to civilization expanding into the wilderness areas dragons inhabit.

Regardless of the reason, a few dragons have roused themselves in recent centuries. To date, no active dragon predates The Second Fall. The possibility that such an antediluvian beast exists hasn't been a common theory. Further, the idea that the dragons known now are the youngest and weakest, the least, of their breed is likewise all but unknown. Such a revelation would inspire great fear among those who have faced a dragon or seen the destruction they can bring.

With only the youngest are active to any useful degree, dragons have lost much of their knowledge and culture. Indeed, the Savage Time has harmed dragons as much as any other race. So much is lost to them and will remain lost until their most ancient sleepers awaken. Should such a day come, it would herald the dawn of a new era for dragonkind, possibly, for the whole of civilization.

By far, the violent and malevolent Chromatics (red, black, blue, white, and green) are the most numerous of the wakened as they breed faster than the rare and wise Metallics (gold, silver, bronze, copper, and brass). One thing is true of both breeds: the older they get the bigger, stronger and more cunning they become. All totaled, there are believed to be only about a hundred-fifty adult dragons in the *World*. For the most part, they are reclusive beings and the older they get the more prone they are to sleep long years at a stretch. It is the younger ones, less than 75 years old, that most mortals will experience.

Still, even the young are impressive. By the end of its first year of life, a dragon will grow to between 6 and 8 feet long, standing about 2 to 2.5 feet high (from ground to shoulder), and having a wingspan around 15 to 20 feet. With wings folded, the effective width of a dragon is roughly equal to its height. Depending on the type (color) of dragon, the neck and tail together account for between one third to one half of the total body length. Their overall size increases roughly the same amount for each age category. So by the third age category, a dragon would be around 18 to 24 feet long, 6 to 7.5 feet high, and have a wingspan between 45 and 60 feet.

A yearling's skin is lightly scaled and tough as leather but, as the dragon ages, it gets progressively thicker, harder and tougher until it reaches a point that non-magical weapons can't penetrate it. Fangs and claws grow and strengthen as well allowing older dragons to rend and tear even

Dragon Age/Weight Categories		
Hatchling/Yearling	1-5	400-500 lbs
Very Young	5-30	1.5-2 tons
Young/Adolescence	30-60	5-7 tons
Young Adult	60-100	12-16 tons
Adult	100-200	25-31 tons
Mature Adult	200-300	43-54 tons
Senior Adult	300-400	68-85 tons
Old/Wyrm	400-500	102-128 tons
Very Old/Elder Wyrm	500-600	145-182 tons
Ancient/Great Wyrm*	600-700	200-250 tons

*Keep adding a category of growth for each century of age.

the heaviest armor and hide, magical or otherwise. Some even grow horns or spikes as they mature. As the size increases so too will a dragon get more types of attacks such as a gore (with spike or horn), a stomp or kick, a tail swipe, wing buffet, and the full body crushing charge that comes with the great mass of the ancient wyrms!

Dragons reach adult status (the fifth age category) after a century but they don't stop growing there. Each century after that adds another age category of growth with no known limit. As far as any mortal knows, dragons never weakened due to age. Their senses never dull. Their minds do not slow. They simply sleep more often and for longer stretches. Note that it is a light sleep, from which any noise or strange odor will often rouse them.

Younger dragons are more active and hence, eat more often. A yearling would want to eat two or three times a day while an adult may need no more than a meal a week, if awake. Fresh meat is most desired by any dragon but the different types will prefer one meat over another. The amount of meat eaten also depends on age. Fifty pounds may satiate a yearling but an adult may want ten times that or more. It is not uncommon for an adult dragon to range up to a max of a hundred-fifty miles from their lair in search of meat. A more typical hunting area is about half that if meat is not hard to find.

A dragon's lair varies by type, some like mountains and others swamps and still others seek desert sands. The younger ones are much more mobile so their lairs are more temporary. It is the older ones that tend to collect massive hordes of silver, gold, and gems which they do in a lair they intend to occupy for centuries more. Dragons wishing to breed will establish a lair for that if they don't already have one.

Dragons first breed at about 75 years of age but are physically able to much earlier, at about 50 years. The lower the local population the sooner a dragon seeks a mate. They mate every decade or so for the next 200ish years. Older dragons could keep mating but sleeping on a horde of gold is much more desirable for them. Prospective mates find one-another by smelling out musk. It is secreted in urine and also by glands under the jaw. Young dragons often rub their jaw and chin against a tree or similar object to scent mark it. This is done as a way to mark territory as well as when seeking a mate. A dragon's sense of smell is so good, that they can scent the musk up to 300 miles away with a good wind.

A year after mating, the female will lay a batch of eggs, between four and eight. These will range in size, by the type of dragon, being between 14 and 25 inches long, 10 to 18 inches wide, and weighing 15 to 28 lbs. She will guard and incubate them until they hatch after another year. Defending her spawn provides a healthy bonus to a mother's combat rolls. She will stay with them between three and five years (depending on type) to teach and provide food for them. This is not necessary, indeed, a hatchling can fend for itself and fly within hours of breaking its shell. The more important part is learning the dragon language and dragon customs which will not come as easily for a dragon left to fend for itself with no mother about to guide the youth. Only about a quarter of all hatchlings will live to see 30 years.

Dragons are very intelligent but the young are rash and prone to pick claw over parley. Vanity in their strength is another common character flaw along with a love of gold that is almost as strong as their love of self. While time and experience may help with rashness, the vanity and greed tends to deepen with the power age brings a dragon. If they can be said to have a weakness, it lies here.

In addition to being powerful fighters with thick scales, dragons have many other abilities. They fly upon great bat-like wings. Soaring high and silent a dragon can swiftly glide hours for little effort. Sharp eyes, ears, and noses mitigate the best of concealment skills and some magics also. Even sleeping, a dragon's ears and nose never really rest. With magic flowing in their very blood and centuries of life to work with, it is no wonder that some dragons become powerful spellcasters as well. Finally, the most famed and fearsome power is in a dragon's breath. The most feared, being the red dragon's fire breath.

Dragon use of magic in the current age is rare only because magic is rare and dragons like everyone else have lost most of their knowledge of it. At least they have until the ancient ones wake. Still, the talent is so strong with them that it only takes a little exposure to get the ball rolling. The older they get the more likely they are to get exposed. Add to that that both detect magic and read magic are at-will abilities for any dragon of breeding age or older. For these reasons a few years study with a spellbook taken in combat from some hapless mage would be enough for most dragons to get the basics of magic.

When it is said that dragons are the most ferocious creatures in the *World*, these are not idle words. It is so, even with the most powerful and knowledgeable of their kind still sleeping in the deep and lost lairs. The oldest of them knows, first hand, of the time before the Savage Time, while the vast majority wouldn't know of anything before The Second Fall. Of course, mortals know nothing of the extent of their knowledge. Even if they did know and sought the sleeping ones, it should be said that dragons tend to guard their knowledge as they do their gold.

Drow

In the earliest age, when elves were new to the *World*, there was discord among them. Those elves of foul, selfish, and cruel disposition were driven out. They fled their brethren. Yet even apart, the two factions could not abide the existence of one another and warfare was common. Again and again, the good elves defeated the evil, pushing them back. Always pushing them back. Soon there was no place remaining, no haven save one. The dark caves under the earth beckoned and the need for safety drove the evil elves to them. And so they went, forsaking the wind, rain, sky, and sun to save themselves from extinction. In the darkness, they found the first comfort known to them in living memory. There, in the lightless caverns and endless warrens of twisting passages the dark elves, the drow, were reborn.

In time, they grew strong once again. In time they became creatures of the darkness. In time the desire to return to the surface abated, somewhat. Still, they never forgave nor did they forget. The surface elves are deeply hated by every drow that draws breath. Indeed, all surface dwellers are disliked by drow. They will cause pain to the "light runners," with a song in their dark, twisted, little hearts.

Over the past few centuries, drow have been busy deep in the Underdark. There have been wars and new dangers to overcome. On the surface, next to nothing is known of these events. But now, for whatever reason, the drow are looking to the surface again. They have an advantage this time, so many humans have forgotten about them that they are the stuff of legend and myth. Drow are not foolish and see this as a huge opportunity, one they don't intend to waste. They will strike from the shadows and use proxies but they will make this boon count. The blood of the "light runners" will flow!

Duergar

The duergar are the rarely encountered, emaciated, evil-visaged cousin to dwarves. Also known as the gray dwarves or gray ones, they are malicious in the extreme and dwell in some of the deepest subterranean depths where the light of day cannot reach them. When they are encountered, there are normally but a handful of them. However, there are stories of lairs having hundreds of duergar. Their warriors are both cunning and fierce.

Duergar have been known to dwell with derro, and similar evil creatures, acting as smiths. While not as good as dwarven wares, the products produced by duergar smiths are still high quality. Finally, they live longer than do normal dwarves, often by a full century or a touch more.

Fey

Sometimes called the First People, fey are spirits of nature and wielders of life's magic. They are strange and alien people that now inhabit a shadow world called the Between Land. According to fey history, or what is known of it, the fey walked the mortal world before any other being and later left for the Between Land. Of all the other creatures that would come into the mortal world after them, many are descendants of fey. Dwarves, elves, gnomes, and halflings all have fey blood but are not true fey. Examples of true fey include dryad, nymph, pixie, and satyr. While not the only true fey, they are the most well-known.

The names of the not so well-known fey vary from place to place. Local environment, culture, and legend affect these local nature spirits. While name and appearance are prone to change, the base essence of the spirit remains unaltered. Hence, there are some basic classifications that appear again and again. Three of these are detailed below.

The Death Portent

Some fey are drawn to death. When the specter of death cast its shadow on a mortal's soul, such fey may come around. This is a rare event, most mortals fated to die will never know. However, when they do show up, sometimes it is for the spectacle of the death and other times for their own reasons. There are

several legends of the Death Portent fey spirit found in the folklore of the Middle Lands. Two well-known examples follow.

The most common is the Ember Eyes, also called a Watcher. In the dark and moonless night, the Ember Eyes will watch those destined to die before the next new moon. The subject will feel the eyes upon them and if they stare out into a dark wooded area they may catch a glimpse of the Ember Eyes which appears as a far off, tall, impossibly slim, shadowy figure having exceptionally huge saucer-like eyes which glow dimly; not unlike how a dog's eyes catch firelight. Some say the fey can be bargained with or offered a gift to steer death away from the subject for a time. These tales don't agree on what exactly will need to be offered but it is always a high and personal price.

While less common than the Watcher, the Hush-lie is no less terrifying. It calls to the subject, whispering their name from the darkest shadows of the night. None but the subject can hear the Hush-lie but once heard they are doomed to die within a moon's cycle. For three nights the Hush-lie will come around to whisper the subject's name from the night's deep gloom. A few of the stories claim that by appeasing this fey the subject can learn from it a detail or two about their death and possibly use that information to avoid dying. The most famous of these stories hold that the Hush-lie, a disembodied voice, wants what it doesn't have. A body.

The House Spirit

This type of fey is bound to a dwelling, commonly a rural dwelling. Urban places are too far removed from nature to support a house spirit for long. They tend to remain hidden by way of magic. The relationship between the occupants of the dwelling and the house spirit is often complex. One of the universal tenants of dealing with this type of fey is, make sure it likes you but don't let it love you or hate you. Making offerings to the house spirit is common and expected by the fey. In return, they will do small tasks and look out for the family. It is rare that they allow themselves to be seen. When the relationship is not good the house spirit will leave, but not before spending a year and a day making the occupants miserable. How awful this is, depends on how much the spirit was offended by the occupants.

The people of the Middle Lands have half a dozen different common names (Belnik, Flingsom, Muldrez, Hopwevs, Ulfston, and Aprozi) for the house spirit, all referring to the same type of fey. Appearance also differs with region and name. In Sulkor the most common manifestation is called a Belnik, which resembles a five inch tall, bald, elderly male, with dark green leathery skin, a wide brim hat, a cane, and a pipe. Belnik warns their family of dangers like fires and intruders, often doing so by striking metal pots or pans with their cane. They have a taste for beer when the moon is full.

People along the Nocmal river have their own brand of house spirit called a Flingsom. They have the appearance of a foot tall squat humanoid with a catfish head. While they will sometimes perform basic household tasks when the family is ill, their most famed activity is warning the family of floods. They do this by opening the back door repeatedly the day before the flood. The more severe the flood the more often they will open the back door. They love fresh bread and honey.

House spirits found on the western coast, along the Sea of Storms' coast, are called Hopwevs and look like hares with hands at the end of their long ears. They commonly scream to scare off intruders and throw tiny rocks at the front windows to warn the family when livestock is getting sick. Families should leave a gift of dried fruit on the hearth to appease the Hopwev.

Mostor's most common type of house spirit is dubbed an Aprozi. Appearing as a two foot tall, red-skinned woman with bat-like ears, tiny sharp teeth, and almond-shaped eyes which have cat-like pupils. She is attracted to babies and small children whom she will watch over, biting anything that threatens her ward. Indeed, children will often see them until they lose their first baby tooth, at which point the fey will consider the child too old for such contact but will still protect the child unseen. She will also steal the teeth as they are lost. Aprozi will move on should the home have no children with baby teeth remaining. The legends warn that should the Aprozi love the child too much they will take it away to the fey city in the Between Land. Aprozi should never be fed by the child as that may make them become too attached to their ward.

One of the common house spirits of Argos, the Ulfston, has a special love of horses. They will often braid the mane and/or tail of any horses on the property. These braids are very complex and beautiful.

Sometimes the Ulfston will even shoe a horse in exchange for a cup of hot very sweet tea and a bit of buttered toast. Finally, while they are never seen, Ulfston are heard, from time to time, to whistle. The whistle often warns of danger.

The Muldrez are only known to inhabit dwellings in the hills or mountainous regions of the Middle Lands. While rarely seen, they appear as a squat porcupine-like, bipedal, critter standing little more than fifteen inches high yet having hands the size of a grown man's. Muldrez fiercely protects their home and its occupants. Any that seek to harm these people will be viciously cursed by the fey. More importantly, at least to most of those lucky enough to live with a Muldrez, they will fetch water every morning. One or more buckets of water will be placed on the front doorstep without fail. This service is not free, the fey expects a refreshing beverage will be left on the front doorstep in the evening, one for each bucket of water brought that morning. A small cup of milk or tea or wine will suffice but which depends on the tastes of the individual fey. Failing to put out the cups will annoy the Muldrez. The first time is forgiven if extra cups are put out later. But if three consecutive nights go by without, then the water stops as well. The fey will spend the next lunar cycle making life unbearable for the inhabitants before moving on.

While these are the most common house spirits in the Middle Lands they are not the only ones to be found. Many others are out there, perhaps dozens more. All are a little different and all are tied to local myth and legend.

The Sad Ones

This group of fey spirits are unique in that they all began as mortals. Mortal children. All died doing what they should not have been doing. Things like playing too close to the pond, playing around the abandoned well, or playing in the marsh. These children then became part of local folklore in the form of cautionary tales (often embellished) and later, with a little fey magic, they became something to be feared as well. The combination of an area's natural magic and fey influence and the belief of the local populace in the stories and a variety of other factors all coalesce to create a new Sad One. The newborn fey spirit will shape itself to the local tales surrounding the child, to a degree. Think of it like making a pearl, the catalyst being the death of a child and the fey magic, the proverbial grain of sand. The local myth that arises around the child would be like the layers that form the pearl. Time and environment make the Sad One as surely as they make the pearl.

The Sad Ones have many of the memories of the child whose death spawned them. They are lonely and want to play with other children but they are bound to the place they died, or places very much like them, hence the widespread popularity of some of the Sad Ones. These are all places children are not allowed to play in. So, the Sad Ones must lure the children in and then, try to keep them. Alive or not.

When parents warn their children to stay away from those caves on the hill or they'll join Bloody Bradley, who died there some years ago, they are birthing a legend that could become real by way of fey magic and their belief. Some of the commonly known Sad Ones in the Middle Lands include Mickey "the White" Bryce who uses his long bony arms to pull children through the ice. Laughing Lana cunningly tricks children into looking down the well then pushes them in where she keeps them until they die, licking their tears for pleasure. Then there's Wee Abner who catches children unaware as they look over the edge of the precipice and pushes them into the ravine. Finally, Annie Blackeye lures children into the bog where her strong hands pull them into the muck. In all these cases the local folklore says the former child, now a beast died and inhabits a nearby place that fits its legend. For example, Wee Abner is always near a canyon or an overlook or a ravine. Some high place that a child could fall, or be pushed, from.

There are many more forms of fey than the ones described here. The folklore has hundreds of stories regarding fey. While Fey often stay in the Between Land many spend significant time in this world.

Giants

In the Middle Lands, when someone talks about a giant they mean a hill giant. That is the common type of giant familiar to people of the Empire. While stone giants can be found in the mountains they are so rare as to be virtually unknown by most citizens. There has not been a credible recorded sighting of a frost or fire giant in three hundred years. And no storm, or cloud giants in over a thousand years. So, the tales of larger, more powerful, and smarter giants than the hill variety are dismissed as travelers' exaggerations. That is not to say they don't exist, only that none have lived to tell the tale.

That said, fire giants are found in the Spice Kingdoms. They have thick upper bodies, stand about 12 feet tall, weighing near 2000 lbs, have coal black skin, flame orange hair/beards, crimson eyes, and jagged yellow teeth. In combat, they favor huge swords and wear mail reinforced with dragon hide. Frost giants are north of the Winter Wall. They are larger, close to 15 feet tall but not as heavily muscled, weighing close to 2800 lbs and have ivory colored skin, bluish-white or yellow hair/beards, pale blue eyes, and dead white teeth. For combat they like big axes and heavy scale mail armor. The high ranking ones braid their beards. Cloud giants live mostly in Rektor. They stand around 18 feet tall and weight close to 5000 lbs but do not look overly muscular. Having bluish skin ranging from pale blue to cobalt blue and hair that tends to vary between silver and brass tones they look almost slim to spite their great stature. In war, they employ massive two-handed clubs made of iron bound tree trunks and fine plate armor. Finally, storm giants may have vanished from the mortal world altogether. The last "documented" encounter took place on an uncharted island deep in the Sea of Storm. The account reported that giant was over 21 feet tall and 8500 lbs, having light green skin, dark green hair, and silvery-gray eyes (legend says some had violet toned skin, hair, and eyes) who did battle by hurling bolts of lightning but wore no visible armor.

The more common hill giant is about 11 feet tall and 1450 lbs, with human toned skin, hair and red-rimmed eyes. They dress in furs and skins, throw large rocks, or wield small logs as clubs. Not being very bright, they are known for a keen sense of smell. Many speak broken Common in addition to their own tongue. They have been known to keep a worg pup or two and raise them as pets.

Stone giants stick to mountain caves and so are rarer. Standing 12 feet tall and weighing 1600 lbs they have a grayish skin tone that varies from light to dark but little body hair. What is there tends to be thin and bluish-gray to black. Black eyes and metal-colored teeth complete the look. They wear grayish leather armor and use spears or stone clubs. Some keep pet cave bears of whom they are very fond.

Gnolls

Typically, a gnoll is 6.5 feet tall and weighs 225 pounds. While they are lazy and tend not to build their own settlements they do take over abandoned villages or warrens and use them until they are no longer suitable. Gnolls love to have slaves. Slaves are used for every imaginable labor around the gnoll lair. The ones that underperform are eaten. Eventually, they always underperform.

Gnoll bands are relatively small, typically no more than one-hundred gnolls. Tribes are more like breeds, the dominant breed of a band determines what tribe they identify as. The most well-known tribes are the Black Backs, Blue Tails, Red Snouts, Sand Manes, and White Ears. There are no leaders at the tribe level but sometimes a very strong or very savvy gnoll will come along and unite many bands to wreak havoc.

The one thing that gets gnolls off their lazy backsides, most of the time, is a good hunt. They love to run down prey, so long as it doesn't involve too much running. What's more, their game is using pack hunting tactics to take down wounded prey. It's not sporting but they like it. The best moment of the hunt for any gnoll is when they start to eat the innards of their still living prey.

Goblins

The smallest of the goblinoids, a goblin stands on average 3.75 feet tall and weighs 50 pounds. Called "tunnel rats" by their larger brethren they are also the most numerous of goblinoids. Other races often use goblin proclivity for mating as some form of insult.

While goblins will dig warrens, something they do well, they will also take over abandoned places. In the mountains, on the plains, by the sea, deep in the forest, it is all the same to the goblin. They breed and spread and then breed some more. War is the only thing that really keeps goblin populations in check.

As individuals, goblins are generally weak, frightened, and stupid creatures. In groups, they are belligerent, rambunctious, and stupid creatures. Goblins follow strength out of both fear and awe. They want to win so following the strong is a step in the right direction for any goblin. The strongest leaders can gather a substantial horde of goblins. While most tribes number only a few hundred the largest is currently about eight-thousand. The largest known tribe ever was under the goblin King Utty Face Chewer who gathered nearly twenty-five-thousand goblins to his banner. Much land burned and many fell before the Face Chewer tribe.

Every tribe of goblins has a "goblin king" that rules them and from whom the tribe's name is taken. A king rules the tribe absolutely and they follow him for his strength. Showing weakness is a quick way for a king to become a former king. Some of the currently famous kings are Mumbro the Fish Eater, Torek Eye Biter, and Zippy the Paw Taker. Their tribes are large and well-known in the Middle Lands. These large tribes launch raids on other settlements at every turn. They even get bold enough to engage the armies of the Empire from time to time.

Goblins at war are a terrible sight. The large tribes will flood the battlefield with a few thousand screaming goblins that just wash over whatever is in the way. They often use a multi-prong attack strategy in which the main force slams the enemy's front line with utter abandon while worg riders sweep wide right and left then turn to hit the enemy's flank and/or rear as they can. The smaller tribes like to force an enemy into a defensive position and firebomb them. Goblins love to use fire in war. Goblins love to use fire anytime at all. While some of the essentials of cooking may escape them, they still build the cook fire high, even if they just use it to light the slaughtering ground. "Fun glowy glowy!" they chant.

Hobgoblins

An average hobgoblin stands 5 feet tall and weighs 160 pounds. They are the builders and visionaries of the goblinoid races. That is not to say that they themselves build things, they direct slaves to build things for the most part. The exception being that they are fantastic weapon and armor smiths and war engine designers. They are also marvelous tacticians and their excellent organization skill make them wonderful clerks as well. Hobgoblins have the ambition to build empires, fortunately for the *World*, they never seem to get enough slaves to realize that ambition.

Hobgoblins are the most orderly of the goblinoid races. They are organized by tribe, which they call a "kindom". Other races commonly and incorrectly use the term kingdom rather than kindom. When members of different kindoms encounter each other, it often ends in bloodshed and death. There are six well-known kindoms of hobgoblins, Ahthrogs, Ganron, Hahvrin, Murlashdu, Sulthgoth, Yovvan and another score not so well-known. A kindom is made up of clans that are related by bloodline. Clans are a little more volatile than kindoms and seem to come and go, sometimes with alarming speed.

The largest kindoms have 20,000 to 30,000 hobgoblins in them. They are not all in one settlement, in fact, it is rare that a settlement has more than three-thousand hobgoblins plus some slaves. A typical hobgoblin settlement is a war camp with up to a thousand warriors, a few hundred slaves, up to a hundred bugbears, and maybe two-hundred goblins who are kept out of the main camp and away from sources of fire. More than one camp has been put to the torch by goblins playing with "The fun glowy glowy!"

Kobolds

The average kobold is about 3 feet tall and weighs about 35 pounds. They are cowards alone and bold in groups, the larger the group the braver they get. They are some of the best miners around and master trap builders. Their warrens are full of traps as are any caves surrounding their lair. Kobold traps are not always deadly. In fact, many are designed to trap and hold interlopers so the kobolds can take them prisoner. While kobolds do sometimes kill and eat prisoners they often sell them to hobgoblins or gnolls or sometimes even orcs. Some tribes give away slaves taken to keep other, more powerful, creatures at bay.

Some of the more well-known kobold tribes include the Acid Flingers, Fire Scales, Iron Teeth, Scar Snouts, and Smoke Eaters. There are dozens of lesser-known, smaller tribes as well. A typical tribe is about two-hundred kobolds with the largest having up to three-thousand kobolds. Such large tribes are very rare.

Kobolds will pull up stakes and leave everything behind for the opportunity to serve a dragon. If they hear of a dragon in the area they quickly organize a welcoming party and seek a meeting. If the dragon will have them the whole tribe will quickly relocate to a spot closer to their new master/mistress.

Many years ago a great kobold shaman and seer recorded a foretelling. She saw that the long sleeping dragon blood would awaken and her people would take strength from it. The Dragon Scion would walk the *World*. Kobolds would have their place beside the dragons and rule under the masters. Since that time many a kobold has stepped up to say they are the Scion and promptly been eaten by a passing ogre or troll or the like. But every time it happens the other kobolds rush to follow the Scion and months of chaos follow. The foretelling is something that every kobold knows, they hear it from the egg on.

Liches

Mortals tend to fear death. When the life of a powerful magic wielder nears its end, it is not uncommon for the less ethical to turn to dark magic, seeking to cheat death. Knowledge, desire, and force of will combine with magic to create a lich. There are several paths to lichdom. Some use necromantic magic to bind their will permanently to their flesh. Others have an immortality ritual that is poorly designed or executed. A few bargain with dark forces from beyond. The end result is the same, the lich passes from a state of humanity to a non-human, nonliving existence through force of will and magic prowess.

The curse of lichdom is that while the physical form remains with the mind locked within, the body still decays. Much of the lich's time and effort go to slowing this rot. Even if it takes centuries, the flesh will someday fail and fall to dust. It is the fate of all lich yet their madness requires they resist this fate.

A lich is most often encountered within its hidden chambers, this lair typically being in some wilderness area or vast underground labyrinth, and in any case both solidly constructed of stone and very dark. In terms of a lich's lair, a laboratory and library are ubiquitous. The lich will walk these halls and chambers going about its unlife, devoted to prolonging itself. It is rare that the lich leaves, they prefer to act by way of proxies. Some use lesser undead or even mortal neophytes seeking to become necromancers.

Appearances vary but the common visage is that of mummified corpse. What leathery skin that remains is often covered in mystical tattoos and stretched tight over bone and desiccated muscle. Much of the hair has fallen out and what remains is thin and wispy. The eyes, rotted, have sunken to dark pits and glowing points of light emit from otherwise black eye-sockets. Often, garments are also rotting and caked in dust.

Lizardfolk

Lizardfolk vary but most stand between 6 and 7 feet tall and weigh between 180 to 250 pounds. They are a simple, private, and peaceful people. The last two centuries have been very hard on the lizardfolk living along the Danchu and Yahsur rivers. Both rivers have seen explosive growth of human populations. The humans use the rivers for trade and travel. In addition, they have diverted massive amounts of water via a myriad of canals used to irrigate distant farmland. This has caused many marshlands to slowly vanish. Drying up as the river's overflow is greatly reduced.

While largely peaceful, the lizardfolk have been taking action. They have not made the connection that the canals are to blame but they have tried to fight off the humans that settle in land that was once marshlands. Along the Yahsur they have had a little success but the Danchu is lost to them. In addition to the marshlands along the rivers drying up, both the Lesmah Swamp and the great Grey Marsh have been slowly shrinking. The lizardfolk are worried and they are becoming more desperate to save their homes as time progresses.

More lizardfolk are venturing outside of their marshy homes. Some have been exiled and others are seeking answers to save their people. Sadly, many die as a result of misunderstandings. These arise as a result of cultural differences which make it hard for lizardfolk to function in the foreign settlements. When not killed by guards trying to subdue them, they are imprisoned for violating laws they don't understand.

Minotaurs

On average, a minotaur is 8 feet tall and weighs 900 pounds. There are many stories surrounding minotaurs and their lairs but the most famous is that of their origin. The common legend is that during the Savage Time the Old Gods cursed one bloodline above all others. They were cursed to live and to kill. Their savage killing and eating of other mortals warped them and this corruption manifested itself by changing them, giving them the head of a bull and massive hooves in place of feet.

As much as the minotaur loves to hunt and kill and eat humans and other such races they love to do it in ways that terrorize their prey even more. They commonly say, "Fear makes the meat sweet!" Harrying their quarry through a labyrinth has become their favorite method. It is the minotaurs natural cunning that makes this so appealing to them. A maze is child's play to the mind of a minotaur. And at the same time, they often confound the prey. This also appeals to the minotaur's sadistic side. To be honest, that is just about every "side" a minotaur has.

Minotaurs are solitary creatures until it is time to mate. A strong bull will try to attract as many cows as he can. It is not uncommon to have two or three cows for a single bull. A single minotaur is usually born to a cow. Twins are rare and regarded as holy. By its second year, a young minotaur has fully developed horns and can fight an orc on equal footing. By its fifth year, a minotaur is larger than a man, and by its tenth year, it has attained adult size and mannerisms. At this point, a young bull will leave the lair, or if the dominant bull is old, he can be challenged by the younger bull. Only the winner will live. The young cows leave to seek a strong, unrelated, bull.

The young that leave will wander until they find a suitable lair or a mate. It is not uncommon for that to take some years. By their fifteenth year, they have usually found both a lair and a mate. Caves or ruins or even city sewer systems can become lairs to a wandering minotaur. Some are even enlisted by other monsters or evil folk to be mercenaries or guardians. Some gold and the chance to kill humans are generally all it takes to hire a minotaur.

Morlocks

A typical morlock stands just over 5 feet tall and weighs roughly 150 pounds. Blind, they live in the ruins of long-forgotten civilizations deep underground. On the longest and darkest of nights, they return to the surface and hunt. Tales of morlocks stealing children from their cribs are common fireside stories in the Empire. These tales have their base in fact and the children taken do not last long among the morlocks. In recent years morlock activities have increased sharply and they can come above ground just about anywhere there are caves. Due to this, even the most heavily patrolled lands can be raided.

According to legend, during the Savage Time humans fled the terrors wrought by the Old Gods. They fled to every conceivable location, including deep into the Underdark. It did not go well for those people. The darkness would rob them of much. Some say they found a baneful artifact deep under the ground referred to as the Bone Obelisk. It is said that this twisted monument was carved from the bones of a long forgotten and insane deity. The people worshiped it and it changed them, corrupted them and showed them the secrets of becoming one with the shadows of the Underdark. The cost of the compact reached deep into them and they began to feed indiscriminately, so long as it was meat. The fresher the better. Soon they would be both cannibals and necrophages. With their humanity lost they continued to devolve until they became what is now known as morlocks.

The stories go on to say that deep in the Underdark is a ruined city, swarming with morlocks, where the Bone Obelisk rests. It is said the Obelisk exudes a softly glowing mist that blankets the city in a dim light, just enough to make one wish for darkness. For thousands of humanoids, this city of blind horrors is the last thing they will ever see. Its halls echo with the near constant screams of captives being consumed alive. The last person who reported seeing this city and lived was over six centuries ago. All accounts say she was never the same. Some even say, she went back there, to that city of blood, and faced the nightmare that would never leave her in peace. Faced it and was devoured by it.

Other morlock settlements are not really worth the name. Small bands tend to take up residence in caves close to prey. On average such a band is no more than twenty morlocks. They tend to hunt in packs, ambushing the unlucky and swarming them with rending claws and clicking teeth.

Ogres

Standing 10 feet tall and weighing close to 950 pounds, ogre are the "littlest giant". They spend a great deal of time working for others. Even with their relatively low intelligence, there is enough they can do to earn the rates they want. Make no mistake, they are well compensated and in high demand. Orcs love to employ ogres as mercenaries, each one is worth a dozen orcs on the line. When orcs go to war they take as many ogres as they can find.

Most problems begin when the ogres have downtime. The only thing worse than a bored bugbear is a bored ogre. They will make their own fun and that fun is always painful for something smaller and weaker, which most things are. Games like "How many thumps can it take?" and "How many sticks can I stick in it?" and "How does it taste?" and the all-time favorite "Will my club fit in it?", while being time-honored classics loved by generations of ogre are not so much fun for everyone around the ogre. Well, orcs like it until the kobolds run out.

Home life for the ogre is not much different from work. They live in caves or abandoned structures with small groups of ogres related by blood. At most a dozen members make up these family units. Fighting is common. Mating is totally indiscriminate. Anything that doesn't fight back hard enough is food. This sums up the average ogre household.

Ogres keep slaves but end up eating them within a few days. The idea of slave labor, while good in the minds of most ogres, does not stand up to a rumbling stomach for long. The only chance a slave has is to keep the food coming as fast as possible. That and avoid the ogres looking for a place to put their club.

Orcs

Savage and strong, the average orc is roughly 6 feet tall and 210 pounds. They are, without a doubt, the most problematic marauders in the Middle Lands. The combination of a high level of hostility and high reproductive rates and environmental flexibility makes the orc a constant obstacle. While they favor mountainous or hilly regions they are also fairly common in the forest, on the plains, and in coastal regions. Caves, ruins, or freshly abandoned structures are often taken over by orcs and used as a base. No settlement within two days of an orc encampment will have to wait long for an attack or raid.

Orcs are quick to paint their faces and attack. With a weaker adversary, they ride in on dire wolves, making a great show of it, and roll over any resistance before taking what they want, which is everything. But strong enemies are harried, supply lines are attacked, patrols are ambushed, snipers are used, and terror is encouraged. Orcs do not play fair and, while not the smartest of creatures, they are cunning enough to use complex strategies. Sadly, for the orcs, they are often a victim of their own success. The better they do the more orcs come to "get a piece of the action" and the more chaotic things become. It gets harder and harder for the orcs to carry out indirect warfare like that for long. Soon, different bands are stepping on each other's feet and they start fighting one another. At this point, a smart orc war chief switches to the direct assault so all the orcs can focus on attacking the same thing at the same time. Often, that change in strategy will allow the orcs to excel again.

It is at this point that orcs are at their most threatening. A screaming horde of hundreds of orcs is something that has ended more than one borderland town. Such hordes are common. Every year scores of small borderland villages are erased by such attacks. The larger hordes can number in the thousands and threaten much larger settlements. Fortunately, those large hordes are less common and will quickly draw the attention of any and all nearby armies loyal to the Empire.

But, as horrifying as these attacks are it is not death that frightens most people, it's being taken and living in captivity. Orcs take slaves, often they go out of their way to take slaves, and life as a slave to orcs is something most would not wish on their most hated enemy. A slave can only expect to be branded, used as their orc masters desire, then to die horribly for the sport of orcs, and end it all by being eaten by those same orcs. Few will escape, the ones that do are never the same.

Female slaves can expect additional horrors for they are often used as breeding stock. It is not at all unknown for female orcs to pick a male slave and couple with them. Most orcs think of this as foul because the male slaves are rarely strong enough to make good breeding stock. In the end, orcs value half-orcs. The half-orc can often be as cruel as any orc and are very often more intelligent. If they are of the right temperament, the half-orc can do very well among orcs, even becoming a leader. Those that lack such a temperament often die young or slip away in search of a better and less brutal place.

Orcs are tribal creatures. Every band of orcs is part of a tribe. Tribes are based on bloodline. The largest and most well-known tribes in the Middle Lands are the Bloody Blade, Bone Breakers, Death Eye, Ear Takers, Rotting Hand, Rune Tooth, Sly Tongue, and Vile Blood. There are dozens of other, smaller, tribes and new ones form all the time as others vanish. Every tribe has its sign, used as a battle standard, honor tattoo, and an ownership brand. Tribe status is measured by the power of its warriors, the number of its slaves, the cruelty of its leader, and the gold they take.

Rakshasa

When the gap was sealed and the Savage Time ended, not every last beast the Old Gods sent to the mortal world died. Some adapted. One foul spirit of the void began to take the shape of humanoids, and by consuming their souls, it found a new energy supply to replace what it lost when the gap was sealed.

This new source of power would sustain it. And it evolved into something never seen before, the creature now known as rakshasa. The consumption of souls continues.

Centuries later they still seek to carry out the will of the Old Gods, tearing at the mortals in every way they can. They do this for themselves, not for the Old Gods, they believe they are all that remains of the divine glory that was the Old Gods. And hence, they believe they should inherit the legacy of the Old Gods. Fortunately, their numbers are small and not likely to grow quickly as reproduction is difficult.

To reproduce a rakshasa must fully corrupt a mortal and merge with them. Years later they split, becoming two independent rakshasas. Due to the time required and the difficulty of corrupting a mortal to the level necessary for merging, the rakshasa can barely maintain their numbers. As a result, they are very careful and avoid direct confrontation unless no other option is available. They will flee if possible, and physical assault is only used when success is absolute. Subterfuge and stealth are their tools.

Rakshasa must eat one mortal, thereby consuming their soul, every lunar cycle or they start to degrade, losing one hit die for each cycle they don't eat. If they lose all their hit dice they fade into nothingness. Eating returns them to full strength. Rakshasa like to make a production of the feeding. It becomes an event, one they savor.

Sahuagins

A sahuagin stands 7 feet tall and weighs about 250 pounds. In the Middle Lands, about one-fifth of all sahuagins have the amphibious mutation. Commonly called "sea devils", sahuagins kill for sport as much as out of need. Next to pirates, sahuagins are the bane of both shipping lanes and coastal settlements. They come in the night, gliding silently over the sand from the sea, into small fishing villages to whisk people away. There are tales of entire villages being emptied over the course of a single night. Many seaside villages keep nightly vigils, most especially during moonless nights & the highest tides of the year.

Ships anchored in harbors are vulnerable to these nightly incursions as well. Vessels carrying large amounts of dried meat and/or sweet peanut cream are most likely to draw sahuagin attention. Their amphibious raiding parties will often sneak onto such a ship, kill the crew and investigate its stores. They will take any valuables and/or foodstuff they like. This often includes the crew's bodies.

Even at sea and under full sail ships can be attacked. Sahuagin are strong swimmers and can keep pace with all but the fastest of ships. They will often latch on to the ship's underside with their powerful claws and climb the hull in the dark of night. Once on board they kill any watchers and stall the ship, allowing more of their brethren to join them. If they can kill the crew they will strip the ship bare.

The average sahuagin raiding party is up to eight warriors if they are targeting a village or ship at least half will have the amphibious mutation and it's not uncommon for all of them to have it. Larger parties may even have a sahuagin shaman who could cast Air Breathing (a variant of the Water Breathing spell) which would allow any non-amphibious sahuagin to safely venture out of the water for a while.

Sahuagin outposts and raiding party camps are often in water at least a few hundred feet deep while actual settlements are in much deeper water, often a thousand feet or more. These undersea cities are both magnificent and terrifying to behold. They can house several thousand sahuagin and their slaves, often merfolk or aqua-elves. Each settlement is ruled by a sahuagin baron. It is rumored that somewhere in the deep ocean is a city of unparalleled size and wonder which is ruled over by the sahuagin king.

Troglodytes

A typical troglodyte stands about 5 feet tall and weighs 140 pounds. While numerous, infighting has kept troglodytes in check for centuries. Prior to the last decade, encounters with them were rare. But something is changing and more troglodytes are coming to the surface to hunt. There are even reports of the mythic dark elves of the Underdark being seen commanding troglodytes. While the lore is sparse, what is known of dark elves says this is very unlikely. Yet something is happening below.

Raiding parties often number between 12 and 20 troglodytes. In the borderlands, they are more common but caves can be anywhere and any cave could lead to a troglodyte lair. It is the increased attacks in the "civilized" lands that has generated much worry. Southern Mostor is one of the latest hotbeds of activity.

Troglodytes do not get along with those outside their tribe. A typical tribe being 50 to 60 mated pairs, with at least as many young and half again as many eggs. Tribes settle in cave systems or ruins. They are ruled by the chief troglodyte who is often a priest as well.

Religion has a major role in troglodyte life. There is no one entity universally worshiped by all troglodytes, it is on a tribe by tribe basis. That adds to the tension between tribes which has historically driven the different tribes to fight one another. While powerful denizens of the Abyssal domains are often worshiped, Elder Beings are also worshiped. Some even follow the Old Gods, in a perverted fashion.

Trolls

Trolls stand about 14 feet tall and weigh around 1,500 pounds. Their emaciated, hunched posture makes them look smaller. Males are solitary and females live in small groups with their young and up to three other females who are often siblings or older offspring. Males come around looking for a mate from time to time and if one of the females is inclined she will accept him. He stays for a short time to mate, moving on later. Trolls defending a spawning lair have a +2 bonus to all melee attack and damage rolls.

Trolls are almost always hungry. This leads to a never-ending search for food. It also means that hiring a troll can be easier than one may think, so long as you have food to offer. The best food is some form of fresh humanoid but trolls are not picky so just about any meat will work. Gold is not a huge motivator, they like it just fine but food is more valuable to them. The treasure a troll tends to amass generally comes from the belongings of its prey. Which is why it is often found among the bones of past meals which litter the floor of a troll's lair.

A troll's lair is almost always underground. It could be a cave or sewer or a tomb or some other ruins. What matters is that it is isolated and safe. Other than that, trolls can hardly be called picky when it comes to where they sleep. The solitary males are more transient, while females establish spawning lairs in which young are raised. These spawning lairs will often see generations of trolls grow to adulthood.

It takes about twelve years for a newborn troll to reach full adulthood. By the age of four, they can fight as well as an orc. They can get by on their own from the age of six. By their tenth year, they are ready to leave the spawning lair. Males go off on their own while females will seek a spawning lair with room to accommodate them. If one is not found they will establish a new one in a neighboring territory, often many miles from the nearest spawning lair. It is unknown how long a troll can naturally live but some subjects have been found to be over seventy years old.

Anyone seeking to employ a troll should be content to approach males. They would not be well received at a spawning lair. The females have no time to leave due to the young they care for. On top of that, they would see the interloper as a threat to their young. Even when dealing with a solitary male, the process of retaining a troll is tricky and dangerous. Most don't make it past introductions before it gets violent. It is best to open with food, the amount of food being in proportion to the length of time one wants to talk.

Vampires

Myth speaks of an ancient alchemist who sought immortality for herself and all of her bloodline. She harnessed the lore of lost gods and dark power only to have it turn on her, cursing her and her bloodline. Those affected will not age as long as they avoid beheading, the sun, and fire. Indeed, as the years pass they will grow stronger and faster than any mortal. But there is a price, they must drink the blood of the living, which they will forever crave in place of all mortal food and drink.

In time, they found they could pass the curse on by giving their blood to mortals that were near death. The mortal dies and three nights later rises as a vampire. However, a mortal drinking the blood who is not "near death" will find themselves touched by the curse and compelled to follow the orders of the blood's owner. The more they take the blood, the longer they are subjected to being controlled. It takes weeks of daily exposure for someone to be totally subsumed in this way. Vampires will often use such a dominated person as a daytime guardian or servant. Having more than a few such servants is impossible.

If a vampire can't or won't feed, they age quickly and grow weak. However old and weak they become, they will not die. There is also the pain of hunger that will fall upon them and drive them toward insanity.

In a matter of weeks, a healthy vampire will become a weak and shriveled husk. After reaching that point it would take at least a week of regular blood feeding to return to normal. In extreme cases of prolonged starvation, the vampire may require months or even years to recover.

The curse will twist a good person and make them evil. The stories claim that is the final outcome, even if it takes years. Some speculate that it is seeing humans as food that does this. Others say it's just another aspect of the curse. Still others say it's because all joy is removed from a vampire's life (the warmth of the sun, the pleasant cup of wine or a meal, the ability to have children, and a number of other small joys). Whatever the reason, vampires tend to be evil and often very cruel.

Just like people, each vampire is different. They have their own goals and desires and dreams. Some study magic and become powerful. Others watch history unfold with childlike glee. A few become puppet-masters and guide the lives of mortal descendants. Many tend to amass wealth over the long years.

As they are individuals, the only commonality for a vampire's lair is that it is often in a dark place and likely underground. A place that mattered to the vampire when they were mortal is chosen more often than not. As a rule, vampires are stealthy and will avoid exposing themselves and their undead nature.

Vampirism is not a plague that spreads like a wildfire. It's more like a slow and steady rot that eats lives by the score. Vampires don't often seek to spread their curse but each has their own philosophy when it comes to passing it along. There is often a ritualistic quality surrounding the vampire giving their blood. Some even ascribe a ritual to their feeding on blood. It can be as simple as a special cup from which the blood is consumed or something much more complex.

Worgs

Measuring 3 feet tall at the shoulder and weighing close to 300 pounds, worgs are feared for their strength and viciousness. However, the intellect of worgs is often underestimated. In truth, it is the factor that really puts them on another level. They remember past foes and tactics. As trackers, worgs are far superior to dogs or normal wolves. They are determined and never forget a scent they track, most especially the scent of any prey that escaped.

Worgs will, if it suits them, attach their pack to some other group of creatures, so long as it is beneficial. They like goblins because goblins are easy to control and happy to have a pack of worgs. Other creatures they will ally with include orcs, hobgoblins, and various giants. Additionally, they will join with humans if fed and treated well. Being intelligent, one thing all worgs dislike is being treated as pets. In their minds, they are in an alliance and allies are equals. They will not long tolerate being looked at as pets. Worgs hate goblin dogs and will kill them unless allied with the goblins whom the goblin dogs in question are serving. Nothing stops worgs from attacking owlbears, for whom they have an unrelenting hatred. The source of this is a mystery, but something about the scent of an owlbear sets worgs off. Finally, worgs love the taste of halfling and will seek it out when possible. One enterprising goblin took to making "Worg Yummys!", the only worg treat made with real halfling jerky. It did very well and he amassed the largest most aggressive worg rider brigade in goblin history. Then his halfling supply dried up and half the worgs ate their riders in anger over the inferior gnome jerky substitute.

Sometimes a worg is taken as a pup and raised to be a companion of some sort. These worg are not welcomed by any existing pack. Not even their original pack will recognize them. That is not to say the pack will not know them, they will be known by their scent, just not accepted.

A typical worg pack is about ten strong. But, in rare cases, they have been known to have as many as thirty beasts. The pack will be commanded by the most powerful bitch. She controls them and decides with whom the pack will ally themselves. Any pack female can challenge the alpha bitch for leadership. Most fights for dominance are to the death.

Creatures Unique to the Middle Lands

Just like any other place, there are creatures in the Middle Lands that exist nowhere else. What follows are a few examples of such critters.

Fet'louse

Commonly called a marsh trapper, these creatures wait just under the surface muck of a marsh or swamp. From there, they attack anything stepping on them.

Fet'louse

CR 5

N Large aberration

Init +6; Senses blindsense 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +15

Defense AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 16 (+2 Dex, +7 natural, -1 size)

hp 52 (7d8+21)

Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +8

Defensive Abilities amorphous; DR 5/piercing or slashing; Resist cold 5, fire 5

Offense Speed 10 ft., swim 10 ft

Melee slam +10 (2d6+8 plus grab), bite +10 (1d8+5)

Statistics Str 20, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 7

Base Atk +5; CMB +11; CMD 13 (can't be tripped)

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills: Escape Artist +8, Knowledge (geography) +10, Perception +15, Stealth +15 (+23 in wetlands),

Sense Motive +8, Survival +10, Swim +17; Racial Modifiers: +4 Stealth (+12 in wetlands), +8 Swim

Ecology Environment: any swamp

Organization: 1 - 3

Treasure: standard

Special Abilities constrict (2d6+8)

Fet'louse are believed to be a distant cousin of the lurking ray. They are found exclusively in wetlands areas, and while warmer climates are preferred, any climate can support them. Their coloration varies, but blends well with the local wetland terrain.

Most victims don't know the danger until the vicious, foot wide maw filled with sharp teeth opens beneath their feet. This is quickly followed by the rest of the beast convulsing and rippling and bashing in an effort to drive its meal into those teeth. All of this is accompanied by the creature shrieking. This is commonly believed to be an effort to surprise, disorientate, and/or scare its prey.

If one could lift a fet'louse off the ground and examine it, one would find a creature resembling a 10 to 12 foot wide fleshy flower, weighing around 600lbs, 900lbs when fully fed. The mouth, in the center, leads to the digestive pouch underneath. The "petals" are flaps of flexible muscle which can undulate, lift up, and curl inward, all of which is done with the goal of forcing food into its mouth. Once enveloped, by way of a successful grapple attack, its prey is crushed to death and eaten. Inorganic items are excreted into the muck beneath the fet'louse. While they don't care so much about riches, they do make several caches of excreted items in order to have something to offer when bargaining.

The most surprising thing about fet'louse is that they are intelligent and can even speak the common language. While it is possible to speak to them, they are not interested in the affairs of humanoids. Coin is not important to them but they do recognize that it can be useful to get other things. Food is more enticing. A promise of food can lead to fet'louse being employed as guardians, assuming the area they are guarding is a swampy area.

Every wetland area of the Middle Lands supports fet'louse and, as a result of their widespread population, there are regional names for them. In addition to marsh trapper, they are also called bog bo, slip, or mud crik. The average citizen of the Empire sees them as vermin, dangerous and deadly, but still vermin. As fet'louse don't go out of their way to communicate, the common belief is that they are animals. While some of the more knowledgeable sages know different, the idea that they are at least as intelligent as people has not caught on with the general population. Other swampland humanoids, such as lizardfolk, don't have this delusion and are more likely to interact with a fet'louse.

Jor Lizard

Similar in appearance to a large zebra-tailed lizard, the jor lizard is used as a mount by some tribals in hot and dry areas.

Jor Lizard

CR 1

N Medium animal

Init +2; Senses low-light vision; Perception +4

Defense AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +2 natural)
hp 15 (2d8+6)
Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +0

Offense Speed 50 ft.
Melee bite +5 (1d6+4)

Statistics Str 18, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 1
Base Atk +1; CMB +5; CMD 7
Feats: Endurance
Skills: Perception +4

Ecology Environment: warm deserts or plains
Organization: 2 - 12
Treasure: none

Special Abilities Adapted to desert movement. Hence, the overland movement multiplier in sandy desert areas is at $\frac{3}{4}$ rather than the $\frac{1}{2}$ listed for normal use.

Jor'ledos means "great sand lizard," they are often called a jor lizard or a jor for short. A typical jor, having a slim and sleek build, is 400lbs and stands about 4.5 feet tall at the shoulder. They are 10 to 12 feet long, nearly half of which is tail.

These lizards are carnivorous, desert dwelling reptiles that inhabit the dry southern plains of Sulkor and some areas of the Great Desert. Jor are almost as adept at water retention as camels and faster in the open desert. In addition, they are very strong for their slight build and relative size. For these reasons, some desert tribes have domesticated jor, using them as mounts.

In the wild, jor eat a variety of desert insects. Domesticated jor live off beetles raised by tribals. The jor's teeth are small and designed for crushing insect exoskeletons. While insects are their main food, any jor will eat whatever meat they can put teeth into. Typically, small prey is taken as it comes.

The average lifespan of a jor is fifteen years. They reach adulthood in their second year. A typical breeding pair will have four to six eggs a year. Eggs are buried in sand among rocks until they hatch, about ten weeks. The parents stay close and protect the nest as best they can. In the wild, only two or three of these eggs will live to see adulthood.

A jor's skin is tough and they tend toward earthy color tones with black rings running down the tail. Tribals, however, have a fondness for other colors and domesticated jor have been bred for different colors and patterns when possible. Often times, the brighter and/or more extravagant skin patterns are used by tribal members with higher social status.

The breeding has led to a healthy jor trade among the tribals. In the past half century more non-tribals have been acquiring jor for use as mounts, at least in southern Sulkor. Over the last decade jor racing has been spreading. Some of the cities in Sulkor now have large, sandy rings used as jor tracks. They hold daily races for both sport and gambling. Likewise, jor breeding is moving beyond the tribals.

Mist Dancer

Outside of a host the Mist Dancer resembles a dark vaporous cloud. Its size varies with its relative power but is generally around 5 cubic feet. In this state, they are hard to see under normal circumstances and all but impossible in dim or hazy conditions. Any corpse vessels will have a dark mist that seems to emanate from around the eyes. A live host has no outward signs of possession.

Mist Dancer

CR 8

CE Medium outsider (chaotic, demon, evil, extraplanar)

Init +8; Senses darkvision 60 ft; Perception +20

Defense AC 21, touch 21, flat-footed 17

hp 73 (10d10+18)

Fort +7, Ref +13, Will +8

Defensive Abilities gaseous; DR 10/magic; Resistance to acid 10, cold 10, and fire 10;

Immunity poison, sneak attacks, critical hits, electricity; SR 17

Weakness banishment by fire or sunlight

Offense

Speed fly 30 ft

Melee (by vessel or none without a vessel)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th)

At will - fear (DC 18), telekinesis (DC 19)

1/day - magic jar (DC 19), greater teleport (self only)

Statistics

Str -, Dex 20, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 19

Base Atk +7; CMB +11; CMD 25

Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Acrobatics +14, Bluff +16, Fly +25, Knowledge (local) +14, Knowledge (planes) +14,

Perception +20, Sense Motive +16, Stealth +16

Languages Abyssal, Common; telepathy 100 ft.

Ecology

Environment: any

Organization: 1 - 2

Treasure: standard

Special Abilities

Gaseous Form - constant

Demonic Vessel - +2 to a vessel's Str, Dex, and Con while it is being inhabited. Also +5 to hit/damage.

Finally, the vessel's hit point total is either double their normal or the Dancer's total, whichever is less.

Mist Dancers are an extremely rare phenomenon. Only in the past few centuries has the seal faded enough to allow these creatures to return and it's still not easy for them. Being outsiders from some demonic plane, they come to wreak havoc as they can. As intelligent beings, they can and often do approach situations with a plan to maximize "havoc". Additionally, they often act as agents of a greater power.

Once in the mortal world a Mist Dancer will seek a vessel. Without one they cannot speak (outside of telepathy) or attack physically but can still use their spell-like abilities. Any corpse will do but the more recent dead are better. A corpse can be easily inhabited and animated long-term without issue and will cease rotting while so used. They can also make use of magic jar to possess the living. In both cases, the gaseous Mist Dancer will seem to flow into the vessel's mouth or nose and merge with it. Being rather clever, they will switch vessels to confuse opponents. Switching is a full round action. It is also not unknown for them to take a living host and quietly infiltrate a situation, waiting for the prime moment to strike.

The Mist Dancer's magic jar ability is innate and the "jar" is part of the Mist Dancer and hence, always in range. As the Mist Dancer has no dual nature, its body and soul are one, there is no "body" for it to leave behind while using magic jar. For this reason the magic jar's duration is always a matter of time.

A full round in sunlight or fire will banish a host-less Mist Dancer from the mortal world forcing them to return to their home dimension. Driving them out of a host requires making the vessel unfit or inoperable. This most often means destroying it. Any living host that survives the experience has a high chance of insanity. When insanity doesn't take the person memory loss is common.

Their talents are geared toward infiltration so greater demons use them in that way.

Unlike other demons, Mist Dancers cannot summon more demons.

Basic Encounter Table Format

Assuming that the percentile roll will conform to a standard bell curve distribution then we can set a basic format for a random encounter table. For each region or region type build an encounter table. I will supply a suggested format and some sample climate/location based tables. By all means, create your own if these do not suit you. It must be noted that threat level is not a consideration for me in "random" encounters as they are random. Players should learn to run too and GM's should allow them to do so when they show good judgment. Below is the format that I use for random encounter tables.

% Range	Creature	Notes
01-02	Very Rare	
03-04	Very Rare	
05-07	Rare	
08-10	Rare	
11-14	Uncommon	
15-18	Uncommon	
19-22	Uncommon	
23-26	Uncommon	
27-30	Common	
31-35	Common	
36-40	Common	
41-45	Common	
46-50	Common	
51-55	Common	
56-60	Common	
61-65	Common	
66-70	Common	
71-74	Common	
75-78	Uncommon	
79-82	Uncommon	
83-86	Uncommon	
87-90	Uncommon	
91-93	Rare	
94-96	Rare	
97-98	Rare	
99-00	Very Rare	

Sample Random Encounter Tables

What follows is a set of random encounter tables I use for certain locations. This is not supposed to be a complete list. It should, however, be enough to get started. All these tables are for wilderness areas.

Desert, Hot Locations

This random encounter table should be used for travel within the Great Desert. The encounter chance for this area is 1 in 8 and should be checked twice a day.

% Range	Creature	Notes
01-02	Mummy	Can be encountered alone or with ruins.
03-04	Dragon, Brass	Can be encountered alone or with ruins.
05-07	Basilisk	
08-10	Sphinx	
11-14	Dire Bat	
15-18	Rakshasa	Often pose as traveling merchants.
19-22	Lion	
23-26	Ghast	
27-30	Goblin	
31-35	Skeleton	They often come up out of the sand without warning.
36-40	Monstrous Scorpion	Tiny, Small, or Medium
41-45	Zombie	They often come up out of the sand without warning.
46-50	Humanoid	Mostly tribal humans, some are elven.
51-55	Orc	Hunting or scouting party.
56-60	Caravan	Between 50 and 200 members, including guards and guides.
61-65	Bat Swarm	Only encountered near dawn or dusk, otherwise re-roll or ignore.
66-70	Ghoul	
71-74	Hyena	
75-78	Wight	
79-82	Ogre	
83-86	Specter	
87-90	Monstrous Scorpion	Large, Huge or Gargantuan
91-93	Dire Hyena	
94-96	Ghost	
97-98	Lamia	
99-00	Dragon, Blue	Can be encountered alone or with ruins.

Forest, Cold Locations

This random encounter table should be used for travel within the northern forests of the Middle Lands. On the map these areas are marked by fir trees, see the section "About the Maps" for marker information. The encounter chance for this area is 1 in 6 and should be checked once a day.

% Range	Creature	Notes
01-02	Giant, Frost	
03-04	Vampire	
05-07	Unicorn	
08-10	Treant	
11-14	Dire Bear	
15-18	Giant Stag Beetle	
19-22	Monstrous Spider	Medium, Large, or Huge
23-26	Dire Wolverine	
27-30	Ogre	
31-35	Lesser undead	Zombie and/or Skeleton. Most often past adventurers.
36-40	Humanoid	Mostly tribal humans, some are elven or dwarves.
41-45	Bugbear	
46-50	Gnoll	
51-55	Animal, normal size	Brown bear, eagle, hawk, snow owl, wolf or wolverine
56-60	Goblin	
61-65	Hobgoblin	
66-70	Orc	
71-74	Dire Boar	
75-78	Dryad	
79-82	Centaur	
83-86	Owlbear	
87-90	Dire Wolf	
91-93	Lycanthrope	Humanoid or giant based. Bear, boar, tiger or wolf form.
94-96	Giant Owl	
97-98	Manticore	
99-00	Pseudodragon	

Forest, Temperate Locations

This random encounter table should be used for travel within the non-northern forests of the Middle Lands. On the map these areas are marked by trees, see the section "About the Maps" for marker information. The encounter chance for this area is 1 in 8 and should be checked once a day.

% Range	Creature	Notes
01-02	Lich	
03-04	Cockatrice	
05-07	Pseudodragon	
08-10	Lycanthrope	Humanoid or giant based. Bear, boar, tiger or wolf form.
11-14	Dire Bear	
15-18	Giant Stag Beetle	
19-22	Monstrous Spider	Medium, Large, or Huge
23-26	Dire Wolverine	
27-30	Ogre	
31-35	Lesser undead	Zombie and/or Skeleton. Most often past adventurers.
36-40	Humanoid	Mostly tribal humans, some are elven or dwarves.
41-45	Bugbear	
46-50	Gnoll	
51-55	Animal, normal size	Brown bear, eagle, hawk, snow owl, wolf or wolverine
56-60	Goblin	
61-65	Hobgoblin	
66-70	Orc	
71-74	Dire Boar	
75-78	Dryad	
79-82	Centaur	
83-86	Dire Tiger	
87-90	Giant Owl	
91-93	Treant	
94-96	Ettin	
97-98	Wyvern	
99-00	Unicorn	

Hill and Mountain, Cold Locations

This random encounter table should be used for travel within the northern mountains of the Middle Lands. The encounter chance for this area is 1 in 4 and should be checked once a day.

% Range	Creature	Notes
01-02	Frost worm	
03-04	Frost Giant Jarl	
05-07	Giants	Hill, stone, cloud or storm giants.
08-10	Giant, Frost	
11-14	Dire Wolverine	
15-18	Polar Bear	
19-22	Troll	
23-26	Ghost	
27-30	Ettin	
31-35	Lesser undead	Zombie and/or Skeleton. Most often past adventurers.
36-40	Humanoid	Mostly tribal humans, some are elven or dwarves.
41-45	Bugbear	
46-50	Gnoll	
51-55	Animal, normal size	Brown bear, eagle, hawk, snow owl, wolf or wolverine
56-60	Goblin	
61-65	Hobgoblin	
66-70	Orc	
71-74	Minotaur	
75-78	Winter wolf	
79-82	Troll Skeleton	
83-86	Eagle, giant	
87-90	Dire Bear	
91-93	Griffon	
94-96	Remorhaz	
97-98	Ogre mage	
99-00	Beholder	

Hill and Mountain, Temperate Locations

This random encounter table should be used for travel within all the hills of the Middle Lands. There are no mountains in the Middle Lands that are considered temperate. The encounter chance for this area is 1 in 8 and should be checked once a day.

% Range	Creature	Notes
01-02	Cockatrice	
03-04	Lycanthrope	Humanoid or giant based. Bear, boar, tiger or wolf form.
05-07	Giants	Hill, stone, cloud or storm giants.
08-10	Dire Bear	
11-14	Troll	
15-18	Centaur	
19-22	Dire Wolf	
23-26	Troglodyte	
27-30	Ogre	
31-35	Kobold	
36-40	Lesser undead	Zombie and/or Skeleton. Most often past adventurers.
41-45	Bugbear	
46-50	Humanoid	Mostly tribal humans, some are elven or dwarves.
51-55	Animal, normal size	Boar, brown bear, eagle, hawk, owl, tiger, wolf or wolverine
56-60	Goblin	
61-65	Hobgoblin	
66-70	Orc	
71-74	Owlbear	
75-78	Treant	
79-82	Blink dog	
83-86	Eagle, giant	
87-90	Giant Ant	
91-93	Griffon	
94-96	Chimera	
97-98	Medusa	
99-00	Unicorn	

Hill and Mountain, Hot Locations

This random encounter table should be used for travel within all the southern hills and mountains of the Middle Lands. The encounter chance for this area is 1 in 6 and should be checked twice a day.

% Range	Creature	Notes
01-02	Basilisk	
03-04	Sphinx	
05-07	Giants	Hill, stone, cloud or storm giants.
08-10	Dire Bear	
11-14	Troll	
15-18	Dire Tiger	
19-22	Ghost	
23-26	Minotaur	
27-30	Giant Ant	
31-35	Stirge	
36-40	Lesser undead	Zombie and/or Skeleton. Most often past adventurers.
41-45	Kobold	
46-50	Humanoid	Mostly tribal humans, some are elven or dwarves.
51-55	Animal, normal size	Boar, eagle, hawk, hyena, leopard, lion, owl or tiger
56-60	Goblin	
61-65	Monstrous Scorpion	Small, Medium, or Large
66-70	Orc	
71-74	Yuan-ti	
75-78	Giant Lizard	
79-82	Roc	
83-86	Dire Ape	
87-90	Giant lizard	
91-93	Griffon	
94-96	Giant, Fire	There will be a hot vent of some kind close by.
97-98	Hippogriff	
99-00	Lycanthrope	Humanoid or giant based. Bear, boar, tiger or wolf form.

Marsh/Swamp, Temperate Locations

This random encounter table should be used for travel within all the marsh/swamp areas of the Middle Lands. These areas are marked on the map, see the section "About the Maps" for marker information. The encounter chance for this area is 1 in 5 and should be checked twice a day.

% Range	Creature	Notes
01-02	Dragon, Black	
03-04	Medusa	
05-07	Crocodile, giant	
08-10	Ghost	
11-14	Viper	
15-18	Ghoul	
19-22	Shambling mound	
23-26	Crocodile	
27-30	Skeleton	
31-35	Troll	
36-40	Monstrous Spider	Small or Medium
41-45	Orc	
46-50	Stirge	
51-55	Snake	
56-60	Goblin	
61-65	Lizardfolk	
66-70	Monstrous Scorpion	Small or Medium
71-74	Lizard, monitor	
75-78	Zombie	
79-82	Yuan-ti	
83-86	Ghast	
87-90	Will-o'-wisp	
91-93	Spirit Naga	
94-96	Green Hag	
97-98	Basilisk	
99-00	Hydra	

Plains, Temperate Locations

This random encounter table should be used for travel within all the plains of the Middle Lands. These areas are marked on the map by the absence of other markers and are color coded, see the section "About the Maps" for more information. It should also be noted that while these areas are mostly flat grassland that does not mean a complete absence of bodies of water, trees and hills. The encounter chance for this area is 1 in 10 and should be checked once a day.

% Range	Creature	Notes
01-02	Unicorn	
03-04	Blink Dog	
05-07	Gorgon	
08-10	Displacer beast	
11-14	Rhinoceros	
15-18	Giant Ant	
19-22	Giant Bee	
23-26	Centaur	
27-30	Bison	
31-35	Lesser undead	Zombie and/or Skeleton. Most often past adventurers.
36-40	Tribal Humans	Hunting party
41-45	Bugbear	
46-50	Gnoll	
51-55	Animal, normal size	Cheetah, hawk, lion, owl or wolf
56-60	Goblin	
61-65	Hobgoblin	
66-70	Orc	
71-74	Bison	
75-78	Elephant	
79-82	Locust Swarm	
83-86	Dire Lion	
87-90	Owlbear	
91-93	Chimera	
94-96	Doppelganger	
97-98	Worg	
99-00	Ankheg	

Underground Locations

This random encounter table should be used for travel in underground "wilderness" settings. These can be natural cave systems or ruins or abandoned mines or anything like that. Functioning mines and other places that are "settled" would not use this table and may not have random encounters at all. The encounter chance for this area is 1 in 8 and should be checked twice a day.

% Range	Creature	Notes
01-02	Umber hulk	
03-04	Giant, Stone	Unless in mountain caves, these will be on a quest for their tribe.
05-07	Otyugh	
08-10	Troll	
11-14	Cloaker	
15-18	Grick	
19-22	Dwarf	Possibility a peaceful encounter. Exploration or scouting group.
23-26	Carrion crawler	
27-30	Ogre	
31-35	Ooze	Most often a black pudding but can be any type.
36-40	Derro	Patrol or foraging or scouting group.
41-45	Goblin	Foraging or scouting group.
46-50	Lesser undead	Zombie and/or Skeleton. Most often past adventurers.
51-55	Fungus	
56-60	Morlock	Most often a hunting party, possibility setting an ambush.
61-65	Gnoll	Foraging or scouting group.
66-70	Orc	Foraging or scouting group.
71-74	Troglodyte	Foraging or scouting group.
75-78	Drider	Most often a scouting group.
79-82	Gnome	Possibility a peaceful encounter. Exploration or scouting group.
83-86	Minotaur	
87-90	Aboleth	Water source (river or lake) is encountered too.
91-93	Mind flayer	
94-96	Phase spider	
97-98	Roper	
99-00	Purple worm	

Sample Non-Wilderness Encounter Tables

Encounters in lands that are well settled are less often about "monsters" and more often animals or outlaws or other travelers or guard patrols. Being on a highly traveled road can do a great deal to cut down dangerous encounters. Outlaws are less likely to stake out a section of road that sees regular patrols. Likewise, roads carrying significant trade more often see patrols. It's a conundrum for outlaws.

With that in mind, here are some example encounter tables for non-wilderness roads.

Primary Trade Roads, Temperate Locations

This random encounter table should be used for travel on major roads in "civilized" areas. Many of these will likely be peaceful encounters. The GM may elect to forgo random rolls or lessen the frequency as they like. The encounter chance for this area is 1 in 10 and should be checked four times a day.

% Range	Creature	Notes
01-02	Way Ash'non	Small band, two or three wagons with 10-15 people.
03-04	Goblin	Foraging or scouting group.
05-07	Noble	Sometimes incognito, most often part of a procession with guards.
08-10	Animal, Dire	Badger, bear, boar, lion or wolf
11-14	Stirge	Flock of 5-8 total.
15-18	Eagle, giant	Hunting for food. Sheep, dogs and goats are favored.
19-22	Realm Patrol*	Patrol of kingdom guards. Always at least a full <i>trident</i> (13).
23-26	Sudden Weather	Freakish weather change. Short but intense, often wind/rain.
27-30	Bandits	Small band of 4-6 robbers.
31-35	Merchant	One or two carts with drivers. Local merchants on a short trip.
36-40	Animal, normal size	Badger, boar, lion or wolf
41-45	Traveler	Lone wanderer. Could be anything.
46-50	Local Patrol*	Guards from the nearest town or city. (4 or 8 guards)
51-55	Pilgrims	Small religious group. Sometimes citizens travel to Father's Rest.
56-60	Peddler	Lone merchant with a cart or pack mule.
61-65	Performer	Lone entertainer. Often a bard or storyteller.
66-70	Bandits	Small band of 2-3 robbers.
71-74	Animal, normal size	Cheetah, badger, lion, hyena or wolf
75-78	Merchant Band	Several carts/wagons, drivers, guards, and other staff. (8-12)
79-82	Animal, normal size	Bear (brown or black) or tiger.
83-86	Messenger	A courier. Often on horseback. Often alone.
87-90	Beetle, Giant	Small group looking for grain fields or other food.
91-93	Traveling Carnival	Carts and wagons with 15 to 30 staff/performers.
94-96	Imperial Guard*	Patrol of Imperial Guards. One or two full <i>tridents</i> (13 or 26).
97-98	Lesser undead	Zombie and/or Skeleton.
99-00	Orc	Foraging or scouting group.

* Patrols are often concerned with the intentions of bands of armed individuals on the road. They will likely have questions for such people. This is part of their duty. They are often in a foul mood and always on horseback. If things go badly, at least two are under orders to flee and report.

Secondary Trade Roads, Temperate Locations

This random encounter table should be used for travel on secondary roads in "civilized" areas. While still well traveled, these roads are less patrolled than primary roads. Encounters on these roads may not be peaceful. The encounter chance for this area is 1 in 10 and should be checked twice a day.

% Range	Creature	Notes
01-02	Realm Patrol*	Patrol of kingdom guards. One or two <i>lances</i> (4 or 8 guards).
03-04	Noble	Sometimes incognito, most often part of a procession with guards.
05-07	Orc	Foraging or scouting group.
08-10	Pilgrims	Small religious group. Sometimes citizens travel to Father's Rest.
11-14	Messenger	A courier. Often on horseback. Often alone.
15-18	Peddler	Lone merchant with a cart or pack mule.
19-22	Bandits	Small band of 4-6 robbers.
23-26	Sudden Weather	Freakish weather change. Short but intense, often wind/rain.
27-30	Local	Local folk going about their work. Woodcutters, farmers, etc...
31-35	Merchant	One or two carts with drivers. Local merchants on a short trip.
36-40	Animal, normal size	Cheetah, badger, lion, hyena or wolf
41-45	Traveler	Lone wanderer. Could be anything.
46-50	Local	Local folk going about their work. Woodcutters, farmers, etc...
51-55	Eagle, giant	Hunting for food. Sheep, dogs and goats are favored.
56-60	Local	Local folk going about their work. Woodcutters, farmers, etc...
61-65	Merchant Band	A cart/wagon or two, drivers, guards, and other staff. (6-8 total)
66-70	Local Patrol*	Guards from the nearest town or city. (4 or 8 guards)
71-74	Traveler	Lone wanderer. Could be anything.
75-78	Animal, normal size	Bear (brown or black) or tiger.
79-82	Way Ash'non	Small band, two or three wagons with 10-15 people.
83-86	Peddler	Lone merchant with a cart or pack mule.
87-90	Goblin	Foraging or scouting group.
91-93	Bandits	Small band of 4-6 robbers.
94-96	Traveling Carnival	Carts and wagons with 12-18 staff/performers.
97-98	Lesser undead	Zombie and/or Skeleton.
99-00	Imperial Guard*	Patrol of Imperial Guards. A full <i>trident</i> (13).

* Patrols are often concerned with the intentions of bands of armed individuals on the road. They will likely have questions for such people. This is part of their duty. They are often in a foul mood and always on horseback. If things go badly, at least two are under orders to flee and report.

Tertiary Trade Roads, Temperate Locations

This random encounter table should be used for travel on tertiary roads in "civilized" areas. These areas are as close to "wilderness" without being that as possible. They are not often traveled roads and are patrolled mostly by the local noble's forces. Encounters on these roads may not be peaceful and both animal and monster attacks are not unknown. The encounter chance for this area is 1 in 10 and should be checked once a day.

% Range	Creature	Notes
01-02	Noble	Sometimes incognito, most often part of a procession with guards.
03-04	Peddler	Lone merchant with a cart or pack mule.
05-07	Orc	Foraging or scouting group.
08-10	Gnoll	Foraging or scouting group.
11-14	Ant, giant	Foraging for hive, 1-3 total.
15-18	Bandits	Small band of 2-3 robbers.
19-22	Spider, giant	Pack hunting, 3-5 total.
23-26	Sudden Weather	Freakish weather change. Short but intense, often wind/rain.
27-30	Local Patrol*	Guards from the nearest town or city. (4 or 8 guards)
31-35	Local	Local folk going about their work. Woodcutters, farmers, etc...
36-40	Animal, normal size	Bear, lion or wolf
41-45	Traveler	Lone wanderer. Could be anything.
46-50	Nothing**	Nothing happened, false alarm.
51-55	Eagle, giant	Hunting for food. Sheep, dogs and goats are favored.
56-60	Nothing**	Nothing happened, false alarm.
61-65	Local	Local folk going about their work. Woodcutters, farmers, etc...
66-70	Merchant	One or two carts with drivers. Local merchants on a short trip.
71-74	Animal, normal size	Bear, tiger or wolf
75-78	Local Patrol*	Guards from the nearest town or city. (4 or 8 guards)
79-82	Bee, giant	Foraging for hive, 1-4 total.
83-86	Ogre	Often solitary, sometimes in pairs.
87-90	Goblin	Foraging or scouting group.
91-93	Way Ash'non	Small band, two or three wagons with 10 to 15 people.
94-96	Messenger	A courier. Often on horseback. Often alone.
97-98	Lesser undead	Zombie and/or Skeleton.
99-00	Bandits	Small band of 4-6 robbers.

* Patrols are often concerned with the intentions of bands of armed individuals on the road. They will likely have questions for such people. This is part of their duty. They are often in a foul mood and always on horseback. If things go badly, at least two are under orders to flee and report.

** A rustle in the brush. A shadow in the trees. They feel watched but nothing can be found.

Appendix H – Lore

Stories, songs, poems, these are some of the things that bind a group culturally. Those bonds transform a collection of people into something more than the sum of its individuals. Each knows fundamental facts about the others, they share a system of values and beliefs learned from songs, stories, and poems heard from childhood on. This section will give more information about those tales.

Songs

Songs are used to remember, to inspire, to warn, to teach, and to feel. There are songs for just about every occasion and a great many people find need to sing them.

Battle songs

Battle songs have been sung by warriors since the first war was fought. Traditionally, these songs are a testament of grim defiance to enemies and long odds and death. Some will summon reminders of what the warrior fights for. Some will be heartbreakingly melancholy laments for the fallen. Some will be humorous. All are a way for a soldier to scream, "We will win!"

Normally sung while marching, they have a rhythm that works well with a strong and steady drum beat. Generally, one soldier starts the song by singing the verse and all thunder out the chorus together. Call and response songs are common. While every troop has their own collection of verse and chorus they favor, there are some old favorites sung across the Middle Lands. It is common to have dozens of verses and some minor variation in the chorus of a song, here are examples of verses for some of the songs.

<p><u>Wolf of War</u> (4 of 18 verses) <i>They come with spears held high Marching to our home</i></p> <p><i>We shall meet them! Axe in hand We shall meet them! Win for our land We shall meet them! Wolf of war is our band</i></p> <p><i>Fire burns in their eyes Hearts black with doom</i></p> <p><i>We shall meet them! Axe in hand We shall meet them! Blood for our land We shall meet them! Red Wolf we stand</i></p> <p><i>Roll over hill and vale Feet march on my road</i></p> <p>(repeat chorus)</p> <p><i>Take what is mine? They fail to see</i></p> <p>(repeat alternate chorus)</p>	<p><u>Victory's Reward</u> (3 of 7 verses) <i>The battle's come and past Crows feast on foes harassed Blood has fed the sands I will wash it from my hands</i></p> <p><i>O' My home waits for me, and the love I left behind. Of all the spoils found, that's the one to ease my mind.</i></p> <p><i>We stood before the charge Saved by strength and words of sarge Hail of arrows fell about Yet luck won me out</i></p> <p><i>O' My home waits for me, and the love I left behind. Of all the spoils found, that's the one to ease my time.</i></p> <p><i>I'll mourn the friends that fell We'll bless them with every ale Now they rest below Her Flame makes it so</i></p> <p>(repeat chorus or alternate chorus)</p>
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Ceremonial Songs

Weddings, funerals, holidays, all these events have songs that go with them. These often double as prayers and will include a supplication to a deity. Local variants in these songs are common. Here are some examples of such songs.

<p><u>Lovers Wed</u></p> <p><i>Dance and sing and follow me O' under the green wood tree Laugh and laugh and follow me O' under the good green tree</i></p> <p><i>The lass she's there as you see O' under the green wood tree Smile so bright it hurts your knees O' under the good green trees</i></p> <p><i>The lad he's there with blessing be O' under the green wood tree Eyes that flash the truest glee O' under the great wood tree</i></p> <p><i>Bound in life bound by key O' under the green wood tree Two they were and one they be O' under the Green Woman's lee</i></p>	<p><u>The Song of Passing</u></p> <p><i>The morning light breaks The fires life takes Our love rises clear and free Off to boundless eternity</i></p> <p><i>Fly on wind and touch the sun By Her Flame, the soul is won</i></p> <p><i>Shine on light of hope Rise up upon the smoke All the cares have come to pass Cool your woes, sound the brass</i></p> <p><i>Fly on wind and touch the sun By Her Flame, the soul has come</i></p> <p><i>Peace to us this night Peace to all this night Peace to all tonight</i></p>
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Drinking songs

The most numerous songs, by far, are drinking songs. They are also the most fluid and varied. Some bards take pride in how many they know and love learning variants. Just about every tavern has local verses for at least a dozen songs. The barkeep and servers are often worked in, sometimes in unflattering ways. There is an art to that, having fun without going too far. The whole point is to have fun with drinking songs. They are loud and hilarious and infectious by design. Melodies and tempo tend to be both quick and upbeat. Here are a few titles of common drinking songs.

<p>"I Used to Work in Balashar" "Punch in the Bowl" "A Good Idea at the Time" "Rum on the Ground"</p>	<p>"Six Drunken Knights" "It Rained in my Ale" "And She Was Trouble" "Another Damned Sailor"</p>
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These songs are almost a game to sing. For example, "I Used to Work in Balashar" is one whose lyrics are largely different by location. Each verse is a tiny story about a funny/silly event, often involving locals, that ends with the call and response: "Have you ever seen something go so far? Well, I used to work in Balashar!" It's not unknown for folks to volunteer some of the most embarrassing stories at the local tavern for a chance at immortality in this song.

Many other songs, generally sung in drunker states, are lewd things and not for civil ears. "Six Drunken Knights" and "Another Damned Sailor" are prime examples of explicitly provocative songs. The things those knights get up to, shameful. And, if one is drunk enough, hilarious.

Sulkor has a unique tradition in drinking songs. They call this genre "the Lament" and it has a style all its own. The lute and mouth harp are popular accompaniments there. Note the lutes are tuned a bit differently, the sound is deeper, lower, more bass like. The rhythm is trance-like. The lyrics are not happy, in fact, they are often painful subjects (such as heartbreak, loss, and oppression). But they are relatable, they describe problems everyone understands. There's a catharsis in sharing it. Also, there's something deep and sensual about the music. Bards that specialize in this form have inspired parents across the realm to lockup sons and daughters for fear of losing them to the sultry sounds. Some villages outside of Sulkor have even banned such music after their first exposure.

Working Songs

While working, folks sing. They do it to keep their minds occupied, to lift spirits, and to share the experience. Such songs are often a teaching tool as well. There are songs for weaving, for cropping, for smithing, for shearing sheep, for rowing, and just about any other job one can think of. Each has verses that remind the worker of things to do and how to do them. While many are local variants there is no small number that are widespread. Here are some examples.

<p>Danchu Poling Song (*)</p> <p><i>Yo, heave ho!</i> <i>Once more, once again, still once more</i> <i>Yo, heave ho!</i> <i>Yo, heave ho!</i> <i>Once more, once again, still once more</i></p> <p><i>Now we pull hard: one, two, three.</i> <i>Lo-hy dah, ro-ho dah!</i> <i>Lo-hy dah, ro-ho dah!</i> <i>Now we pull hard: one, two, three.</i></p> <p><i>Yo, heave ho!</i> <i>Yo, heave ho!</i> <i>Once more, once again, still once more</i></p> <p><i>To the sun we sing our song.</i> <i>Lo-hy dah, ro-ho dah!</i> <i>Lo-hy dah, ro-ho dah!</i> <i>To the sun we sing our song.</i></p> <p><i>To the sun we sing our song</i> <i>Yo, heave ho!</i> <i>Yo, heave ho!</i> <i>Once more, once again, still once more</i></p> <p><i>Mighty stream so deep and wide.</i> <i>Lo-hy dah, ro-ho dah!</i> <i>Lo-hy dah, ro-ho dah!</i> <i>Danchu, Danchu, life river.</i></p> <p><i>Yo, heave ho!</i> <i>Once more, once again, still once more</i> <i>Yo, heave ho!</i> <i>Yo, heave ho!</i></p> <p>(*) Shamelessly lifted from a 19th century Russian boatman song.</p>	<p>Net Weaver's Song (4 of 12 verses)</p> <p><i>If ya want to fish</i> <i>Ya got ta make a net</i> <i>No net, no fish</i> <i>Empty bellies do not lie</i></p> <p><i>Every knot, every knot, and again</i> <i>Every knot, every knot, fingers sore</i> <i>Every knot, every knot, and again</i></p> <p><i>Down goes the loop</i> <i>Up through it slide</i> <i>'Round cross and down</i> <i>Pull pop and it hides</i></p> <p><i>Every knot, every knot, and again</i> <i>Every knot, every knot, you see spots</i> <i>Every knot, every knot, and again</i></p> <p><i>Fish swim, fish jump</i> <i>No fish jump in your boat</i> <i>If ya want fish</i> <i>Ya got ta make a net</i></p> <p>(repeat chorus)</p> <p><i>Down goes the loop</i> <i>Up through it slide</i> <i>'Round cross and down</i> <i>Pull pop and it hides</i></p> <p>(repeat alternate chorus)</p>
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Stories

There is a long history of oral stories. At some point, scholars began collecting them and writing them down. Over the past few centuries, it has become popular to keep copies of such books as wealth allows. While the majority of copies are still done by hand, there has, over the past couple of generations, been an increase in production. This is due to the advent of crude printing presses. The main obstacles limiting the spread of the printing press comes from the guilds currently controlling the ones that exist. The money they make printing books for common folk and the control they have over what books are printed make for a powerful combination. In fact, most people don't even know printing presses exist. For the moment, that is not likely to change. As for storybooks, they are more popular than ever.

The Saga of Tazral

There are six volumes, each about two hundred pages, with dozens of stories about the first Emperor before he founded the Empire. All penned by Tazral's bard and traveling companion, Meche Del Ro Suhromi. While no one talks about it too loudly, many scholars who have studied the works in detail believe them to be fiction. Engineered (presumably by Meche, who was a real bard) to put forth ideas and attitudes seen as favorable, but still, just fiction. Most of them will agree that the Saga has been successful, at least more than it has failed, in encouraging a mindset beneficial to the current climate of the Empire. Several generations of young people have been remaking the world using lessons learned from the Saga. The Empire has expanded into the wilderness and there is a general trend toward prosperity. Examples of a few stories include title, summary, and the lesson. This is not a complete list.

"Anneahlyn and the Star Fall Mystery", vol I

A young Tazral learns the value of seeking help from people that know more than he does. There is no shame in not knowing, but failing to learn is another matter.

"Mists of Crab Reef Point", vol I

Tazral first meets Ramiz while investigating pirate raids. The importance of telling the truth.

"The Troll Bridge of Camdon County", vol II

Tazral outwits a more powerful opponent rather than facing them with main strength. Have the wisdom to know when it is not time to fight.

"The Troglodyte Menace of Oak Hollow", vol II

With a village to save, Tazral and Anneahlyn protect the folk of Oak Hollow from a horde of troglodytes. Fight went you must.

"The Adventure of the Copper Band", vol III

Tazral befriends Kimart and together they face a gang of slavers. The value of freedom.

"Terror of Cyclops Island", vol IV

Tazral and Anneahlyn are shipwrecked and must escape the island of the murderous cyclops, Davros. Just because you've never seen it, doesn't mean it's not out there.

"To the Surprise of the Silk Princess", vol IV

Tazral steps back and Ramiz takes center stage in this story about a pampered princess who learns that getting everything she demands is not a good thing.

"The Tale of the Hate-Filled Blades", vol V

Tazral needs all his companions for an epic confrontation with the necromancer, Brosh, and his undead giants while forging an enchanted blade of unparalleled evil. Warns of the evils magic is capable of in the wrong hands.

"Dance of the Crooked Man", vol VI

Tazral faces a corrupted Baron who abuses his authority and those he rules over. Beware the seduction of power.

Other Books

Other collections are popular as well. They're generally between 100 and 200 pages. Some are stories older than the Empire. Still other collections feature one region or another and the stories unique to them. For example, a yearly collection comes out for the Clarin's Choice festival, it features all the winners and picks many other noteworthy competitors. Some of the other popular volumes include:

The Marrah Ves Joon Collection, 225 MLE

The Water Rider's Fables of Luck and Fortune

Stories of Fey and Glamours from the Hills of Par-dan-ro

Beyond the Wall: Oodar's Run and Other Tales

Laugh, Cry, Shriek: Stories of Amazement

Sir Green Trellmock's Collection: Tales of the Fox

Great Battles, The Orc Hoards of 177 (soldiers' journals)



Other Stories

While collections are popular in book form, there is also a tradition of oral storytelling. These stories are told for fun as well as to educate and remember. Some are cautionary tales, some are heroic, some are funny, some are scary, and there is often a message regarding morality. Any bard would do well to know, at least, a few dozen common stories. The variation from region to region is much greater with oral tradition. Still, there are some stories that are common.

A Perfect Spear

A Pie in the Window

Below the Green Hill

Cloak of Silver Stars

Deann and the Fey

Escaping Boar Mountain

Fishing for a Prize

Gan and the Elves of Snow

Mary's Long Night

Pale Apple Jam

Summer's Night Dance

The Black Dog

The Girl and the Golden Boots

The Longest Beard

The Night Tarlay Came Home

The Sage of Bone Hill

The Shepard's New Staff

The Trouble with Fake Gold

Trolls Never Know

Our King's Crow

Waiting for Dawn

Walking Potter's Field

When the Orcs Came

Appendix I - Herbs, Spices, and Useful Plants

As always, there are the spices that see mundane use in cooking. Some plants are used for dyes and stains. Others have more specialized uses. Some of them are beneficial and others, less so.

Janice the Apothecary was a woman of legend who is credited for much of the expansive array of medical knowledge used to the current day. Later, others would expand that knowledge. Shown below are some of the herbs, spices and other plants used across the land. Included is where it is nativity found, how it is commonly used, and what it looks like. This is not a complete list.

Plant	Native Source	Use/Effect	Description
Ahyid	swamps	Used as a blood clotting agent.	Bamboo-like, it has light green, hairy leaves, and its blue flowers resemble those of corn.
Amber Bell	widespread	Used to treat difficulty breathing.	A smallish bush that favors rocky ground. Tiny bell-shaped, amber colored flowers cover it in early spring.
Assassin's Berry	Spice Kingdoms	Used to brew poison.	A medium sized bush that grows in remote tropical coastal areas. It grows up to 4' tall; it has dark green, oval leaves with black streaks. Pale pink flowers with eight petals about 1" wide produce the small pink berry.
Basil	widespread	Used in cooking.	Basil will prolifically produce large green leaves, measuring around 2 inches in length, throughout the summer. Basil flowers are white and are commonly removed to increase the plant's yield.
Belladonna	southern Keltor	Used to brew poison.	A short woody shrub from a fleshy rootstock. It grows to about 6' tall and has ovate leaves. The bell-shaped flowers are dull purple with green tinges and faintly scented. They yield berries, which are green, ripening to a shiny-black that are sweet but very toxic.
Bleed Knettle	northern Mostor	Used to brew bleeding poison.	An herbaceous plant, it often grows to about 5' in height. The toothed leaves and stems are covered with many tiny stinging trichomes (plant hairs). Wounds made by them bleed longer than is normal and are more painful.
Bright Finger	Cold Plains	Used to restore blood flow or treat frostbite.	A small shrub with three-lobed leaves. It's tiny yellow flowers grow into slim green seed pods.
Broken Lobe	lakes/ponds	Used to treat nausea.	Cattail native to cool/temperate wetlands and streams. Marked by a rounded looking pod with a blueish tint.
Cloves	Spice Kingdoms	Used in cooking. Also has antiseptic and painkiller properties.	A small, reddish-brown flower bud of a tropical evergreen tree. Dried and/or ground.
Chamomile	widespread	Used to make a tea that treats headaches.	A low-growing plant, creeping or trailing, its tufts of leaves and flowers a foot high. It is covered with leaves which are divided into thread-like segments, the fineness of which gives the whole plant a feathery appearance.
Chaos Fang	Sulkor	Grants visions, if overused can lead to madness.	This turnip-like root enjoys sandy soil. It grows up to 10 inches long and looks like a big tooth. The color varies from yellowish brown to violet with the older plants making the darker roots.
Cinnamon	Mostor	Used in cooking.	The tree grows from 20 to 30 feet high. It has thick scabrous bark and strong branches. The young shoots speckled greeny orange, the leaves petiolate, entire, leathery when mature, the top is shiny green, lighter under.
Coffee	Spice Kingdoms	Stimulant. Very expensive. Seeds are often dried, roasted, and ground before being used.	This tree grows in hot forested highlands. Fresh leaves can be chewed to as a mild stimulant. Its flowers give way to small clusters of seeds. They vary in shade from green to green-yellow.

Plant	Native Source	Use/Effect	Description
Cumin	southern Argos	Used in cooking.	Cumin seeds are actually dried fruits. They are thin, yellowish brown, elongated ovals about a quarter inch long.
Drake Blossom	marshland	Painkiller, mildly addictive.	A cluster of stalks rises from the roots. Each stalk is ringed by small mottled green leaves. Small flowers of varying color bloom in clusters from the stalk's top.
Dream Root	Fellice	Used as a sleep aid. Causes vivid, sometimes disturbing, dreams.	A tuber vine with dark green heart-shaped leaves and small orange-yellow flowers. The roots have nodules which can be chewed fresh or dried, crushed and brewed as a tea.
Eversleep	Dothmas Hills	Induces coma if taken in large amounts.	This rare plant is a creeping vine. Its broad dark-green leaves have a splotchy pattern of a bluish tint. During the spring it sports thumb-sized red flowers that resemble tiny musical horns. Its summer berries are bright yellow.
Eveslay	swamps	Eases swelling and itching.	A tuber, this plant often grows underwater. A single tall slim stalk will grow and flower above the waterline. The flowers have four large red and yellow petals around a deep blue center.
Fabodam	Sulkor	Speeds healing.	An arid area succulent, it has a cluster of fleshy, gray-green leaves with a reddish vein in the center and rows of tooth-like thorns along each edge. It sports tiny white flowers in spring.
Fade Moss	Celyd	Used to brew paralytic poison.	This reddish-brown moss grows in small hanging clumps but only within the upper branches of one rare species of tree, known as Stinging Spruce. It should not be handled bare handed.
Flux Leaf	deep forests	Hallucinogenic.	A small shrub, native to remote temperate forested areas. It has fleshy, light green, palmate leaves; pale blue, five-petaled flowers; and small yellow berries. The flowers are most potent before making berries.
Garlic	widespread	Used in cooking. A very strong smelling herb. It also has antiseptic properties. Myth says it wards off vampires.	The leaves are long, narrow and flat like grass. The bulb (the only part eaten) is of a compound nature, consisting of numerous sections, known technically as 'cloves,' grouped together within a whitish skin, which holds them as in a sac.
Ginger	Spice Kingdoms	Used in cooking and treating stomach problems.	An herbaceous perennial plant having an aromatic root, used as a spice, flavoring, food, and medicine.
Goblin Weed	widespread	Causes stomach cramps and other minor muscle spasms. Can cause seizures in very large doses.	A rough, weedy perennial which commonly grows in fields, open woods, waste areas, and on roadsides. It likes sunny areas. Blooms are small funnel-shaped and pink, mauve, or white in color. Its foul smell is stronger when sap runs.
Golden Grass	Spice Kingdoms	Used to help bones mend.	This short grass has finger-wide dark green leaves with a golden vein down the middle.
Gotiley	swamps	Aids in healing so there is less scarring.	Rooted in the soil beneath the water, its diamond-shaped leaves float on the water's surface. The white flower is prized as a remedy.
Heart Creeper	mountains	Sedative. Too much can cause coma or death.	This bluish-green moss is native to cooler, sheltered areas. It often grows on shaded rocks.
Heart Bush	Argos	Helps the body restore lost blood.	This small bush has red buds, and small round leaves. It often grows near the Danchu.
Hessdon	Sulkor	Used to promote healing.	A thorny vine related to the blackberry, native in semiarid to temperate streambeds, particularly seasonally dry ones. Its dark violet, delicious berries only achieve medicinal use when the juice is reduced. Often used as a paste/poultice.
Horehound	Sulkor	Brewed in a tea to treat coughs.	A creeper that favors dry rocky soil, it grows in patches and sports red and blue flowers in the early fall. Both leaves and petals can be brewed.

Plant	Native Source	Use/Effect	Description
Ice Peppers	Fellice	Used in cooking and to clear sinuses.	A blue-white pepper a few inches in length. Known for its sharp, spicy flavor. The best of them are the ones that live through a late frost.
Iverson Cap	Mostor	Used to fight infection and disease.	A mushroom with a tall yellow cap covered in blue spots. Grows on fallen logs.
Keepcup	Argos	Used to increase fertility in both women and men. Rites of Volios make use of it also.	A perennial creeping vine that favors sunny areas. Its dark green leaves have a light-green underside and they form a cup-like shape. In late spring they sprout large pink flowers. Often cultivated by priestesses of Volios.
Lavender	widespread	Used in cooking and to ease anxiety.	The common narrow-leaved variety grows 3 feet high with a short, but irregular, much-branched stem having yellowish-grey bark.
Lemon Balm	widespread	Used in cooking and to ease anxiety.	A perennial herb with a four-edged, branching, sparsely-haired stalk. The opposed leaves, whose stalked stems vary in length, are broadly oval to heart-shaped and have an irregular crenate (rounded teeth) or serrate (small, sharp teeth) edge.
Mage Flower	widespread	Mild mood elevator.	A creeper that grows up wet rocks. Those near waterfalls being favored. The yellow-green leaves spawn white flowers with a red heart.
Marjoram	widespread	Used to spice wine or beer.	A bushy herbaceous plant that typically reaches 2 feet high. The square branching stems are densely covered with hairy ovate leaves, arranged oppositely in pairs. The pale two-lipped flowers are borne in small clusters.
Mercy Flower	Celyd	Induces sleep and healing.	Short plants with a single stalk less than a foot high. Petals a blue so dark, they look black, surround a gold, red, and white center of these blooms. They favor shade and sandy soil and cool temperatures.
Merweed	coastal beaches	Used to make water breathing potions.	This underwater plant grows only in salt-water. In deep water, it floats freely on the surface, its colonies covering several hundred square yards. Small parts of these will break away at times to wash up on shore.
Mint	widespread	Used in cooking and to ease anxiety.	Mints have square stems and opposite aromatic leaves. The small flowers are usually pale purple, pink, or white in color and are arranged in clusters, either forming whorls or crowded together in a terminal spike.
Mistletoe	widespread	Used as a digestive aid, heart tonic, and sedative. Also used to treat arthritis, asthma, wounds, and infection.	A parasitic evergreen plant that lives on trees such as oaks, firs, pines, apples, and elms. The plant has yellowish flowers; small, yellowish green leaves; and waxy, white berries.
Mofiran	swamps	Commonly used during childbirth to ease the process. Lessens pain and bleeding.	Large blue-green fern-like bushes sprout clusters of tiny yellow flowers that give way to red berries in early fall.
Moonbright	Tynhare Plains	Sap used to make ointments granting low light vision. However, light brighter than moonlight hurts.	This bushy shrub is a cluster of woody stalks with tiny green leaves. It grows to a height of about 4'. The flowering shoots are different, less woody and emit a thick sap when broken; small white flowers grow along their length.
Mugwort	widespread	Used to make foot ointments.	A tall plant, frequently rising 3' or more in height. With stems, often a purplish hue, and smooth leaves being dark green on top, but covered with a dense cottony down beneath. Its flowers (reddish or pale yellow) are in small oval heads and arranged in long, terminal panicles.
Mustard	widespread	Used in cooking.	A small flowering plant under a foot tall. The flowers range from yellow to red and form seed pods which are harvested and dried.

Plant	Native Source	Use/Effect	Description
Myrrh	Spice Kingdoms	Used as a wound antiseptic.	A tree gum. Sap from the myrrh tree is best from trees that are at least a few decades old. The sap collects in dark clumps on broken bark among the thorny branches.
Nutmeg	Mostor	Used in cooking.	A dark-leaved evergreen tree is cultivated for the spice derived from its fruit.
Pepper	southern Mostor	Often dried, ground and used in cooking.	A tiny round dried fruit. There are many varieties denoted by the color of the fruit.
Rosemary	coastal Argos	Used in cooking.	A woody, perennial herb with fragrant, evergreen, needle-like leaves and white, pink, purple, or blue flowers.
Saffron	Spice Kingdoms	Used in cooking. Very expensive.	This autumn-flowering perennial plant species is unknown in the wild. The violet flowers with crimson stigmas are the source of saffron. It takes 5,000 flowers to yield an ounce of saffron.
Sage	Sulkor	Used in cooking.	A perennial, evergreen small shrub, with woody stems, grayish leaves, and blue to purplish flowers. It is found in arid areas.
Skull Crone	widespread	Used to make incenses. They have a big role in the Maven's rite of judgment.	A stark white mushroom with a red skull pattern on its wide cap. They are typically about two hands tall. Grows on the floor of damp caves, in patches of threes and fives. It has a musky smell that many find unsettling.
Thyme	widespread	Used in cooking.	An evergreen perennial with a woody, fibrous root. The stems are numerous, round, hard, branched, and usually from 4 to 8 inches high. Leaves are small, broad, narrow and elliptical, and greenish-grey in color.
Weeping Rose	Celyd	Sap that relaxes and acts as a mild "truth serum". Very bitter and strong smelling.	These large bushes often have trunks several inches thick and an overall teardrop shape. The leaves are almost square and the blossoms are very rose like. They are often yellow or pink. Sap is collected by placing small pails beneath cuts in the bark. Best when done in late winter.
Wifella Bark	Fellice	Stimulant, very addictive.	The wifella tree tends to grow in girth rather than height. The hand wide spear-head leaves are deep green with a yellowish edge. The dark red bark is tough and removing too much will kill the tree. This is best done in early summer.
Willow Bark	widespread	Used to make a tea that treats pain and fever.	The bark of the willow tree is light in color and thin with a bitter taste. Saplings are easiest to harvest bark from but doing so kills them.
Winter Root	Cold Plains	Used in rites of Gravston. It is said that the devoted can live on this root alone. Soldiers have been known to chew it before battle.	A small grass-like plant having a cluster of spiked leaves growing from the ground. It has strong smelling bitter roots, pale yellow to white in color. They grow in clumps that look like an intact shorn beard.
Wolfsbane	mountains	Wards off lycanthropes.	This plant grows in a patch of stalks about 3' high. It has leaves that are rounded and divided into five well-lobed segments. The purple flowers are helmet-shaped and sprout in late spring.
Valley Salt	widespread	Used to cleanse toxins from the body. They taste salty.	Tiny mushrooms, golden in color with both a slim stem and pointed cap.
Varassu Husk	cold forests	Hardened tree sap that has strong healing effects.	The varassu is a fir tree, it's trunk is coated with sap only after it is damaged by fire. This thick, hardened sap, called "husk", is best when gathered from older trees.
Yarrow	Sulkor	Used in a tea to treat headaches, harmful in large quantities.	The stem is angular and rough, the leaves alternate, 3" to 4" long and 1" wide. Flowers are white or lilac and look like small daisies.
Zlivekorn	caves	Used to brew poison. Dangerous to touch with bare skin.	A fungus that grows on dead things in caves. It is bone white and sprouts in shard like patches. Some say it grows best on the bones of murders.

Plant	Native Source	Use/Effect	Description
Zuddimon	marshlands	Used to treat burns and rashes.	The fruit of a small tree common to coastal marshlands. The size of a large plum, the skin is tough and ranges from pale blue to violet in color and often has spots of yellow.

Many more herbs exist but these are the ones well-known across the land. A good apothecary can make salves, tinctures, poultices, tonics, and potions from combinations of these plants that treat illness or heal injuries. Dozens, if not hundreds, of recipes exist and are in common use. Some are better than others. Less ethical individuals have learned to make harmful or dangerous combinations with a darker purpose.

Everyday citizens often know the use of a few local plants. These could be plants they need for work or for cooking or for treating ailments. Such treatments are never as good as what a trained apothecary can make but a simple willow bark tea may be all that's needed. When the simple cure is not enough, the recipes used by professionals will do more. They enhance the plants natural, and often minor, abilities by using techniques that both concentrate and refine the desired effects to give an end-product that is many times better than what the raw plant is able to grant.

Herb gardens are very popular in small villages and towns. They often include anything that will grow wild in the region. The best have an import or two as well. While many culinary herbs are easily cultivated in a wide range of locations, most of the specialty herbs resist the best gardener's efforts. It is true, however, that centaurs have shown a knack others seem to lack in this area. When cultivation is not an option the only remaining choice is to go where the plants grow wild and collect them there. This has led to a brisk trade in hunting/harvesting wild herbs.

Influences

I have been asked the question, "What influences your fantasy settings?" Well, lots of things do. I like to think that history has a big part but that's not really true. I do look to history as a guide when I build a world but beyond that, it is not a huge factor. While many would list off a bunch of authors and books, I will not. I do enjoy books, I just don't read as much as some. As a dyslexic, I am very visual so naturally, movies have a larger influence on my work. The ones from my youth more so. I've put together a list of my favorite fantasy, sword and sorcery movies. These influenced my early gaming experience and I still see the mark all these years later. So, without further ado:

- The 7th Voyage of Sinbad (1958)
- The Beastmaster (1982)
- The Blade Master (1984)
- Clash of the Titans (1981)
- Conan the Barbarian (1982)
- Conan the Destroyer (1984)
- The Dark Crystal (1982)
- Deathstalker (1983)
- Dragonslayer (1981)
- Erik the Viking (1989)
- Excalibur (1981)
- Fire and Ice (1983)
- The Golden Voyage of Sinbad (1974)
- Hawk the Slayer (1980)
- Jason and the Argonauts (1963)
- Krull (1983)
- Labyrinth (1986)
- Lair of the White Worm (1988)
- Ladyhawke (1985)
- Legend (1986)
- The NeverEnding Story (1984)
- Ninja Scroll (1996)
- The Princess Bride (1987)
- Red Sonja (1985)
- Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger (1977)
- The Sword and the Sorcerer (1982)
- Sword of the Valiant (1984)
- Troll (1986)
- Vampire Hunter D (1985)
- Warlock (1989)
- Willow (1989)

Index of Names and Places

Alphabetical Index

Ag'rune.....	114, 115	Fer'Helt.....	48	Janice.....	59, 68, 182
Ahjifrohme.....	141	Fer'Ko.....	46, 47	Janumorn.....	47, 138
Ahlabim.....	18, 72, 79, 120	Fer'Rae.....	47	Jean-Baltist Rejun Kalistic.....	23
Alur-Lar.....	57	Fer'Set.....	47	Jennell Casabon.....	20
Arcane Syndicate.....	12, 56, 83, 84, 85, 95, 102, 131	Fire March.....	79	Jortice.....	70, 92
Argos .9, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 43, 45, 52, 67, 68, 69, 84, 89, 91, 93, 94, 110, 112, 151, 183, 184, 185		First People.....	150	Josephine Pentell.....	20
Arnuf.....	135	Flint Seth Urgains.....	21	Jular Dosren.....	19
Asurten.....	112	Foamrest.....	17, 34, 70	Jun Wolf.....	79, 88
Balashar..17, 30, 43, 50, 60, 67, 68, 78, 85, 88, 102, 104, 178		Foel & Til.....	140	Justin Almir Roesoon.....	18
Bantus.....	47, 83, 137, 140	Forked-tongues.....	22	Jute Rhone.....	48, 111
Barnabas Sulon Orcrest.....	20	Founding Day.....	46	Kelgal.....	103, 134
Bartimus Arnas.....	22, 120	Fularrd Soson Helot.....	19	Keltor .8, 9, 75, 76, 93, 108, 109, 112, 113, 119, 144, 182	
Battle Sign.....	114	Gavin Nentus.....	120	Kin-slayers.....	22
Between Land.....	87, 91, 150, 151, 152	Ghuntos.....	30, 63, 70, 88	Kohlot.....	103, 140
Bimcho.....	16, 109	Gleamdon University.....	55, 56, 57, 71, 84	Kolynn the Breaker.....	49
Blackhearts.....	22	Gom.....	113	Kyle Sunchild.....	22, 78
Blind-eyes.....	22	Gong Farmers.....	85	Labnoz.....	142
Blood Moon.....	79	Gorn.....	103, 142, 143	Lamp Lighters.....	44, 85
Blue Swords.....	12, 78	Gravston.....	48, 103, 137, 185	Lana Tollbren.....	79
Bohtan.....	47, 103, 135	Great Desert.....	7, 10, 16, 33, 92, 93, 108, 109, 112, 119, 162, 165	Laren.....	57
Brazhale.....	30, 75	Grey Marsh.....	68, 79, 90, 94, 155	Larhelm.....	134
Caretaker.....	47, 82	Guston Gantu.....	19	Latter Formation Wars.....	68, 120
Celyd...9, 13, 18, 19, 21, 22, 25, 43, 44, 45, 52, 64, 72, 74, 83, 91, 94, 95, 110, 112, 120, 183, 184, 185		Hajout.....	140	Lechwed.....	43, 73, 92, 94, 95, 120
Cen Almos Nentus.....	13, 18	Hazzin Aklu Yeats.....	79	Lelot Library.....	55, 71
Central Clans.....	111	Helen Kysta Lunaz.....	19	Lesmah Swamp..43, 73, 74, 91, 92, 94, 95, 104, 155	
Central System.....	88, 101, 102	Hemtopie.....	110, 112	Lestare.....	68, 90
Cernoz.....	143	Hethrize.....	48, 82, 103, 104, 137, 138	Levloer.....	43, 69, 92
Charlotte Indorn.....	21	Hilldale.....	30, 74, 75, 84	Looh.....	113
Clarise Vashee Trelmock.....	18	Hills of Par-dan-ro.....	87, 91, 180	Loran Kalistic.....	46, 117
Cliff-dwellers.....	109	Horse Runners.....	94, 109	Luvic.....	50, 112
Cold Plains...14, 47, 70, 87, 88, 89, 90, 92, 182, 185		House Arnas.....	13, 18, 22, 120	Mad-hats.....	22
Common.....	55, 114, 115	House Borsheen.....	17, 20, 64	Mailyng Gantu.....	19
Corhov.....	47, 135	House Canitus.....	20, 118, 119	Mako.....	90, 98, 111
Covehaven.....	34, 41, 72	House Casabon.....	20	Many Deeps.....	91, 95
Dagger Mountains.....	70, 88, 95, 110	House Dorell.....	17, 19, 67	Markus Davren Borsheen.....	14, 17
Danchu .12, 14, 43, 46, 64, 67, 68, 69, 70, 88, 89, 90, 92, 95, 112, 117, 155, 179, 183		House Dosren.....	19	Marrah Ves Joon.....	68, 180
Darius Wyse Murktan.....	21	House Endun.....	22	Marren Street Riot.....	79
Devairrik.....	113	House Fortess.....	22	Maven.....	82, 185
Dirk Heny Kuntarr.....	19	House Gantu.....	19	Maz-Lar.....	56
Dothmas Hills.....	46, 68, 89, 117, 183	House Kalistic.....	17, 19, 23, 67, 119, 120	Meklidozrin.....	103, 104, 141
Dragon's Backbone Mountains.....	70, 88, 89	House Kuntarr.....	19	Melina Delan Dorell.....	12, 17
Dragon's Fang Mountains.....	70, 89, 92	House Lunaz.....	19	Middle Land Empire...9, 23, 45, 75, 76, 77, 105, 108, 116, 117	
Drazlooh.....	47, 136	House Morgain.....	18, 19	Mischihoon.....	30, 76, 119
Elite Guard.....	68, 78	House Murktan.....	21	Mo'Helt.....	48
Elizabeth Hope Urgains.....	21	House Nentus.....	18, 19, 120	Mo'Ko.....	47
Eohgin.....	143	House Orcrest.....	20	Mo'Rae.....	46, 47
Estollin.....	113	House Ricdon.....	22	Mo'Set.....	47
Father's Day.....	46	House Roesoon.....	18, 19, 119, 120	Mononik.....	140
Father's Rest.....	46, 117, 174, 175	House Urgains.....	21	Mostor.9, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 42, 45, 50, 52, 71, 79, 88, 91, 93, 109, 112, 115, 118, 119, 151, 158, 182, 184, 185	
Fellice..9, 10, 12, 14, 17, 19, 20, 42, 45, 47, 52, 53, 63, 70, 87, 88, 89, 101, 110, 112, 118, 183, 184, 185		House Welldown.....	21	Mt. Scarroth.....	93
Fellice Plateau.....	70, 90	Houseless.....	23, 24, 45, 77	Murath.....	17, 70, 90, 102
		Hylee.....	16, 54	Mursha.....	88, 110
		Ice Sea.....	8, 89, 98, 111	Nathaniel Reid Casabon.....	20
		Imperial Guard.....	62, 68, 78, 97	New Dawn Park.....	73, 74
		Imperial Messenger.....	44, 101	New Gods.....	46, 59, 82, 122, 131, 137
		Inner Sea .8, 10, 15, 62, 67, 69, 79, 88, 89, 92, 97, 98, 99, 111, 114, 118, 119, 147		Nishrah.....	135
		Iron Storm.....	13, 78, 79, 88, 138		
		Islynnas.....	140		
		Iturr.....	47, 136		

Nisvaloon.....	46, 47, 48, 82, 103, 138	Savage Time. 7, 19, 29, 56, 59, 68, 84, 113,	Ty'Ko.....	47
Nocmal.....	14, 69, 70, 92, 151	114, 115, 116, 118, 121, 122, 131, 134,	Ty'Rae.....	28, 47
Nojala Mountains.....	10, 72, 92, 93	137, 139, 141, 146, 148, 150, 155, 156,	Ty'Set.....	46, 48
Nomadic Clans.....	109	157	Tynhare Plains.....	15, 93, 94, 109, 184
Northern Wilds.....	10, 14, 108, 111	Sea of Storms. .8, 10, 72, 88, 97, 111, 138,	Unbound.....	49
Novaskag.....	50, 112	151	Unetor.....	8, 54, 75, 86, 97, 99, 108, 112
Old Gods...49, 57, 103, 117, 122, 127, 137,		Sehthar.....	Untah.....	103, 142
139, 140, 141, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159		Sezral Tal Morgain.....	Ur-Lar.....	57
Order of Kodar.....	80, 143	Shalamahkib.....	Ursinah.....	48, 103, 139
Ortho.....	136	Sheldon Indorn.....	Vast Sea.....	8, 97, 108
Pangu.....	103, 140	Silk Web.....	Vesral.....	30, 76
Phillip Hend Kuntarr.....	19	Soltor.....	Volios.....	46, 47, 103, 139, 184
Polimus Fortress.....	22	Sons of Gravston.....	Wagon People.....	110
Prime Advisors.....	15, 84	Southflo.....	Water Carriers.....	85, 86
Prime Order.....15, 56, 57, 71, 84, 104, 114,		Spice Kingdoms. .10, 16, 54, 67, 72, 86, 93,	Watlen.....	141
117		108, 109, 110, 112, 147, 153, 182, 183,	Way Ash'non.....	58, 59, 110
Prion's Lances.....	79	185	Wessroth Company.....	16, 78, 79
Qurin.....	136	Stouthearts.....	White Sands Accord.....	16, 72, 79, 109, 119
Quy.....	112, 113	Sulkor..9, 16, 18, 19, 21, 42, 43, 45, 47, 52,	Wild Hills.....	94
Rachel Dewitt.....	79	53, 54, 62, 94, 109, 110, 112, 151, 162,	Wild Hills Rebellion.....	19
Rajhahl.....	141	178, 182, 183, 185	Wild Wood Road.....	94
Rakthor.....	21, 47, 78, 103, 138, 139	Tanjoom.....	Wild Woods.....	94, 95
Rascool.....	62, 72	Tashrune.....	Willen T. Prion.....	79
Rasfenie Mountains.....	7, 10, 93	Tazral Kalistic.....	Wind Blades.....	79
Razlanchi.....	110	Tazral's Day.....	Winter Guard.....	10, 14, 102, 108, 111, 118
Red Guard.....	82, 95	Tecken.....	Winter Wall.....	10, 14, 102, 108, 112, 117,
Rektor...8, 75, 76, 86, 96, 97, 99, 108, 111,		Temalo Rix Welldown.....	118, 153	
112, 113, 153		The Second Fall.....	Xanathurr.....	143
Republic Hall.....	73	49, 57, 59, 74, 117, 122,	Xorn Brokerage.....	86
Rocrest.....	18, 34, 62, 68, 90, 94	148, 150	Yahsur.....	64, 73, 83, 88, 91, 95, 112, 155
Rychar Starcrest Canitus.....	17	Thieves' Cant.....	Yonhan Montomm.....	79
Saga of Tazral. 39, 46, 55, 74, 80, 117, 131,		Tinkerers' League.....	Yuretgolden.....	134
180		Trade Tongue.....	Zaphkah.....	136
Sage City.....	15, 54, 57, 71	Treaty of Song.....	Zenchu.....	141
Samule Roesoon.....	22	Trevor Montblac Ricdon.....		
Sapreen.....15, 18, 54, 60, 71, 79, 84, 114		Tuzale.....		
		Ty'Helt.....		

Change History

May 11, 2013

Initial public release totals 55 pages.

May 19, 2013

Update version #993913:56:55 totals 57 pages.

- Rearranged some sections.
 - Added a section on [Common Life](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

May 27, 2013

Update version #994114:12:33 totals 58 pages.

- Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

June 1, 2013

Update version #994224:03:43 totals 61 pages.

- Added section for [Shadow Walkers](#).
 - Added section for [Religious Orders](#).
 - Added section for [Intellectual Guilds](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

June 1, 2013

Update version #994247:28:09 totals 63 pages.

- Changed section name [Shadow Walkers](#) to [Shadow Organizations](#). Expanded section.
 - Expanded section for [Religious Orders](#).
 - Expanded section for [Intellectual Guilds](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

June 6, 2013

Update version #994366:05:26 totals 64 pages.

- Added section for [House Guard](#).
 - Added section for [Army of the Domain](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

June 9, 2013

Update version #994439:47:55 totals 64 pages.

- Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

June 11, 2013

Update version #994474:19:13 totals 64 pages.

- Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

June 14, 2013

Update version #994559:22:40 totals 64 pages.

- Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

June 24, 2013

Update version #994795:12:31 totals 66 pages.

- Added section for [Imperial Guard](#).
 - Map of Levloe added.
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

June 27, 2013

Update version #994863:19:17 totals 67 pages.

- Map of Sapeen added.
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

July 7, 2013

Update version #995111:09:09 totals 69 pages.

- Map of Hilldale added.
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

July 11, 2013

Update version #995185:14:35 totals 69 pages.

- Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

July 14, 2013

Update version #995276:42:00 totals 72 pages.

- Added section for [Noble Life](#).
 - Added section for [Communication in the Middle Lands](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

July 28, 2013

Update version #995607:46:44 totals 73 pages.

- Added section for [Non-Humans in the Empire](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

August 10, 2013

Update version #995907:44:36 totals 77 pages.

- Added new heading for [Guilds, Orders & Armies of the Middle Lands](#).
 - Moved some sections from the heading [People of the Middle Lands](#) to the newly created heading.
 - Added section for [Law and Order](#).
 - Added section for [Slavery](#).
 - Added section for [The Empire's Statistics](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

August 17, 2013

Update version #996082:43:24 totals 80 pages.

- Added section for [Commerce and Business](#).
 - Added section for [Influences](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

August 22, 2013

Update version #996206:52:35 totals 82 pages.

- Added section for [Safety on the "Road"](#).
 - Added section for [Magic Items](#).
 - Added section for [Intelligent Items](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

September 3, 2013

Update version #996482:04:28 totals 85 pages.

- Expanded section on [Minor Houses](#).
 - Expanded section on [New Houses](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections, formatting, and/or typo corrections.
-

September 16, 2013

Update version #996803:29:07 totals 92 pages.

- Added links to ToC.
 - Added footer to each page, it includes a link to ToC as well as page numbers.
 - Added section [Example Settlements and Territories](#).
 - Expanded the section [Appendix F - Deities](#), adding more deities for all races.
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

October 1, 2013

Update version #997170:40:47 totals 94 pages.

- Added section for [The Death and Rebirth of Magic](#).
 - Added section for [The Magic Road Back](#).
 - Added section for [What is Magic](#).
 - Added section for [How Magic Works](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

October 14, 2013

Update version #997477:12:51 totals 102 pages.

- Added section for [Custom Spells](#).
 - Added section for [Ritual Magic](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

October 31, 2013

Update version #997893:33:34 totals 110 pages.

- Added section for [Extended Creature Details](#).
 - Added section for [Custom Magic Items](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

April 14, 2014

Update version #1001850:48:02 totals 111 pages.

- Extended section for [Extended Creature Details](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

May 3, 2014

Update version #1002297:49:01 totals 121 pages.

- Expanded section on [ALCC/BW](#).
 - Extended section for [Extended Creature Details](#).
 - Added section [Life in the City](#).
 - Added section [Life in the Country](#).
 - Added section [Naming Things](#).
 - Added section [Rumors](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

May 24, 2014

Update version #1002801:21:45 totals 130 pages.

- Added section for [Customs](#).
 - Added section for [Land Ownership](#).
 - Added section for [Keeping Records](#).
 - Added section for [Trade and Service Groups](#).
 - Added section for [Creatures Unique to the Middle Lands](#).
 - Added section for [Other Stuff](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

September 30, 2014

Update version #1005909:55:29 totals 136 pages.

- Added section [Hunting, Herding, Fishing, and Farming](#).
 - Moved section [Rumors](#) to its own heading.
 - Expanded section [Major Cities of the Middle Lands](#).
 - Added section [Underdark Deities](#).
 - Map for Balashar added.
 - Several minor font and formatting changes due to migration from Mac to Windows.
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

October 21, 2016

Update version #1023957:56:41 totals 137 pages.

- Added a section on [Clothing, Fashion, and Symbols](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

December 29, 2016

Update version #1025615:09:41 totals 139 pages.

- Added a section on [Settlement Construction](#).
 - Added a section on [Settlement Defenses](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

September 10, 2017

Update version #1032090:33:57 totals 151 pages.

- Removed the section [Other Stuff](#).
 - Added the link to the [RPG Stash](#) website.
 - Added the section [Xorn Brokerage](#).
 - Added the heading [Lore](#). This includes sections on songs and stories.
 - Added the section [Change History](#).
 - Expanded the section for [Language](#). More details for all language groups and dialects.
 - Minor font changes due to new laptop not having all fonts. Embedded fonts so as to avoid it in the future.
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

January 31, 2018

Update version #1035163:01:07 totals 152 pages.

- Added more [Custom Magic Items](#).
 - Found and re-added a font from the past.
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

February 15, 2018

Update version #1035517:10:39 totals 160 pages.

- Added section [Education](#).
 - Added section [Etiquette, Manners, and Protocol](#).
 - Added section [Index of Names and Places](#).
 - Added section [Sayings and Curses](#).
 - Expanded section [Creatures Unique to the Middle Lands](#).
 - Expanded section [Tribes of the Middle Lands](#).
 - Reformatted the section [Change History](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

March 24, 2018

Update version #1036405:26:59 totals 169 pages.

- Added more cultural notes (blue boxes).
 - Added the section on [Cuisine](#).
 - Added the section on [Technology](#).
 - Expanded the section [Major Cities of the Middle Lands](#).
 - Expanded the section [Deities](#).
 - Map of Lechwed added.
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

July 8, 2018

Update version #1038948:51:28 totals 172 pages.

- Added the section on [Dragons](#).
 - Added the section on [Vampires](#).
 - Expanded the section [Cyclopes](#).
 - Expanded the section [Giants](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

August 10, 2018

Update version #1039740:31:08 totals 174 pages.

- Added the section [Cost of Construction](#).
 - Added the Halovir Freehold under the section for [Example Settlements and Territories](#).
 - Altered the section on [Commerce and Business](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

September 3, 2018

Update version #1040305:26:32 totals 174 pages.

- Added the section on [Liches](#).
 - Minor format changes.
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

October 2, 2018

Update version #1041000:04:48 totals 181 pages.

- Added more encounter tables.
 - Added the heading [Herbs, Spices and Useful Plants](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

October 26, 2018

Update version #1041586:48:06 totals 190 pages.

- Added the heading [Geographical Regions of Interest](#).
 - Expanded the section [Herbs, Spices and Useful Plants](#).
 - Minor changes to some sections and/or typo corrections.
-

November 11, 2018

Update version #1041976:57:44 totals 195 pages.

- Added the section on [Oaths and Oath Breaking](#).
 - Expanded the section [Deities](#).
 - Expanded the section [Herbs, Spices and Useful Plants](#).
 - Expanded the section [The Empire's Statistics](#).
 - Minor changes to many sections and typo corrections.
-

March 10, 2019

Update version #1044831:00:35 totals 197 pages.

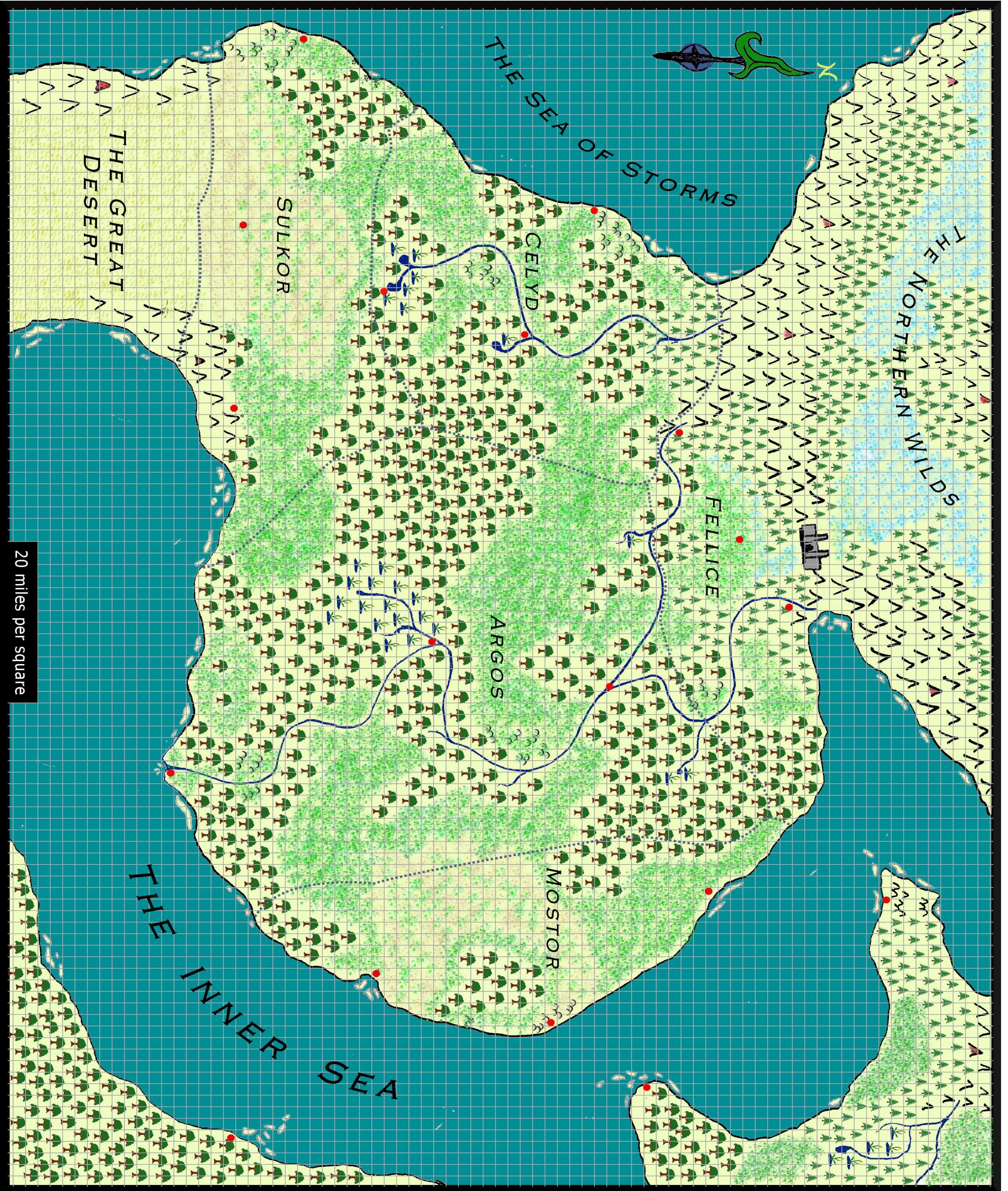
- Expanded the section [Major Cities of the Middle Lands](#) by merging parts of the city stat spreadsheet which was, up to now, one of my private documents.
 - Minor changes to many sections and typo corrections.
-

November 14, 2019

Current release. This version totals 198 pages.

- Added more [Custom Magic Items](#).
 - Minor changes to many sections and typo corrections.
-

Map of the Middle Lands





LEVLOE

150 ft.

WRG
2013







