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ATLAS OF ESLIN



Dark Matter Studios, LLC

Bozeman

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO ESLIN



The Pons Noron monk balanced barefoot on the windowsill of the abandoned tower room, fifty feet above the mist-swept Silverthrone forest, an infant cradled in his arms. The mercenary, rabid from a two-weeks long chase, had finally found an axe and would be through the barred but time-worn door in moments. He watched the woman in the guttering light of the oil lamp as she tightened her greaves and caught a brief grimace of pain fly across her features, quickly mastered. He could not believe she was even standing just five hours after such a difficult birth, never mind preparing to face a full squad of the Black Boar Brigade. Pale, her hands quivering, she checked the grip on her short swords, rolled her shoulders, glanced up at monk and child and whispered, "Go. His name is Lleyden. Tell him that he is the son of a warrior." As he found footholds in the tiny cracks of the tower wall and lowered himself from sight, he heard the door splinter....

The World of Eslin

Welcome traveler! Within these pages we attempt to provide a world fertile with myth and breathing with color. Delve into these words, and it will not be long before you are immersed in adventure. Use this tome as a departure point for tales of your own making, and feel free to massage what displeases you into something that makes you smile.

Though there is much more we might say, we believe that Eslin is best introduced by its own, and thus offer this excerpt from a famous work written by Devlin Tamber, Professor Emeritus of the Collegium and Poet Laureate of Meath.

"I can describe the rich realms of these Chronicles' focus from many points of view, and not all would dwell upon death, blood and darkness. My perspective as one of the (very) long-lived inhabitants of this harsh world is, surprisingly, colored by hope. Most of those reading this will see little of how events set into motion millennia ago play prominent roles in those readers' present and future. Others will see the lessons of the past of these many lands as only a doom which we are bound to repeat. I can only hope and trust that there will be some few, doughty travelers that perceive that truly great works and legends are carved by present action and seasoned with farsighted experience. An old man digresses. Eslin.

Eslin is dominated by a vast continent whose extreme reaches of the north are icy forests of eternal snow, and to the south, black-sanded desert. It is, from its furthest points to the east and west, 1,370 leagues (1 league = 3 miles) as the windeagle flies, and 1,500 leagues north to south. Despite its size, this continent is well traveled; its seemingly infinite coasts are plied by mariners of more than one race, and its five soaring primary mountain ranges are scaled by beings both strange and mundane. Its diverse locales, however, are not as important as that which gives Eslin its singular nature: its multitude of intelligent races. This planet is peopled by inhabitants who originated from within and without its boundaries: many evolved on Eslin, some are invaders or visitors from other places. There are more who have come and gone, more who are unknown, and still more who are unnamed, but I assure you there are plenty in the known world for this Chronicle to record."

Cosmology

Every people has its own conception of how the world was created,

what the rings are, why there is ring-fire, whether or not gods exist; they are discussed in and around campfires, temples and pubs all across Eslin. For example:

"...and it is said that the Dragon Magi at conception were fully sentient, at once aware of their mother the earth. And they read the dooms of fate in the bedrock of the world upon the Pillared Isles. And they set these dooms in the Citadel of Prophecy for all time.

But it is written in the most revered Scroll of the Creator that the Mother will not suffer the offspring of her Blood to live within the dooms writ upon her breast, the foundation of the world."

-An excerpt from the lost Codex of Orumae

Details regarding these many systems of cosmology and mythology can be found in each Realm chapter's discussion of religion. The physical facts regarding the composition of the planet follow.

The Planet and its Environs

Eslin is a planet like Earth in many respects, and so Earth will be used as a point of comparison in this discussion. Eslin is slightly closer to its star than is Earth; a single revolution takes 350 days. Eslin is only slightly smaller, with an equatorial circumference of 24,100 miles and a polar circumference of 24,200 miles. Eslin is tilted on its axis almost identically to Earth. Because it is closer to its sun, and because its sun is somewhat hotter, Eslin is a relatively warm planet. It still has ice caps, but these are 30 percent smaller than those found on Earth.

Climate

This means that there is about a 15 degree latitude difference in climate compared to Earth. For example, the climate at Earth's 75th parallel (only 5 degrees short of the Arctic Circle) is polar, while on Eslin, the 75th parallel climate is akin to that of southern Alaska or Oslo, Norway: still cold but by no means consisting of only snowy tundra or fields of ice. The difference is more striking at lower latitudes; the weather at Earth's 45th parallel ranges from icy cold in Mongolia,



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to cool and wet in Oregon. Eslin's 45th parallel, on the other hand, crosses many Mediterranean climates and wet regions akin to the American south (for example the states of Georgia and Alabama).

The Ring, Which Was the Moon

In Eslin's recent geologic past a terrible cataclysm occurred when its single moon was forced within the planet's Roche limit, which is the lowest possible altitude at which a small celestial body can withstand the fragmenting force of a primary celestial body (for Eslin this is a little over 11,000 miles). The moon's fragments formed the ring, and the possibly world-ending forces unleashed on the surface of Eslin were only partially alleviated by forces beyond those of nature.

The ring has now become an integral part of life on Eslin's surface. Because of the planet's tilt and ring-shine, the nights of the spring and summer months are equivalent to Earth's twilight and ring-shadow is absent during the day. The nights of the autumn and winter months are dark and ring-shadow blankets the daytime in twilight, cooling the air considerably. Seasons in the northern and southern hemispheres alternate in Eslin, like they do on Earth.

History

"History is like a meal in a restaurant. One person tastes heaven, the other, rotting squid." - Jabim Sha'Tal, Adjunct Professor of History, University of Maklubar

The story of humanity on Eslin is a very old one, with some truly ancient cultures still in existence, with others only dim memories. Each Realm's chapter contains a moderately educated person's understanding of its history. This will allow characters to operate from the point of view of a current resident of the Realm, and not from the unproductive point of view of an all-knowing God of Every Event That Has Ever Happened.

Characters of less than moderate education in most of these Realms will have an even dimmer understanding, or no knowledge at all, of past historical events.

The True History of Eslin

Game Masters are encouraged to do some reading in Chapter 10, The GM's Toolbox, to discover the real bones and historical foundation of the world. It is truly complete and detailed, and full of opportunities and inspirations for the creation of campaign events and plotlines.

Using the Atlas - Quick Tips For the Game Master

1. *We did the Heavy Lifting for You.* Enjoy. The Atlas has a total of 8 diverse, ready-to-play geographic areas, or "Realms" for your gaming group to play in. Choose one you like, and away you go.
2. *Detail is Key.* What makes good storytelling is details. The pride of a Giren slave, the hatred that follows Lord Bordros down a street in Bryghton, the fact that the GM remembers what he sounded like the last time the characters met him. We put enough details in so you could use as many as you want to.
3. *Don't Be Sly.* If you love Rullaea, but hate Pentonism and want Rullaeans to worship The Mushroom Gods, go ahead and change it that way in your campaign world. We won't tell anyone.
4. *You're the Boss.* If a player wants to run a Quel-Noron pentonite monk in your Mushroom-God-Rullaea, just talk to her about how that idea might need to be collaborated on a bit. Really. Show her your draft of the Guild of Mushroom Prana and she'll forget all about it.
5. *Secret Masteries Add to Gameplay.* Nothing makes an occupation more interesting and characters more diverse than requiring the character earn an organization's secret mastery to advance in it. Roleplaying the gaining of the mastery is fun, as are the perks of the title (see below).
6. *Titles are Great for Roleplaying.* Being awarded the title of Knight isn't just about gaining access to shen. The title should merit the character more respect from commanders and the populace, a special shield of quality, and even greater interest from the opposite sex! Those things will enrich your characters' lives and the gaming session.

For the Player

1. *Play the Character's Knowledge, Not Your Own.* If you've read the Atlas cover-to-cover, thank you. However, please don't allow your young, stupid and farm-bred warrior to know that the Arcanum is a super-secret organization with its headquarters in the city of Meath-Myrus. It will just bug everybody.
2. *Get Familiar with Your Organization.* Find out who your superior is. Look at the secret masteries and the rest of the description. Play up the boisterousness of that Storm Warden. You'll enjoy it.
3. *It's Your Gaming Group's World.* Telling a GM or another player, "well, it's different in the Atlas," will not work, and it will, again, just bug everybody.
4. *Roleplaying is in the Details.* As with #2 in the GM's Tips. Knowing that your Fost should take the pinkies of his defeated adversaries and store them in a bag will just make the game more fun.



An overview map of Eslin at roughly one-quarter scale. Some features and textures have been removed for readability, but beautiful full-size color maps are freely downloadable at www.epicrpg.com. These maps can be used on a computer or printed out on an oversize printer.

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Navigating a Realm

Each Realm chapter is divided into clearly labeled sections for easy access and understanding. The progression varies slightly, but is basically the same:

- **Traveling Tips Box.** Here you'll find a down and dirty summary for players and GMs who require little detail and are ready to go, or just want a refresher.
- **Overview and Statistics.** This is where you'll find entries covering Geography, Flora and Fauna, History, Politics and Law, Armament, and so on.
- **Races.** Here are detailed descriptions of each race in the Realm, including physical descriptions, customs, demeanor, art, even culinary styles.
- **Organizations and Mentors.** Here are individual descriptions of a plethora of starting points for adventurers and details of how each fits in to the greater society around it.

Realms, Atlas Organization

For the purpose of using Eslin as a world in which to base Epic campaigns, it has been divided into geographical areas, called "Realms." Each Realm is more than large enough to support an entire campaign without the characters ever leaving its borders. In fact, multiple campaigns could be conducted in a single Realm, as the diversity of each is substantial.

When choosing a Realm, the GM should peruse each chapter to gain a feel for the peoples, cultures, religions, history and overarching themes. For a quick glance, each Realm

is listed below with a brief introduction. The chapters of the Atlas are arranged in a counter-clockwise spiral originating in the Heart Realm of Rullaea, and circling outward.

Heart Realm - Rullaea (Ch. 2)

This Realm, also known as Rullaea, is where the first civilizations of Eslin evolved. An ancient land of deep history, it is now settled by the Rullaeen and Merethi humans in a diverse number of kingdoms immersed in intrigue and political maneuvering. Pentonism is the dominant religious force, bringing veneration of the Five Virtues to all peoples. Rullaea is one of the most renowned centers of learning in the world, home to the great university called the Collegium, where scholars of many nations debate, write, and learn. This Realm is also home to the non-human, exotic Celarri, and the Lemui, called the forger-folk.

Ice Crown Realm - Rimenor (Ch. 3)

A rugged, mountainous land filled with wild unexplored places, fast rivers, and few people, Rimenor is a vast wilderness inhabited by a tribal people that call themselves Fosts. There are no true cities here, nor really any roads, just small villages, towns and the occasional "stong," its hewn logs hardly interrupting the endless procession of tree and rock to breathtaking and isolated fjords. The almost good-natured warring between Fostic tribes turns deadly earnest when pitted against an incursion from the north by giants, their ancient enemies.



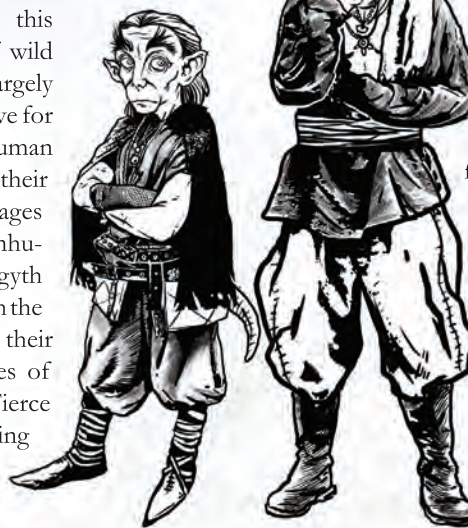
From left to right: Rullaeen, Merethi, Celarri, and Fost

Wind Steppe Realm - Emerald Sea (Ch. 4)



From left to right: Ellinael and Gwegyth

Also called the Emerald Sea, this vast expanse of wild grassland is largely unpopulated, save for the nomadic human Ellinael on their moving villages and the nonhuman Gwegyth living beneath the surface of their highland lakes of Garudaean. Fierce Ilfar, migrating herds of huge beasts and their predators threaten all who would venture to travel here in the country of endless sky.



From left to right: Lemui and Ro-elem

and Ro-elem) and three non-human (Buruk, Lemui, Stedyon) dwell here. In a land in which war continually looms, the races are adapted to a cycle of continual conflict.

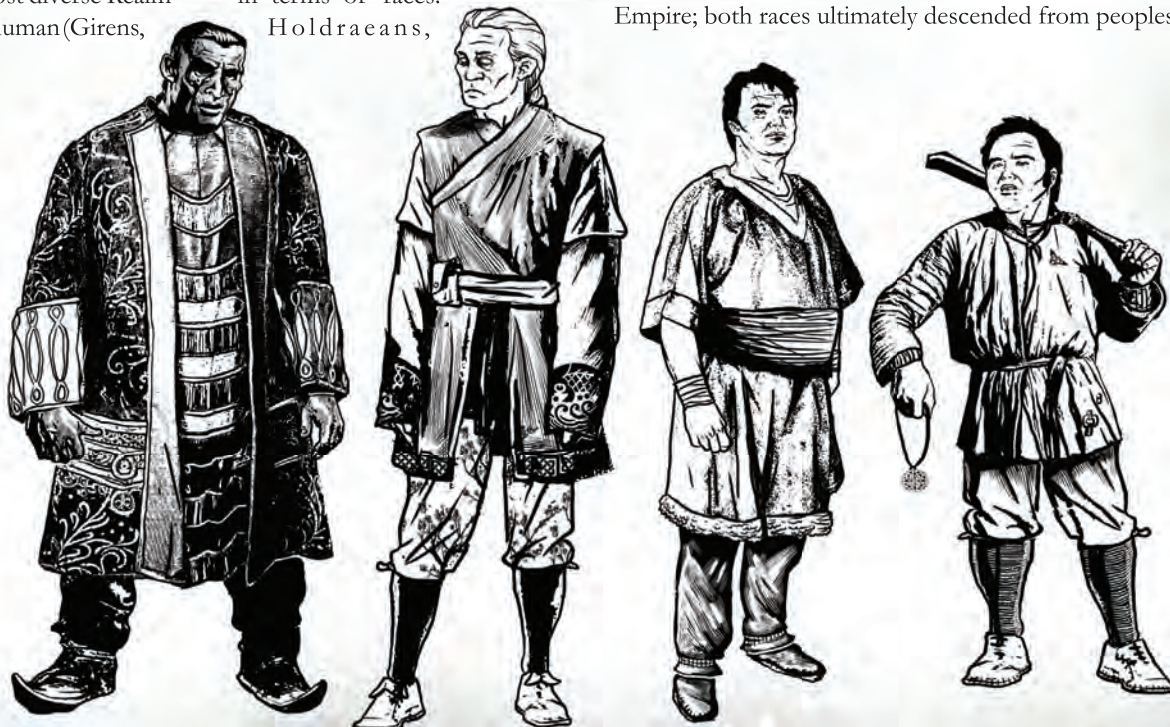
Sand Forge Realm - Farshan (Ch. 6)

A land of heat, dust and riches, this Realm is home to the human Thursions and Alturans, and the non-human Farshai. Despite the Realm's predominantly dry

conditions, the cities occupying its fertile coastal regions are teeming with humanity, making it the most populated Realm of Eslin. Like the blowing sands of the desert, the region is ever-changing. The insect-like Grimm threaten civilization from the deep desert, the bizarre Farshai mentor humans in the use of ancient power, and the Embraced seek the mastery of demonurgy.

Ring Shadow Realm - Ursyos-Elkinon (Ch. 5)

The twin threats of the Buruk Empire and ring-fire bring danger and terror to this Realm known as Ursyos-Elkinon. It is the most diverse Realm in terms of races: threehuman (Girens, Holdraeans,



From left to right: Buruk, Stedyon, Giren, Holdraean

Cloud Spire Realm - Espirea (Ch. 7)

This Realm is known as Espirea, and is dominated by the fierce human Kalmon-I and the Olemic people of the Senjic Empire; both races ultimately descended from peoples driven

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From left to right: Alturan, Farshai, and Thursion

Tropical Realm - Bonjua (Ch. 9)

This Realm houses Bonjua, a relatively small, tropical island nation far to the south of the main continent. It is the home of the human Bonjuans, a technologically advanced race with unique customs who are nonetheless god-fearing. Ruled by living gods, they remain cut-off from the rest of humanity, though their rich culture belies their isolation. The Bonjuans are among the foremost mariners in all of Eslin.



Bonjuan

The GM's Toolbox (Ch. 10)

This exclusive Realm houses a big pile of goodness for GMs. It begins with a Realm-by-realm selection of adventure and campaign sparks, organized for quick access and ease of incorporation. The sparks are followed by three sample population centers: part of a Rullaeen city, a doomed Fost

village from Rimenor, and a frontier outpost on the fringes of Ursyos-Elkinon. The chapter is rounded off by an exhaustive historical timeline for Eslin, matched up with complete histories of the various Realms.

Other Places

Besides the Realms of men, there are other places connected to Eslin. The connections are often tangential or hidden, and always strange and dangerous. Little is known of such places, and this volume will have little to do them. Only fools and liars claim to have visited these places unscathed.

Dark Lands of Inuheim

North beyond Rimenor lies a wilderness uncharted by civilized travelers, though its inhabitants might dispute this claim. It is blanketed with evergreen forests and dotted with lakes and streams, some icy and some boiling hot from forces at work beneath the surface. Inuheim is the Realm of the Oralothe, or Giant-kind. Though giants may be found elsewhere in the wide lands of Eslin, Inuheim is their homeland. The names of three great Oralothe cities pervade legend and lore: Ebivintor of the Balir, Artirex of the Nabon, and Gebarox of



Selgonaw



From left to right: Kalmon-I and Olemic

Rain Idol Realm - Selgonaw (Ch. 8)

Selgonaw is a wild and unknown frontier, home of the mountain-shakers and fell beasts who have never been named. The Selgonac live there, stone age inhabitants who venture away from the tribal fire into the mist to wrestle with myth and dreams.

the Bellagag and Collbronde. Who from the south or east has seen these abodes? No one can tell. Dragons also dwell here, though the Oraloth reign supreme, and great herds of cetyl beasts roam the land, all the way to the ocean of the north and the Maelstrom of Ice.

Erebus

The Land Beneath, the Underworld, Realm of Despair. It has many different names in many different lands. It is the subject of old wives' tales and sages' treatises alike. Myths and legends multiply around its mere mention. Most agree that it is the Realm of the Erebusi, who the common folk (and the sensible folk) call demons. Savants say that it exists beneath the surface of Eslin, though powerful enchantment runs through its fearsome and horrid halls, and only through means arcane or unlucky can one reach it, or have traffic with its denizens. Why one would want to have such traffic defies explanation.

Vulshea

A soft whisper escaping a stack of dusty tomes in the Collegium's library.... a fleeting glimpse in a dark and misty grove of the Great Misenwood... an out of place couplet in a Fost oral epic... this is Vulshea. There is no authority, no body of knowledge about this no-place. There is no proof of its existence, yet some say there is something that lives in the unseen spaces between, watching this world. If there is purpose or desire there, they dwell in that place between sleep and waking. When the watchers venture into this world, let the unknowing beware.

Creating an Organization

A very important part of our philosophy is the bridge that mentors and occupations create between character and setting in the Epic RPG system. It is relatively simple to create a new organization for use with Epic. You can be as detailed or generic as you would like, based on your style of play and the needs of your campaign. Remember that organizations are some type of group or lone master of an art; either specific or broad, whose skill set is applicable in some way to adventuring. Characters can learn new skills and masteries from an organization, gain allies, and seek help in time of need. The organizations of Eslin are fairly detailed and oriented to the specific Realm settings, so if you are looking for something more generic or something oriented to your own world or campaign, we've provided the following suggestions:

1. Come up with a general idea of the organization's purpose. Some questions to ask are: Who or what cause does it serve? Are its aims political, economic, religious, arcane, academic, a combination of these, or something entirely different? Who leads the organization? What is the personality of its leader or leaders? How does one become a member of the

organization? What are the general skill sets of its members? What special skills do its members possess that set them apart from other similar groups, or the general population? Example generic organizations are priesthoods, knighthoods, thieves' guilds, bards' collectives, mercenary companies, orders of assassins, orders of warrior monks, or armies. An organization could also be a lone wandering warrior or artist of the arcane who decides to take on a character as her apprentice. The possibilities are as endless as your imagination.

2. Decide if the organization has any tenets, rules, dues, or vows that characters must follow or pay in order to join and remain members of the organization. Examples include a knight's vows, or a set of rules governing a priest's actions, or monthly dues/percentage of earnings a thief owes to his thieves' guild. It is not necessary for every organization to have such rules, but most are going to require something from the character in exchange for training and other types of assistance.

3. Decide on a symbol, if any, that identifies the organization. This could be anything: a coat of arms, a brand or tattoo, a particular type or color of clothing, a specific weapon, or nothing.

4. Choose four basic skills that all initiates of the organization learn during their apprenticeship. This could be any combination of four skills from Chapter 3 of the Game Manual. For example, a warrior's guild might teach athletics, melee arms, maneuvering, and military arts.

5. For the fifth skill, we encourage you to choose something that isn't all that tactically useful. Oftentimes, such a skill can round out of the feel and individuality of an organization, and add an element of creativity and detail that a purely utilitarian organization might not possess. Tie this skill to the secret mastery for the organization. For example, the Balder Brotherhood in Rullaea has mostly tactical skills for its skill set. However, the inclusion of stewardship skill, which governs food and spirits, forces characters to sacrifice pure tactical mojo to achieve secret mastery and rank inside the profession.

6. Create masteries and grandmasteries a character can learn when and if the character is inducted into the inner secrets of the organization, also identifying specialties that lead to these secrets (see Chapter 3 of the Game Manual for a list of all specialties). It should not be easy to gain this knowledge. Some trial or test should be completed to the liking of the senior members of the organization before the character is trusted to wield such power. If the character does achieve this knowledge, she should be counted among the highest members of the organization. See the Eslin organizations and mentors in the end of each Realm in this book for examples of secret masteries and grandmasteries.

INTRODUCTION

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Conclusion

We conclude this introduction with words from Jordain, sometime Wanderlord of the Haethcyl Clan of the Alturans of the Sand Forge Realm:

"There is no knowing Eslin. She will save you, damn you, love you, and beat you half to death, but you never truly know her. As the sun wester bears you over the horizon, there is always fresh adventure awaiting."

CHAPTER 2

RULLAEA, THE HEART REALM

Hark! The war horns blow; it is the Duchy Abendroth defending its borders from the maniacal Duke of Melyorn and his men. Warring nobles and political intrigue grip these lands, held in check only by strong kings and the powerful Pentonite religion. Welcome to the most ancient Realm in Eslin, where the secrets of ages past lie hidden under layers of civilization that once marked the golden age of humankind.” Dorel chuckled to himself as he finished reading the playbill. Ella Wells, his partner in the King’s Evening March, touched his arm as the lights in the theatre dimmed. The pair, dressed as Merethi nobility, rose inconspicuously to leave, but were spotted by the agents from Cernnia who undoubtedly wanted their stolen plans back. A scream shot from the audience as the Cernnian spies drew blades and darted toward the duo. Dorel and Ella leapt onto the stage, blades in hand, and began to make a thrilling performance of their own.



Geography

The verdant lands of the Heart Realm are covered with hospitable grassy fields and old growth forests. Indeed, the pastoral beauty of this misty Realm is the subject of many a poet's craft. The name "Heart Realm" derives from a time before history, for it was here that humans and Gwegyth first developed civilizations. This region was the birthplace of cultures and mythology that would shape the far-reaching future of the world.

The geographical names of the Heart Realm used in the present are nearly all Donish, the language of the kingdoms of Rullaea. A very few place names survive from the days of the Merethicles Empire, and these are found chiefly in the south. Location monikers are chiefly descriptive of natural characteristics or based on the names of prominent personages from each respective area's past.

The Realm is surrounded on three sides by water: this fact is its foremost defining geographical feature. Baliray Bay and the Espirean Sea lie to the north; to the east, lie the Fairwind Sea and Ever Sea; and to the south lie the Arlfaxon Sea and again, the Ever Sea. Many islands rise from the deeps along this exceedingly long coastline, and countless bays and inlets serve as natural harbors for fishermen, merchants, navies, and pirates alike.

The lands of the Realm are usually spoken of in terms of "the East," and "the West," as the region is neatly bisected by the Palandrine Hills in the south-central, and the Greenlock Forest in the north-central. However, there are also other clearly definable geographical features of northern and southern Rullaea.

In the north, the Realm is walled by the Hyali Mountains, and in the northwest by the Frostmaiden Mountains. The valleys and plateaus of these forbidding ranges were once central to the Rimenoran Empire of old, and hold ruins and ancient monuments standing mute testimony to its former glory, including the famous Figures of Rimenor carved into the cliffs of the Valley of Fallen Travelers. The mighty Silverthorn Forest descends from the western-most of these peaks to shroud much of the northwestern Realm in the cool darkness of an ancient wood never conquered by humankind. It is the eastern edge of this forest that the Celarri call home. Prospectors and adventurers venture across the northern borders frequently, though the weather and denizens of the region claim many a victim. The northern-most Rullaeian settlement is the renowned Quel Noron Monastery, which lies in the very foothills of the Hyali's.

The Kingdom of Doriént guards much of the long northern border of Rullaea; it is divided into two duchies, two counties, and one earldom. The Kingdom of Severness holds the northwest. While Doriént is comprised of gently rolling hills and numerous flat, fertile river valleys leading north to the sea, Severness is more rugged, especially in the north. Shalandria,

the wondrous capital of Doriént, sits on a broad peninsula that juts out into the brilliant blue waters of Baliray Bay; it is the greatest hub for culture and trade in northern Rullaea and contains soaring, breathtaking architecture. By way of contrast, Tuirdroth, the capital of Severness, is a provincial city that recently arose from a crossroads town. Its most notable features are the soaring spires of the scholarly retreat called the Sortilegium. The mighty Skybleed River, over a mile wide in some places, defines the southern border of both kingdoms, and separates northern Rullaea from the rest of the Realm.

Western Rullaea fades away into the steppe of the Emerald Sea. Its boundary is marked from north to south by the maze-like Silverthrone Hills, the thirsty brown Plain of Goe'lad, and the musty confines of Darkwood Forest. The Kingdom of Goe'lad, comprised of an earldom and a county, stands between the western wilderness and central Rullaea. Much drier than any other Rullaeian kingdoms and thus unable to support its economy through agriculture, Goe'lad relies upon the rich trade tariffs it levies on the trade routes that run through its heart and south to the Thursion states and east into Ellinael lands. Another, extremely prominent, geographical feature that completes Goe'lad's monopoly on overland (or underland as it may be) trade in this part of the Heart Realm, is the Under-River at GoLann, named Dwenolost in the Gwegyth tongue (see Seven Greatest Wonders). Eastern Goe'lad is dominated by Ascension Peak, a staggering solitary mountain that is a wonder in and of itself.

Between the Fens of Aldofi, Aldofi Forest, and the active volcanoes of Mount Colorum and Mount Mereth, lies southern Rullaea: once the heart of the incomparable Merethicles Empire. Southern and eastern Rullaea borders the sea, which supports constant trade with the peoples of Farshan to the southwest and Espirea to the far northeast.

The 45th parallel passes directly through the middle of the Heart Realm. Its seasons are moderate with average summer temperatures in the 70s and average winter temperatures in the 40s. Weather patterns largely determined by ocean currents give Rullaea its moist climate with a large proportion of fungal life. Ring-shine and ring-shadow are the same here as they are elsewhere on the planet.

Flora and Fauna

The areas not occupied by forest are filled with lush green grass and wild grains. These heaths range the entire Realm and interweave through the hills, forests and rivers. The Heart Realm used to be filled with old growth forests before human civilization encroached. Now the forests show the distinctive pattern of excessive logging. This patchwork of woods is a vital resource to the Rullaeans, and only three great forests remain: the Silverthorn, the Greenlock, and the Fernward. Most trees are hardwoods, though the forests bordering the

Rullaea Traveling Tips

Lay of the Land: Rullaea is a land of misty, rolling hills and deep forests; isolated keeps and hardy border wardens guard the young cities of the north and west frontiers, which are contrasted with thriving and venerable metropolises to the south and east. The Heart Realm makes a relatively recent return to civilization after an extended dark age. Four hundred years ago, the acclaimed King Donelgaen united what is now Meath, instituted the common language, Donish, and restored the Virtuous Pentad to the people. Pentonism, the philosophical teachings of the Prophet Erelae, is the accepted religion of the Heart Realm, and the Pentonite church is respected and powerful. The High Kingdom of Meath has a central political and geographic position, but the other countries of the region are as ambitious, if not as large; they engage in a constantly changing dance of alliance and betrayal.

Human Races

- **Merethi:** Proud of their old Merethicles heritage, they are smaller and darker than Rullaeans. Merethi are known as great merchants, orators and even charlatans, and have a way with words.
- **Rullaeans:** A mix of several cultures of ancient times, Rullaeans have fair or ruddy skin, and brown or blonde hair. Larger than their Merethi cousins. Loyal and proud by nature, their faith in Pentonism is exceeded only by loyalty to country or even county.

Non-Human Races

- **Celarri:** The half-human, half-tree people of the Heart Realm project a calm and calculating nature that humans find cruel at times. Celarri think before acting, but are more emotional than logical. They live in three strong, private communities within Rullaea.

Some Influential Organizations

- **The Arcanum:** Metaphysicians and alchemists in a hidden organization within the Collegium universities. The Arcanum are almost unknown except to the select, powerful individuals they advise.
- **The Evening March:** A group of elite spies for the Kingdom of Meath. Renowned for their skills at collecting information and hiding in plain sight.
- **Gepetos Scops:** Bards and musicians without peer, the scops are part of the cultural fabric of Rullaea.
- **Paladins of Tellimod:** The Grey Riders are the elite noble calvary of Meath and knights of the Pentonite Church.
- **Pentonite Monks:** The Quel-Noron Order use shen to defend the innocent and devout. The Pons-Noron monks are healers and counselors, and are well-loved by the people.

- **Pirates of Prody the Peg:** These swashbuckling rogues are the scourge of the Espirean Sea and the subject of innumerable ballads and tales.
- **Sages of Tuirdroth:** Researchers arcane and mundane, they practice theurgy and philtrology in the towers of the Sortilegium in Severness.
- **Sepi's Gauntlet:** Famous Cernnian mercenary company. Many lords employ the Gauntlet to lend considerable power to their forces for a handsome price.
- **Storm Wardens:** Rangers from Severness that patrol the Ice Forge mountains and battle the barbarous Fosts. Boisterous drunkards, their rough existence has contributed to their legendary lack of social skills.

Key or Uncommon Terms

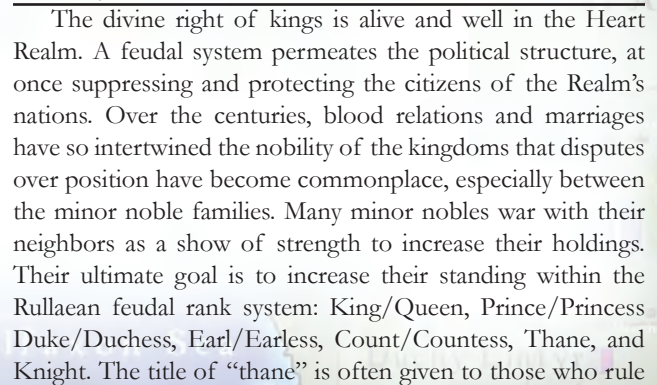
- **The Collegium:** The great universities of Rullaea, housed at three campuses in Meath-Myrus, Ehrlyntir, and Jalipir.
- **The Virtuous Pentad:** Tenets of the primary religion of Rullaea, called Pentonism: passion, integrity, loyalty, temperance and prudence.

Economics

Rullaea is a thriving hub of feudal capitalism. National currency is exchanged for goods and services in most kingdoms, though barter (goods for goods) is still a major part of the economic picture, especially in rural areas.

Powerful Political Entities

- **Cernnia:** A great hub for trade, commerce and the old Merethi traditions; ruled by Olotrius Demneti.
- **High Kingdom of Meath:** The greatest kingdom in the Heart Realm. Ruled by King Malcorn Penrose the Fifth, Meath is old, mighty and content.
- **Dorient:** Often at odds with Meath, this kingdom is known for its racial acceptance and strange contacts to the north. King Hranmar Cluso rules here.
- **Ehrlyr:** Recently won its independence from Meath. Lucrid Dodenor ferociously protects its borders.
- **Goe'Lad:** Trade is the lifeblood of this home of the famous Under-River. King Mordren Greythorn loves music, stout beer and anthropology.
- **Deluer:** King Faundius the Block rules this ethnically Merethi land and is constantly warring and scheming, particularly against Ehrlyr, which he hates.
- **Severness:** Strange and mystical, this kingdom ruled by Lencou Silverhand is famous for the Sortilegium of its sages, odd happenings, and its never-ending border war with the Fosts to the north.
- **The Pentonite Church:** The undisputed religion of the Heart Realm also wields secular power that no kingdom can ignore.



small areas of land for their lord – which could be any title from count to king. Thus thanes are the most common, yet least powerful of the land-ruling nobility. Knighthood is bestowed upon free landowners who pledge their services in battle to their liege in exchange for their property. Entire communities, including towns or cities, are ruled by thanes, but also sometimes by knights, lord abbots and high curates (see Religion). Community officials and general ranks and titles are:

- Alderman: town or city official
- Burgomaster: town or city official
- Burgher: a middle class citizen of a city
- Castellan: governor of a castle or fort
- Chamberlain: official of a court or office
- Constable: commander of constabulary guard (police)
- Examiner: city official or a law advisor
- Magistrate: judge
- Master of Revels: oversees festivals and entertainment
- Master of Property: manages property and deeds
- Master of Scrolls: manages records and reports
- Master of Guilds: oversees all guilds
- Master of Apothecaries: oversees all apothecaries and mandates regulation
- Page: servant to a noble
- Regent: ruler in absence of or until a prince reaches ruling age
- Sergeant: commander of a guard
- Steward: overseer appointed by duty to govern a house
- Squire: servant-apprentice to a knight
- Valet: personal attendant
- Vassal: follower of a noble

At the end of each king's life there is a great festival celebrating his life and deeds called the Rite of Regency. During this Festival a great tournament takes place. All eligible lords and ladies may take part, as well as five of the general populace chosen by lottery. The tournament consists of tests of faith to Pentonism, tactics and strategy, civility, and strength at arms. Although this process does not appear to be corrupt, there are many political games and alliances made by the lords who participate. Consequently, citizens of low or no nobility are rarely competitive.

Climbing the political ladder means changing (or acquiring) a sigil reflecting the title obtained. Unlike the lords of surrounding realms who use animals for devices, nobles and knightly orders of the Heart Realm use simple geometric designs. These standards include simple checker fields composed of two colors, angled stripes over monochromatic fields, solid fields with a colored square in the a corner, etcetera. The color blue signifies the highest titles. Thus, it is tradition that only the king's royal device contain solid fields of pure blue.

Generally the inhabitants of Rullaea are law-biding citizens, though there are most certainly those who operate outside the law. A criminal act is dealt with by placing the suspects

in detainment until Law Day, which occurs at the end of each month. During this time, an impartial officeholder known as an Examiner seeks to find the truth of the dispute or crime. On each Law Day, he brings his findings to either the local lord or an assembly of lords. After both sides have been heard, the noble or nobles present will make a judgment. If either the facts are inconclusive or no resolution is found, the decision is made according to how well the person has followed the five virtues. This is accomplished through interviews conducted by the Examiner, often with the person's hometown curate acting as a character witness.

Punishments range from a night in the dungeons to beheading, with torture being withheld only for extreme or horrific cases. All criminals, great and small, are branded with a symbol on their left hand representing the crime they committed.

Rullaeen Kingdoms

Table 2.1: Rullaeen Kingdoms

Kingdoms	Capital	Tender
Cernnia	Armasi	Estat(Gold), Embers(Silver), Eggs(Copper)
Doriént	Shalandria	Dukes(Gold), Counts(Silver), Earls(Copper)
E. Crushant	Crushant	"
C. Lauranor	Lauranor	"
C. Parlione	Parlione	"
D. D'Saonne	Ba'luess	"
D. Druyae	Druyae	"
Ehrlyr	Ehrlyntir	Falcs(Gold), Wings(Silver)
D. Greenpool	Greenpool	"
D. Trugyle	Trugyle	"
D. Adronel	Adronnor	"
Goe'Lad	Goe'Lad	Falcs(Gold), Wings(Silver)
E. Brightwall	Brightwall	"
C. Dunnington	Dunnington	"
Meath	Adanlac	Crowns(Gold), Ells(Silver), Fools(Copper)
D. Abendroth	Abendroth	"
D. Melyorn	Meath-Myrus	"
D. Loholt	Marholt	"
E. Colmar	Mistport	"
E. Ronael	Ronael	"
D. Elsinor	Fenstyle	"
D. Collandoc	Whitecourt	"
C. Camulod	Camulod	"
C. Ge'Beth	Ge'Beth	"
C. Hallofae	Hallofae	"
Deluer	Camleses	Shines (Gold), Elms(silver)
D. Lintyr	Lintyr	"
C. Ponnas	Mera-Antuni	"
Severness	Tuirdroth	Dellings (Gold), ½ Delling (Silver)

Note: Currencies marked in italics are the Standard Currency or "standards" of that country. Standards are the main coin used in day to day transactions, and the currency type that characters start with during the creation process. (See Game Manual, Chapter 2, p. 19) Small differences in conversion rates exist

between different countries' currencies based on variation in weight and purity.

Kingdom of Cernnia

Capital: Armasi

Herald: Half blue, half gray

Population: 14.4 mil. (85% Merethi, 12% Rullaeen, 3% others)

Currency: 1 Estati(Au)=5 *Embers*(Ag)=50 Eggs(Cu)

Exports: Blue pearls, Jewelry, Cotton, Glass and Glazes

This Kingdom contains the heart of the old Merethicles Empire, now long dead. While the great city of New Mereth is now somewhat old and dilapidated, it is still a great hub for trade and commerce. King Olotrius Demneti rules this land and tries to establish the old traditions of the Merethi to differentiate his country from the Rullaeen people. The city of New Mereth also houses the original (now ruined) Collegium, whose ancestor-schools have spread throughout the Realm. Political relations with the surrounding countries often place Cernnia on the inferior end, though its fleet is second only to Meath and its sea trade is great, receiving goods from the coastal Thursion traders, the far southern countries of Addarendraga and Mal Yatan, and even portions of the Burning Coast.

High Kingdom of Meath

Capital: Adanlac

Herald: Solid blue

Population: 56 mil. (90% Rullaeen, 7% Merethi, 3% others)

Currency: 1 Crown(Au)= 5 *Ells*(Ag)= 50 Fools(Cu)

Exports: Glass, Parchment, Ink, Ironmongery, Gold

The greatest kingdom in all the Heart Realm, Meath not only dominates in size and military power, but also in the loyalty and contentment of its people. The High King Malcorn Penrose V lives in the capital Adanlac, physically residing in Castle Deonor, an immense palace built for both defense and breathtaking beauty. The river Skybleed flows not only through Deonor, but pours down a great fall in the middle of this incredible structure. The water of the Skybleed is used for drinking, bathing and powering several waterways in the structure, though its sewer system has polluted the river somewhat over the years, sometimes wreaking havoc with the health of the city's occupants.

His Majesty Malcorn Penrose is the fifth Penrose to take the throne: at the end of a great line of men and women with a history of being magnificent warriors and scholars. In fact, Malcorn has heavily funded the Collegium, a place in which he spent over three years in the customary study of a young aspirant to the throne. This tradition has been present since before there was a Meath to rule, its origins perhaps dating from the Merethicles Empire.

Duchy Abendroth

Capital: Abendroth

Herald: Blue v. stripe on black

Meath's strongest duchy Abendroth is the home of a great city of the same name, though many refer to it also as the "city of four winds," due to its importance as a center for trade. The Duke, Erodorn Demshire, is known as a devoted Pentonite, great warrior and general of a considerable portion of the Royal Army. The Duke is openly hostile and distrustful of the Duchy of Melyorn to the south, despite his brother's friendship with Melyorn.

Duchy Melyorn

Capital: Meath-Myrus

Herald: Checkered violet & black

The Duke of Melyorn, Kenrod Yornfell is known for his thirst for power and utterly ruthless nature in political affairs. An open supporter of the Order (see Religion), his heretical views have caused uproar in the kingdom, with many of the more pious leaving the Duchy socially and politically isolated. The Lord Curate in the capital of Meath is at constant odds with the duke because of this association. It is thought by some in the King's advisory council that he is also a member of the secret society of Lupus-Mur, though these rumors have never been substantiated. However, he does rule one of the most powerful and influential courts ever seen in Meath, created solely through his boundless ambition. Meath-Myrus was on the verge of economic breakdown at the dawn of Kenrod Yornfell's ascendancy to Duke; now, it has become the largest, most prosperous city in Meath, an accomplishment the King highly respects. Duke Yornfell is tolerated by the King simply because the Duke strengthens the kingdom as a whole, though the King's spies are ever vigilant and watch Melyorn with unblinking eyes.

Duchy Loholt

Capital: Marholt

Herald: Green field, black corner

This Duchy is ethnically distinct, as the majority of its inhabitants are Merethi. It also harbors some of the greatest warships of the kingdom, moored in the vast harbors of Marholt. Duchess Elsbreanna of Loholt nurtures a close alliance with the ever-strong Count of Camuloth, Genmark Wingmorn.

Earldom Colmar

Capital: Mistport

Herald: Checkered orange & white

Like Duchy Loholt, many of the people living in Colmar are of Merethi blood. The reigning regent-lord is the Earl's daughter Sarella Loukburn. The Earl disappeared several years ago on a journey to the far west of Farshan. She is a strong lady who rules justly despite regular courtship offers from the

other lords of Meath, the strongest and most notable being those of Kenrod Yornfell.

Earldom Ronael

Capital: Ronael

Herald: V. Half yellow, half black

The Earl Penmark the VI is cousin to the Duke of Melyorn and is known for being a playboy of great prowess. Perhaps too zealous in the taxation of his subjects, the Earl is checked often by the High King. It is also been rumored as of late that Penmark poisoned his father, the great knight Pendrake the Claymore, in order to gain his title: a claim that Penmark alleges was a vicious rumor started by his enemies in the court. He has since married his cousin, the daughter of the Duchess Elsbreanna of Loholt, despite her mother's objections.

Duchy Elsinor

Capital: Fenstyle

Herald: Red H. stripe on black

Duke Midor Elsinor V possesses a famous appetite for both food and tall tales. Also one of the King's greatest friends and advisors, Midor is often chosen to represent the King on important matters in other kingdoms. He and the Duke of Abendroth are the highest ranking generals in the Royal Army, second only to the King himself.

Duchy Collandoc

Capital: Whitecourt

Herald: Gray field, green corner

As Collandoc is the doorway to Meath from the kingdoms to the west, her lord, Duke Nigel Rothchild, is known for stressing matters of foreign diplomacy. It is rumored that the duke is secretly courting the Duke of Elsinor's daughter.

County Camuloth

Capital: Camulod

Herald: Black field, violet corner

Genmark Wingmorn the III leads both the people of this realm and the Shields of Camuloth, the High King's best lancers. County Camuloth has a great history with proud and loyal citizens. Those born in Camuloth are said to bear the blood of fire, and are considered to possess a more tenacious, emotionally driven nature than most.

County Ge'Beth

Capital: Ge'Beth

Herald: Green v. stripe on yellow

The Countess Arienna Leross is very peaceful and supports a small army for the sake of prudence, but uses instead her superlative skills in diplomacy to keep her people from needless bloodshed. Through her ongoing affair with Prince Selwyn Penrose, she has been able to augment her forces with

soldiers from Meath to strengthen her borders against the Kingdom of Doriént.

County Hallofae

Capital: Hallofae

Herald: H. half orange, half gray

Count Braedon the Red has long been suspected of supporting Doriént. He is a physically imposing man whose loyalties shift depending upon whom is currently in favor with the King. He uses his political tie as cousin to the Countess of Ge'Beth to do as he pleases (because of his cousin's influence with the Prince). Due to the tendency of many Rullaeans to attribute the characteristics of a land's lord to the people of that land, those from Hallofae receive an unearned reputation for untrustworthiness by the people of the neighboring Duchies.

Kingdom of Doriént

Capital: Shalandria

Herald: Blue field, violet corner

Population: 16.8 mil. (95% Rullaeans, 5% others)

Currency: 1 Duke (Au) = 5 Counts (Ag) = 50 Earls (Cu)

Exports: Armor, Wine, Silver, Cloth, Honey

Known as the "Kingdom of Two Lands," this sovereign nation borders northern Meath, and is a constant thorn in the side of the High King. Doriént is often at odds with Meath, though confrontation rarely ever exceeds minor military skirmishes. The King Hranmar Cluso is cousin to the royal Penmark family of Meath. The King's castle Nornaal is located in Shalandria, a city that rivals Abendroth in size and wealth. The northern portion of Doriént is known for its acceptance of all manner of races into its society, and rumor has it that it even has contact with the strange city-states to the north, and even that a contingency of Senjic nobles resides within Shalandria itself as representatives of the Empire.

Duchy Druyae

Capital: Druyae

Herald: Violet h. stripe on white

Duke Bauchand Palinae VII rules this realm with an iron hand. Though the Duke is deeply devoted to his version of the Virtuous Pentad, the Lord Curate has actually dubbed him a heretic for his fanatical beliefs. Palinae strains Doriént's relations with the Senjic Empire due to his deep religious bias. He has given standing orders to his authorities to question all foreigners on sight to prevent "tainting influences" from invading his demenses.

Duchy D'Saonne

Capital: Ba'luess

Herald: Green v. stripe on white

This duchy has made Pentonism the state religion by law. Transgressors are punished with death. Otherwise, Duchess

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Shallos Ulaese rules justly and is known for her skills as a diplomat and a peacemaker. Her guard regularly patrols the Eastern Gateway, quietly shielding the borders against Senjic spies and other unwanted influences from the north.

Earldom of Crushant

Capital: Crushant

Herald: Checkered red & white

Crushant is known for its herds of deer and solemn citizens. It is ruled by the Earl Ulod, who is a lover of hunts, sports, and games of all kind. His wife Corlaea is the sister of Breonum Greenpool of Duchy Greenpool. Because of this tie to Ehrlyr, the King of Doriént often sends the earl south on important diplomatic business.

County of Lauranor

Capital: Lauranor

Herald: Checkered green & yellow

A few years ago, Count Hemlaine Lauranor took a new bride half his age named Camellya of Treston after his first wife of 17 years was attacked and killed by wolves during a hunt. Some say that Camellya is a witch or a sorceress. She has caged the Count's heart so completely that he listens almost solely to her advice and wisdom. This has not hurt the County in any visible manner. Indeed this land is prospering under the new marriage.

County Parlione

Capital: Parlione

Herald: V. half orange, half black

Ruling over both her subjects' bodies and spirits, Vessa Ableatte is both Countess and High Curate of her domain. She is known for her charity to the poor and unfortunate souls of the land. She is equally known for a belief in hard work and her extremely low tolerance for men who take advantage of women, no matter the situation.

Kingdom of Ehrlyr

Capital: Ehrlyntir

Population: 15 mil. (89% Rullaeen, 8% Merethi, 3% others)

Herald: Blue field, black corner

Currency: 1 Falc (Au)=5 Wings (Ag)

Exports: Ale, Tin, Fine Leatherware, Grain, Cotton

This Kingdom won its independence from Meath during Malcorn's father's reign. The former Duchy ferociously protects its borders, keeping its eyes and ears open for any movement against its hard-won territory, especially from Meath. The

King of Ehrlyr, Lucrid Dodenor, was a great hero of the war of independence and is now in his fifties. Greatly loved and known as the People's King, he was once a Tellimodian knight who eventually led the forces that defeated his fellow Grey-Riders at the Battle of Doronbourgh. He is hated in Meath, where he simply called "the Traitor."

Duchy of Greenpool

Capital: Greenpool

Herald: Solid green field

Breonum Greenpool is the cousin of Penmark the VI, Earl of Ronael. Breonum greatly dislikes his cousin, though as a devout Pentonite, he speaks no ill of royalty or his family. Somewhat naïve, Breonum believes that through hard work and true belief he can change the world. He is ever busy sup-



A group of Merethi men engaged in political debate

porting the rights of his people and working against the evils of the feudal system.

Duchy of Trugyle

Capital: Vasdain

Herald: V. half white half red

Ceodric Trugyle is a self-made man. As a young boy and pauper he saved a knight's life, and in reward was made the knight's squire. Years later he became a hero in the battles against Deluer and was granted the Duchy of Trugyle when its former lord died in the conflict. Now in his late forties, he has forgotten his roots and is as decadent, proud, and boastful as any lord. Occasionally, he realizes how he has changed and tries to make amends, though his weaknesses persist and eventually draw him back to his vices.

Duchy of Adronel

Capital: Adronnorr

Herald: Checkered red & black

Cousin of the King of Ehrlyr, Duke Balthus Adronel is every bit as loved by the people as his older kingly relative. Balthus was good friends with the Duke of Trugyle, but they have fallen out because of Ceodric's lust for wealth, power, and pleasure. Balthus is a tall, gaunt man who for the most part strictly practices Pentonism. He loves the finer things in life, including the young ladies, but is not blind to the hard life led by most of his subjects.

Kingdom of Goe'Lad

Capital: GoLann

Herald: Blue field, white corner

Population: 9.9 mil. (85% Rullaeen, 6% Elinael, 4% Thur-sion, 4% Merethi, 1% other)

Currency: 1 Falc (Au)=5 *Wings* (Ag)

Exports: Horses, Cattle, Lead

Culturally, Goe'Lad is decidedly Rullaeen, with a strong ethnic identity as a nation, although many foreigners are found within its borders due to its western location and heavy dependence on trade from the Emerald Sea and Dwenolost. This causes the other Rullaeen kingdoms, particularly Doriént, to inaccurately view Goe'Lad as a land of half-breeds and ruffians. Its ruler, King Mordren Greythorn II, is a cousin of Nigel Rothchild of Collandoc and a strong Pentonite with a well-known love for music and stout beer. Less well-known is his passion for anthropological pursuits. He is a scholar of Emerald Sea cultures and history, and owns one of the best libraries on this subject in Rullaea. He has traveled deep into these lands on numerous trade expeditions. Goe'Lad is one of the wealthiest Rullaeen kingdoms due to its mastery of trade.

Earldom of Brightwall

Capital: Brightwall

Herald: H. half white, half green

Earl Holdrin the Deep is also a Pentonite High Curate who serves his people well as a simple man of faith and leadership. He runs a lottery that allows a common person to rule the Earldom for one day of every month. Despite his kindness to the Earldom's people, it is rumored that he suffers great sorrow from the death of his twin children that he tries to alleviate with potent drugs supplied by Ellinael traders.

County of Dunnington

Capital: Dunnington

Herald: Gray field, white corner

This County is ruled by a legendary hero from the Battle of Cirinth Hill: Fredrick Dunnington. He treats his people well, though he is disliked by many women of the County as he tends to bring death on the men who follow him on his insatiable search for adventure. Fredrick has no tolerance for rogues and struggles to follow the Virtuous Pentad. As a diplomat, he is quiet and succinct; traits that have built good relations with bordering fiefdoms.

Kingdom of Deluer

Capital: Camleses

Herald: White v. stripe on blue

Population: 16.1 mil. (75% Merethi, 21% Rullaeen, 4% others)

Currency: 1 Shine (Au)=5 *Elms* (Ag)

Exports: Hemp, Pearls, Fine Beeswax, Crimson Dye

This kingdom, which is ethnically more Merethi than Rullaeen, is a land full of hollows and hills. The King of Deluer, Faundius the Block, is a great man in girth who is known for pushing the limits of taxation on his people. Always scheming, Deluer supports clandestine maneuvers to undermine the economics and social structure of his neighbors, while at the same time seeking to increase his own lands and wealth. He has a particular distaste for Ehrlyr and was the instigator of a confrontation with them known as the Hillshadow War, a conflict that ended only 7 years ago with the withdrawal of Deluer troops back across the Shimmer Run, the river that divides the two lands.

County of Ponns

Capital: Mereth-Antuni

Herald: H. half yellow, half orange

The Count Andrelles Ponns has always been uneasy with the political tactics of his King, but youth and inexperience sap from him the bravery to argue with Faundius. Andrelles was the youngest of three sons who all eagerly awaited the opportunity to rule when they were of age. His brothers were denied this chance when both died in a bizarre jousting accident. Now, several years after the death of his father, Andrelles has reluctantly taken the Count's mantle.

Duchy of Lintyr

Capital: Lintyr

Herald: V. half violet half gray

Nearly the polar opposite of Andrelles Ponns is Sergius Domici, Duke of Lintyr. Sergius loves to rule and conspires ruthlessly with the King of Deluer. He is a dangerous man not because of temper or skill at arms, but rather because he craves the trappings of power and is without scruple.

Kingdom of Severness

Capital: Tuirdroth

Herald: Checkered blue & white

Population: 10.4 mil. (96% Rullaeen, 3% Celarri, 1% others)

Currency: 1 Delling (Au)=2 *Half-Dellings* (Ag)

Exports: Paper, Herbal Medicine, Lumber, Wool

King Lencou Silverhand the IV comes from a long line of lords beginning with King Fotbard, who had his hand eaten by a great dragon. Fotbard's new prosthetic silver hand gave this family their name and a reputation for being great warriors. Strange coincidences have given more than one Silverhand monarch the need to use it. Severness is on fair, but often-strained terms with Meath, for it lacks the might to take back its ancient lands, now occupied by County Hallofae. The people of Severness are regarded as strange by much of Rullaea because of the mysterious towers in Tuirdroth called the Sortilegium, were it is said that sages and alchemists practice the occult arts. In fact, most of the inhabitants of Severness mistrust the Sortilegium as well, and tend to be more superstitious than other folk. Severness' northern border is never quiet, due to constant skirmishes between the Fostic tribes and the kingdom's border guards, the Storm Wardens.

Economics

The chief exports of the Rullaeen kingdoms are lumber, paper, iron, gold, silver, wool, and cotton. Their geographical location allows them to be the hub of trade between the Cloud Spire Realm and the Sand Forge Realm, thus producing a rich economic environment even in the smaller countries. Slavery is an institution throughout the Realm, and free labor continues to account for a great deal of wealth for the nobility. Slavery manifests itself in a number of ways, the chief of which is serfdom. However, slaves are not doomed to live a life of servitude. They are not considered objects; rather, they are the lowest class of citizen, and every citizen is protected by the government according to Rullaeen law. In addition, slavery rights laws have arisen in many countries that criminalize the cruel and undue mistreatment or abuse of slaves. Slavery is also not a rigid class, but can be bestowed upon an individual of a higher class as the punishment for a crime, or removed from those who are able to buy their freedom or who have worked off their debt to society.

The Great Rullaeen Mercantile Guild is a powerful player in all of the kingdoms of the Heart Realm, and its representatives wield influence over civic and even some military decisions, especially in Meath. The equally venerable Illustrious Guild of Shiplords aggressively defends its smaller interests in the ethnically Merethi environs of Cernnia. The economics of western Rullaea have increasingly been dominated by the Glorious Trade Guild of Thauk, which has grown exponentially after Severness' independence. The venerable organization has been dormant since the time of the Merethicles Empire, but agents of the Glorious Trade Guild can now be found in all but the smallest population centers of the west.

Technology

Iron, as well as various alloys such as steel, pewter, and brass, are in common usage. While most weapons are comprised of lower-grade steels, some are constructed of the finest alloys produced by human hands. Rullaeen woodworking is also quite advanced, producing wagons, ships, and buildings of high quality. Meath is the only kingdom in the realm that possesses a large fleet of galleons, which are constructed exclusively by the shipwright guilds.

Rullaeans also have perhaps the most advanced hostel system in the realms. Every town has at least one apothecary or barber, the larger towns often having many. Their business ranges from the alleviation of minor pains to attempted correction of major, debilitating, or lethal diseases or wounds. Prices are still high for peasant folk and the lower middle class, but many healers accept indentured servitude as a form of payment. Depending on the need of the patient and the severity of the problem (and most certainly the scruples of the healer), the time spent under their control can be a number of days, or it can last years. For example, a minor wound could require the patient to simply retrieve a certain type of plant from the forest floor outside of town. Treatment for a life-threatening wound or fatal disease could result in guarding an incoming shipment of rare fungi from the far eastern swamplands, meaning the indenturees would have to travel across the continent. Many healers keep their stocks full this way and most servants keep their oath of servitude true. However, because some have reneged in the past, the healers will place tattoos on the face and arms of their servants with a dye made from a Ciqon, a flower common to the region. The tattoos are often quite large, ugly, and created with poor artistry, though rarely scarring. They are also unique, so should the patient not fulfill her duties and decide to flee her debt, the healer can submit the tattoo as a description for the law enforcers. The tattoo is easily removed by a healer at the end of an indenture, but no healer will remove a tattoo not their own, nor reveal the method of removal.

Armament

Weapons, other than daggers and staves, are outlawed in urban areas in all kingdoms except Severness. Weapons such as maces, halberds, crossbows and other implements of war are used exclusively by soldiers and mercenaries. Even fewer warriors carry swords, as such weapons signify high social status. Visitors to major cities usually must obtain writs of permission or check their weapons with city guards at entry points. Except for the Order of Tellimod, many warriors prefer to use distance weapons, especially crossbows, in order to avoid the carnage of close combat.

The kite and heater shields are commonly used for added protection, usually enameled with a geometrical symbol (see Politics and Law). Indeed, it has become so widely popular that some actually can make a living off nothing but the production and painting of shields for the nobility alone. Most individuals will find no need for armor, and those that do usually can afford only the cheapest and lightest protection. Consequently, the more expensive armors are quite rare, and usually reserved for the greatest and wealthiest of warriors.

Languages

Donish is the native tongue for the Rullaeans, and it exists with a relatively small amount of variance in dialect. This is due to the efforts of King Donelgaen over 400 years ago to create a standard language for trade in Rullaea. As trade and commerce grew, so did the language; now, all major ports and cities speak the same tongue, and only isolated villages have greatly dissimilar dialects. The only other language used to any degree is Old Merethi, which has seen a revival in Merethi communities in recent years, though it is still uncommon. Donnish is written on thick vellum and has a highly phonetic style. Schooling is mandatory for all noble children beginning at age five, and peasant children are often taught in formal, if less informed, gatherings by an individual or group of individuals. Thus, literacy rates in the Rullaeen kingdoms can reach 40%.

Arcane Arts

In Rullaea, most arcane arts are practiced out of the view of the general populace, and are unknown, save in stories. Spectacular and public displays of arcane power are almost unheard of and are likely to cause public outcry and possibly fearful retribution.

Both the Pons-Noron and Quel-Noron orders of Pentonite monks are exceptions in that they practice shen publicly, though rarely. The Quel-Noron's astonishing feats of martial skill and the Pons-Noron's facility with healing have made them respected and loved by the common people and many of the nobility, as well. Shen is also taught secretly to ranking members of lay organi-

zations, most notably the Leaf Walkers of Doriént and the knights of the Tellimodian Order.

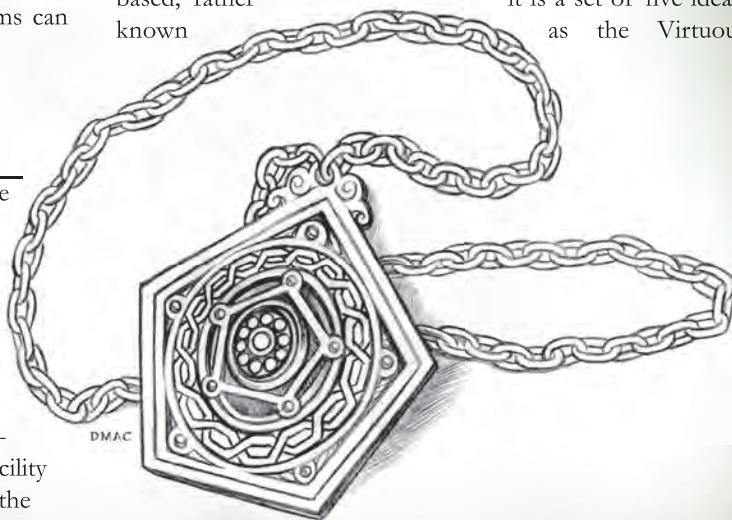
Another arcane influence contained within a more public organization is the Arcanum. Alchemy and metaphysics are practiced by the Jharsilde, the members of this secret society. The Arcanum is housed inside the three esteemed universities of the Collegium without the knowledge of most students or faculty. The Jharsilde openly act as professors at the Collegium and are indispensable advisors to rulers and other powerful figures to whom they have chosen to reveal themselves; few others even know they exist. They are aggressive in their control of their two arcane disciplines. As a result, the only other organized practitioners of alchemy or metaphysics in the Heart Realm are the Celarri; alchemists that call themselves the Valshiri.

The Sages of Tuirdroth are a much smaller scholarly guild that competes with the Collegium. The sages also hide their penchant for wielding magic, but are more tolerant of, or at least much less organized in pursuing, others practicing their chosen discipline of theurgy. That said, few of the folk of Severness are unaware that the sages practice of the arts of theurgy. The sages also study philtrology with a scientific fervor seen nowhere else. Philtrology is otherwise widespread and practiced by village witches and curates alike, though the poison formulae are only mentioned in darker, more sinister circles.

Religion

Pentonism (Virtuous Pentad)

The primary religion of the Heart Realm is called Pentonism. It is so overwhelmingly complete in its grasp on the people of this Realm that folk from other lands know these people simply as Pentonites. Pentonism is not deity based; rather it is a set of five ideals known as the Virtuous



The Pentonite holy symbol

Pentad. This pentad is comprised of passion, integrity, loyalty, temperance and prudence. There is no order of importance imposed on the Pentad, though many find themselves drawn to one or two of the five, as it fits their personality better.

Pentonism is symbolized by the pentagon. This symbol pervades the architecture of temples and is worn as amulets by its followers. Pentonism is also symbolized by a pool being stirred. Stirring the pool also refers to Pentonism's power to awaken the mind, create doubt concerning the norm, and generate introspection.

The goal of adhering to the philosophies of the Pentad is to transform this life into a heaven-on-earth experience, because death is viewed as a final return to the substance of the earth. This transformation allows individuals to transcend the self and become one with others as well as the universe. The Virtuous Pentad as one with the universe also teaches practitioners to accept sorrow, failure, suffering and ultimately death as unavoidable aspects in life. Thus, acceptance is one of the most ostensible goals of this religion.

The true philosophy of Pentonism is hard for the lay person to grasp. According to the wisest pentonite curates and monks, strictly following five virtues alone as rigid structural values is dangerous and unwise. One needs, as they would say, to embrace all virtues which lead to a healthy life. The five ideals are merely a ritual symbol, a basis if you will, to supply structure for the beginning pentonite and the church as an institution. These spiritual leaders would urge that all five ideals are but one in reality. This multiplicity reflects the pentonite belief that through contemplation one should see the world, and life, as composed of many parts yet comprised of one truth. Some falsely seek an intellectual answer for: what is the one virtue? They fail to understand the true nature of the virtuous pentad and seek answers in the words of others - charlatans and con men instead of from within the self. There is a great saying in Pentonism: "One virtue is all virtue, one life is all life and one death is all death".

These concepts are difficult for even most of the clergy to understand and results in many areas of "traditional" pentonite philosophy based strictly on the five virtues and reliance on others (curates). In fact, these same ignorant practices fail to convey the self reliant, richly complex and thought-provoking nature of Pentonism proposed by its founders.

The Five Realizations is a poem or set of five statements, which meditated on daily, help lead one to wisdom. The Five Realizations contains the essence of Pentonism, but also reflects, in its structure and content concerning doubt, the scientific aspect of the culture within which it spawned. The poem reads as follows:

- All outward paths are false
- False paths lead to difference
- Difference is illusion
- Illusion crumbles against doubt

- Doubt is the pentad

A prophet known as Erelae who had discovered enlightenment in a set of five virtues, as described by an ancient Merethiclesian philosopher, founded Pentonism. She contemplated and reflected for five years on Mt. Colorum about these philosophies until passing animist pilgrims came upon her and shared her fire for the evening. The shaman of the animists said "You do not worship the mighty bull and thus will not participate in the cycle of life, because we are his chosen people and you are not." The pilgrims smiled in their honored place in life and awaited an answer.

After several moments Erelae stated: "Do we not share the same skin shaman?" He nodded. "Do our bodies not share the same earth after death?"

He nodded slowly again. And replied: "Yes we share the earth, but Konkom the mighty bull takes our souls to heaven."

"You seek the divine in others, shaman. You seek it in a god, in heaven, in the bull and your followers seek it in you. Does your mighty bull turn towards others for quenching its soul? Does the stag? The boar or bear? Nay, all paths outward are false." The pilgrims were hushed and she continued. "You, spiritually, are a child that cannot take responsibility for your soul. Look within and harbor the ways of passion, integrity, loyalty, temperance and prudence. From these and yours you shall become strong enough to except your fate in life."

Rushed conversation flowed between the wide-eyed pilgrims and the shaman screamed: "Stop!" There was silence for some time when he continued: "I cannot deny the truth of your words. I was a fool indeed. I am ready to accept my responsibility, prophet."

Erelae replied: "The true prophet lies within all of us, not in the hand of a leader."

All of the animists remained on Mt. Colorum and five became Erelae's highest disciples. They are known as Disciples Monod, Faroll, Ulluron, Esoes and Jonothios, the former shaman. Assisting the prophet they spread the word of Pentonism throughout the realm often having inspiring adventures along the way. Finally, in her later years Erelae instituted what would longer after become the great temple at Adanlac as a beacon for the coherence of this now widespread and fully entrenched religion.

Rituals & Organization

Ceremonies are generally given once a week by a cleric known as a curate. Ceremony consists of communal meditation, tithing, and lectures on one of the five ideals by the curate. These ceremonies also act as a community meeting, as the majority of the community attends them.