

AARKLASH



RACKHAM



ARKLASH

Nubian river

Falk-Shear river

Dahab

White Nile

Sudan

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THANKS TO

Raphaël Guiton and the Rackham team.

Very special thanks to Christian "Get Anxious"
Cirri for the first background texts in 1996.

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Printed by Realgraphic

(90000 Belfort)

Printed in France

• FOREWORD •

The desert of Syharhalna as far as the eye could see. The Metropolitites' long red and white togas were flowing in the wind.

They advanced slowly. Coming from the Temple of the Sands, they neared the promontory that overhung the Western Gate where Basyleüs Villa, the high priest of Arh-Tolth, the alchemical divinity, awaited them. At the top of the six arches that crowned Shamir, the three Suffetes of the Earth and the three Suffetes of the Sea silently awaited the ceremony that would mark the triggering of the spell. They had been preparing this event for such a long time, and soon their powerful armies would follow the sands in their assault of the continent. All of the Empire's Metropolitites were assembled for this celebration, which would eternally mark the reign of the Alchemists over the continent of Aarklash.

No one remembers when this story began. Our memories are lost in the meanders of time... How many of our childhood dreams told of never-ending journeys? We were great warriors, heroes going on impossible quests. We dreamt of strange and wonderful adventures, and while gazing at the stars we became powerful magicians. Time has passed... How many glorious battles did we have to fight? How many nightmarish monsters has my sword sent back to limbo before taming the dragon and making him my herald of legends? Many were the evil spells that tried to extinguish the flames of adventure. The struggle has already been long, yet it has only begun... I will not rest before having accomplished this awakened dream, before having forged a world made of magic, of fantastic quests and of the imaginary.

The story I will tell you begins with a magical formula, the one that opens the eternal gates of dreams.

Once upon a time...

Jean Bey

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• INTRODUCTION •

If one is subject to fervour or doubt, if one believes in magic or in science, if one seeks one's future in the stars or in one's own hands, the signs are there... The Age of Darkness has befallen the continent of Aarklash.

The Incarnates, champions of the gods, return to bring the fury of the lords of Creation to their enemies' lands.

Dark empires born of anger, of jealousy and of vanity join together to install a reign of terror.

The heralds of virtue with swords soiled by blood must muster enough courage so as not to resemble the monsters they fight.

Evil has been prowling in the mortals' thoughts for a long time. At present the low rumble of the armies being raised announces the return of war, that blind horror that hungers for carnage. The horizon reddened by the embers of hate promises an age of battles, of fury, of sacrifices and of heroism...

This is the Age of the Rag'narok.

*This is
the AGE
of the
RAG'NAROK.*

THE DAWN RITUAL



The endless desert of Syharhalna.

The first rays of the sun would
soon burst over the horizon...

Three women were standing at the top of a
dune, their loose robes floating in the soft
wind of the night that was coming to an end.

Before their immortal eyes stood a lone tower, lost in the middle of this ocean of sand: the second Shamir, the Alchemical Tower, capital of the Empire of Dirz. No sound betrayed the presence of life within this vertical city that usually never slept.

Two travellers approached the gigantic tower. Just as an imposing drawbridge was lowered to let them enter, a monotonous hymn began to resonate within the walls of Shamir.

Other eyes had observed the travellers' approach. On their arrival the whispers of Shamir's inhabitants gave way to a song of celebration that now echoed throughout the whole city.

At each new chorus, a faithful of the god Arh-Tolth came out of the highest stratum of the tower, that of the priests, to climb the steps of the Ladder of Perfection. This is how they named the immense staircase that ran along the walls of the city's central column like an infinite spiral.

The first faithful placed himself on the last step and let the one following him pass him and place himself on the next step... As the litany of Arh-Tolth continued, the steps were occupied one after the other.

A few metres from the procession, suspended in the air, floated one of the gigantic elevators designed to transport men and merchandise between the storeys of the capital of Syharhalna. Despite its size, the pod only transported a single man: a seminarist of the cult of Arh-Tolth. The humble student was charged with the delivery of an important message to the one who had climbed the last step of Perfection and who now lived at the top of the tower: Basyleüs Villa, the Alchemical Emperor. During his trip to the top, the messenger couldn't help noticing a strange cortege of his god's faithful. For him it was an honour to have been given such a mission: an occasion like this one might never come again.

He had to make a good impression, or else...



The pod came to a halt at the last storey it could reach: the stratum of the priests. The seminarist then climbed the last few storeys that separated him from the summit while being careful not to meet the disquieting gaze of this sanctuary's guardians. On each step stood a faithful who, his eyes closed, tirelessly repeated the same obsessing liturgy. Intoxicated by the adrenaline pulsating in his veins, the messenger didn't even notice that his sandals were no longer touching stone, but white marble! Catching his breath, he remembered what he had been told: "Shamir is in the image of Syhar society: an individual's status is measured by the height at which he lives." Each one of these steps represented years of abnegation and sacrifice in order to rise in the Scorpions' hierarchy. Here lived the priests of Arh-Tolth.

Who knows, maybe one day he'd have the chance of being one of them?

The marble soon gave way to gold and little by little the heat coming from the lower storeys was replaced by the night's cool air. The moon's silver glow suddenly illuminated the seminarist's face: he had reached the top!

But a firm hand gripped his shoulder and put an end to his dreams of perfection.

"Where are you going, my friend?"

The messenger quickly turned around. His soft-voiced interlocutor was none other than the *magon*, the high priest of Arh-Tolth! His throat taut with emotion, the young man immediately lowered his eyes and got down on his knees. His answer was to be as respectful as possible.

"My name is Methra, your Eminence. Lord Razheem has entrusted me with a message: he humbly asks to be received by his Excellency the Basyleüs."

"Methra... That's a beautiful name. I will remember it. Quickly go and join your brothers, the ceremony has already begun. Tell them that the Basyleüs gives Lord Razheem and his guest his authorization."

Methra just had the time to catch a glimpse of the majestic assembly meeting at the top of the Alchemical Tower, caressed by the wind. He perceived the shape of the Basyleüs addressing strange guests visiting from far away countries no doubt. In the centre of the place was a kind of metal well studded with gems cut into uncommon shapes.

The young man wasn't able to talk to the Basyleüs. He nevertheless silently thanked his parents for having given him a name that was liked by the *magon*.



Basyleüs Villa had invited the ambassadors of Syharhalna's allies to come and witness the Empire of Dirz's brilliant revenge. Every diplomat came escorted by one of the Commodores, the generals of the Scorpion army.

The first to respond to the invitation was Rhéa de Brisis, the Crimson Countess of Acheron. No doubt that her enchanting beauty, which had already seduced Dirz himself in his time, has resisted the test of centuries at the price of bloody sacrifices that gave her her name. Near her stood Ash'Ra the Unique, the Commodore of Shamir, the greatest strategist of the Empire and maybe even of all Aarklash. The Unique's eyes were turned towards the horizon, towards three feminine shapes only he could distinguish...

Vilyad Hayann, the ambassador of Akkyshan, had joined them a few days later accompanied by the one they call the First Pillar of Danakil, Mezaïan Genariah. Like the dawn warriors he has been leading for such a long time, the desert sun has marked the Commodore through the slits in his helmet leaving two dark marks on each of his cheeks. Compared to the impressive general, Vilyad Hayann could seem insignificant if one forgot that he was the Master of Daggers, the best duellist in the Sorority of Ashinân.

Only Razheem was missing, the youngest and most intrepid of the three chiefs of the Dirz army. They had lost trace of the ambassador of Mid-Nor five days earlier; the Commodore of the fortress of Inuka, nicknamed the Insane by his own men, had decided to find him no matter the cost... and he succeeded.

The Insane and the emissary of Mid-Nor were presently in a rising pod, the same one that had brought Methra a few minutes earlier. The crowds of the lower Strata's cheers were slowly replaced by the litany of the faithful of Arh-Tolth who continued their inexorable descent towards the city's foundations.

A little smile crossed the Insane's angel-like face as he watched the top of the tower get nearer. Yh-Kthan, the diplomat of Mid-Nor, didn't share his protector's good mood. Being a Dominant among his people he didn't need an escort! The demon of the abyss had no trouble at all making his way to this place on his own... only the fortress's entrance was a bit of a problem.

He was sure though that the Syhars wouldn't appreciate to know that it was he who had found their Commodore and not the other way round.

Yh-Kthan's arrival caused a most lively astonishment at the top of Shamir. Never had anyone seen a Dominant who so rightly deserved his rank! The Despot's emissary was a true force of nature, almost as big as a man and three times wider. The intensity of his diabolical gaze would have caused a moment of hesitation in any adversary, except perhaps in a reckless one. That's why Razheem had been chosen to watch over him...

After the usual formal introductions, the Basyleüs motioned the ambassadors to be seated a few metres from him around the central well. The litany of Arh-Tolth was almost done...

The last of the priests of Arh-Tolth, the *magon* himself, began walking down the Ladder of Perfection. He recognized every single faithful during his journey and one by one he passed every stratum of the Alchemical Tower. That of the faithful, of the laboratories, of the technomancers, of the warriors... The Ladder of Perfection didn't end at the flagstone, the tower's base. It continued through its foundations, into the quarters forbidden to all but the priests and their slaves. The *magon* threw a glance at the mosaics on the flagstone and renewed his orders to the guards present: no pod should move and no one should touch the mosaics until further notice. The punishment would be without appeal: summary execution.

The litany of Arh-Tolth ended when the *magon* reached the door of the tunnels.

During his ordination, the faithful of Arh-Tolth's middle fingers are removed. A sallyar, a plug made of finely crafted copper, replaces the one of his right hand. On his left hand a sanyar is grafted, a socket made to channel the energies flowing in his body. They are then each covered with a prosthesis imitating flesh to protect them from sand, which would corrupt their sacred properties. For a mysterious reason only the *magon* had the privilege of being endowed with two Sanyars.

Conform to the ritual the faithful uncovered their sanyar and their sallyar. Then each stretched his right arm, his hand placed on the shoulder of the faithful in front of him. The latter did the same, his left hand placed on his own right shoulder. The priest standing on the last step of the Ladder of Perfection inserts his sanyar into the Dawn Altar, the most sacred emblem among all and the symbol of perfection that has guided the Scorpion Empire for generations.

The *magon* then entered the obscurity of the foundations of the second Shamir. Many minutes passed in a dreadful silence...

Several hundred metres further below.

The *magon's* footsteps echoed in the gigantic corridors of the strangest of necropolises. In the middle of all the humidity and dust that filled the place glinted thousands of tanks of all shapes and sizes filled with various fluorescent chemical substances. The oldest ones were also the biggest: behind their thick, armoured casing slept creatures that were inconceivable to a sane mind. Around these antiquities, countless warriors born of Dirz's desire for perfection also awaited the day of their awakening. The high priest noticed one of them moving. What could he be dreaming of? No matter, soon his long sleep would be coming to an end...

The *magon* reached a dark room decorated with the same mosaics as the ones on the flagstone. The chain of the faithful ended here before a large well identical to the one before which the Basyleüs stood hundreds of metres above. A familiar shape sitting on its edge spoke to him.

"*Magon...*"

"D'Jabril. I thought I'd find you here. Your task will be done in a short time and Arh-Tolth will no longer need his loyal guardian... To tell you the truth, I believe that it's been a long time that he hasn't needed him anymore. You should thank me for relieving you of such a responsibility."

As he got nearer, the high priest saw the bubbling ethereal liquid that surfaced in the old well. The person he was speaking to, the one known as the Voyager, caressed the surface of the strange fluid with his hand.

"That's right, *magon*. But Arh-Tolth has asked me to translate the insignificant human thought for him. At his scale we are just primitive organisms that infest this plane of existence. Since he still considers his... loyal guardian... to be of use, it is to you that he has given this

sensitive mission, and not to me. But dawn will soon break, and then you'll understand..."

The *magon* knew exactly what he had to do. He placed his left hand on his right shoulder and received his predecessor's sallyar. He then heard the creatures sleeping in their tanks move about restlessly, as if they were having a nightmare. Nothing could have prepared him for what was to follow... The moment he plunged his other sanyar into the well's dark water, an indescribable pain took him and made him scream from the deepest parts of his soul.

At first he was surprised: he had watched D'Jabril nonchalantly touch the water without suffering! The high priest instantly felt as if his nerves, his blood and his muscles were turning against him, that they were taking revenge on his corrupt mind that had soiled such a pure body... Then all was only pain.

"I knew you'd be receptive, *magon*."

When he saw the day break, the Basyleüs raised his arms to welcome the sun. The bottom of the well opened like a lotus of metal while the first rays hit the countless gems that studded its walls. The sun's light warmed the Dawn Altar that was a few metres below while the *magon's* cry resonated like an echo of suffering in all the Alchemical god's faithful. Many priests collapsed, flattened by the pain.

The underground well's fluids thus reached the Dawn Altar, sealing Aarklash's fate forever... An immense and blinding beam left the altar, crossed the fower from top to bottom and hit the flagstone's mosaics while pulverising all the pods in its way.

Enormous blocks of stone broke from the upper storeys while the earth furiously started to tremble. Everything that was touched by the pillar of energy was instantly vaporised.

The Basyleüs exulted. At the heart of this cataclysm he roared with laughter.



"Watch, impotent gods and vain mortals, the rise of the True Shamir! May this be the day of the Empire of Dirz's triumph!"

All of Shamir's inhabitants were taken by panic when the tower seemed to teeter on its foundations. But their cries were nothing compared to those of the faithful invested by the power of Arh-Tolth. The tower wasn't collapsing... it was growing. The second Shamir was only the visible part of an incredibly taller structure that now was emerging from the sands with an apocalyptic rumble. The sand sunk beneath the tower as it rose, thus forming a depression several hundred metres in diameter.

Shamir's shadow stretched further and further, becoming more and more menacing...

The True Shamir's shadow covered the three women in no time at all. There was no doubt that this dreadful spectacle was visible for dozens of kilometres around.

"This is the dawn of a new era, my sisters."

It was only the beginning... An age of hatred, of carnage and of destruction began before their eyes.

The Age of Darkness.

The wind was much stronger now that Shamir culminated at an altitude four times higher than the one it reached a few moments earlier. Most importantly the tower had to be rebuilt. The strata had to be made bigger to correspond to the size of the True Shamir. That which once was the second Shamir would now become the stratum of the priests... The clones that were sleeping in the tanks were now awake. The conquest had begun; the alchemical army would soon be on the move.

The alchemical Emperor turned towards the ambassadors and the Commodores.

"We will burn Aarklash. From now on the will of Darkness is in the earth."

When he partly opened his eyes, the *magon* thought he saw D'Jabril threatening him with a weapon. But when he regained his senses he realized that the Voyager was smiling at him and held out his hand to help him get back up. The arabesques and the mosaics on the walls had disappeared. The high priest's strong condition allowed him to resist his god's unlimited power...

D H E A D E R D I C T S

Alas, this wasn't the case of all the faithful who followed him. At best they were emptied of their vital force, at worst they were charred beyond recognition. When the *magon* tried to speak he noticed that his once so crystalline voice was forever broken.

The well was empty. A weak echo like breathing could be heard in the depths. D'Jabril whispered into the *magon's* ear.

"You have succeeded, *magon*. Arh-Tolth is now in Shamir. Come with me into the well, he'd like to see you with his own eyes..."



Far away from Shamir, in the vast, dark but richly decorated throne room of King Gorgyn the Lion in Kallienne, the capital of Alahan.

"The soothsayers are formal, your Majesty. The Dawn Ritual will very well take place today."

"What is the enemy's progress?"

"No one knows yet, your Majesty. Even the Syhars probably don't know. The progression of evil will be slow; the land of Aarklash will defend itself."

"We must alert our allies."

"Our envoys in Akkylannie have let us know that the Griffin considers this threat to be unreal, your Majesty. Your letter has barely been brought to Pope Innocent's knowledge. The Legates laughed at our diplomats' claims."

"Their pride can lead us all to our doom, chamberlain. When they finally open their eyes, it may be too late. What about our contacts within the Inquisition?"

"Our welcome there was even worse, your Majesty. They did not laugh, they simply could not believe it. The Inquisition cannot imagine such a gathering of power."

"Their faith blinds them. We must warn the Dragons of Laroq, if they aren't already aware of it."

"It shall be done as you wish, your Majesty."

"We must also find a man who knows Shamir, its inhabitants and its customs well."

"Ambassador Brehnan, currently stationed in Cadwallon, was the last of the kingdom's ambassadors in the Alchemical capital before all diplomatic relations were severed..."

"Have him return at once. He must come and see me as quickly as travel from the Free City allows."

"Very well, your Majesty."

In the duke of Cadwallon's palace, Den Azhir, the master of the place, was giving a reception to celebrate the victory of the city's founders against the damned hordes of Sophet Drahas.

All the city's ambassadors were there, dressed in their finest garb and accompanied by impressive retinues.

The men and women present were also magnificently dressed, but always in the unique style of Cadwallon. Several guards with heavy red capes were charged with the guests' and especially the host's security.

Nobody could, nor should, not notice the embassies' representatives: Brehnan the Lion of Alahan, Iraem the Griffin of Akkylannie, Zakin the goblin of No-Dan-Kar, Dyrsin the Cynwall of Lanever and Shaïan Alud the alchemist of Dirz. The exchanges between the diplomats and their suites were a bit lively, but remained courteous. Their bodyguards remained at a certain distance behind the ambassadors of the great powers of Aarklash.

Yet the weapon bearers were everywhere, especially around the diplomats, but they weren't hostile, though they did poke fun at each other or made faces.

In the shadows, quiet and observant, stood Isabeau and her servant. As usual, the Secret One wore her red armour marked by many duels in the City of Thieves.

Her attention seemed focused on a young and refined Lion around whom some of the city's prettiest ladies swarmed. Even the visiting Cynwall princesses, who normally were indifferent, couldn't resist his charms. The young man attracting all their attention was none other than the Lion ambassador's nephew.

On hearing the young man recite poems to the damsels, Isabeau couldn't help but snigger with contempt. These mimics were so useless and futile, especially just to get one of these brainless girls into his sheets... But the Secret One was charged with the adolescent's protection by his uncle, and she would carry out her mission with all the efficiency that her reputation demanded.

Anyhow, it wasn't one of these damsels who would pose any threat to the Lion...

Despite all this, she noticed the unexpected arrival of a guest who had nothing to do at the reception: it was Alahel the Messenger.

His presence was incongruous with this place. His weapon bearer was from the embassy; the Messenger

must have gone there first to be authorised to interrupt these festivities. Brehnan hated being bothered during his diplomatic representations, especially by an individual of his own camp.

Alahel threw a quick glance around the room and then walked in Brehnan's direction. But the ambassador's bodyguard had already spotted him and moved to intercept him. He stopped him by placing his hand on the Messenger's chest. The two men were smiling, yet their words were harsh. Alahel threatened to fight his way to Brehnan if he wasn't allowed to pass immediately!

Finally the ambassador, who had observed the scene from the corner of his eye, excused himself among his peers, not without causing their questioning and also that of Den Azhir. The two men went out onto the balcony and found a quiet corner. Only a young couple of nobles of Cadwallon was there flirting. From the terrace they had a magnificent view of the city, surely the most beautiful one there was.

"It is hard to realise how beautiful the city looks at night when one comes from the Lower City, ambassador."

"Its beauty is certainly ruined by your arrival, Messenger."

"Yes, of course. The shadow nears with its load of woe and sadness."

"You are being very poetic for once. But I would be grateful if you'd end your creative rambling and get to the point of your presence here. The situation is already tense enough between the ambassadors, and I mustn't leave the festivities for too long."

"There was a great ceremony in Shamir led by Basyleüs Villa six days ago. It bore the name of the Dawn Ritual."

Any trace of serenity suddenly vanished from the old Lion's face.

"What happened?"

"We don't know yet, Brehnan. We have sent a message to Tir-Ná-Bor from where one of our agents has left for the desert. But we don't have more information for now."

"What does His Majesty expect of me?"

"The Lion orders you to return to Kallienne immediately. You have deep knowledge of the alchemists of Dirz and their capital. Only you can organise an eventual operation in the Alchemical Tower."

"I cannot leave Cadwallon, not at any price."

"Even to help your fatherland contain the desert menace?"

"If I leave now, our... friend... Shai'an Alud will probably create a similar situation over here, much closer to our borders."

"What do you suggest?"

"Hmm. I don't know yet. We will discuss these matters tomorrow morning at the embassy."

"I must immediately return to Kallienne, and you with me."

"You have a few hours to spare. I have read simplified versions of the Tables of Zahar; I know the Ritual's effects. It will take some time to feel them. You will leave for our kingdom tomorrow, that will give you enough time."

Discreetly hidden in the doorway, Isabeau had watched the whole scene. She did not hear the words spoken, but she couldn't help being surprised by such a long discussion between the two men.

The situation must be serious.





THE GENESIS

OF GODS



Dear Vistan,

Here is the transcript of a text that was found by the mage Kyllion the Elder on a small island off the coast of Akkylannie. It was represented by a series of icons engraved in an ancient language most probably related to the dialect of Gheim or to hermetic magic.

Due to the difficulty in interpreting them, the translation's accuracy can't be guaranteed, so I suggest you keep your mind as open as possible when discovering this priceless document.

I hope that this little transposition will help you in your quest.

Your friend,
C.

Even Creation had to be born. Time didn't exist. There was only emptiness, an infinite Void of all possibilities.


Then came the Breeze.


The Breeze crossed the Void. Creation took shape as many worlds. But they were too close and crashed into each other, making an indescribable noise.

Then the Breeze returned to its point of origin and the noise of the worlds became a melody.

From this melody was born **EVERYTHING**.




Seduced by the melody of the worlds,  started dreaming. The melody came to an end when the worlds finally arranged themselves.


 opened its eyes. Light invaded Creation, mixing with the Darkness of the Void.

From the meeting between Darkness and Light was born **CONSCIENCE**.

From the meeting between Light and Darkness was born **BEAUTY**.


From the unfinished dreams of  was born **INSPIRATION**.



 looked at its child-gods and went back to sleep, cradled by the memory of the melody of the worlds.

Only Conscience had an identity. Only Beauty had a form. Distracted by being incomplete, Beauty and Conscience bonded and exchanged a part of each other.

Inspiration remained alone, invisible to the eyes of his kind. Born of the imagination of the first among all, he could change identity and form at will.

Beauty and Conscience wandered in Creation, discovering the wonders engendered by the dreams of . Profiting from their immense power, they named all the creatures that they met... All except Inspiration.



Inspiration followed Beauty and Conscience, discovering Creation after they did. He renamed certain creatures and remodelled others according to his desires, giving them the gift of dreams and nightmares. He knew that his sisters hadn't visited all of the worlds.

Inspiration dreamt of Beauty.

Thinking that they had discovered and named all of Creation, Beauty and Conscience decided to create in turn. They bonded a second time and from their mixed powers sprang forth three new gods, the Children of Felicity.

CONQUEST came to Creation endowed with flaming wings.

WISDOM was naked. In his sad heart lay the secret of the measure of things.

DESIRE was born like fit of fury, deformed and mad. He sent everything he met back to the Void.

Inspiration breathed dreams into the Children of Felicity and was caught in his own trap.

In return, Desire, stronger than all, aroused Inspiration's dreams.

Conquest, with his wings of glory, told him that Beauty would be his.

Wisdom pierced Inspiration's secrets and taught him patience and resolution.



Conscience, frightened by Desire's power, sought to appease his blind rage by all possible means. From the deep cave where their confrontation took place, only Conscience returned.

Inspiration visited Beauty, who was left all alone, and made her his own.

Then Inspiration returned to where no one could see him, abandoning Beauty who was elated by their union.

When Conscience returned from his impossible quest, he found Beauty expectant and smiling.

Weakened by his fight against Desire, Conscience discovered anger. He promised Beauty that the childbearing she expected would be painful if she didn't reveal the name of the being with whom she had bonded.

Beauty, only remembering the joy that Inspiration gave her, couldn't say a word and gave birth to her two children while suffering terribly.



CYCLE was born marked by pain and pleasure, though he can feel neither.

TORMENT saw the day covered in fresh blood and armed with a spear of pain. Wherever he may go, misfortune always precedes or follows him.

Gazing at the Children of Suffering, Conscience went into a fit of anger and cursed Beauty. She was banished to the end of Creation, a place where the sky was Darkness and which Light never reached.

Inspiration went to find Beauty in her sombre home and brought her warmth. They didn't have more children, for the fear of suffering and Conscience's curse had convinced Beauty to create no further. She could only give names and alter the works of her own kin.

Condemned to exile in the unfathomable Void, Beauty gave nine fascinating and nine terrifying faces to Inspiration.

After anger, it was Conscience's turn to discover pain — the pain of doubt. He withdrew himself to a place not far from Desire's sanctuary in order to gather his strength.



The Children of Felicity and those of Suffering found themselves left to their own devices.

Cycle and Conquest bonded without knowing the consequences of their act. Thus were born the four Children of Destiny.

VIRTUE and **VICE** were born twins. Neither good nor evil, each one took satisfaction in usurping the other's role.

INSTINCT gave his blessing to the plants and animals. His incomprehensible madness allowed him to discern Inspiration in all his guises. No other but Wisdom could understand his language.



HOPE was born with a mark on his face. He mingled with the creatures to flee the gods' mockery.

And the gods conquered Creation, shaping it as they pleased.

From the confusion that reigned between Vice and Virtue came discord. The gods opposed the future of certain creatures and fought for some while destroying others.

The gods waged war against each other.

Beauty and Inspiration shaped Darkness, giving it many appearances. They ordered their creations to destroy everything that Conscience cherished.



Conquest gave several names to the beings so that they would never be completely forgotten.

Desire welcomed the wounded creatures to his cave where a magnificent garden awaited them for them to rest.

Cycle betrayed Conquest by stealing the creatures' first names from him.

Torment was present in all battles, always fighting by the creatures' side, confronting his parents or his brothers.

Vice tried to destroy Virtue and gouged out one of his eyes. Virtue cursed him and changed his appearance so as to no longer resemble each other.

Instinct was betrayed by a simple creature. He made it suffer a terrible ordeal and cursed all of its descendants.

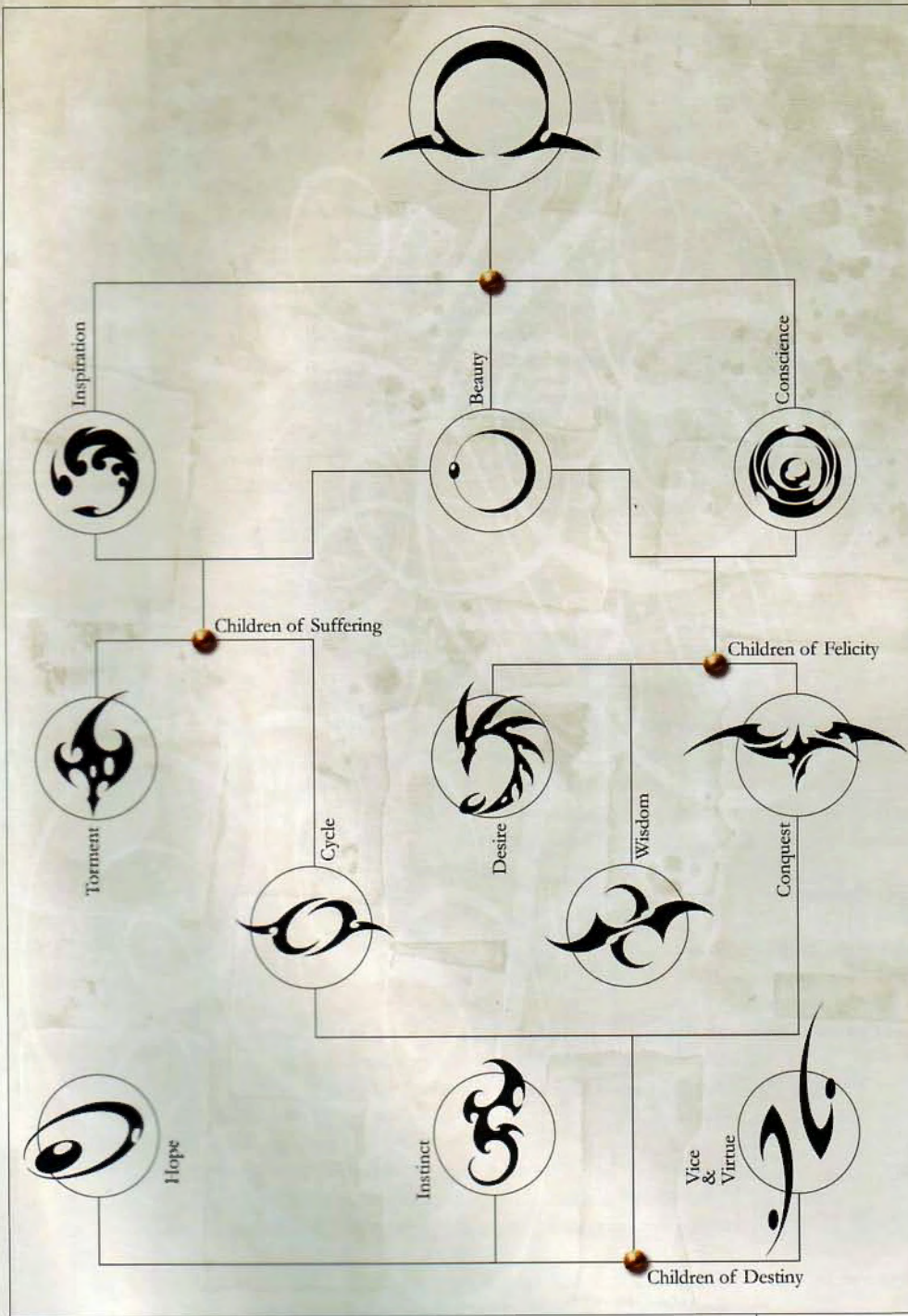
Wisdom contemplated Creation, impassively.

Hope mingled with the creatures and passed for one of them.

The war of the gods profoundly changed Creation.

The fury of the battles, the cries of the dying and the rumble of the worlds collapsing created a new melody that troubled the sleep of Ω.

Ω awakened a second time.



The Breeze blew again.

The worlds, being so different, were separated by impassable borders.

The melody of the Rag'narok was thus stopped. The gods were all banished, each one to a different Realm.

Ω created Time, the scourge of the gods.



Creation took shape a second time.

The gods spoke to the creatures that were faithful to them. They told them that the melody would be heard again one day, and that only the most devout among them would survive.

Conscience gave them faith and will. Beauty transformed numerous creatures. She gave shape to Inspiration's dreams and nightmares.

Conquest gave knowledge to his followers, and Wisdom gave them the power of the mind.

Cycle taught them the real names. Torment gave them the gift of steel and of the warrior's honour.

Virtue gave them valour and mercy. Vice revealed the splendour of the shadows.

Instinct, the insatiable, granted them the benefits of passion and of the night.

And the ghost of war returned. Yet this time the gods no longer walked the earth among the creatures.

• ASTRONOMY •

The planet on which the continent of Aarklash is found orbits a great yellow sun commonly known as **Lahn**. Two other much smaller solar bodies orbit Lahn: **Ley**, a tiny blue sun, and **Lyth**, a blood-red star.

Ley and Lyth don't appear every year. But when they do, it often happens that these celestial twins cause various natural phenomena: magnetic storms, climatic change, disastrous animal migrations, unwanted magical side effects and spontaneous appearances of Portals leading to other worlds are the most common ones.

One revolution of the world of Aarklash around Lahn takes four hundred days of twenty-four hours each, counted from one of Lahn's rises to the next. Most of the continent's peoples know four seasons: spring, summer, autumn and winter.

According to the calendar used in most parts of Aarklash, there are ten months in a year. The name and duration of each month varies slightly from one civilisation to the other.

Yllia is the name given to the vast white moon with bluish reflections that orbits the world of Aarklash in twenty days. When Ley or Lyth are present, Yllia's normal colour is affected: she can take on a darker or redder shade. Yllia has an influence on the oceans of Aarklash, causing a tidal cycle as she revolves around the planet. Strangely, Yllia's orbit also influences certain living beings: their biological or mental rhythms vary according to this pale moon's phases.

Of the numerous stars that light up the celestial sphere every night, four are used by travellers to find their bearings. These cardinal stars, commonly known as

Nerea (in the north), **Sylhea** (in the south), **Elion** (in the east) and **Olhim** (in the west), are also part of the constellations used by astrologists and augurs in their esoteric calculations. Their position in relation to the other stars in the sky, their alignment and Yllia's aspects are used to determine just about anything, including the gods' moods, favourable or unfavourable conjunctions, the dates of certain celebrations or the fate of individuals.

Knowledge of the rest of the universe is left completely up to a small group of astronomers and enlightened theologians. Some claim that Lahn revolves around Aarklash and not the opposite as is popularly believed. Others think that magic Portals are in reality thresholds to other planets. Is the world of Aarklash flat, hollow or spherical? What lies beyond the oceans?

The most talented and eccentric of these individuals, the cosmologues, develop various magic or technological procedures to try and observe the stars from a bit closer. Glasses of incredible complexity have been designed by the Cynwalls and the dwarves of Mid-Nor. The cosmologues who left to explore other worlds using spontaneous Portals have still not returned.

THE FIVE AGES

Scholars who have devoted their work to the history of Aarklash are numerous and yet very few of them are remembered. Many have perished while trying to shed light on forbidden mysteries. Others have disappeared while searching for a shortcut in their quest for knowledge and now haunt limbo, prey to a thousand torments. Invoking superior entities is dangerous for those who are easily tempted.

Kyllion the Elder's work may not be the most thorough, yet it remains the most remarkable and most easily read. His books on the civilisations and archaeology of Aarklash are universally acknowledged, from Wyde to Shamir. The captivating tale of this mage of Alahan's journeys has caught the imagination of many an adventurer.

Despite the strange curse that bound him to Sephiroth the Reaper, the last king of the centaurs of Koldan, Kyllion tirelessly travelled across Aarklash looking for the origins of Creation. Before dying, the mage had compiled most of his sixty years of research in a series of encyclopaedic tomes. Only a miracle allowed this collection to reach Kallienne, the capital of the Lion Kingdom, in good condition.

Kyllion's contribution to the cultural heritage of Aarklash is undeniable. By going back to the origins of writing, and checking and comparing many founding myths, Kyllion managed to piece together the continent's History and divide it into five distinct ages.



THE AGE OF BATTLES

There is no trace of what happened before the cataclysm that chased the gods from Aarklash. The Age of Battles tells of this undefined period lasting from the appearance of Time until the end of the terrible conflicts that almost annihilated all forms of civilisation on Aarklash.

It is thought that the gods communicated with their peoples through individuals predisposed to hearing them. Under their divine tutelage, the mortals knew growth and prosperity. But with passing time they also discovered envy and jealousy. Territorial or ideological quarrels became conflicts that went on from generation to generation. So in their faithful's eyes the gods then stopped being the benevolent protectors they once were. The mortals turned away from their worship to concentrate on more important matters.

The gods' influence did not wane, on the contrary: it became more subtle and cruel.

Many civilisations disappeared during this barbaric age. Most of their rare written heritages are, unfortunately, indecipherable, no translation being available. The artefacts of these vanished peoples often hold unsuspected powers. Some imaginative academics have claimed, without any formal proof, that some of these civilisations haven't completely disappeared. They supposedly continued to subsist, at least for a certain time, within the shadows of the other peoples after the Age of Battles.

Alas, the fate of these orphaned cultures is lost in the meanders of History.

Long after Aarklash had been covered by the blood of millions of victims came the Winter of Battles, an especially harsh climatic phenomenon. Myths tell of an endless winter, others say that the sun turned away from the world on seeing the atrocities that were committed there. Whatever may have happened, the wars suddenly came to an end and the peoples forgot their old enemies in order to meet the needs for their very own survival.

THE AGE OF REBIRTH

The Age of Rebirth is especially rich in information. The absence of major conflicts allowed certain relics of this era to survive the trials of time without difficulty, hidden from the eyes of the world. The most important and well-known artefacts of Aarklash appeared during the Age of Rebirth.

When the Winter of Battles was over, the surviving peoples retook possession of the world after having almost abandoned their old gods. But these gave new signs reminding of their existence, and new cults flourished at the same time as new quarrels.

new Cults
flourished
at the same time
as *new* Quarrels

The dwarves discovered the natural riches of the earth after having sought refuge deep inside it during the Age of Battles. They enslaved the goblin people that lived in the depths before them, and developed elaborate forging techniques. They abandoned barter and adopted money, thus making their civilisation grow faster than those of their neighbours. The Aegis Mountains and the plains surrounding them became their unchallenged territory.

Even though this theory may sound inconceivable, it seems that the elves appeared during the Age of Rebirth. Their nation's oldest writs date from this era and none

The people of Kel landed on the west coast of Aarklash as exiles from an unknown nation. After a short war they allied themselves with the people of the northern centaurs, the Keldanis, and with the Ogmanans, the people of giants. Thus was born Avagddu, named so after the death of the first Kelt king, Avagdd. The sudden disappearance of their second king, Cernunnos, caused the secession of a small number of Kelts who left on the quest for their sovereign. Convinced of the gods' implication in the disappearance of their king, they called themselves Drones, meaning "clear-sighted."



mention their existence before this time. Some speculate that the elven people "appeared" rather than was created, since its culture was well too advanced for a developing civilisation. The most plausible theory remains that the elves came from elsewhere and brought their culture with them.

This doesn't hide the fact that they are themselves unable to prove the antiquity of their civilisation or to locate their place of origin.

It is said that the mysterious civilisation of the Serpent people was then at the height of its power, despite its blood-filled customs and its indescribable beliefs. No one knows how such cold-blooded

creatures managed to survive the Winter of Battles, when the sun no longer shone on Aarklash.

The **Ophidians** built cities whose construction seems impossible with the means available at the time, and which would still be difficult today. However, two decisive factors kept them from realising their desire for conquest and extermination: Aarklash's generally temperate climate and their endless quarrels with their neighbours of the Utopia of the Sphinx.

As for the **Wolfen**, the testimony of the time is clear. The first writings and the first representations of all civilisations are often made to warn of Yllia's children.

Crossing the Winter of Battles like any other winter, the Wolfen were the masters of the forests and of the night. Their incursions into the first cities inspired true terror in the hearts of

the other peoples. Though the Wolfen now seem to be less numerous and powerful than their ancestors, the dread has remained intact.

THE GOLDEN AGE

The exact dates of the beginning and the end of the Golden Age are hard to define, even by Kyllion himself. This age was a period of encounters and of exchange: all peoples confirmed their art and their culture. The continent's global population started growing and the cities mushroomed in number and in size.

The Golden Age is said to have been that of the supremacy of reason. New territories were conquered by their future kings. Wild animals were chased away at the same time as the ancestral fears that held back the outbursts of civilisation. The Golden Age is a period of prosperity and of dreams come true.

The **goblins**, still slaves to the dwarves, began worshipping the god Rat who appeared from the depths and became their people's emblem. They broke their chains and fled in all directions in a chaotic way. Uprooted and without any geographical reference points, the goblin population exploded and founded vast colonies all over Aarklash.

To the **dwarves'** great misfortune, the goblins destroyed everything in their path following their liberation. For a





long time the inhabitants of the Aegis Mountains thought that other peoples would take advantage of their temporary weakness to invade their territory. But this didn't happen. Some claim that the dwarves' extreme isolationism stems from this fear of invasion.

The nation of the **Kelts** knew an evolution of capital importance. Morbid customs and a fierce hatred for the gods completely differentiated the **Drunes** from the rest of their kind. Other clans then saw the light of day: the **Ta'an**, the **Ishim'Re**, the **D'Aran**, the **Egann...** Those who chose to respect the goddess's original ways, the true children of **Kel**, called themselves **Ses-sairs**. More than just the emergence of a nation, this was foremost the cultural birth for the human race as a whole: many were those who sought the favours of these sometimes simple-minded barbarians who are extremely effective in extreme situations.

The union of the Kelt clans of **Lahnar** and **Ylliaar** gave birth to the **Alahaar**. Their civilisation knew rapid and considerable growth as they colonised the future domain of the **Lions of Alahan** at stupefying speed. The **Ylliaar's** powerful magic combined with the temerity of the **Lahnar** quickly rid this part of the continent of the monsters that prevented it from being lastingly peopled. The **Alahaar** were also able to push back invasions from the outside, thus setting solid foundations as a prelude to the glory of a whole people.

The Golden Age can also be subdivided chronologically according to its most agitated periods.

The first of these historical incidents happened just after the emancipation of the goblins: the spectacular decline of the **Ophidian Alliance** and of the **Utopia of the Sphinx** for reasons that are as sudden as they are inexplicable. The **Ophidians** themselves refuse to answer questions concerning this subject. However, it seems that the premature death of their civilisation is related to the disappearance of the **Mnemossians**, the patriarchs of their people. As for the **Utopian domain**, it completely vanished in less than ten days.

The second notorious element of the Golden Age was the power struggle

between princes **Elhan** and **Silmaè**, the two heirs to the elven crown of **Quithayran**. After **Elhan's** voluntary exile, **Silmaè** became the first mortal king of the **Forest of the Faves**, the territory of the **Daïkinees**. **Elhan** and his partisans founded the **Cynwäll** nation in the strange ruins of the **Lanever Mountains**, the land of the dragons. Withdrawn in a meditative introspection, the **Cynwälls** isolated themselves from the rest of the world and no one heard of them again.

The end of the Golden Age is often associated with the foundation of the Empire of the **Griffin**. **Arcavius de Sabran**, a nobleman of **Alahan**, left on a mission after having seen a vision of **Merin**, the only god. He set the foundations of **Akkylannie** within less than fifteen years. Guided by their prophet's revelations, the **Griffins** colonised the Kelt region of **Akhylahn** and established the civilisation that we know.

THE AGE OF STEEL

The Age of Steel corresponds to the grievous period in which all wars were being prepared and the principal alliances between the peoples were forged. It began in the , which was still a fiefdom of the Kingdom of **Alahan** at the time. The Order of the **Black Togas**, hungry for knowledge, discovered necromancy and the powerful magic of **Darkness**. Only a fortunate combination of circumstances let the plot hatched by **Feyd Mantis**, **baron of Acheron**, and **Kaïan Draghost**, dean of the most prestigious magic academy of the **Lion**, be uncovered. The **Black Togas** promised their souls to **Darkness** if it blessed them in return. Three gods answered their prayers and revealed themselves on **Aarklash**: **Salauël**, **Belial** and **Dhalilia**.

Only the alliance of the **Lions**, the young army of the **Griffin** and the **Cynwäll Dragons** could prevent the hordes of the damned from sweeping across **Aarklash** in the sadly infamous first **Battle of Kaiber**. The evil infused by the **Black Togas** was, alas, irreversible. One of their members, an **Akkylannian** alchemist named **Dirz**, sought to create a perfect being worthy of **Merin** by using a blasphemous science born of the corruption of **Darkness**.

Barely escaping the stake, **Dirz's** alchemical disciples fled **Akkylannie** and settled in the desert of **Syharhalna** after several months of wandering. The wave of religious terror that shook **Akkylannie** was nothing compared to the witch-hunt that followed. Until today the wound that the heretics inflicted on their land of origin still hasn't healed. After having spoken with **Arh-Tolth**, the **Scorched God of Syharhalna**, **Dirz** the **Heresiarch** chose the scorpion to be his new empire's emblem. The alchemists didn't stop there. After many years spent eluding their persecutors in the desert sands, the **Syhars** made a capital discovery and used their new knowledge to build the perfect army. They brought the orcs to life using genetic strains taken mainly from goblins.

The **Daïkinee nation** was once again struck by fate. **Scaëlin**, the princess of **Quithayran**, was enchanted by her own narcissism to the point of making a pact with the occult forces to preserve her beauty and her courtiers. The price to pay was a high one: **Darkness** made **Scaëlin's** deepest nature come to the surface, slowly turning the only heiress to the throne and her followers into arachnoid witches. **Scaëlin** was chased away by her own courtiers. Blinded by anger, she cast a terrible curse upon her people before disappearing in a maelstrom of blackness: from then on every **Daïkinee** woman would die shortly after having known love. In this way the only partner the men would have left was solitude.

The **goblins** managed to unite under one banner, that of **Emperor Kharbôxyl**. Those with vicious tongues say that this happened by luck or by a miracle, but reality is very different: **Kharbôxyl** of **No-Dan-Kar** was an unequalled speaker and a hardened traveller. Strengthened by his experience, which he sometimes gained the hard way among other peoples, he decided to give the city of the goblins, **Klûne**, a splendour worthy of his ambitions.

When the goblins realised that not only did the city not collapse, but it even resisted well against the dwarves' incursions, they came in throngs to pledge allegiance to **Kharbôxyl**. The semi-nomadic goblin hordes brought

with them their customs and their intellectual "wealth." Klüne began to mushroom and soon the territory of No-Dan-Kar stretched from the forest of Drun Aeryth to the Plateaux of Giants. Klüne became the goblins' cultural melting pot.

The first war declared by the goblin empire was not against the dwarves, as one might have expected, but against the alchemists of Dirz who had used the bodies of their diplomats to build the orcs.

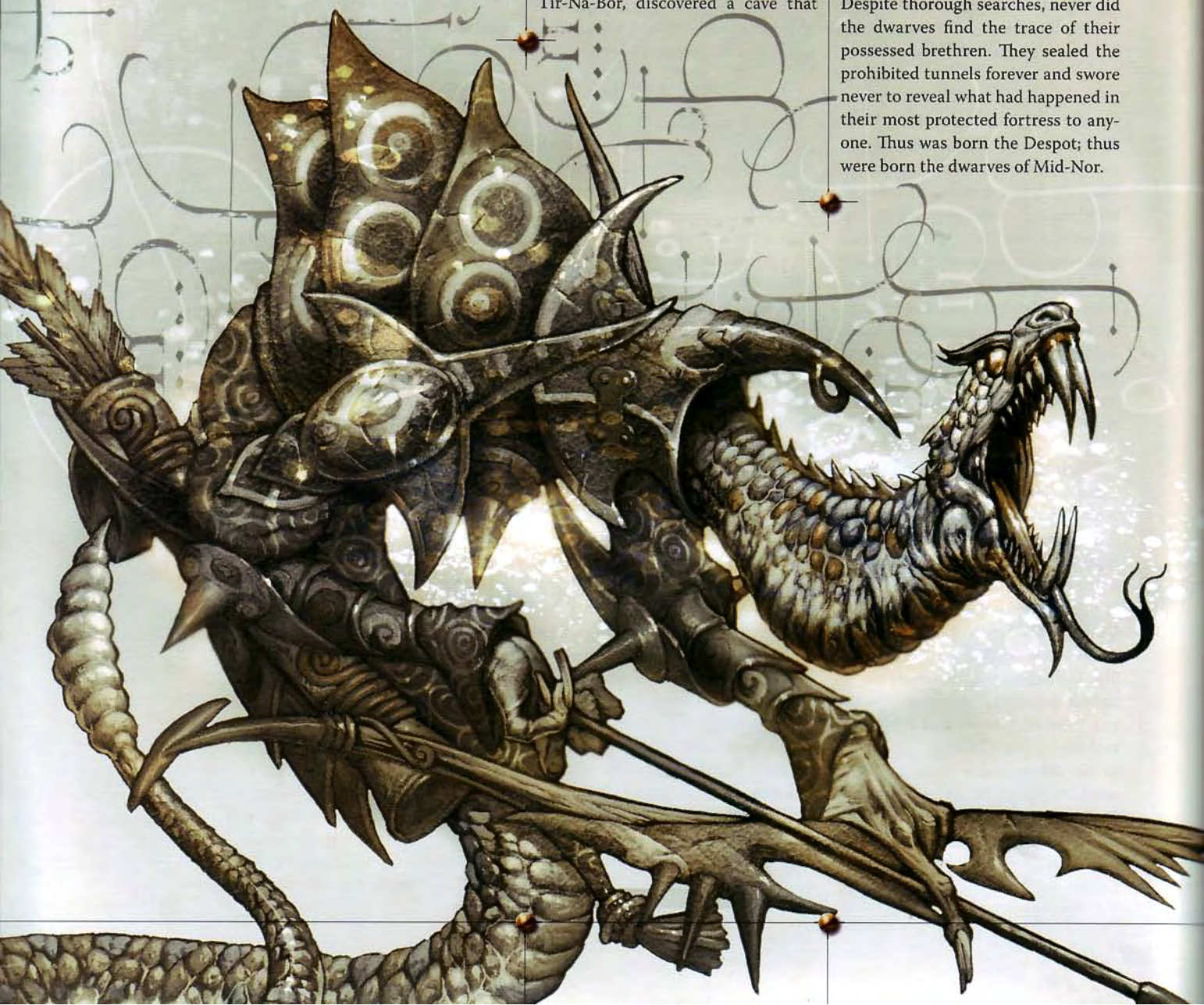
The dwarves tried marching on No-Dan-Kar to subjugate the goblins again. When they found themselves face-to-face with a tide of flesh and rusted metal, they understood that never again would Rat's mob submit to their authority.

Dwarven society experienced a few major changes during the Age of Steel. They sent emissaries all over Aarklash with the mission to inquire on the progress made by other peoples. Recognising a shared interest in certain matters, Tir-Nā-Bor made an exception to its tradition of self-sufficiency by openly proposing an alliance with the Griffins of Akkylannie. Pessimists by nature and predicting a disastrous future, the dwarves signed a non-aggression pact with the Lions of Alahan and the Cynwäll elves. Their relations with the people of Light became better with time, yet never did the dwarves let down their guard.

It is while defending against a Wolfen attack on his village that Van-Ahn-Kaer, defender of the plains of Tir-Nā-Bor, discovered a cave that

no one seemed to have explored in centuries. Taken by curiosity, he plunged into the Depths and returned with a legendary weapon: the sword of Mid-Nor, the blade of one of his people's ancestors. Van-Ahn-Kaer abandoned his village to the assailants and travelled straight to Kā-In-Ar. There he killed the Moln-Dan, the general of the dwarven armies, and violently forced his way to the deepest tunnels of the Aegis Mountains. He had been possessed by the infernal sword and was endowed with an odious strength. Mid-Nor's spirit, trapped in the sword, belonged to Darkness, and Van-Ahn-Kaer belonged to Mid-Nor.

All the fallen dwarves he touched rose again to follow him, animated by a will that was not their own. Despite thorough searches, never did the dwarves find the trace of their possessed brethren. They sealed the prohibited tunnels forever and swore never to reveal what had happened in their most protected fortress to anyone. Thus was born the Despot; thus were born the dwarves of Mid-Nor.



THE AGE OF DARKNESS

Zahar's testament, an ancient collection of prophecies, announces that the fifth age, that of Darkness, would begin with the awakening of a power long imprisoned in the desert. The Dawn Ritual performed by the Scorpions looks a lot like the prelude to the cataclysmic war predicted by the supposedly mad hermit.

The Age of Darkness is that of incertitude, of corruption and maybe even that of the end of time. All over Aarklash armies are being raised and heroes rally their people to insane causes. Diplomatic activity and its corollary, espionage, know an unprecedented boom. Those who are oblivious can pretend to ignore the menace, and the powerful can express contempt, yet the signs are there: never has Aarklash been in greater danger since the gods left its surface.

The influence of Darkness is invisible and underhand. Little by little the forces of chaos spin the tenebrous web that will cover Aarklash. Even a layman could feel to what extent their power grows as the months go by.

Yet it hasn't always been so: in times past, the actions of Darkness were only carried out indirectly by the Elements or individuals that it had managed to corrupt. At the time, finding gems of Darkness was very risky. This has changed since.

Since a jealous god plunged a noble king into the throes of remorse. When Cernunnos abandoned his people, only the most faithful of his subjects, the Drones, went looking for him. Darkness offered them the possibility to get revenge for the murderous intrigues of the gods.

Since three gods of Darkness appeared in the barony of Acheron, leaving behind a chasm leading directly to hell. The necromancers have pierced the secret of eternity, but at what price?

Since vanity has turned a young elven princess, Scaëlin, into a diabolical and cruel matriarch. The pain and the hatred in the heart of the Akkyshans are so powerful that they pervade their blood, their being and their soul.

Since an Akkylannian alchemist renounced his god to the benefit of science. Dirz has created counter-natural abominations while believing he could dominate Darkness, and then built an inhuman empire while claiming to act for the common good.

And finally, since a dwarven adventurer found the sword of a hero betrayed by his own brothers. Until he has punished all those who cast him into the Abyss, Mid-Nor will never stop turning the living against their creators.

Once scattered, the peoples of Darkness are now beginning to join forces, and the strength of their alliance easily surmounts their cultural and political differences. Sombre pacts unite the barony of Acheron, the alchemists of Dirz, the Kelts of the Drune clan, the dwarves of Mid-Nor and the sisterhood of Ashinân.

Once confined by the forces of Light, the armies of these peoples help each other more and more to vanquish their respective enemies. No one is sheltered from their exactions: the maritime trading-post of Kylaë, though under the joint protection of the fleets of the Lion and of the Griffin, was razed by a handful of Dirz clones led by Arkeon Sanath. Bands of dwarves of Mid-Nor prowl the edges of the forest of Quithayran and compare their trophies with those of their brethren of Cadwallon, of Diisha and of Klûne. The necromancers make Portals appear in the four corners of Aarklash and found formidable sects without anyone knowing.

One should not be mistaken: the disciples of Darkness wouldn't be true to themselves if they were loyal and fully cooperative with each other. It sometimes happens that they confront each other. This fratricidal aggressiveness has, until now, prevented the peoples of Darkness from overrunning their adversaries one after the other by concentrating their efforts onto one target at a time.

Aware that division breeds weakness, the civilisations of Light have forged a solid alliance. But the brotherhood that unites the Cynwälls, the Griffins, the Lions and the Sessairs is continuously put to test while the spawn of Darkness surrounds and gnaws at them.

The first great battle between Light and Darkness, at least in modern times, was fought in the narrow gorge that once linked Acheron to the rest of the Kingdom of Alahan. For weeks the armies of the Lion, the Griffin and the Dragon relentlessly confronted the infernal legions of the rebel barony at the Kaïber Pass. Nowadays a massive fortress rises in this place, born of the knowledge of wise men and bathed in the blood of the brave. There the Alliance of Light pushes back countless waves of undead warriors every day. But with each passing day the fortress slowly becomes weaker. Its stones are removed one by one and taken to limbo by grimacing demons. Its foundations tremble under the blows of unknown forces

Kaïber is a living symbol of Light on Aarklash: at the feet of its walls, as on all battlefields of Aarklash, acts of great bravery are carried out by heroes that will never be sung about. The situation is the same in the desert of Syharhalna, in the canyons of Bran-Ô-Kor, in the mists of Avagddu and in the Forest of Webs. Families mourn their children who fell on the fields of glory.

As long as an ideal remains to be defended, never will the valiant warriors of Light submit to adversity. They are the protectors of justice and honour, and also of the fate of a whole continent. What kind of future could they promise the generations to come if Darkness were to win the war?

Just like Darkness, Light hasn't always been as present on Aarklash. Like its opposite Principle, it used to carry out its will using devout and faithful agents. The natural balance of things forced it to act directly when Darkness began to flood over Aarklash: in the minds of its servants only Light can resist the corruption of Darkness and push it back until elemental harmony reigns again. Alas, even though the gods of Light have always taught good and virtue, this battle would be fought with the help of the peoples of Destiny, if they like it or not!



THE
LIMBOS
OF A
CHERON

The greatest threat may not come from the present and future conflicts, but rather from the inside. Thinkers, philosophers and even some magicians believe that the intransigence of the peoples of Light vis-à-vis the other nations only strengthens Darkness. Imposing their traditions, their gods or their own way of thinking onto peoples believed "inferior" only breeds hate. These words, sometimes judged to be blasphemous, have led many of their partisans to prison or in front of war tribunals. In this dark age born of dissent and weakness, any compromise would be a mistake. The forces of Light must show a united front. The time of negotiation is over: those who refuse to pledge allegiance to the lords of Light will die alone or be eliminated before they can sell their souls to Darkness.

What if true honour wasn't inscribed on coats of arms, but in the desire for justice?

What if true wisdom wasn't dictated by the words of the elders, but by tolerance?

What if true courage wasn't confronting one's shadow, but accepting change?

These are all questions that barely-interest the peoples of Destiny, born of the four primordial Elements and the most ancient gods of the celestial spheres. To them these interrogations are the fruit of minds that have been separated for too long from the true values taught by nature, life or fortune.

What are the true stakes of a war? Those that survive the whims of History! No ideology and no empire is eternal. War is made to destroy, to conquer or to defend oneself... At least that is what the Daïkinee elves, the goblins, the dwarves of Tir-Nà-Bor and the orcs seem to claim. This principle is also shared by the Kelts of the minor clans, the Wolfen and the terrifying Devourers.

Every civilisation of Destiny follows its own traditions, independently of the other peoples. Even if the orcs and the goblins regularly barter and some Wolfen mingle with the Daïkinee, no concrete and lasting alliance binds one people of Destiny to another.

The ways of Destiny are sometimes also those of paradox. The Devourers of Vile-Tis roam Aarklash leaving blood and terror in their wake. Despite their unbearable mores, no one can dispute the fact that they are more "civilised" than their Wolfen brothers. The dwarves of Tir-Nâ-Bor have struck a fruitful alliance with the Griffins of Akkylannie, yet they refuse to let strangers enter their fortresses in the Aegis Mountains. The goblins, enlightened minds and promoters of writing on Aarklash, receive the ambassadors of Acheron with lavish celebrations. As for the orcs, they indiscriminately attack the Griffins and the Scorpions who cross Bran-Ô-Kor, despite their limited population.

May they inspire contempt, indifference or caution, every one of these peoples has survived the passage of time, invasions and the ravages of History without any outside help. This is a point that their interlocutors and enemies tend to neglect, but which is capital when one tries to understand the wealth of their culture.

In this age of darkness where whole civilisations prepare for a war that will be waged on earth as in the heavens, it may very well happen that the disciples of Destiny make the balance sway in one way or the other. Who can say which side these disparate peoples will join when the end of the world approaches?

War has been declared.

Who will raise the banner of the gods?

Who will be worthy of surviving the Rag'narok?

The troop of knights advanced to the top of the hill. The sky was ashen and the valley below seemed to be agitated like a green sea in a storm. Everywhere the sky darkened and soon Yllia, the moon, fully covered the face of Lahn, the sun. The confrontation between the two celestial bodies foreshadowed the struggle to come...

Urland de Montvert placed the crest representing Alahan on his head before unsheathing the sword of his ancestors. Bolts of lightning split the sky

and revealed the noblesse of his stature. His whole body was covered with heavy armour and his figure seemed to be made of bronze while his eyes intensely scanned the darkness.

The rain was battering the heavy caparisons while Urland continued observing the landscape, which was changing right before his eyes. The horizon seemed to be moving as if it were troubled by an unreal wind. Further below in the valley a wave spread as the storm grew stronger and stronger.

The wave progressively became thicker until it was solid, and then the Portal appeared under the icy rain of ill omen. It then opened up like a foul-smelling well of Darkness that spewed forth the deformed shapes of an endless tide of zombies, skeletons, golems of flesh and Crâne warriors.

A vast army was rising from the abyss...

Urland stroked his mount's neck before turning towards his men. He quickly gave orders to his captains and then dispatched a messenger to the nearest fort to have reinforcements arrive as fast as possible. He scanned the long row of knights standing before him, and one after the other they saluted him and raised their lances. Their faces were impassive, hidden by their great metal helmets. Urland raised his armed hand high into the air, thus giving the signal to charge.

The impressive column slowly began moving and soon the whole detachment was rushing to attack the legion of the damned while calling strength and Light onto their broad swords and finely crafted armour.

The Crâne warriors, who dominated the evil horde, summoned unfathomable darkness to guide their twisted blades of carnage to strike their enemies at the heart or the throat. In the past the Crâne warriors had been great men. But their fateful destinies had led them onto shadowy paths, and once they had reached death, vile sorcerers mastering strange arts had transformed them. Their bodies were made stronger and their mind treacherous, gnawing away at the last remains of their humanity. They were

now the perfect servants devoted to their dark masters, the necromancers of the Ram.

The first ranks of knights clashed with the vanguard of the undead. The impact was quick and deadly. Steel struck steel. Swords were raised and brought down heavily, filling the air with the metallic clanking of weapons and armour. Lances pierced parched flesh and shattered bones.

The warriors' armour deviated blows, but the struggle was uneven because for every creature that was destroyed two more came forward to replace it. One by one the knights yielded ground and inexorably fell under the ever-growing numbers of the dreadful legion.

At the heart of the battle, Urland, his face dripping with sweat, was pushing back the assaults of a gigantic golem of flesh. The creature was howling its hatred and sliced the air with its jagged claws, cutting deep gashes into the metal of any armour they met. While his mount retreated from the golem's repeated attacks, a horrible fear grasped Urland's mind, spreading doubt and slowly taking hold of his soul. A last resistance, a last rampart of courage and of will, yet the battle's outcome seemed less and less certain while his spirit fought on. Surrounded by all sides, unhorsed and then submerged, he wavered before collapsing unconscious at his enemies' feet.

From the Portal came the accursed call of Belial, the Prince of the Abyss. Wearing the Horns of Blackness, the emblem of the necromancers, he was coming to claim his due: the power of death over life.

When the reinforcements reached the top of the formerly lush and green hill, the dark army had grown by hundreds of beings whose names alone could make the bravest of souls shudder.

Readying themselves for a new assault, the knights of the Lion surveyed for a moment the plain drenched with the blood of their warriors. Flashes of lightning revealed glimpses of the face of Death, whose teeming troops were silently invading the plain in the chill of the night. This battle was lost... but the war had only begun...

THE ARCANA OF MAGIC



The origins of magic on Aarklash are unknown. Certain paths, such as primagic and the Kelts' shamanism, seem to always have existed... Others, such as necromancy of Acheron and the Scorpions' technomancy, seem to be more recent. Or had they simply been hidden for centuries? Either way, magicians do not like their mysteries to be revealed and have a taste for secrecy. To most of them the mastery of their art comes before all other considerations, and they look at warriors in a slightly derisory way.

At least as long as they have mana gems left...

THE ELEMENTS

All life within Creation springs from the Elements. But it is up to magicians to give Form to this Essence...

There are six **Elements**.

Among these are four **Primordial Elements**: Water, Air, Earth and Fire are the substances from which the animate and inanimate are born. Perfectly neutral, the Primordial Elements are naturally found on Aarklash. Outward signs of their presence can be seen daily.

The two other Elements are called the **Principles**: these are Light and Darkness. Endowed with a consciousness, they subtly influence the other Elements towards perfection or towards destruction.

The Primordial Elements and the Principles are intimately bound to each other. The stability of Creation depends on their harmony. They attract or repel each other and mingle to give shape to the most unimaginable dreams and nightmares. But none has, nor should ever have, absolute supremacy over the others, for then Creation would collapse... That is why every Element has its contrary, a diametrically opposed Element with which it is in constant conflict.

Incantation is the process by which magic is channelled, its Form. As for mana, it is the raw material that allows the spells' effects to materialise, its Essence. As magicians say: "Essence precedes Form."

The mana gems that circulate on Aarklash are the objects of intensive trade between the peoples.

THE PATHS OF MAGIC

There is one Element that a magician always masters: the **primary domain** of his people. On the other hand, some Elements are prohibited. Though some exceptions are possible, magicians cannot, or refuse to, study this or these Elements. Every people follows one or several paths of magic. The principal ones are described below, yet others, just as impressive, remain to be discovered...

THE ELEMENTAL PATHS

Elemental paths are not true paths of magic, but a group of spells common to all the paths mastering the given Element. Even if their Incantation differs from one people to the next, the effects are the same. A fireball remains a fireball, be it invoked in the name of Merin, the Fire spirits, or by the magician's will alone!

There is an elemental path for each Element. To use a spell of elemental magic, a magician must imperatively master the Element required for its Incantation.

PRIMAGIC

Primagic is not a path of magic in the strict sense. This ancestral form of magic includes all spells that directly affect magic energies. This path is accessible to all, and its spells can be cast using any type of gems: the number of gems needed for the Incantation is represented by a neutral gem.

HERMETISM

The mages of Alahan are gathered into scattered brotherhoods whose power rivals that of the most formidable armies. They have pushed the study of magic to its purest form and are able to unleash the power of the Elements like no other people on Aarklash. Their hermetic magic is distinguished by complex formulas and esoteric circles marked by the language of the gods! The mages of Alahan's favoured Element is Light, symbol of the harmony and the perfection they aim to reach at every instant.

They vigorously reject Darkness, the principle of corruption and decadence.

Primary Domain: Light.

Forbidden Domain: Darkness.

NECROMANCY

"All Light casts a shadow," the necromancers of the Order of the Ram often like to say. The magicians of Acheron have perverted the hermetic magic of their ancestors (natives of Alahan), giving birth to the dreadful path of necromancy. With a gesture of their fleshless hand they summon hordes of the Living-dead and demons willing to do anything to enslave their masters' enemies. Yet their incredible mastery of Darkness comes at a price: Light has definitely renounced these corrupted magicians, and the mysteries of Water have become strangers to their twisted minds.

Primary Domain: Darkness.

Forbidden Domains: Light and Water.

SOLARIS

Withdrawn within their cyclopean cities, the Cynwall elves live far from the rest of the world and remain little known by the peoples surrounding them. At the highest summits of the Behemoth Mountains they breed the immense dragons of the peaks, which they use as formidable mounts.

With the Rag'narok nigh, they do, however, leave their retreat more and more often and deploy their forces on the chessboard of the powers of Aarklash. Their peculiar use of Light will surely surprise more than one of their opponents.

Primary Domain: Light.

Forbidden Domain: Darkness.

TELLURIC MAGIC

In the depths of their hidden laboratories in the Aegis Mountains the dwarves of Tir-Nâ-Bor use telluric magic to develop substances and materials with extraordinary properties. Their weapons and their armour are surely among the most resistant of the continent! The Earth is their ally in the battle that the dwarves have chosen to wage against the enemies of Tir-Nâ-Bor and the unavoidable fate that awaits Aarklash. Dwarves hate treachery and resist the insidious corruption of Darkness with all the strength of their valorous hearts.

Primary Domain: Earth.

Forbidden Domain: Darkness.



THEURGY

What the Griffins of Akkylannie call the Heart of Merin is the path of theurgic magic. To them magic is not the incarnation of dreams or the mastery of occult powers invisible to the layman's eye, but well and truly a gift from the one god, Merin: the gift of Creation. The preachers, inquisitors and Darkness hunters watch over the salvation of their people. By fire and steel they spread the word of the god Merin, and burn the heretics who stand in their way.

Primary Domain: Fire.

Forbidden Domain: Darkness.

INSTINCTIVE MAGIC

The orcs of Bran-Ô-Kor do not perceive magic in the same way as the other peoples of Aarklash. Some of them develop the mastery of mana like an inborn gift: this is instinctive magic, which uses mana's Essence without giving it a true Form. Certain orcish shamans duplicate the gifts of animals of the canyons where they live, while others are persuaded that they share a special bond with Bran-Ô-Kor... The magic of the orcs is in their image: spontaneous, unexpected and brutal!

Primary Domain: None.

Forbidden Domain: None.

TECHNOMANCY

To the alchemists of Dirz it doesn't matter what Form magic comes in, as long as the result is the one they wanted. The path of technomancy, developed beneath the desert sands on guinea pigs captured among their enemies, accomplishes counter-natural wonders: it mixes the animate with the inanimate, flesh with metal, the organic with the mineral. Biosurgeons use the corrupting power of gems of Darkness to modify the body and mind as they wish. One day an army of supermen modelled according to their perverted criteria of perfection will overrun Aarklash... Air, being changeable and elusive, seems to escape the nefarious grasp of the Scorpion scientists. But for how long still?

Primary Domain: Darkness.

Forbidden Domain: Light and Air.

WHISPERS

The Moon is full and the night belongs to the predators. Under the impassive gaze of their celestial goddess, the Wolfen shamans call on the magic of the Strips of Whispers to attract Water's blessing onto their brothers and their territory. Again and again their whispers are followed by howls the way the everlasting laws of nature have always wanted it to be. Light and Darkness are part of the order of things, but Yllia's children refuse to give in to their desires for conquest. And woe to the Principles' servants if they dare cross the boundaries of their territory!

Primary Domain: Water.

Forbidden Domains: Light and Darkness.

SORCERY

No two goblins are alike. If it isn't their instable genetic heritage that differentiates them, then it is their completely opposite personalities. The god Rat's brood is present in the four corners of Aarklash, subject to all morals and to all forms of magic. Yet there is one Element and one path that they prefer above all the others: Air, for it is as whimsical as they are, and sorcery, which makes them irresistible in every way. Until now no one has proven that there is an Element that cannot be used by goblins.

Primary Domain: Air.

Forbidden Domain: None.

CHTHONIAN MAGIC

In the depths of the earth, far below the supposedly impregnable underground fortresses, lie horrors that even the gods have forgotten. At the heart of the labyrinthine domain of the one they call the Ymsur, the Despot of the dwarves of Mid-Nor, the lictors perform disgusting rituals in which they mix tainted earth, the magma of the deep and the innards of their victims. Such is chthonian magic! Light is anathema to these monstrous magicians, as is Air, which is polluted simply by their presence.

Primary Domain: Darkness.

Forbidden Domains: Light and Air.

SHAMANISM

In the plains of Avagddu the Kelt barbarians of the Sessairs clan live in close relation with nature and follow the path of shamanism. Their magicians don't really dominate the Elements; they rather borrow their energy to satisfy all the needs of their nomadic way of life. They craft talismans, the gesas, in order to obtain these favours.

Primary Domain: the Primordial Elements.

Forbidden Domains: Light and Darkness.

THE DRUNES AND MAGIC

Taken by hatred and rancour, the Kelts of the Drune clan have turned away from their people's beliefs a long time ago. They nevertheless haven't forgotten the knowledge of the ancient shamans of the people of Kel. But their magic has been perverted by the dark powers of their demonic allies, the formors. Under their influence the Drones have turned towards Darkness and have committed the most loathsome of rites.

Primary Domain: the Primordial Elements.

Forbidden Domain: Light.

HOWLS

Deprived of territory and despised by their Wolfen brethren, the Devourers of Vile-Tis roam Aarklash spreading sorrow and devastation in their path. It is in the impure blood of their enemies rather than in the crystal-clear water that the insane haruspices read the coming quirks of fatality. And the agonizing clanks of the Chains of Howls chant the name of their next victim...

Primary Domain: Water

Forbidden Domain: Earth

THE ELEMENTAL REALMS

The old Druid put the blanket back onto his frail shoulders. He moved closer to the fire whose orange glow lit the children's faces. Then he continued his story with a soft and confident voice, for he had chosen these little men for them to become druids themselves.

But to do so they would have to understand the nature of Creation. Creation is so vast that a human being could never visit it completely, even by devoting his whole life to such a task.

The immensity of the Realms stretches to infinity. Within them lie the domains of the gods and of their children, the creatures of Light and of Darkness. The Real World is in fact like a set of mirrors in which each Element mingles with the others in an infinite number of different reflections. Every one of them, like that of Aarklash, has its own countries, its peoples, its creatures and its own rules.

Aarklash is the Realm of mortals. Its place is near the centre of the Realms, be they celestial or abyssal. Even though this may not be important to most of the continent's inhabitants, the magicians and faithful of the various peoples take great interest because the Realms are above all the only real source of magic. Indeed, **mana**, the matrix of all magic, practically no longer exists in its natural state on Aarklash since the gods ceased to walk its face. There are several types of Realm. The most common are bound to the Elements: Air, Water, Fire and Earth are the so-called "primordial" Realms. There are also Realms of Light and of Darkness, the so-called "principal" Realms.

After the gods' exile, the **magicians** were faced with a great problem that they saw as a trial imposed on them by the divinities themselves. They therefore left on the quest for mana and it was long... The **faithful** prayed more than ever and their sacrifices were bloody.



These efforts were not in vain. Portals opened spontaneously on Aarklash's surface and the gods revealed to the mortals the places where mana was hidden. The most reckless magicians and the most devout faithful used these Portals and went looking for mana in the Realms. So they were called... Voyagers.

Portals are as rare as they are coveted. They generally only appear for a few days at a time. But some legends tell of permanent Portals allowing access at will to certain Realms. Constructions of this sort are extremely rare and well hidden! The peoples who call on magic do so sparingly in order to preserve the precious mana gems containing magical energy.



Yet the necromancers of Acheron don't seem to have any problems when it comes to mana: their god Salaüel defied the interdict of Time by appearing physically in their barony. The place where he appeared became a gigantic Portal leading straight to the Netherworld... Poets and war leaders don't realise how right they are when they say that Darkness is flooding over Aarklash!

As for the orcs, they call on a unique magic that only they master: instinctive magic. It seems that they get their power from Aarklash's essence itself rather than from mana gems. Instinctive magic is turbulent and uncontrollable, but free. Just like the orcs!

It is also whispered that certain people are able to predict when and where a Portal will appear. These individuals are supposedly even able to open passageways to the other Realms...

The Voyagers of the Realms disappeared for a long time, so long that they were believed dead. But when they finally returned, they had changed. Their eyes glowed with a wisdom that only elders could possess. Their bodies were badly scarred by their expedition. They had confronted thousands of perils and seen thousands of wonders in the Elemental Realms...

The nature of the Realms is often subject to confusion by the profane. When speaking of the Primordial Realm of Fire one easily can imagine an infernal domain made of flames and fury. Even though the blazing fountains of the fief of K'Taol may fit this description, a Voyager cannot be satisfied with such a simplistic comparison.



The whole of these Realms is commonly called Creation. Every Elemental Realm is subdivided into a multitude of worlds, and each one of these follows its own physical, moral and biological laws.

Every one of these universes leads an autonomous and unique existence, just like Aarklash. They are peopled by individuals of different, more or less developed species that live together in various ways. The nature itself of these exterior beings varies enormously: some are made of flesh and blood; others are only made up of ether or other essences unknown to the natives of Aarklash. It even sometimes happens that a Voyager can only discern one of these beings through his emotions, all of his senses being unable to perceive it!

The most common manifestations coming from the Realms are the **Elementals**. By summoning one of these beings, the magician only tears

a primordial creature from its original Realm in order to temporarily rally it to his cause. Even if Elementals are often simple beings coming from the basic Realms, the Elemental Lords, those known as **Sihirs**, don't like seeing their subjects being enslaved.

The world of Aarklash seems to be an exception among the infinity of Realms, and this for more than one reason.

First of all, in addition to being practically at the centre of the known Realms, Aarklash is one of the only worlds where all of the Elements are perfectly balanced. If one of them should dominate the others, the consequences would be disastrous. It is therefore with a certain anxiety that the Elemental Lords watch the recent emergence of Darkness.



Second of all, the Elements cannot manifest themselves on Aarklash in a conscious way without having been invited to do so, which happens relatively rarely in Creation. This is partly why magicians are treated with such respect in the Court of the Sihirs.

And finally, Aarklash has a form of magic that isn't practiced anywhere else in Creation: instinctive magic. If the magicians of Aarklash knew to what degree the orcs' magic attracts the attention of external beings, they might show a bit less contempt for the shamans of Bran-Ö-Kor!

The Voyagers came back with sumptuous gifts: mana gems of all Elements. Magic returned to Aarklash, and this almost as strong as it was during the reign of the gods.

Mana gems are far from being simple stones coming from the Elemental Realms. One should not be mistaken: all rocks from the Realms are not mana gems!

Mana gems have a surprising property that the magicians don't know well: within them they hold a part of the essential force of their original Realm, which they conserve when leaving their Realm. It's this faculty that makes their prospecting so difficult for the Voyagers... and which makes mana gems priceless jewels.

Their users, mainly magicians, distinguish two families of mana gems: ephemeral gems that turn to dust once their elemental energy has been consumed, and immortal gems whose magic potential is progressively replenished during a process called **Rebirth**. Immortal gems, being even rarer than their ephemeral sisters, are of course bitterly sought after and are the objects of a ruthless trade. Rebirth remains little known by the magicians. No one has yet managed to grasp the rhythm of the immortal gems' Rebirth: it seems to depend on the whims of an unknown force. An immortal gem can be reborn in a few seconds just to flicker out again for hours. Many a magician has met his fate because he overestimated the Rebirth of his gems!

Some Voyagers have only explored one Realm and know its inhabitants' customs well. Others travelled from Portal to Portal and from Realm to Realm. These widened their knowledge after having confronted the perils of the Void that separates the elemental domains.

The Voyagers of Aarklash are not alone, nor are they the first to explore the Realms using Portals. Gems of the various Elements can thus be found in most of the Realms in which the Voyagers travel. It is, however, very hard to find gems of an Element in the Realm of the opposite Element...

Aarklash is the only known Realm in which any Voyager can find any type of gem. All permanent Portals are well guarded to prevent unwanted Voyagers from entering Aarklash, yet no one can guard a spontaneous Portal...

Alas, two groups never returned. No one knows what happened to the Voyagers who left for the Principal Realms, those of Light and of Darkness. A few gems of the Principles were found in the Primordial Realms. There they were as rare and as precious as diamonds. Voyagers of our time sometimes say that they meet fleeting shadows while looking for gems of the Principles. But these are just tales told to scare children...



PAN DEMONIUM



Very few Voyagers know the Portals that allow the Principal Realms, those of Light and of Darkness, to be reached. It is unknown why these Portals are so exceptionally rare. Yet the reason is very simple, but it is a well-kept secret...

Light and Darkness are called Principles for they have an influence on the four Primordial Elements. The Principles are full of Good and Evil, the particular philosophical values of beings that think. So both have their own conscience that, though it is fragmentary, seeks to protect itself by keeping the Voyagers from pillaging their resources! What would happen if the opposition of the Primordial Elements were to be made even more complex through the introduction of the Good and Evil specific to the Principles?

The Unfinished Realms exist outside of the fundamental laws of Creation, including that of Time. It seems that no Voyager has ever managed to find a permanent Portal leading to an Unfinished Realm. The only way to reach one is by using a spontaneous Portal... or due to an error in a Portal's creation. And even if a Voyager crossed an Unfinished Realm, the chances that he would even notice are slim at best, and only as long as it is inhabited.

Testimony concerning the Unfinished Realms tells that their reality is completely based on their inhabitants' will, hidden desires and fears. One just has to change the way these beings see their own world for it to be modified consequently. The mage Kyllion the Elder, a great explorer

A seductive prospect, yet impossible to verify, alas!

Yet some Unfinished Realms fill the tales and legends told by the most intrepid Voyagers. The most famous is the one called Parangon, even though the existence of a Realm of prosperity where the heroes of past times reign seems unlikely.

Rumours also claim that two vanished civilisations, the Utopia of the Sphinx and the Ophidian Alliance, have retreated to Unfinished Realms. They supposedly continue their war throughout all of Creation while destroying whole worlds lying in their path... Just the thought of two peoples able to massively retreat to another Realm and to lead a conflict on several worlds seems unbelievable.



Two questions come to mind: if Darkness really is endowed with a will of its own, what were its objectives when it "authorised" the creation of a permanent Portal to its Realm in the barony of Acheron? What can be deduced from the relationship between the Elements and the gods when taking into account Salaüel's role in the creation of this permanent Portal?

THE UNFINISHED REALMS

The Elemental Realms are connected to each other by Portals, fine threads linking Creation like a spider's web. But at the edges of Creation lie strange domains where no laws can resist the will and desires of those who live there.

These lands of dreams and of nightmares, forgotten by all, are called the Unfinished Realms.

under the Crown of Alahan, has given this phenomenon of projection the name of Ideal.

Kyllion once put forth the hypothesis that in the beginning all of Creation's Realms were "Unfinished" insofar as they were uninhabited. When the gods arrived in the distant Realms following their exile, they defined the first Ideals of these unexplored territories.

By attempting to return to Aarklash, the gods attracted their faithful and power-hungry magicians to them... Thus the untouched Realms that separated Aarklash from every god's land of exile were explored, even if just briefly, and their Ideals were defined by those who believed to have discovered them! According to this hypothesis, the Unfinished Realms lie beyond or at the borders of the gods' Realms of exile... and every god's objective would be to impose his Ideal on all of Creation's Realms.

The most fervent believers in the existence of Unfinished Realms are the magicians who follow the fratricidal paths of hermetism and typhonism. The founding principles of these two paths are based on the affirmation of the magician's will over the laws of nature. To their adepts, reality is determined by those who perceive it. The one who imposes his will onto the primordial forces of the Realm in which he is thus dominates its "reality."

Magicians of both camps have often made it clear that they had access to the Unfinished Realms and that they have built fortresses there that make the one at the Kaïber Pass pale in comparison.

Can these magicians, who have also become masters in the art of politics, be believed?

HEROES NEVER DIE



Characters, known as Incarnates by the inhabitants of Aarklash, have attracted the gods' attention in one way or the other. Alas, this privileged relationship is forged for the better and for the worse...

But all Incarnates are not heroes of their people. One can even say that most of them are, at best, local celebrities. Most Incarnates are favoured, detested, manipulated, exhibited or observed by the divine powers like fair animals or vulgar pawns on a chessboard.

THE MAKING OF HEROES

Incarnates can never really die, at least not a violent death. A lucky combination of circumstances always saves a badly beaten Incarnate from the Reaper's claws: the arrow that should have pierced the champion's heart is deviated by a medallion or a liquor flask, or a valiant anonymous soldier jumps into its trajectory in self-sacrifice. And if the Incarnate should nevertheless happen to be mutilated, immolated, and his remains dispersed by the winds, then the gods' actions would nevertheless remain unaffected. The witnesses' memories would simply be altered, the ashes reassembled, the wheel of time manipulated.

The only exception to this rule: an Incarnate can, under certain circumstances, be truly killed at the hand of another Incarnate. This is one way in which the gods settle their scores with each other or make their schemes evolve. Each god selects his champion and the combat's winner ends the debate.

Incarnates who are aware of their immortality are few and most of them see only a part of the puzzle. They hide their knowledge, for sharing the secrets of the powers that be can only attract their wrath.

Being heroes of divine wars, Incarnates have the power to accomplish the impossible. Standing firm against an enemy army, rekindling the flames of hope when all seems lost, and becoming a part of legend are some of the privileges bound to their status.



And finally, being an Incarnate means bearing a god's mark. This distinct sign is recognised by the other gods and, in a fairly surprising way, by magic itself. The chosen ones who know this remarkable property can use it to recognise or to unmask them: some spells refuse to work and some miracles cannot happen in an Incarnate's presence.

THE PRINCIPLE OF INCARNATION

With just a few exceptions, one isn't born a Character. One becomes a Character. This principle is Incarnation.

But immortality has its price. In order to allow Incarnates to never succumb and to accomplish things that nature doesn't permit, the gods are obliged to tear out a primordial part of them. Depending on the religion or philosophy, one can say that they disperse their inner essence in the infinity of the Realms or that they shatter their soul into several pieces. This mystical dislocation happens during the individual's Incarnation. What is left of the ravaged soul after this horrible ordeal is called Essence. The dispersed fragments are the Incarnate's Elixirs.

Some Incarnates subconsciously try to restore their Essence. They then go on a mad quest for themselves into which they invest themselves completely.

ELIXIRS

An Incarnate's Essence is incomplete as long as his Elixirs haven't been gathered together again. Thus an Incarnate often feels incomplete, has his mind set on a particular goal, like an obsession, and frequently senses that something is missing from within him. The most intrepid Incarnates go on adventures. Others, more numerous, attempt to compensate the loss inflicted on their Essence by searching internally. They then devote themselves body and soul to a cause, or lose themselves in study and meditation.

Going on a quest for one's Elixirs is a very perilous mission. Indeed, an Incarnate's Elixirs can take on any shape or size, even temporal.

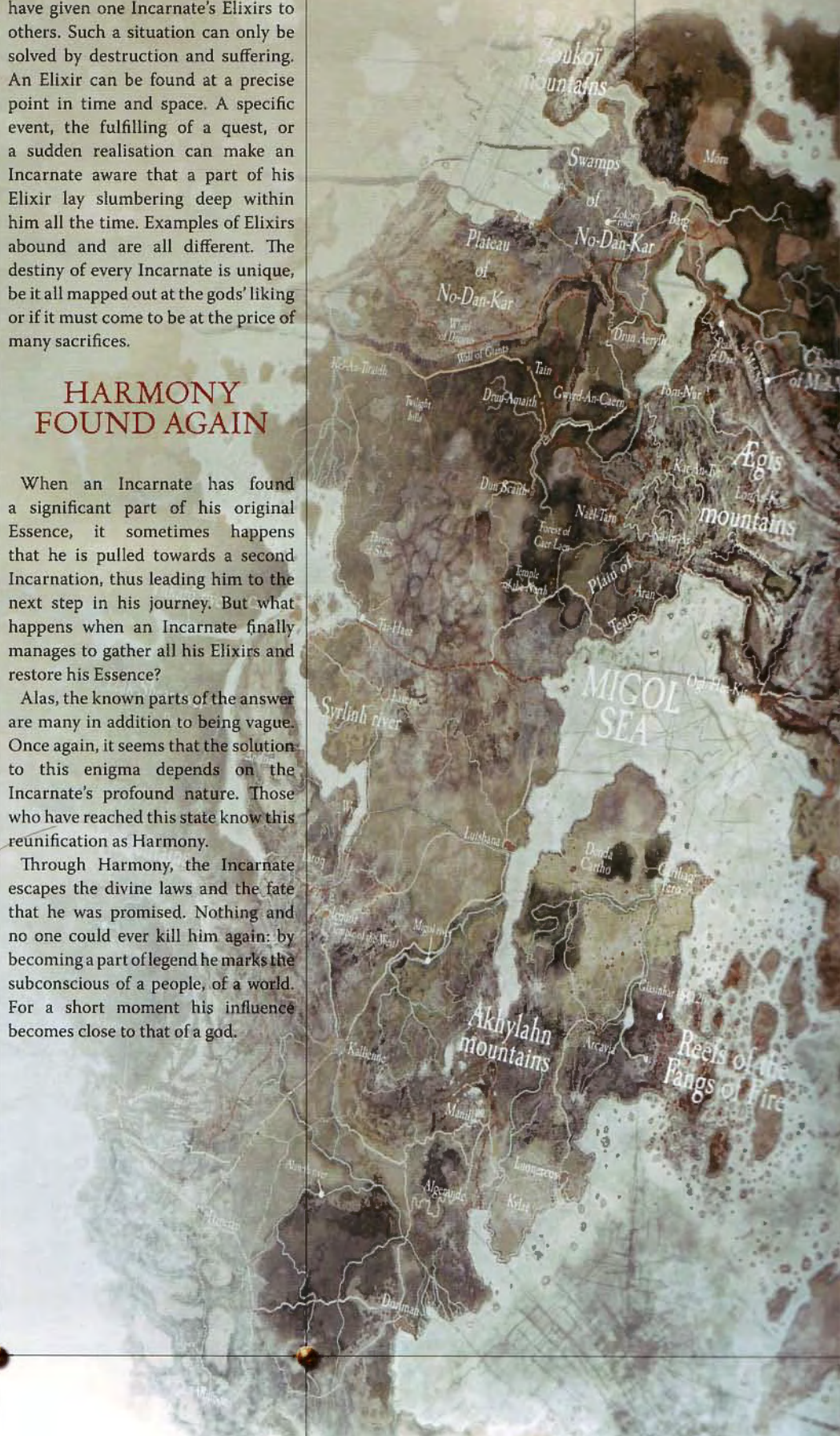
The most vicious or bellicose gods have given one Incarnate's Elixirs to others. Such a situation can only be solved by destruction and suffering. An Elixir can be found at a precise point in time and space. A specific event, the fulfilling of a quest, or a sudden realisation can make an Incarnate aware that a part of his Elixir lay slumbering deep within him all the time. Examples of Elixirs abound and are all different. The destiny of every Incarnate is unique, be it all mapped out at the gods' liking or if it must come to be at the price of many sacrifices.

HARMONY FOUND AGAIN

When an Incarnate has found a significant part of his original Essence, it sometimes happens that he is pulled towards a second Incarnation, thus leading him to the next step in his journey. But what happens when an Incarnate finally manages to gather all his Elixirs and restore his Essence?

Alas, the known parts of the answer are many in addition to being vague. Once again, it seems that the solution to this enigma depends on the Incarnate's profound nature. Those who have reached this state know this reunification as Harmony.

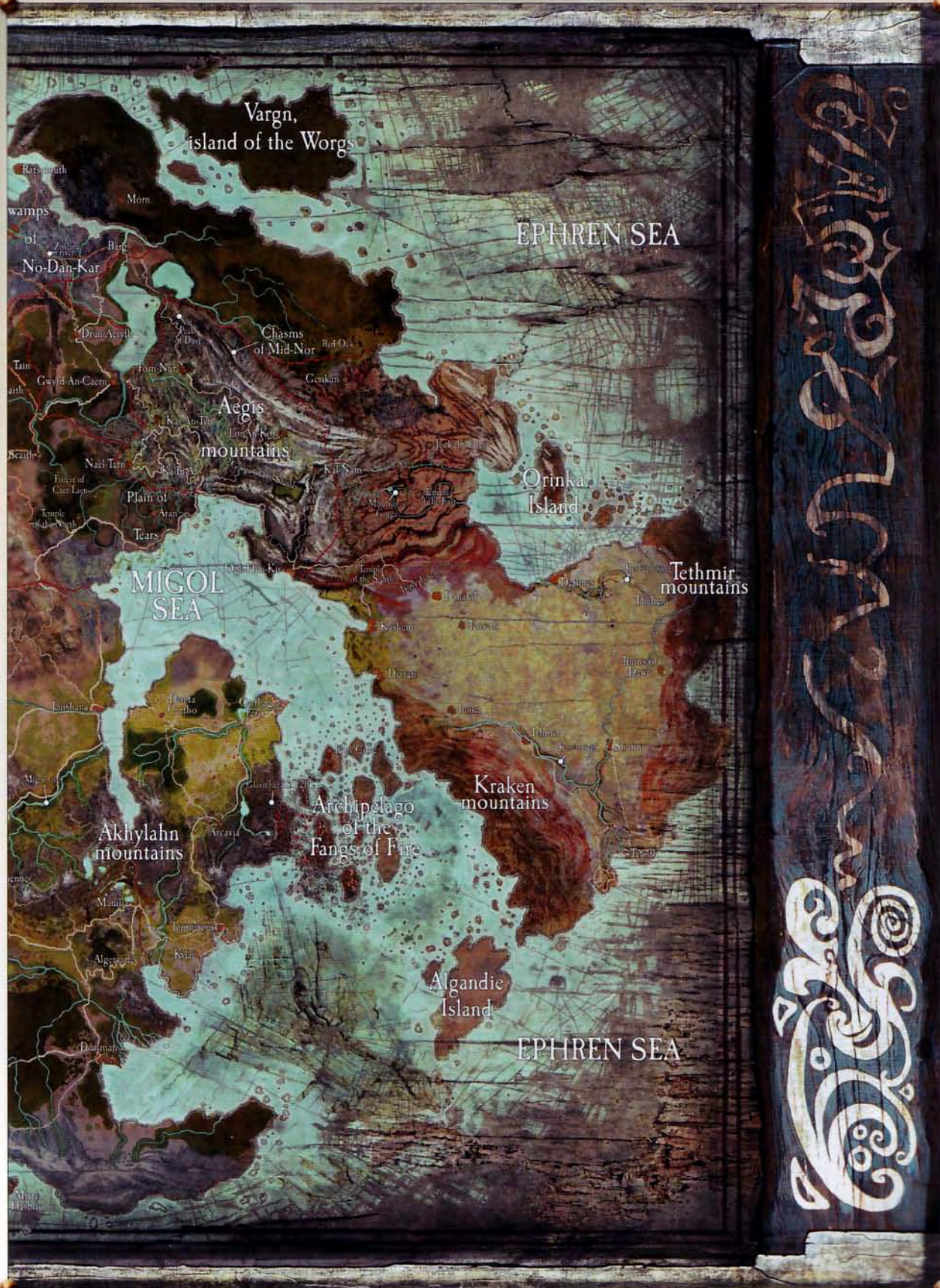
Through Harmony, the Incarnate escapes the divine laws and the fate that he was promised. Nothing and no one could ever kill him again: by becoming a part of legend he marks the subconscious of a people, of a world. For a short moment his influence becomes close to that of a god.



AARKLASH

MAP

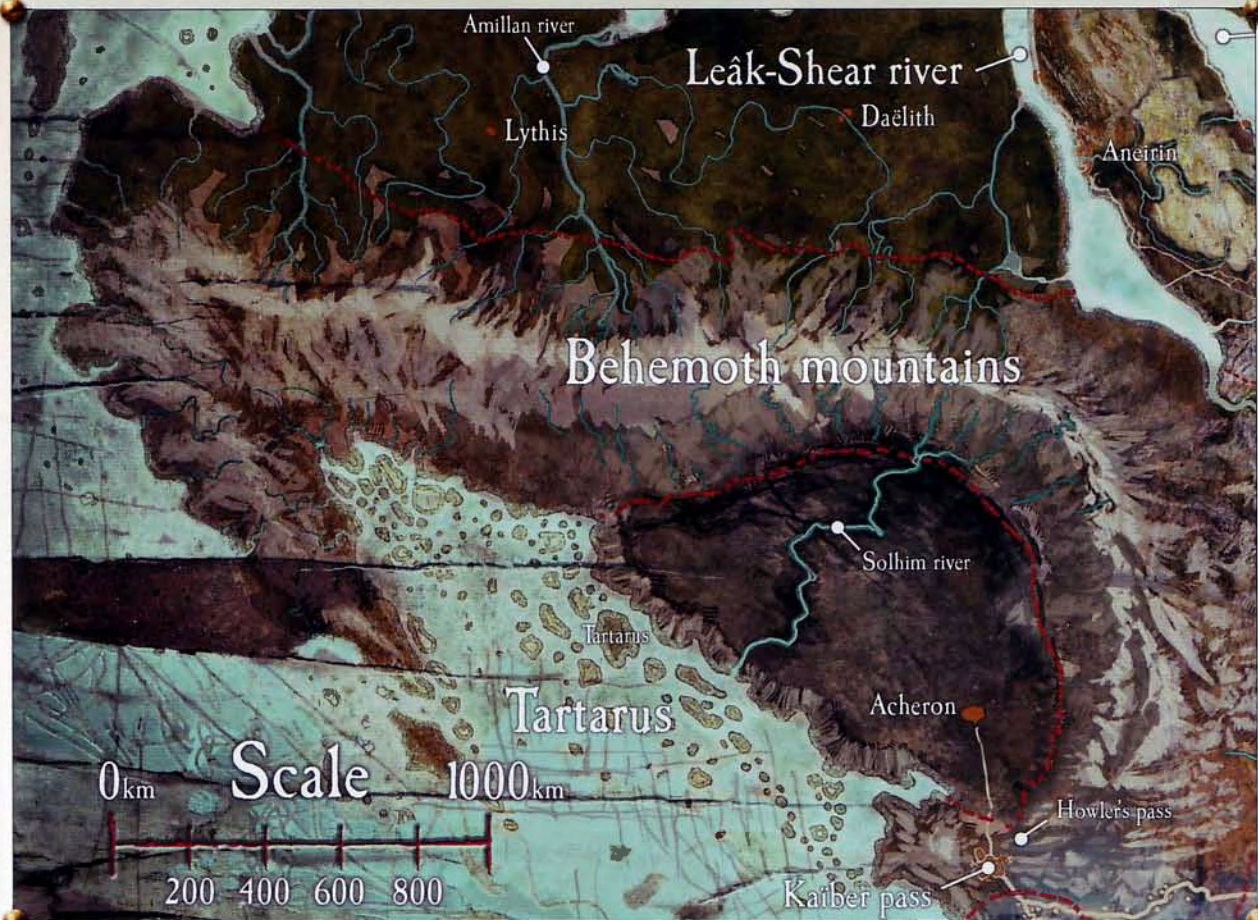














THE KELTS

OF THE SESSAIRS CLAN



THE PROUD WARRIORS of the Sessairs clan roam the misty plains of Avagddu ever since the dawn of time. No opponent can subjugate these nomads of legendary fury.

ARMY

The plains of Avagddu are the domain of the proud warriors of the Sessairs clan, the ancestors of all the human peoples of Aarklash. Having come from the sea in immemorial times, the Sessairs worship a pantheon made up of primitive divinities and immortal heroes: Danu, the goddess of nature; Cernunnos, the horned god, and the Matrae devoted to life, war, death, etc.

War is an integral part of Kelt culture, especially that of the Sessairs: they must fight to survive and push back the repeated assaults of their bordering nations. There isn't a single people that the seething Sessairs haven't confronted at least once, and Avagddu has never known lasting peace. The Sessairs are a free and savage people in perpetual motion. Nothing can take their pride or their incredible temerity from them.

EMBLEM

Minotaur

CAPITAL

Kel-An-Tiraidh

ALIGNMENT

The Ways of Light

ALLIANCES

Lions of Alahan,
Griffins of Akkylannie

CULT

Danu, goddess of the earth and rivers

MAGICIANS' PRIMARY ELEMENT

The four Primordial Elements
(Air, Water, Fire and Earth)

• HISTORY •

It is commonly acknowledged that the people of Kel make up the first human group to have walked the continent of Aarklash. With the passing of time these conquerors divided into several clans that dispersed to settle this new land. It is, however, a culture of tradition exclusively handed down by word of mouth, which is why this people's history is lost in the paradoxes and contradictions of a complex mythology.

The origins of the people of Kel remain for the least unclear. Myths evoke a faraway land that these men were forced to abandon to demons that came from the ocean. The men of Kel didn't bring their own religion with them. They had renounced their old divinities that they held responsible for their exile. When they landed on Aarklash, those who claimed to be the children of the goddess Danu and who called themselves *ogmanans* welcomed the men of Kel. Their stature so impressed the newcomers that they named them Giants.

The *ogmanans* were friendly and only asked for one thing: the men of Kel could settle here under the one condition that they pledge allegiance to Danu. Yet the Kelts refused to submit themselves to a divinity's whims.

Three great battles followed. So the men of Kel decided to resort to cunning to strike their enemies straight at the heart. Eladh, son of Avagd, king of the Kel tribe, was charged to seduce Danu and then to kill her. But he was caught in his own trap and the young man fell in love with the goddess who turned him into a demigod. Of their union three girls were born, all three of them at once goddesses and daughters of Kel. This event brought confidence and peace to the hearts of the Kelts and the children of the goddess, who were then able to live together in peace.

This episode marvellously illustrates a fundamental trait of Kelt culture: before submitting to any sovereignty, the Kelt warrior must fight it. He thus proves his valour and then shows his wisdom by putting himself into the hands of a higher authority for the common good.

THE FURY OF THE EARTH-GODDESS

With Initiative/INI and Strength/STR rates greater than the human average, as well as the "War fury" ability, the Sessairs obviously favour attacking. Their Defence/DEF is even one of their weaknesses, as are their low Resilience/RES and mediocre Discipline/DIS. From a strategic standpoint this last characteristic is a handicap that must be compensated by systematically using Leaders. Indeed, the low Discipline/DIS of the Sessairs' Commanders-in-Chief only gives them a limited number of additional Orders.

COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

The lack of discipline among the Sessairs is also found among the potential Commanders-in-Chief for their armies: **Gwenlaen** (DIS 4) and **Viraë** (DIS 5). This is why it is recommended to give them a war-staff when possible. Yet this remains too weak for a big army. Another alternative is the legendary warrior **Drac Mac Syrö** (DIS 8, Living Legend), who represents an attractive investment (240 A.P.).



• GEOGRAPHY •

The Plains of Avagddu are named in honour of Avagd, the king of the Kel tribe when they settled the land of Aarklash. They are delimited in the north by the Wall of Giants, which symbolises the border between the Sessairs' territory and the Plateau of No-Dan-Kar.

To the west stretches the domain of the goddess, the great forest of Caer Mnà, where it is said that Danu's burial mound awaits the visit of Ard Ri, the High King who will unite the clans. On its eastern flank Avagddu touches another forest. The Kelts call it Caer Maed, which, in their language, means "the Black Woods." In this place the goddess has no rights, because the Drones, the enemies of the gods and of those who worship them, rule as its masters.

And finally, in the south the plain stretches into the territory of the Barhans, in the heart of the Kingdom of Alahan.

• ALPHABET •

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
⋈	⋉	⋊	⋋	⋌	⋍	⋎	⋏	⋐	⋑	⋒	⋓	⋔
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THE RAG'NAROK

Without counting the rivalries that sometimes oppose the tribes against each other, the Sessairs continuously live on a war footing, be it to defend their life, their honour or their land. The only nations with which the Kelts maintain a true link are the Kingdom of the Lion and the Empire of the Griffin. And it is in the Lions' and the Griffins' interest to preserve good relations with the tribes of Avagddu.

But most importantly, the Sessairs' territory is a buffer zone between the northern and the southern territories. Thus, when the hordes of goblins and the swarms of Dirz cross the plain, it's in the Lions' and the Griffins' interest to help the Sessairs stop the invaders before they bring the war onto their own lands.

Long ago several Wolfen packs left the Forest of Diisha to settle the few wooded areas scattered on the plains. Most of the time, men and the

"upright wolves" have a hard time cohabiting, for on the plains the quest for food is a matter of life and death. That's why it's not rare to see Wolfen and Sessairs confront for the control of hunting grounds.

Nevertheless, this competition is part of the natural order of the cycle of life, and the Sessairs feel no hatred for the Wolfen. Their true enemy lies in the east, in the heart of the Black Woods. There live their accursed brothers who have vowed to cause their downfall and that of the gods: the Drones.

AN ENDLESS WAR

The Sessairs are sometimes denigrated by some of their distant and supposedly "civilised" cousins who only see them as uneducated, quarrelsome and bawling barbarians. The Sessairs are warriors more out of necessity than out of appetite for destruction.

Due to its geographic position, the Sessairs' territory is regularly crossed by armed forces marching towards

the lands lying to the north or south. Though their real objectives are usually outside of Avagddu's borders, it sometimes happens that these armies send detachments to raid the local population in order to assure the resupplying of their troops.

The Sessairs' sacred places are also numerous in the plains. Standing stones, cromlechs, dolmens and burial mounds rise on the moors, defying eternity. To the soldiers marching through, the temptation to desecrate these graves with the hope of finding treasure is always great. But these sites are carefully watched and their guardians demand the profaners' life in payment.

THE CLANS OF THE PLAINS

Though other smaller clans may subsist on the plains, sheltered by thick forests or in the mountains of Akkylannie, the Sessairs make up the biggest clan of Avagddu. A place of historical importance, the city of Kel An Tiraidh was, if legend is to be believed, founded by the men of Kel on their arrival on the continent of Aarklash. This is where they supposedly confronted the giants and the centaurs in three mythical battles. This stronghold may seem quite primitive in comparison with the magnificent Barhan and Akkylannian cities, yet it nevertheless represents

the world's biggest concentration of Sessairs. But it would be wrong to qualify Kel An Tiraidh as being a capital. Though most of the tribes of the plains do indeed assert their membership of the Sessairs clan, each one has its own king and none is willing to submit to a supreme authority unless the goddess herself has designated it. Though some of the largest tribes have settled down – mainly in the western parts of the plains and in its centre along the tributaries of the Zokorn river – most of them lead a nomadic lifestyle, migrating to follow the herds of wild aurochs that make up their main source of subsistence.

The Sessairs don't use agriculture very much. Their sedentary settlements have developed a few crops of cereals, but they get most of their food from breeding livestock. As for the nomadic tribes, they live mainly from hunting. It happens that they barter with borderline Barhan villages, exchanging handicrafts and spoils of war for food. These tribes generally maintain good relations with the Kingdom of the Lion. Yet in periods of famine or under the leadership of a belligerent war leader it sometimes happens that the Sessairs raid the most isolated frontier settlements of Alahan. These attacks usually don't cause any victims as long as the villagers are smart enough to abandon their food reserves to the assailants.

THE KINGS OF KEL

Whatever their size or their way of life, the Sessairs tribes all follow the same model of social organisation. Sessairs society is divided into three castes: The working class includes artisans and food providers. The sacerdotal class reunites all of the tribe's learned members: druids, shamans, priests and doctors. And finally, the warrior class makes up the most prestigious class of them all, the king being traditionally chosen from among its members.

Despite this fact, royalty is more a symbolic representation than the exercise of a central and absolute power. For though the king comes from the warrior class, the high dignitaries of the sacerdotal class influence all the domains of sovereignty. The druids and the priests are in fact the king's advisors, and no royal decision is made without their approval.

THE VOICE OF THE EARTH-GODDESS

In addition to this political duty, the representatives of the sacerdotal class are also the holders of the secrets of the Elements and of the voice of the gods within their tribe. The Sessairs' pantheon is vast and complex, for numerous mythical figures appear in it, sometimes as gods, sometimes as heroes with exceptional talent but who remain mortal. Several names can,

FURY WARRIORS

Fury warriors are an excellent choice among the Sessairs warriors. They are fast, reactive and exceptional attackers endowed with a Strength (STR 7) that is clearly above the human average, and they must strike before their opponents can because their low Resilience (RES 3) doesn't give them much chance for survival if they are taken unawares. This being said, their cost (15 A.P.) lets them form Units that are big enough to allow the survivors to decimate the enemy with an avalanche of blows despite their losses.

CENTAURS

Centaurs are a rather untypical case among the allies of the Sessairs. Though they are even faster (MOV 20; INI 5) than the latter, they have a very average Strength (STR 5) for beings of their Size. This disadvantage is, however, made up for by the "Brutish charge" ability, which gives them a bonus on their Damage Rolls when charging. So this means that the centaurs must charge their enemies at any price, or they risk being rendered powerless if they fail to do so.



The horde of the Sessairs gathers under the command of its greatest heroes.



BAAL THE CONQUEROR

In spite of appearances, Baal is not a centaur. He was once a great Kelt warrior, the champion of the tribe of Scaith and most probably destined to become its king. Yet fate had other things in store for him. During a battle between his tribe and some Drones, Baal was struck by a terrible curse. When he killed Asamòn, the former (see The Kelt of the Drone clan) leading the onslaught, the monster's demonic essence took possession of Baal and his mount and condemned them to form a single being. That day their victory was a bitter one for Baal, for following Kelt custom, no man victim of an infirmity or a physical deformity can claim the title of royalty.



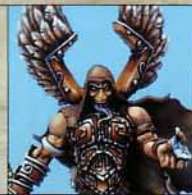
HUNTERS

Kelt hunters are extraordinary scouts. Completely versatile, they can trouble the enemy from a distance with their javelins, harass a fray without risking hurting their companions (thanks to the "Instinctive firing" ability) or engage the enemy in hand-to-hand combat. Indeed, their combat characteristics, especially their Strength (STR 8), are far greater than those of most human fighters. Unlike most other scouts, a Unit of hunters can therefore be deployed behind enemy lines without fear of being engaged in hand-to-hand combat.

FIANNAS

The **Fiannas'** advantage is their Initiative (INI 4). For 12 A.P. they count among the fastest fighters of their category. This speed, combined with their two-handed sword (STR 6), makes these female warriors a bona fide strike force despite their frail appearance. However, like so many of the fighters of their clan, they have a low Resilience (RES 3), which makes them very vulnerable to attacks of all sorts (especially projectiles!).

OF THE **SESSAIRS** CLAN



• The Queen of the Fiannas •

• Kelen the Thirteenth Voice •

• Orhain the Erudite •

GIANT BARBARIANS

Giant barbarians have all the advantages of the Sessairs (strike force and movement capacity) except for Initiative (INI 2). They are often reduced to attacking last. Yet they have exceptional Resilience for Sessairs (RES 7) and are endowed with the "Hard-boiled" ability. Against enemies with low Strength/STR they can therefore place their dice in attack without risk and use their "War fury" ability. If this isn't enough, then their alternative profile with the "Fierce" ability lets them attack no matter what happens.

DANU WARRIORS

If all conditions are met, the **Danu warriors** can turn into beasts of war at an insignificant cost. Furthermore, the chances of transformation can be increased thanks to a "Heart of fury" and/or by giving a "Rune of metamorphosis" to a Sessair faithful. This last relic also allows a Danu warrior to join a different Unit. This possibility has two advantages: in addition to the additional strike force the presence of such a fighter represents, the victim needed to provoke the transformation does not have to be a Danu warrior.



however, be mentioned about whose divine character there is no doubt.

Danu, the tutelary goddess of the land, the lakes and the rivers, is surely the most emblematic figure among all the Sessairs' divinities. At the very beginning of Creation she united with Lahn, the god of the sun and the sky. Of this union only two sons were born: Clanath and Murgan. Today these three male divinities have fallen into disuse since they symbolise the sterility of Danu's lands before the arrival of the people of Kel. Indeed, Avagddu's fertility only returned the day that the goddess shared her bed with Eladh, who would later become Cernunnos, and that she gave birth to three girls, Siobhan, Fiann and Neraidh.

And last but not least, Cernunnos, who remains to date the strangest and most controversial character of this gallery of divinities. Worshipped by the Sessairs and by the Druces, demigod to some, accused and despoiled king to the others, the mystery that surrounds his legend continues to inspire the bards of Aarklash to this day.





MAGIC

The Sessairs are the masters of the four elements. As such, they have access to a wide choice of spells among the elemental paths as well as among various paths of magic. And extraordinarily, Kelen the Thirteenth Voice is even an adept of the Principle of Light and also has access to the path of solaris. Thanks to this diversity, Sessairs magicians can easily adapt their choice of spells to any situation and to all types of enemies. It is, however, recommended that each magician be given spells that need the same Element (so that he can cast any one at any time).

MINOTAURS

Speed, strength and resilience. These three assets make minotaurs killing machines that are impossible to stop by common mortals. Unlike Elite troops, such as the cavalry and royal guardsmen of Alahan, minotaurs are perfect for decimating enemy rank and file. Such a monster can be a Unit all on his own! Thanks to the size of his base he can engage a large number of enemies who he will have no trouble slaughtering thanks to repeated devastating attacks. Beware, however, not to have him confront opponents with too great a Strength, for his low Initiative/INI often causes him to attack last.



Regular

HUNTERS

In the Sessairs' society only the king (and only symbolically) is given the double role of the clan's protector and purveyor. The caste of hunters is, however, a noteworthy exception to this rule. Daily they stalk game and supply the tribe with meat and skins to tan. In times of war, far from remaining at a distance from the battlefields, they put their exceptional tracking talents to use to spy on the enemy forces and prepare deadly ambushes. In combat, as when hunting, they use their fine javelins that they can throw with incredible precision. Yet they do not fear close combat and their long stone axes have made many an enemy bite the dust.



Veteran

FIANNAS

Fiannas are considered to be the incarnations of Danu's daughter Fiann, the Sessairs' goddess of war. They throw themselves into battle with deadly grace, and the whirl of their great swords chops up enemy ranks with surprising strength. Their presence at the men's side galvanises the other warriors, whose ardour and courage are doubled in order to please the goddess. In addition to their role of fighters, the Fiannas also have an initiatory mission. These women train the young Sessairs warriors in the handling of weapons and in the art of war. It is also they who, through a secret rite, bestow them with the status of warrior, thus allowing them to participate in battles with the rest of the tribe.



Elite

DANU WARRIORS

Once upon a time Fiann, daughter of Danu and goddess of war, granted the Sessairs warriors divine rage. This bloody state of trance that the Kelts call "war fury" is only the first step in a much more spectacular metamorphosis: the spasms of fury. Only a minority of warriors is able to go into such a state of savagery and murderous madness. Even rarer are those who manage to survive it. Chosen by the priestesses of Fiann during extremely violent ritual jousts, these men and women then get the privilege of being Danu's lovers, the favourites of the goddess. In battle, when the violence of combat reaches its summit, the Danu warriors let themselves be invaded by the spasms of fury and they then undergo a terrifying metamorphosis.



Koren's savagery is unequalled.



High Priestess Viraë embodies the beauty and the fervour of the goddess Fiann.



THE LIONS
OF ALAHAN

THE LIONS OF ALAHAN

HEROES OF LEGEND

The heroes of the Lion are paragons of noblesse, strength and virtue.

Being champions of Light, the warrior kings relentlessly rise to face and beat back Darkness.



ARMY

Founded over five centuries ago by the descendents of two Kelt clans, the Kingdom of the Lion is the biggest human territory of Aarklash. This land of justice and prosperity is the most valiant defender of Light on a continent that is prey to Darkness.

The knights and the powerful magicians of the Lion are paragons of virtue who fight in the name of noble ideals. The Lions are reputed for their bravery and temerity in the face of the most terrifying of perils. The exploits carried out in the name of their fatherland and their king have become legendary. The noble houses of the nine baronies of the Lion are grateful for the honour, heroism and loyalty of the brave fighters who wield their coats of arms.

In an age where the enemies of Light make use of the most perfidious means to reach their ends, the Lions don't just content themselves with travelling all over the world as wandering knights looking for wrongs to right. They are the proud owners of the most prestigious fleet of Aarklash, and are diplomats, spies and fearless roamers. The Lions of Alahan make the most of their mad recklessness and their valour in the war that they have chosen to wage: the one for goodness.

EMBLEM

Lion

CAPITAL

Kallienne

ALIGNMENT

The Ways of Light

ALLIANCES

Griffins of Akkylannie, Sessairs Kelts and Cynwäll elves

CULT

Arín, the sun god

MAGICIANS' PRIMARY ELEMENT

Light

• HISTORY •

The history of the Kingdom of Alahan begins with the rivalry between two Kelt clans, the Ylliaar and the Lahnar. The Lahnar, worshippers of a sun god and outstanding warriors, were the guardians of the border between Lahnaen, the lands of Light, and the Valley of Darkness haunted by the creatures of the night. When their shamans felt the magic of Lahnaen grow, they believed that they were blessed by the gods... The Ylliaar, heirs to the Moon, didn't agree. This mystic-filled clan felt the coming invasion by Darkness. The Ylliaar prepared to push back the onslaught of the infernal forces.

The Ylliaar's incursions into Lahnaen gave rise to a conflict that lasted for years. Neither of the two clans managed to prevent Darkness from manifesting itself and taking over their lands.

That is when the Chimera intervened. Appearing as an Ylliaar woman, the immortal being proposed an alliance to the young king of the Lahnar, Leonid the Lion. Lahnar and Ylliaar united to give rise to a new clan: the Alahaar.

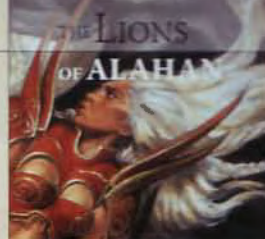
Together they managed to liberate their homeland and conquer the Valley of Darkness.

The glorious crowning of Alcyd the Paladin, son of Leonid and the Chimera, saw the unification and the declaration of sovereignty of the Kingdom of Alahaen.

The kingdom was divided into ten baronies. Law replaced traditions and the clannish hierarchy gave way to nobility. For the first time, the powerful weren't fighting to make the law, but rather to make it be respected.

Alahan consolidated and knew a long period of prosperity. This kingdom became the biggest human territory united under the authority of one leader. Every one of its kings inherited the name of Lion and shone over Aarklash as an example of courage, honour and justice.

It is in these lands of virtue that Evil came to get revenge. Darkness slowly took over the kingdom's tenth barony, Acheron. The infernal monsters haunt Aarklash anew: new heroes must rise to stand up to Darkness.



HONOUR AND COURAGE!

Such is the creed of the Kingdom of Alahan's soldiers. Endowed with average rates in most characteristics, they nevertheless stand out due to their slightly above normal Resilience and especially to their Courage that is strengthened by the "Bravery" ability. From a strategic point of view, though the Lions don't reach the level of rigour of the Griffin Empire's troops or of the dwarves of Tir-Nâ-Bor, they know to show discipline as long as commanders and Leaders accompany them. Strengthened by these assets, the Lions are able to hold their positions without failing, even when faced with the most terrifying of enemies.

THE COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

Depending on the army's size, the forces of Alahan have a choice between several Commanders-in-Chief. For a relatively small contingent the Red Lioness is an excellent choice, especially when facing fear-inspiring enemies against whom her high Courage rate (COU 9) can be of crucial importance. Sardar Tillius, who has a different style but whose Discipline is equal to the Red Lioness's (DIS 6), can also be chosen to be Commander-in-Chief. To lead larger armies it is preferable to give the command to one of the kingdom's barons, such as Dragan d'Orianthe or Valdenar.



• GEOGRAPHY •

Alahan was once part of a vast territory where the strongest tended to their horde's needs in metal and food. The sovereignty of the Lion people allowed them to transform these lands of promise into a united and flourishing country. No other country on Aarklash has an environment that is as mild and as diverse: the domain of the Lion knows practically all the various climates. While its capital, Kallienne enjoys ideal climatic conditions, a soothing heat bathes the valleys of Laverne, and the forests of Allmoon are caught in an almost permanent winter.

• ALPHABET •

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THE RAG'NAROK

The Lions, wherever they are and whoever they may be, leave no one indifferent. Their allies know that they can always count on them in times of peace as of war. Their enemies, on the other hand, will try anything within their power to stain the disconcerting nobleness of these tireless opponents. The Lions have succeeded in turning their intrepidity into heroism and their versatility into richness. Unlike many other peoples of Aarklash, they do not determine their true allies according to their origins or their interests, but rather according to their valour.

The Lions make up the principal pillar of the Alliance of Light with the Griffins of Akkylannie and the Cynwalls of Lanever. Regiments from the baronies can be found in the four corners of Aarklash, supported by the Griffins in the Syharhalna and by the Dragons in the Forest of Webs.

No war is more pitiless than the one the Barhans wage against the traitors of the Barony of Acheron.

Kaiber, the gigantic fortress blocking the passage between the Behemoth mountain chain and the plateaux of Daneran, is the symbol of this fratricidal war: over there, hundreds of soldiers of all ages and conditions confront the Death that endlessly gnaws at them day after day.

The Lions don't care if they are seen as being dreamers bound to honour and love for justice. The values they preach and share have made them key players on the political chessboard of Aarklash.

Their prosperous kingdom has chosen to defend that of the oppressed, as immense as it may be and whatever the price...

A NOBLE BLOOD, SOUL AND HEART

The Lions remain very attached to feudal and heroic values. The kingdom's first law, set by Alcyd the Paladin himself, states that "whoever

performs great feats in the name of the values of the Lion shall receive honours worthy of his exploits." Alahan's hierarchy includes many titles, though most of them only grant the rule over a more or less important domain. The kingdom's heraldry is especially complex and the coats of arms symbolise the complete history of the families they represent.

THE NINE BARONIES

The Kingdom of Alahan once encompassed ten baronies: Acheron, Algerande, Allmoon, Daneran, Doriman, Icquor, Kallienne, Laverne, Luishana and Manilia. Acheron's treason to the benefit of the forces of Darkness doesn't represent a great loss in territory, but in the Lions' eyes it symbolises a huge blow to their honour.

Each barony bears the name of its most important city and is placed under the responsibility of a baron who is named by the king in person. Even the capital-barony, Kallienne, is placed under the authority of Baron Kelgar de Valady while King Gorgyn resides there. This administrative division is the origin of the term "Barhan," which means "an inhabitant of the baronies" and thus, by extension, a subject of Alahan.

A baron must administer his domain in all matters and enforce the law throughout the kingdom.

He only answers for his decisions before the king himself or before the

Council of Mages of the Order of the Chimera. This relative autonomy allows for an astonishing diversity: a law that benefits all or an ingenious way of managing resources is sometimes applied to the whole kingdom.

Few nations can rival with Alahan in terms of economy and cultural progress. The efficient management of natural resources and an impeccable organisation allow the king to maintain a large, well-trained and well-equipped army.

THE HEROIC PANTHEON

The Barhans' gods and goddesses each have a different and clearly defined protectorate. Yet very few have a temple that is wholly devoted to their cult. A Lion can go into any place of worship in his kingdom to pray to a particular god. The temples of Arin, the kingdom's principal god, also have small altars devoted to the members of his celestial family!

According to their beliefs, the gods live in the vicinity of their faithful in a realm hidden from mortals' view. The entrance to this realm is somewhere in the domain of the Lion and only appears for a limited time. The Chimera herself guards the country of the gods...

Arin is the first and the most celebrated of the Lions' gods. The Father of Light is represented as being an aged man watching over the world

and carrying Lahn, Elad, his wife, is the goddess of fertility, love and water. Her priests, who are close to nature and endowed with great self-control, have largely contributed to the Lions' diplomatic reputation. Arakin the Benevolent is the son of Arin and Elad. He is the god of war, courage and honour. It isn't surprising that his worshippers must constantly look after each other so as not to fall into the clutches of Arakin the Tormentor, the malevolent alter ego of the Benevolent and the personification of the inhumanity of war. And then there are Tiranor and Kain, the twins of destiny, be it good or bad. The relative rarity of their temples doesn't keep the Barhans from invoking and cursing them as soon as luck and chance come into play. The last goddess of Alahan spreads her realm over the silent shadows of Death and Time: Azël isn't evil, but she guards the passage separating the world of the living from that of the deceased.

THE HEIRS OF THE CHIMERA

The Kingdom of Alahan is known for the impetuous courage of its soldiers, its invincible cavalry and the endless power of its magicians. The latter are united under the aegis of the biggest organisation of magicians there is, the Order of the Chimera. This august assembly is the keeper of the Chimera's heritage and

THE KAÏBER GUARD

The low value (in A.P.) of these Regulars allows a great number of them to be deployed and their good Resilience (RES 6), combined with their modular equipment, makes them very versatile. When armed with spears or maces (DEF +1) the **guards of Alahan** can be used to hold a position or to block the enemy in an endless fray. When equipped with their other weapons they take on a more offensive aspect. When the sword is chosen they win the initiative more easily when they are in hand-to-hand combat, but when the guards are really destined to attack, then the war pick (STR +2) is the most appropriate weapon. The war-staff of Kaïber gives them a Veteran profile as well as a Tactic card reserved to the Lions of Alahan.

THE SISTERHOOD OF AZËL

Valkyries are excellent fencers yet they suffer from a low Resilience (RES 4). This weak point can be partially made up for by enlisting a pythia of Azël in their Unit (in her presence all valkyries get the "Fierce" ability). This usually pushes the opponent to keep several dice in defence and prevents him from attacking excessively, even if he is sure to decimate them. The pythia of Azël also benefits from the proximity of the valkyries because she can increase her Strength/STR and Resilience/RES by drawing from those of her sisters-in-arms.



The cavalry of Alahan is the most prestigious of Aarklash.

THE RED LIONESSE

L aurena Tillius, nicknamed the Red Lioness, is the perfect example of a woman who has managed to impose herself in a patriarchal society. Gifted with an intrepid temperament, she secretly learned the arts of war with her best friend, Llyr, a paladin of Alahan. When he died during a battle against Acheron, the Lioness decided to avenge him. She later encountered Llyr, who had come back from the dead as a Crâne warrior, and had no choice but to destroy her old friend, her heart torn apart.

This victory transformed the young woman. Her hair bleached by the Crâne's destruction, the Red Lioness picked up Llyr's sword, which Darkness had changed into a Carnage Blade. Since then her battle against Acheron has never ceased.



THE ARCHERS OF ALAHAN

The archers of Alahan have a fairly low value (in A.P.) that lets them form imposing Units. The number of projectiles then makes the difference and these archers become a true nightmare for fighters with low resilience. When faced with slow opponents, such as dwarves or the Living-dead, it is, however, suggested to use the **archers of Icquor** profile. They may have a higher cost but their bows have a better Strength (STR 4) and range (25-45-65) and, when fighting slow enemies, they can take full advantage of their capacity to fire twice per round when their target is within long or medium range.

CAVALRY

The **mounted knights of the Lion** count among the kingdom's most formidable fighters, but they are also the trickiest ones to play. A bad positioning or an ill-timed manoeuvre can considerably hinder their efficiency. In order to profit from the "Brutish charge" ability and the Strength of their lances (STR 15), they must charge their opponent. Furthermore, the latter must be chosen with the greatest of care. These fighters are made to decimate the enemy Elite and Creatures of Large Size. Sending them to fight the rank and file is nothing but a waste of time. So beware of Scouts and flying creatures who will surely attempt to immobilise them before they can charge.



• Dragan
d'Orianthe



• Meliador
the Celestial



• Misan the
Clairvoyant

PALADINS

The **paladins of Alahan** are an asset that no Commander-in-Chief of the Lion should fail to make use of. The strength of these proud warriors lies in their sacred swords that divide their enemies' Resilience/RES in half when making Damage Rolls. Thanks to these extraordinary weapons, the paladins can finish off the most resistant of enemies with disconcerting ease. And if this isn't enough, then there is the alternative profile of the **paladins of Doriman** who are faster, stronger and especially have the "Master strike/2" ability, allowing them to shower any opponent with a hail of deadly blows.

THE ROYAL GUARD

The **Royal Guardsmen** can be considered to be an improved version of the paladins of Alahan. Endowed with better characteristics, they are in addition equipped with sacred armour that, combined with a RES of 10 and the "Hard-boiled" ability, makes them extremely hard to wound. So it is useless to waste the potential of their sacred weapons by placing combat dice in defence, these Elite warriors being made to attack. Like for the paladins, their opponents must be carefully selected: very resistant Elites, Creatures with several Wound levels, and Characters are their targets of choice.



perpetuates its mission of protecting Light. Yet this invincible order is slowly being torn apart from within by the Masters' intricate machinations and the numerous brotherhoods it is made up of.

The competitive spirit is highly developed, even among the students of the academies of magic. Sometimes these intrigues grow and in some rare cases become real conspiracies. A word pronounced badly during a speech can ruin a reputation that was built at the price of many sacrifices!

Until now all internal struggles seem to have spared the Council of the Order, which is directed with a hand of steel by the Queen of Alahan, Trys the Divine, in person. Nevertheless, this worrisome situation could quickly mean the end of the Order if it doesn't reunite to face the dangers that threaten Aarklash. Indeed, Meliador the Celestial, an independent hermetic mage and former member of the Order, has recently reported having encountered a creature in a village overtaken by the forces of Acheron that very well may be one of the original Atrocities: the Gorgon.





THE VANGUARD

The royal troops of Alahan benefit from the advantages given by the **reapers of Alahan**, who are very efficient Scouts. Equipped with firearms, they form the ideal troop to pick off enemy magicians and faithful right from the start of the game. Be careful, the short range of their pistols forces them to get very close to their targets in order to be effective. On the other hand the **falconers of Alahan** are there to prevent enemy scouts from being deployed in strategic points. When they are well positioned on the battlefield, they ensure the security of Units of marksmen and cavalry as well as that of isolated Independents.

MAGES

Magic is one of the Lions' major assets. All their magicians benefit from above average Power rates. In addition to making their Incantation Rolls easier, this gives them a substantial mana reserve and allows them to use a higher number of spells. And last but not least, magicians who master the path of hermetism don't suffer penalties on their Mana Recovery Rolls. Yet be careful, for magicians of the Lion are generally not made for hand-to-hand combat. There are nevertheless exceptions, such as the bards (Warrior-mages) who can counter-attack thanks to their excellent Defence, or also the extraordinary Baron Mirvilis d'Allmoon, Master magician and highly skilled fighter.



Regular



Marksman



Elite

THE GUARD OF ALAHAN

The Guard of Alahan is the cornerstone of the Alliance of Light (Alliance of the Ways of Light at Kaïber). Numerous, well equipped and well trained, it is at the front lines wherever Light confronts Darkness, from the Kaïber Pass in Acheron to the Ivory Dunes of Syharhalna.

The Guard is made up of warriors of Alahan, but also of individuals who wish to acquire Barhan citizenship. Indeed, for the Lion, valour is the daughter of bravery and not of blood. A heroic feat is always rewarded at its rightful value.

Though the Guard of Alahan is a united army corps, each barony of the Lion has its own contingents bearing its own colours. They all rival in talent and bravery when it comes to slaying the enemies of the Crown.

ARCHERS OF ALAHAN

Archery has been raised to an art form in its own right in the lands of the Lion, and is commonly practised as a sport by nobles or as a hunting tool by the kingdom's subjects. It very often happens that talented bowmen confront during fairs or tournaments organised by the lords and barons of Alahan.

The most gifted archers sometimes have the chance of being able to negotiate their entry in the army's ranks and are often granted a comfortable pay. This pay is not calculated according to his rank in the army, but rather according to his skill and aim. Traditionally, the officer gives the archer three arrows when it is time to be paid, and invites him to shoot at a numbered target. His pay is then equal to the sum of the three numbers hit by the arrows.

THE ROYAL GUARD

The Royal Guard is an elite corps devoted to the protection of the sovereign and the dignitaries of the Lion kingdom. Reaching such a prestigious rank in the military hierarchy is an honour sought after by many Lion fighters. These warriors, chosen by the king himself, are equipped with a weapon and armour blessed by the gods of Alahan. Confronting a Royal Guardsman is a risky challenge. He stands like a rock onto which blows are broken like waves on a cliff, and his sacred weapon can pierce the thickest of dwarven armour.

A superstition deeply rooted in the warriors' minds claims that a Royal Guardsman must never show his face when he is ready for battle. If he does, then Arakin, the god of war, no longer protects him...



We are the sentinels of the skies!



The army of Alahan is the pillar of the Alliance of Light.



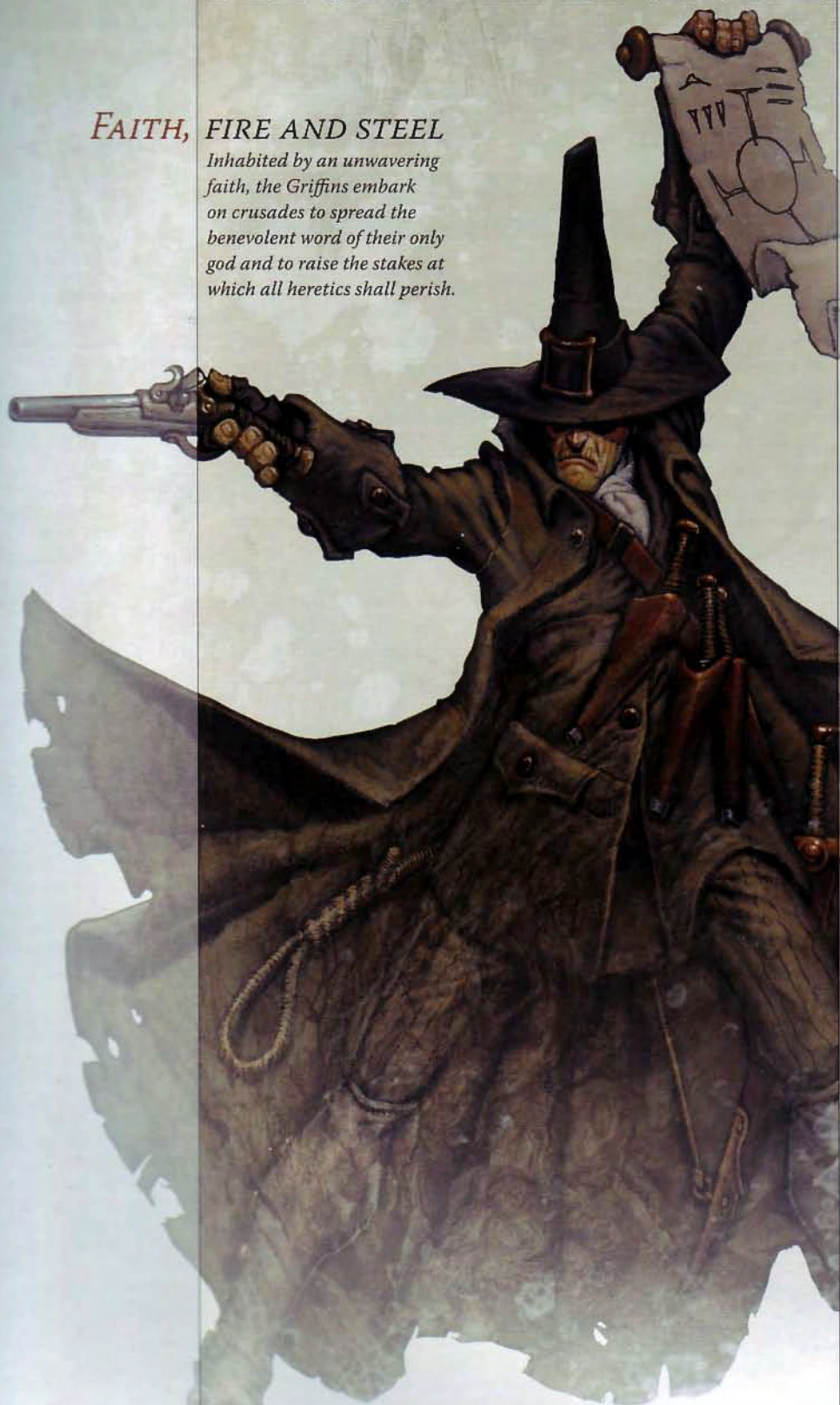
GRIFFINS
OF AKKYLANNIE

THE GRIFFINS

OF AKKYLANNIE

FAITH, FIRE AND STEEL

Inhabited by an unwavering faith, the Griffins embark on crusades to spread the benevolent word of their only god and to raise the stakes at which all heretics shall perish.



ARMY

While the Kingdom of Alahan began to enlighten Aarklash with its virtue and its power, a noble lord of Laverne had a revelation. Arcavius had a vision of Merin, the one and fiery god. After having given up his title, his fiefdom and his weapons, he left on a mission and his new religion attracted an incredible number of followers. They soon founded an empire: Akkylannie. Soon afterward, Arcavius left again to journey all over Aarklash to preach the one god's word. He never returned.

Merin's disciples multiplied and form a hard-working people united by their faith. Alas, Arcavius's dream is dying. The coming of the Age of Darkness has covered the continent with a dark veil. The warriors of the Griffin have gone on a crusade to far-away lands in the east to find their prophet's tomb and battle the enemies of the one truth.

In the eyes of the other peoples, the disciples of the Griffin Empire are often seen as religious fanatics willing to mercilessly sacrifice everything that doesn't fit their ideals on the altar of an intransigent god. This exaggerated vision serves the Griffins' interests, be they justified or necessary. Only those who have something to feel guilty about must fear Merin's purifying flames!

EMBLEM

Griffin

CAPITAL

Arcavia

ALIGNMENT

The Ways of Light

ALLIANCES

Lions of Alahan, dwarves of Tir-Nà-Bor and Cynwäll elves

CULT

Merin, the only god

MAGICIANS' PRIMARY ELEMENT

Fire

• HISTORY •

The nobleman Arcavius de Sabran, a tactician and lord of Alahan, one day had the vision of a unique god, father of Creation and of all living beings: Merin. The fiery god revealed to him that he was returning among humans to lead them back onto the right path. Temptation had led them to worship false gods!

Arcavius de Sabran left on a mission accompanied by his most loyal servants. His charisma, his just words and his great forgiveness quickly attracted the population's sympathy. Within a short time this new religion had replaced the old gods of Alahan in the hearts of hundreds of individuals of all social classes.

So the partisans of the unique god departed eastward towards a domain that no sovereign had ever claimed: Akhylahn. After having laid the foundations of the Empire of Akkylannie, Arcavius again left on a crusade, this time to convert the rest of the continent.

He never returned.

The young army of the Griffin saw its first battle at Kai-ber where the forces of Light fought to contain the hordes of Acheron. Meanwhile, an alchemist-monk named Dirz abandoned Merin when he discovered that science could vanquish death.

Everything changed in Akkylannie: the small imperial army being unable to fight on two fronts, the responsibility of turning the situation around was given to the See of Internal Affairs... the future Inquisition.

A wave of religious folly followed the Era of Radiance as the Inquisition burned everything in its path while hunting down the heretics of Dirz. Tolerance gave way to fanaticism, abundance to terror, and compassion to redemption. The institutions of Akkylannie knew a far-reaching upheaval.

The time of burnings at the stake lasts to this day, over three hundred years later, and it doesn't seem to be reaching an end. It is time for the children of Merin to take up arms to defend their Church, their homeland and their future!



• GEOGRAPHY •

Life could be idyllic in Akkylannie if the unpredictable volcanoes of Akhylahn wouldn't threaten to awaken at any moment. Past eruptions and an oceanic climate have created fertile lands and forests full of game that are favourable for the rapid evolution of the One Truth's disciples. The forests and lakes are the pride of the empire's citizens. The most affluent among them have country houses in the western forests where hot springs surface. In the east, the cities in the surroundings of Luonercus live off fishing and mining. Akkylannie is a land blessed by the unique god!

• ALPHABET •

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
Λ	Ξ	ϸ	Ϲ	Ϻ	ϻ	ϼ	Ͻ	Ͽ	Ͼ	Ͽ	Ͼ	Ͽ
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
Π	Ϡ	ϡ	Ϣ	ϣ	Ϥ	ϥ	Ϧ	ϧ	Ϩ	ϩ	Ϫ	ϫ

THE RAG'NAROK

Arcavius's descendants have great trust in their allies and have an unlimited hatred for their enemies. To them, the art of politics is only a stratagem to be used when time is short or when there are no better options. For Merin will return to judge his Creation: those who worship him or repent will know Forgiveness and then Rebirth in a better world. The others will suffer the torment of his just anger for eternity. It is thus the duty of Arcavius's disciples to save their neighbour's soul, no matter the price. The end of the world is nigh and the future of Creation depends on the victor of the battle between Good and Evil. Strengthened by this certitude, the Griffins have joined the Alliance of Light of the Lions of Alahan and the Cynwäll elves: they bring Fire, faith and steel among Darkness, burning the impure to cinders and guiding the innocent like beacons of justice.

Two crusades are the background to the Griffins' impossible quest for redemption.

The First Crusade was declared against the Alchemical Empire of Dirz. But this war, which was supposed to only last for a few months, has lasted for practically three centuries... The Griffins vastly underestimated the technomagic science of their enemies. Every ziggurat uncovered and purified at the cost of many sacrifices paves the way to two other technomantic laboratories.

Emperor Octave IX recently declared the Griffin Empire's Second Crusade after years of research on the location of Arcavius's tomb. The monks who did this research all came to the same conclusion: after having explored the ruins of Lanever in search of a mysterious sanctuary, Arcavius turned back and continued eastward towards the future land of the orcs.

The Inquisition obviously supervises the activities of the armies marching in these hostile territories, but its numbers are a lot smaller than

FERVOUR AND DISCIPLINE!

On the battlefield, the morale of the Griffin Empire's soldiers is only equalled by the steel of their armour. Discipline and Resilience, these are the characteristics that best define the armies of Akkylannie. With Discipline/DIS rates between 4 and 10, the Griffins have no trouble carrying out the most complex manoeuvres and their Commanders-in-Chief grant them a good number of additional Orders. This allows this army to benefit from considerable strategic flexibility, each Unit almost systematically being able to get two additional Orders.

THE COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

The imperial army has a wide choice of Characters to support its troops. Three of them stand out, however, and can claim the title of Commander-in-Chief. **Arkhos** and **Sered**, the two templar commanders, can take on this role. Slightly superior in hand-to-hand combat, Arkhos also has a higher Discipline than Sered. However, the latter compensates for this difference with a higher Courage and especially with his status of Zealot. More costly than these two commanders of the Temple, **Deacon Tiberius** is currently the best possible Commander-in-Chief for this army.



THE TEMPLE

Despite low Attack and Strength rates (ATT 3; STR 4), the **Griffin templars** represent an unsolvable problem for their opponents when used intelligently. First of all they must be numerous enough (at least 9 to 12) in order to benefit from a sufficient number of combat dice. For this, equipping a commander of the Temple with a "Seal of the Temple" is a most profitable investment. In this configuration their high DEF (4) and RES (9) rates, combined with the "War fury" ability, let them launch attacks that are hard to endure while limiting the losses among their own numbers.

MAGIC

The Griffins don't view magic with a favourable eye, and it does not count among their major assets. However, they can nevertheless count on destructive spells of the Element of Fire, and their Adept, Melkion the Flaming, also can use spells of Light and those of the path of hermetism. This choice allows them to make use of some of the most devastating rituals supplied with this edition of *Rag'Narok*, such as "Column of Light" and "Meteors of Fire." At the same time, their Warrior-mages compensate for this relative weakness with exceptional combat skills.

in the lands of the Empire. The relative proximity of the commanderies of the east and of the south doesn't improve things, nor does the longing for revenge that the Temple secretly nurtures against the Inquisition for having transformed sweet Akkylannie into a bloody forest of stakes.

AT THE EMPIRE'S BORDERS

The rapid development of Akkylannie, at first thanks to Arcavius's directives and then to his successors' continued efforts, gives it a most singular appearance. Akkylannie is often described as a land of contrasts.

Ever since the alchemists of Dirz's heresy, time seems to have come to a standstill in the land of the unique god. A traveller would be surprised by the stunning modernity of its buildings, which contradicts the sometimes narrow-minded mentalities and the omnipresent hegemony of the Church.

Arcavius's revelations have allowed his children to build cities that are ahead of their time, having an ingenious system that collects and centralises wastewater, heating based on steam, and even lighting in the richest quarters. Griffin architecture is in the image of its Church: the imperial buildings are imposing monoliths that, though they defy the heavens, also plunge the modest houses at

their feet into a humid and perpetual shade. They sometimes whisper the story of an orc prisoner who, on seeing the immense fortifications of the Empire's cities, perfidiously asked the templar guarding him if the walls were there to keep invaders from entering or rather the residents from leaving...

All of the power seems to lie in the hands of the Church's legates and especially in those of the cardinals of Carthag Fero, Denda Cartho and Luonercus, the great cities that stand at the borders of the Empire. Every one of these immensely rich cities is linked to Arcavia, the Griffin capital, in every possible way. Yet the great majority of the population lives in rural areas, far from the oppressive atmosphere of the cities. Therefore, excepting the large highways that link Arcavia with its cardinal sisters, the only way to get information and to communicate is during daily mass. An individual sidelined by his community for one reason or another is completely left to his own devices.

DOUBT HAS NO PLACE IN FAITH

The churches of Merin can be found everywhere in Akkylannie, from the town centres to the cliffs bordering the Ephren Sea. A church in Akkylannie, in addition to being a place of spiritual communion, is a true cultural and

social centre where every citizen can get advice, instruction and care. The style of every temple of Merin differs largely depending on the period during which it was built: the first ones used traditional masonry, others are completely devoid of any ornaments, and the most recent ones impose respect and obedience by making the burden of Merin's gaze weigh down on the visitors' shoulders...

The Age of Darkness is synonymous with paranoia and suspicion in Akkylannie. Only the priests and the dignitaries of the Griffin have the wisdom needed for the Empire to be run correctly and for the security of its population. But for this the Church's will must be respected to the dot and everyone's morality must be free of stains.

In the prelates' eyes any individual who doesn't come from their ranks is a potential heretic. Denunciation is obligatory, torture a necessity: it's only at this price that Merin's will can be carried out and that the soul of his children can be saved. For many, the simple fact of being summoned to appear before an inquisitional court is already an indelible mark of infamy. Because they don't care about the life or the dignity of those they question, the inquisitors have already broken whole families by throwing them to the lions of public rumour. When the Inquisition moves, someone must fall.



The Order of Just Punishment is the bane of the impure.

MIRÀ THE RECKLESS

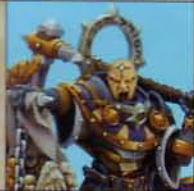
The Temple is more than just an order of warriors: it is a family in which everyone watches over his neighbour, be he his brother-in-arms or his brother by blood. Mirà the Reckless, the adopted daughter of Commander Thurbard, has broken the order's rules by wearing the Temple's armour to go and join her brother Arkhos in Bran-Ô-Kor. When she ran off, the rash young woman took along Hauteclair, a sword whose legendary power and true origins she is unaware of. Now nothing can stop Mirà from reaching her destiny.

Yet she doesn't know the secret enshrouding her birth. Indeed, the Temple's masters awaited her arrival like a prophecy: she is the child of the Phoenix, the one who will free Akkylannie from the yoke of Darkness.



REGULARS

Griffin conscripts are the toughest among the Regular troops (RES 8), all armies included. Thanks to this, they can defend an objective without giving up an inch of ground even when facing much better fighters who will have a very hard time wounding them. Their alternative equipment allows them to be made more belligerent by increasing their INI, ATT and STR. These fighters can then choose to attack all out while counting on their armour and shields to protect them from the enemy's blows. In the meantime the **Griffin fusiliers** take care of spraying their enemies with deadly projectiles. Equipped with long rifles with exceptional range (25-50-75) and Strength (STR 6), they can annihilate entire Units. Take care, however, not to expose them too much since their low Resilience (RES 2) leaves them only a slim chance of survival when inflicted with a Damage Roll. So beware of scouts. It is best to place a defensive line of fighters behind the fusiliers at deployment.



• Sered, templar commander •



• Darkness hunter •



• The Priestess of Steel •

THE FIRST CRUSADE

At first bloody and without mercy, the war raging in the Syharhalna has slowly turned into a conflict of wearing down and guerrilla tactics, each side unable to invest the funds needed for ceaseless battles of titanic proportions. Such large-scale encounters do still happen of course, but only after months and months of preparation and espionage... Between each of these battles the Griffins are used as guinea pigs for the latest inventions created by the Syhars' twisted minds.

THE SECOND CRUSADE

The Second Crusade costs the Empire's treasury a lot less gold than the first one. However, the number of soldiers that go to Bran-Ô-Kor is almost just as big... The Second Crusade's nervous centre is the commandery of the temple of the east, placed under Commander Arkhos's responsibility.

Thus, hundreds of warriors coming from Akkylannie, Alahan, Lanever and sometimes elsewhere leave every month towards the east to try and annihilate the alchemical legions hidden in the desert, or to confront the hordes of orcs who are furious at seeing strangers invading their lands. Some of these valiant crusaders have already fought for the Alliance of Light at Kaïber or in the Forest of Webs.



THE INQUISITION

Not only are the **Griffin inquisitors** magicians, but they are above all warriors. Their Defence (DEF 5) makes them more than formidable thanks to their ability to counter-attack. They can even be sent into battle without any spells simply to give support to other magicians when initiating rituals. They are then the most reliable of bodyguards. They are usually accompanied by an escort of **templars of the Inquisition**. Albeit more resilient (RES 11) than their templar brothers, these fighters also suffer from a slight deficit in Strength. This makes them efficient especially when facing strong and skilled enemies with low resilience. **Darkness hunters** are fighters trained to track down the councils of magicians. Their two shots per round and their bonus against individuals endowed with Power don't give a moment's respite to enemy magicians. As for the **Griffin exorcists**, they can be used instead of inquisitors to lead the templars of the Inquisition and weaken enemy magicians and faithful thanks to their special capacity.





THE PRAETORIANS

The **Praetorian Guard** is the imperial army of Akkylannie's elite corps par excellence. Its members' combat characteristics know no weaknesses and their capacity to deal master strikes ("Master strike/2" ability), combined with the "Sacred weapon" rule, leaves their opponents very slim chances of survival. Because they can be chosen to be leaders of any Unit at a lower cost (5 A.P. instead of 10), these formidable fighters are destined to reinforce the potential of other regiments instead of forming Units on their own.

FAITH

The Akkylannians are the soldiers of an only god. The faithful of Merin benefit from bonuses when they call miracles, and they can count on the support of many fighters endowed with the «Loyal/X» ability. Their Warrior-monks, the **magistrates of the Griffin**, are perfect Leaders for Units of fusiliers, or better yet, of **Griffin thallions**. Being endowed with the "Scout" ability themselves, the magistrates can accompany these formidable warriors behind the enemy lines and profit from their "Loyal/X" ability.



Regular

GRIFFIN CONSCRIPTS

Serving Merin and the Empire is a duty that Akkylannians learn at a tender age. On reaching adulthood every man owes five years of military service to his homeland. He then learns to obey orders, to use a weapon and to manoeuvre while wearing armour. Only after this period does he become a citizen.

The Akkylannian army is a professional army, but the Age of Darkness demands ever more fighters. The war the Griffin Empire is waging is taking place outside as well as within its borders. The imperial authorities therefore use conscription more and more often, and numerous are those who take up their weapons again to defend Light and to punish heretics in the four corners of Aarklash.



Marksman

GRIFFIN FUSILIERS

The Cynwäll elves gave gunpowder to the Griffins during the first Battle of Kaiber. Time has passed and Merin's disciples have learned to master this unequalled instrument of domination.

The fusiliers mete out death from an impressive distance thanks to the long rifles that have earned them their reputation all over Aarklash. Some regiments of fusiliers are feared for their mechanical rigour and the deadly precision of their marksmen. The Akkylannian generals use them very often, usually by deploying them at the front lines to slay the enemy before he can get near. Others place them at a height where their weapon's range allows them to eliminate the enemy chiefs and to stop the retreat of those fleeing.



Elite

GRIFFIN TEMPLARS

Wise warriors, intrepid conquerors, treasurers of Akkylannie, guardians of the pilgrims... All these are characterisations that perfectly suit the templars. From the commanderies built at the continent's four cardinal points, they watch over the Griffin Empire's interests and fight in the name of Merin every day.

Though their loyalty is unwavering, the templars raise many questions in their wake. They have been cultivating a taste for secrecy and for the occult ever since the clergy has taken the power in Akkylannie. The Inquisition's spies cannot manage to determine if they are protecting a forbidden knowledge or if they are secretly conspiring against the Pope's authority. Is it an aura of saintliness or of damnation that emanates from the Temple and its valiant defenders?



Peace to your ashes.



Swift as the wind, the thallion riders only leave corpses in their path.

THE CYNWÄLL

ELVES

THE WISE WARRIORS

Heirs of the Ancients and allies of the dragons, the Cynwäll elves join the final battle to save the continent that had forgotten them.

ARMY

In the elven tongue "Cynwäll" means "exiled." A long time ago the Cynwälls chose to withdraw to the high mountains of Lanever to devote themselves to the quest of Noesis, the harmony of body and soul. They discovered ancient secrets hidden in ruined temples, and made pacts with the dragons perched on the peaks of the Behemoth Mountains.

With the passing of time, Aarklash ended up forgetting these exiles... and then the Rag'narok broke out. Darkness is spreading its evil influence over Aarklash. The continent is prey to the flames of war.

After centuries of contemplation and preparation, the Cynwälls have broken their tradition of neutrality in order to engage in the final battle on the side of Light. Ever since their origins they are aware that the future of Creation as a whole depends on the outcome of the Rag'narok.

The army of the Dragons isn't numerous, yet its strength is considerable. It is guided by the wisdom of the ancients, borne by the wings of the dragons, and supported by mechanical warriors from a forgotten age.

EMBLEM

Dragon

CAPITAL

Laroq

ALIGNMENT

The Ways of Light

ALLIANCES

Lions of Alahan and
Griffins of Akkylannie

CULT

Noesis

MAGICIANS' PRIMARY ELEMENT

Light

HISTORY

The history of the Cynwäll elves begins during the Serrëlis, the fratricidal war that opposed Elhan and Silmaè for the conquest of the throne of Quithayran. In effect, these twin brothers were born of the union of an elf and a faye, both coming from the royal family and of families very close to the still unique throne of this people.

But though Elhan and Silmaè were twins by their blood, they weren't so by the gifts they had received, and their differences grew during their whole childhood.

When the time came to enthrone a new king, Elhan was so close to the mortals that the elves of Aarklash could only envision this wise and tolerant prince leading them. The fays preferred the fiery Silmaè without a shadow of doubt. Their respective partisans' schemes quickly degenerated into armed conflict.

No one heeded the two princes' wish for conciliation. After having secretly met with his brother, Elhan stepped

down and condemned himself to Cynwë – exile. His most faithful servants followed him when he left Quithayran to go and settle the forest of Allyvie, the domain of the dragons of Lanever.

The elves of Elhan slowly prospered, hidden from other peoples' eyes by their solitary mores and their introspection. Centuries went by...

The Cynwälls awakened during the battle of Kaïber. Aarklash then discovered that the exiled elves had harnessed the power of unimaginable artifacts and had made pacts of reason with the dragons of the peaks.

The Age of Darkness has forced the Cynwälls to end their tradition of neutrality and to intervene to save Aarklash. Every one of their appearances on a battlefield brings the warriors of Light valour and courage.

Yet the Dragons seem troubled by a shameful fate. Little by little the Cynwälls distance themselves from the world that they have sworn to protect for reasons only known to them. Their gaze darkens without their unfailing allies the Lions and the Griffins being able to comfort them at all.



GEOGRAPHY

Though they avoid destroying the environment, the Cynwälls didn't refrain from clearing hundreds of acres of the forest of Allyvie in order to build splendid cities there. They even followed the dwarves' example and dug into the earth and the mountains to establish military outposts and small agricultural colonies.

The city of Wyde is home to a prestigious university that rivals that of Kallienne in Alahan.

The Cynwäll capital is a gloomy fortress swept by the elements. A people that preceded the Cynwälls in the lands of Lanever built Laroq in forgotten times... and it outlasted its original inhabitants. Laroq's population is mainly military and very few travellers spend time in its austere taverns.

ALPHABET

p	t	c	b	d	g	f	v	s	z	ch	j	g	l
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r	m	n	gn	x	ng	i	é	è	a	â	ô	o	
ou	u	æ	eu	e	in	un	an	on	y	u	w		
ɥ	ʏ	œ	ø	ɔ	ɛ	æ	ɑ	ɔ̃	ʝ	ɣ	w		

THE RAG'NAROK

The Dragons of Lanever form the third pillar of the Alliance of Light, with the Lions of Alahan and the Griffins of Akkylannie. A sincere brotherhood unites these three peoples in times of peace and in war, from Cadwallon to Kaïber, from Wyde to Bran-Ô-Kor. Military and commercial cooperation is frequent between Kallienne, Arca-via and Laroq. Mixed regiments made up of soldiers of the three armies of Light continuously wage battles in the four corners of Aarklash. Despite all this, every one of these peoples wishes to preserve its identity and the rivalry that opposes their intelligence services has become legendary...

In memory of Elhan, the supreme chief of the whole Cynwäll nation is called the Guide. Esneh was one of

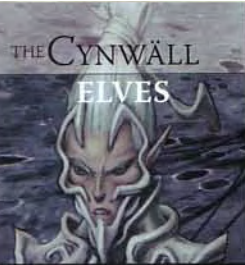
the greatest Dragon knights and then one of the greatest equanimes before he was elected the fourth Guide of the Cynwälls by the whole of his peers.

Esneh must find a solution to the cruel dilemma with which his nation is confronted. He knows that secrets sleep deep within the temples of Lanever that, if revealed, would mark a decisive turning point in the war against the Obscure Principle. The most insignificant of these secrets was once given to the Griffins for them to be able to protect themselves and their brothers. They transformed this defensive tool into an instrument of domination... May a wise man give such tools of destruction to a continent that is prey to madness?

The Cynwäll population is rather small, though no one else but them can estimate its exact size. It is gathered in the Lanever Mountains and in the

LIGHT AND CREATION

Unlike armies such as those of the goblins of No-Dan-Kar or the living-dead of Acheron, which get their strength in numbers, the Cynwäll armies count on a small number of well-equipped and very disciplined troops. In combat it isn't the kind of brute force characteristic of the orcs or the Wolfen that makes them so formidable, but rather their versatility and their exceptional capacity to adapt to any kind of opponent. Indeed, the "Concentration/X" ability allows them to increase one or another of their characteristics at the moment that they need it most. Like this their potential is always concentrated in such a way as to serve their army's strategy in the best possible way. Furthermore, this advantage is strengthened by their speed (MOV 12.5), which is higher than that of most other humanoid fighters. This lets them take most of their enemies by surprise in order to impose their strategy. And finally, the elven warriors are supported in battle by combat automatons whose presence is a major tactical asset for their Commanders-in-Chief.



COMMANDERS-
IN-CHIEF

As a general rule the Cynwälls are endowed with Discipline/DIS that is slightly above average, yet without reaching that of more rigorous armies of Aarklash, such as the legions of the Empire of the Griffin or of the dwarves of Tir-Nä-Bor. However, their commanders have a particular advantage given to them by the Luminous Stranglehold rule. Thanks to this rule, any Cynwäll Commander-in-Chief can use gems of Light to acquire additional Orders for his Units of Constructs. Thus this possibility protects Cynwäll armies from unlucky Tactical Rolls that would normally ruin their Commander-in-Chief's strategy by leaving Units deprived of Orders. So it is recommended to always equip the Commander-in-Chief with an Orb of Clarity (which gives him the gems needed to use this faculty), even if he is a magician, so that he wouldn't have to draw from his own mana reserve thanks to the gems generated by this artefact. With this in mind, the heliast **Galhyan**, an adept of Light with the "Leadership/15" ability, is an excellent choice for Commander-in-Chief. Another good choice is **Syd de Kaiber**, who, though he isn't a magician, has the advantage of being able to command any Allied troops there may be in his army.

surrounding forests, around fortified constructions left by their enigmatic predecessors. Though they descend from the Daikinee elves, the Cynwälls aren't affected by the curse cast upon their cousins by Scaëlin. The men and women of their people have more of less the same life expectancy. Unfortunately their birth rate is barely high enough to ensure the renewal and the growth of their nation. In absolute terms the union with an individual of another people isn't taboo and half-elves are generally considered on an equal footing. Yet the Cynwälls remain desperately isolated...

The Cynwälls are doubtlessly one of the most enigmatic peoples of Aarklash. Their culture, which is founded on philosophy and spiritual fulfilment, makes them balanced and, alas, sometimes sad individuals. It takes a lot to shake their apparent serenity. As long as he has time to meditate before a battle, a Cynwäll can show resolve in any situation and no demon of the abyss can make him retreat.

The Cynwälls honour no god. Some of them, however, seek to reach Noesis, the Truth, a kind of apotheosis that can only be reached through total mastery of one's feelings and the communion with the forces of the universe. The temples that Elhan and his followers discovered when they arrived in Lanever are now used by the equanimous brothers who teach

the precepts of Noesis to those who wish to learn, even if they come from another people.

Noesis is an ideal that few individuals manage to reach: those who do are known as noesäll or noesians.

It is claimed that some noesians can only die when they wish to do so, like faves of their old home of Quithayran.

The first noesian was Akaris, a simple servant of Elhan's. At the latter's request the servant became a preceptor and initiated his former master to the bliss of Noesis. Unfortunately, Akaris died brutally before he able to write down the last chapters of his teachings. Elhan, who had become a noesian himself, continued his reign over Lanever for a few more years before disappearing mysteriously just before the decline of Scaëlin, his brother Silmaë's daughter. Not much later the first Akkyshan elves appeared...

Tradition demands that every individual aspiring to reach Noesis write the missing chapters of Akaris's teachings on his own and in the greatest of secrecy. Those who manage to elevate their soul in this way destroy their work, while the others must continue theirs... or start all over again. The equanimous brotherhoods thus regroup communities of individuals who counterbalance their spiritual quest's solitude through the physical proximity of their kind.

Someone who doesn't know the Cynwälls could expect them to lead a pacifistic policy based on diplomacy and reason rather than on the use of force. The elves of Lanever do, after all, not only have the dragons but also fabulous artefacts that are able to reverse the course of a battle. In these conditions they would be bargaining in a position of strength in all negotiations...

Yet this isn't so.

The Dragons have been neutral for a very long time, leading an existence at the edges of neighbouring civilisations. When the integrity of their nation was threatened, the aggressor was quickly and definitely neutralised. The emergence of the peoples of Darkness has made them come out of their contemplative lethargy.

The Battle of Kaiber marked the return of the Dragons, whose interventions have been more and more frequent and brutal ever since. Could this be due to one of the multiple assassination attempts on their Guide fomented by the sisterhood of Ashinän? No matter... Seeing the Cynwälls in combat can make shivers run down one's spine. Though the Dragons know to show compassion in normal times, this is not the case after their ritual meditation that precedes every one of their battles.

The warriors of Lanever carry out their orders with the exact



At the lead of a Unit of selsÿms, Syd and Nelphaëll are getting ready for battle.

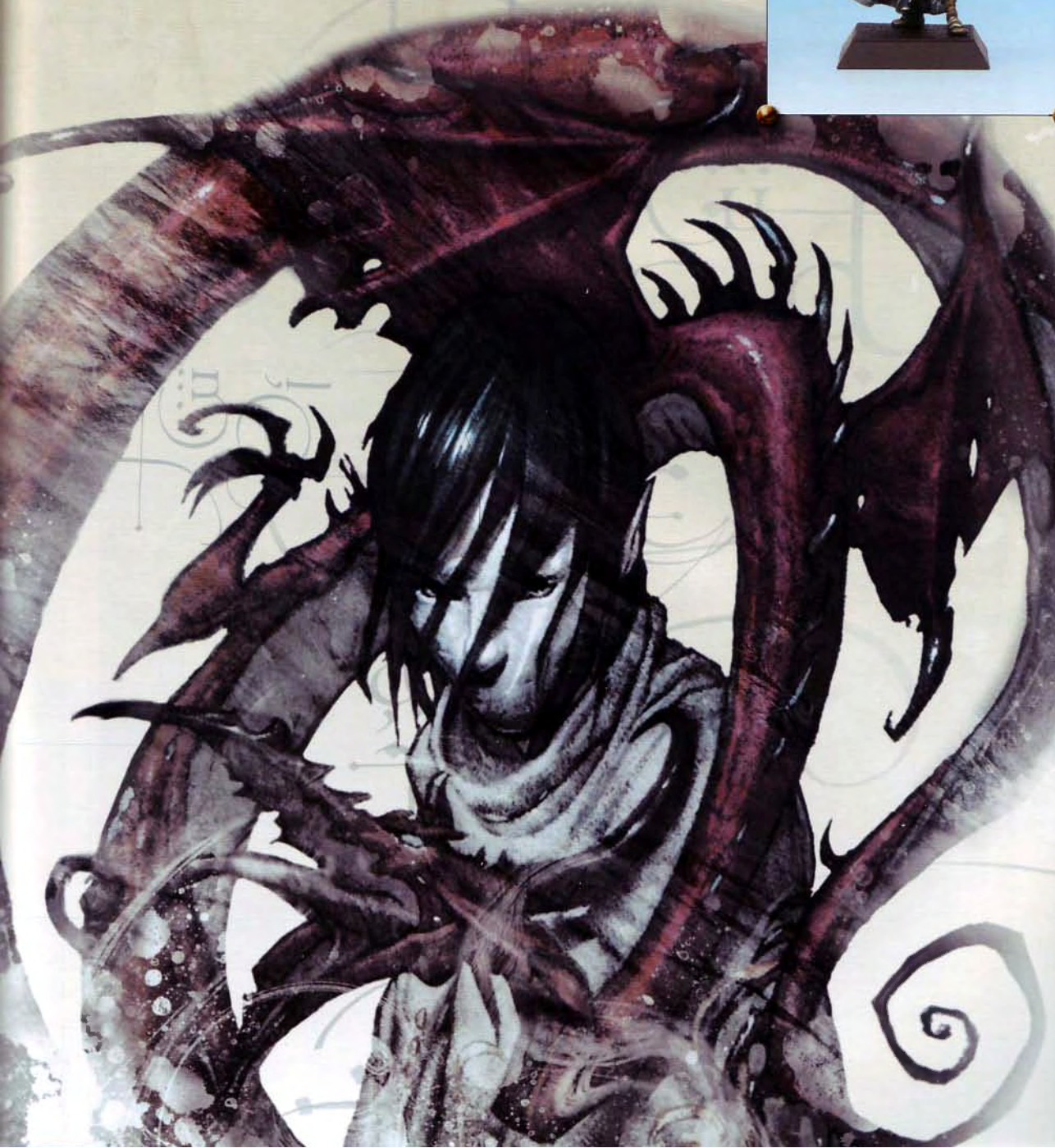
SYD DE KAÏBER

Syd de Kaïber has hunted down the enemies of the Cynwäll people in the four corners of Aarklash. These journeys have led him to the distant shores of unknown and inhospitable lands. Syd de Kaïber has become a part of legend by leading the Lions of Alahan and the Griffins of Akkylannie to victory on the ramparts of Fort Kaïber. This elven hero was triumphant in this trial by saving thousands of fighters from a fate worse than death: that of necro-animation. He is now the most respected Cynwäll of Aarklash.



REGULAR AND VETERAN SELSÛMS

SelsÛms make up the vast majority of the Cynwäll armies' fighters. Thanks to their slightly higher characteristics than their equals of the other armies, they can be used in a very versatile way, either to face opponents of lesser value or to block enemies much stronger than they are. Yet they have a rather belligerent vocation since their "Concentration/I" ability applies to their Initiative/INI and to their Attack/ATT. An increase of their Initiative can be also be used for defensive purposes by forcing the opponent to place combat dice in defence. SelsÛm veterans are, on the other hand, more specialised in fighting Elite opponents or Creatures. Depending on the equipment given to them, their Initiative is increased (INI 4 or 5 including the concentration bonus), which gives them the power to attack first in most situations. Thus, by using the "Feint" ability (which allows them to take combat dice away from their opponent), these Veterans can prevent them from attacking as well as from defending themselves. When used in combination with tactics that radically favour one aspect of combat (such as Brutality), this strategy can prove to be extremely devastating.



ELVES



• Galhyan •

• Asadar Cynwäll •

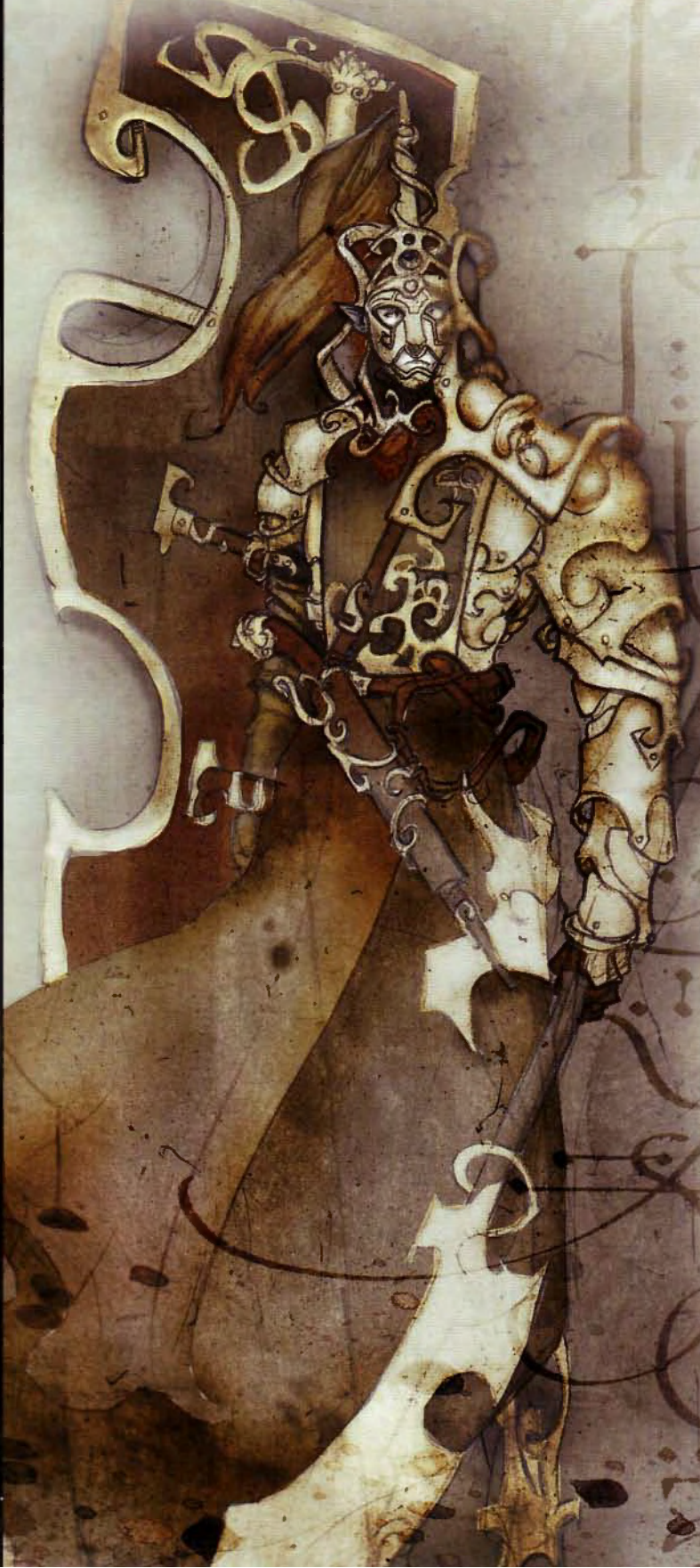
• Akhamiäl •

AZURE HUNTERS

Azure hunters are outstanding marksmen (AIM 4) as well as skilled fighters. With the «Sharp shooter» ability they automatically hit their targets at short range and are able to strike with great precision at a distance up to 40 cm. Thanks to this and their good mobility, they are perfect for harassing the flanks and rear guard of enemy Units when the frays have been engaged. The strength of their helianthic crossbows (STR 6) then becomes extremely deadly, even when facing troops endowed with good resilience.

VARSŪMS

Varsŷms are an indispensable choice for any Cynwäll army, and are a true nightmare for their opponents. Being Scouts with a Movement/MOV of 12.5, they can be deployed with their enemies within charging distance while remaining out of their opponents' range. Thus, with good combat characteristics (STR 8), of which Attack/ATT can be increased using their "Concentration/2" ability, these fighters are able to carry out powerful master strikes (STR 14 and higher). A small group of varsŷms can thus eliminate any isolated Character or Creature, or annihilate enemy detachments, right in the first round of the game.



determination needed and never fail. They remain stony-faced no matter what happens, should nightmarish creatures rise before them or should they proceed to kill the prisoners who refuse to answer their questions one after the other. A living tradition among the Cynwäll generals wants them to give their opponents a chance to surrender right before the battle. Those who have already confronted them know that such an opportunity will not be given to them again after the first signal to charge and this until the complete destruction of one or the other army. In these conditions it's better to think twice before attacking the Cynwälls...

In the image of Light, the Cynwäll armies bring hope and salvation, but at the painful price of redemption and intransigence.



CONSTRUCT WARRIORS

The **Constructs** that support the Cynwäll troops in combat present a major advantage: they do not feel fear. These mechanical auxiliary troops therefore represent an inevitable choice when facing fear-inspiring fighters. In addition to this asset, they are also endowed with most respectable combat potential. Their combat characteristics (ATT, STR, DEF, RES) are far above average and allow them to make the most of their "Ambidextrous" and "Sequence" abilities. The latter is especially useful for battering a powerful opponent with an avalanche of blows.

SYNCHRONĪMES

SynchronĪmes count among the most unpredictable of Cynwälls. Their Concentration point can be assigned to their combat characteristics (INI 4, ATT 4, DEF 4). These elves can thus become particularly dangerous when defending themselves, because with a DEF of 5 they can allow themselves to attempt counter-attacks against most opponents. And when they aren't fighting, their "Concentration/1" ability lets them either support a fighter in their camp or get an additional gem of Light. And last but not least, the "Ellipse" spell, which lets them increase their Movement/MOV up to a rate of 20 (in cm), permits them to intervene at any time wherever they are needed most.



Regular



Marksman



Special

SELSŸMS

The **selsŸms**, meaning "warriors" in their tongue, are the most numerous among the Cynwäll fighters. With the exception of very specialised army corps, they form the base from which all warriors of the Dragon emerge. Each soldier of Lanever, from the most humble to the most noble, was once a selsŸm among so many others before choosing his speciality. Some selsŸms choose to remain in the main body of their army and become veterans to who the young recruits entrust their lives.

The Cynwäll people is neither numerous nor prosperous, so each and every life is precious. The selsŸms represent Lanever's first line of defence, but also its future. The generals of the Dragon always make sure that the selsŸms at the front lines get rapid and efficient support on behalf of their army's other units.

AZURE HUNTERS

To manage to concentrate and to draw from one's hidden resources to carry out feats is an art among the warriors of the Dragon. Be it agility, coordination, or a supernatural talent, the azure hunters have the reputation of never trembling when they fire. The precision they show is breathtaking and is often enough to intimidate opponents who are a bit too sure of their armour or their reflexes.

The azure hunters' crossbows are helianthic weapons, meaning that they were forged and assembled by heliasts, the Cynwälls who hold the secrets of the magic of Light and of matter. By calling on its power, a heliast can improve the precision and strength of these weapons, which are as beautiful as they are dreadful.

CYNWÄLL CONSTRUCT WARRIORS

When they came to settle Lanever, the Cynwälls explored the sacred ruins of temples that dotted the sanctuary of the mountains. They managed to decipher the ancient enigmas engraved in their walls and discovered the remains of a forgotten and incredibly powerful civilisation in the secret halls that they uncovered. These secular artefacts were protected by mechanical warriors: constructs. Because they were pure at heart, the Cynwälls had no reason to fear their blades.

The Cynwälls have managed to replicate and control these guardians of steel. Yet they are still far from having pierced the greatest secret of the first constructs: the gift of a soul that gives them their own intelligence and an absolute autonomy.



The blood of dragons flows in Syd de Kaiber's veins.



The Cynwäll armies are like waves of Light ready to submerge Darkness.

THE LIMBO OF ACHERON

THE SINISTER

MASTERS

of Acheron have conquered Darkness and eternity. Invested with infernal powers, they are leading their living-dead armies to the conquest of Aarklash.



ARMY

More than three centuries ago the barony of Acheron was subservient to the Crown of Alahan. Under the influence of the Order of the Ram, an evil sect, its illustrious lords let themselves be corrupted little by little by their desire for immortality, power and debauchery. When the Lion's authorities became aware of the danger it was already too late: the sinister necromancers of the Ram had opened a gigantic Portal of Darkness leading straight to the Netherworld. Night took hold of the tormented sky of Acheron and legions of living-dead poured out of hell onto the now accursed barony. No less than three armies and the sacrifice of thousands of warriors were needed to prevent the invasion of Aarklash by the undead hordes. The dreadful battle had only begun.

The forces of Light can't prevent the Obscure of Acheron from sowing corruption, terror and decadence all over the continent. A single necromancer can raise a battalion of living-dead fighters; a single fiend of the infernal forces can cause an empire to fall into the grasp of eternal darkness. No one can escape death!

EMBLEM

Ram

CAPITAL

The city of Acheron

ALIGNMENT

The Meanders of Darkness

ALLIANCES

Alchemists of Dirz,
Dwarves of Mid-Nor,
Drune Kelts and Akkyshan elves

CULT

Saläüel, the Lord of the Abyss

MAGICIANS' PRIMARY ELEMENT

Darkness

• HISTORY •

The most ancient writs let the scene of one of Aarklash's greatest tragedies be imagined. These venerable works first describe a Golden Age. Light and Darkness are so rare that they are a part of mythology.

They then describe the barony of Acheron. The only way to reach it is by the narrow Kaïber Pass, south of the Behemoth mountain chain. Powerful lords rule its fertile lands. The greatest among them is Feyd Mantis, the "Divine Baron," known for his nefarious celebrations. The Magic Academy of Acheron, directed by Kaïan Draghost, is the most reputed of the continent.

And finally, these priceless books describe an event. Feyd Mantis was never able to follow what has always been his vocation: priesthood. He wouldn't be able to abandon the pleasures of the flesh and the mind! As for Kaïan Draghost, he is the ambassador of the Chroniclers in Alahan. But this isn't enough for him: he doesn't want to be the

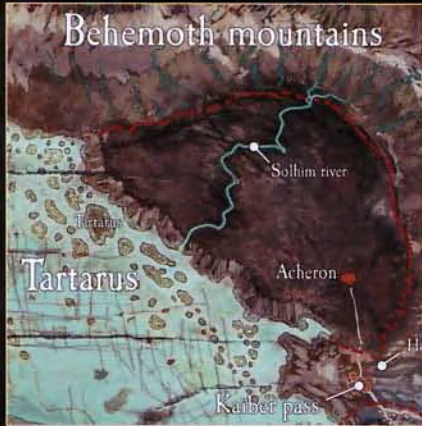
instrument of power; he wants to be the power. Ambition gnaws at the magician's heart.

Thus are born the Black Togas, a secret order of magicians and nobles. In them Kaïan Draghost sees a way to make his power grow even more, and Feyd Mantis uses them to find happiness. They rediscover the magic of Darkness and, in their dreams of immortality, begin raising the dead.

The consequences are inevitable. The forces of Light then prepare to invade the rebel barony, but it is too late. The armies of the Principles meet in the Kaïber Pass and engage in a dreadful battle in which three gods of Darkness, Salaüel, Dhalilia and Belial, intervene thanks to the will of Mantis and the power of Draghost.

Centuries have passed. In these grim nights Acheron's power doesn't stop growing. The dignitaries of the Ram are almost all liches, immortal lords commanding countless legions of the damned.

The accursed barony has raised the banner of Darkness.



• GEOGRAPHY •

Isolated, surrounded and locked in by the peaks of the Behemoth mountains, the barony of Acheron displays a horrifying landscape to those brave enough to look at it. Grass has been replaced by a carpet of ash. The skeletal trees are gallows for those who have dared to displease the masters of the accursed barony. The rivers and the blackened forests teem with carnivorous beings. Acheron is a demonstration of what can be expected should nature let Darkness take possession of it.

• ALPHABET •

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THE RAG'NAROK

The masters of the accursed barony maintain long-distance relations with other peoples. Few individuals are able to bear their physical appearance and the way in which they subjugate their slaves even after death. Acheron's only regular diplomatic relations are with the Akkyshan elves and the alchemists of Dirz. The Drones and the dwarves of Mid-Nor also have contact with Acheron, but in a more periodic manner.

Acheron's principal opponent is the Alliance of Light made up of their enemy brothers of Alahan, the Griffins of Akkylannie and the Cynwälls of Lanever. Fort Kaïber stands like an insurmountable obstacle between Acheron and the conquest of Aarklash. With or without their allies' support, facing the forces of Acheron on a battlefield is often equal to confronting one's own nightmares.

The dead legions relentlessly flood over their adversaries like tides of

rotting flesh and bones enslaved by the will of the Obscure. Not to mention the summoners who call on the might of demons to subjugate the ranks of Light.

There is, however, an evil a lot worse than the one that haunts the battlefields. Acheron sometimes sows the seeds of Darkness using brotherhoods that conceal dreadful sects or corrupt benefactors, or by submitting the innocent to temptation. Every mortal has his weakness, his price, his secrets... and soon will come the time to reap the harvest.

THE FIEFDOM OF DARKNESS

The accursed barony is plunged into a supernatural night that only turns into a stormy sky when Lahn is at his zenith. Vegetation is sparse and deformed, when it isn't dangerous for man. The trees, crystallised by Darkness or scorched by the earth's polluted fluids, raise their branches to the devastated sky as if making a final plea. The green forests of Acheron have given way to rows of stakes.

THE PRINCES OF DARKNESS

The army of the limbo of Acheron is as dreadful as it is numerous. Swarms of flying creatures spewed forth by the Abyss follow the legions of skeletons. Leading them are terrifying champions: Crane warriors, diabolical priests and necromancers with impious powers. This horde from the beyond has many advantages: a huge choice of fighters, a generally high FEAR, as well as champions who have all the characteristics of Death incarnate. Their disadvantages, though they are undeniable (weak INT, DEF and DIS), can be compensated by wise coordination between the various Units.

COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

Most of Acheron's forces are made up of Living-dead (DIS 0). Their strategy depends on the use of the Dark Stranglehold combined with magic. The presence of reliable Commanders-in-Chief and magicians is therefore capital to ensure victory. The Crane warriors Alderan and Melmoth are excellent fighters and ensure the leadership of the front lines. Not far behind them can be placed the Coryphaeus, the Gorgon or Asura de Sarlath, powerful magicians who are as skilled in attack as in support. And finally, the Almighty Crane is a true nightmare for the opponent: an invincible warrior, he can become a magician thanks to Twilight, his blade of carnage.

THE OBSCURE HOUSES

Acheron is not inhabited only by the living-dead. On the contrary, they make up a minority among the population of serfs who are completely subjugated to the wishes of the lords of the Houses. The undead make excellent servants, but the living are a lot more productive and much more entertaining! The necromancers sometimes leave their palaces of gold and ivory to choose a new slave or a new apprentice, which is pretty much the same thing. These occasions are the only hope for a better life for the unlucky inhabitants of Acheron, for the only two laws that rule there are those of the strongest and of obedience to Darkness.

The barony of Acheron was once the domain of numerous aristocratic families that were grouped together into Houses. These certainly had the worst reputation among the protectors of Light: their isolation had doubtlessly contributed to the extreme intransigence of these nobles for whom war was an art in which the victor's duty was to crush the vanquished. Death hasn't changed anything, except maybe the straightforwardness of the Fathers of the Houses concerning their own ambitions. The masters of Acheron's schemes can be carried out over several generations: being immortal, they have all eternity before them!

Only a handful of these illustrious families have survived the fratricidal

struggles, the purge of the Black Toga, and the passage of time. Each one of them has its own fief within the barony, though their borders are sometimes disputed.

Every House of Acheron has a Patriarch or a Matriarch who sits at the Council of the Order of the Ram. The number and the strength of their dignitaries are very variable, without counting the assimilated members and their principal servants.

The most powerful divine or elemental beings of the Abyss have bound themselves to every one of the Houses of Acheron, opening the gates of their realms in exchange for indescribable favours. Some were forced to do so; others spontaneously gave their support, be it just to satisfy their vile appetites. Thus Hecate, the demon of the abyssal flames, seems indissociable from the charred magic of the House of Hestia. Typhon himself, the Master of languages and demon of a hundred faces, has given his patronage to the House of Lazarian. Each of the Obscure Houses' citadels thus has a permanent Elemental Portal leading straight to one of the six Cardinal Realms of the Abyss.

THE TRINITY OF THE ABYSS

No other entity is as worshipped as are the Lord of Darkness, the Queen of Vice and the Prince of the Abyss.

Salaüel, Dhalilia and Belial are at the heart of the Acheronian pantheon.

The necromancers and their cults' priests don't hesitate to sacrifice hundreds of lives to thank the gods who braved and then destroyed the wall of Time. Salaüel sometimes expresses himself through Feyd Mantis, and Dhalilia regularly possesses the necromancer Rhea de Brisis. As for Belial, he often joins battles when the harvest of souls was good enough.

PANDEMONIUM

The omnipresence of Darkness isn't the only reason for the devastation of the barony of Acheron's lands. Just after the first Portal of Darkness was opened, Kaïan Dragghost was transported to a place that resembled an Unfinished Realm. The sky mingled with the earth and everywhere mountains, hills and plains floated above an emptiness. He was on one of the islands that marked the borders of Creation, the place to where Darkness was once banished by Light. The only resident of this place lived in a citadel perched high up on a cliff bordering the Void. Aker, such was his name, led Dragghost to the six doors of the Dark Realms and let him open them, for only the hand of a mortal could do so. This Realm of exile was Erebus, the centre of the Realm of Darkness.

With the passing of time, Acheron exploited its ground resources to

REGULARS

The Obscure enjoy flooding their opponents with a tide of fleshless pawns. The **morbid puppets**, available in various models endowed with different and complementary characteristics, stand out due to their extremely low cost (5 or 6 A.P. depending on their profile), which allows them to be deployed in great numbers. When they are transformed into **morbid angels** with wings of darkness thanks to the "Morbid angel invocation" spell, they fly over the battlefield to harass the most valuable enemy troops. Units of morbid angels and puppets are made to be sacrificed without remorse. Necromancers can easily invoke them to send them into combat, make them explode in a deadly spray of bone splinters, or can even increase their strength tenfold using magic. The **skeleton spearmen**, **skeleton warriors** and **skeletons in armour** are endowed with good characteristics (STR 5, 6 and 5; RES 5, 5 and 7, respectively) for a cost (in A.P.) that is barely higher than that of morbid puppets (9, 11 and 12 A.P.). When deployed at the front lines they can absorb enemy fire and protect their army's advance. When deployed in the second lines they can intercept enemy elite fighters thanks to their often comparable Strength/STR and Resilience/RES.



The Gorgon and her retinue roam the battlefields looking for a legendary treasure.

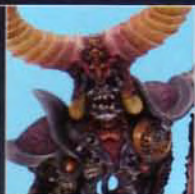
THE GORGON

No one knows her name. Those who have encountered her and survived have nicknamed her “Gorgon,” for her gaze is a window to the Abyss and devours the souls it meets. No one knows her origins. She appeared like a nightmare that had come to life. The Obscure of Acheron fear her, for she has crossed limbo by her own means. Her power seems to go back to immemorial times, to the origins of Darkness itself. No one knows her goals. After having roamed Aarklash looking for forbidden knowledge, she sowed the seeds of fratricidal war and has awoken abominable creatures: the Atrocities, her brotherhood. The Atrocities return for the Rag’narok to take back Aarklash, their former domain, and to subjugate all mortals to the laws of eternal Darkness.



ZOMBIES

Among the macabre pawns that the lords of Acheron throw at their enemies, there are often zombies. Endowed with the “Regeneration/X” ability that allows them to heal the wounds inflicted on them, they return again and again to torment the enemy who thought he had slain them. The **zombies of Acheron** (19 A.P.) and the **zombies in armour** (21 A.P.) make up the ideal personal guard of a commander or a magician. The zombies of Acheron have a very belligerent profile (ATT/STR 4/7; DEF/RES 2/5) and depend on Regeneration during longer battles. The **zombies in armour** favour resistance (ATT/STR 4/5; DEF/RES 2/9) and form a true wall that can ignore the most powerful blows all the while attacking. The **Wolfen zombies** haven’t lost any of their bestiality on their return from the dead. They combine the strength of a powerful creature with an exceptional speed for fighters of the limbo of Acheron (while having the ability to regenerate, of course). The three profiles available (34, 41 and 51 A.P.) let various strong points be favoured and make these fighters one of the most dreaded troops of Acheron.



SCAVENGERS

The **Scavengers** are much more than just sinister zombies riding terrifying mounts. Their good combat characteristics (ATT/STR 5/7; DEF/RES 3/7), combined with a high Movement rate (MOV 15) and with the "Fierce," "War-horse" and "Regeneration/5" abilities, make them essential troops in the ranks of the army of the undead. Very versatile, they can just as well cross a battlefield to support an assault as they can take and hold a strategic point while awaiting reinforcements. Their cost, which is very low for a cavalry unit (33 A.P.), allows them to be deployed in great numbers and overwhelm the enemy's fast-moving Units.

GHOULS

The **ghouls of Acheron** (17 A.P.) are an exception in the army of the Obscure: they are living troops! Being such, they are not affected by the Dark Stranglehold rules. One of them can become Leader, thus saving the rare additional Orders gained by the Commanders-in-Chief of Acheron. Ghouls form an ideal personal guard for the army's other living troops (Gravedigger of Salauel, Ejhin de Vanth, Azaël the Unfaithful...). Well-balanced characteristics and the "Ambidextrous" ability make them a bane for the enemy's regular troops and annoying obstacles for the enemy's elite fighters.

The Almighty Crâne

Asura de Sarlath

Ejhin de Vanth



build a city in Erebus. It was called Pandemonium, after the name of the demon Aker's citadel. Constructed over almost three centuries by the hands of slaves and the powerful magic of Typhon, Pandemonium is currently surpassing Kallienne in size and in population, both mortal and immortal.

Every House of Acheron has an exact replica of its citadel in Erebus. Strange foreign beings and dreadful celestial vessels cross the Void to link the various islands. The laws of magic not being the same as on Aarklash, numerous Portals open in the masters' luxurious palaces, giving them access to most of the Elemental Realms.

No other people of Aarklash seem to be aware of Pandemonium's existence. The night will come in which the necromancers use the Portals of the dead world to surprise their enemies. Then no fortress will be able to hold back the wave of Darkness, and Aarklash will only be the first step in their conquest of Creation.





MAGIC

Necromancy is essential in order to use the Dark Stranglehold, which allows efficient control of Living-dead Units. Magician commanders are the nerve centre of an obscure horde and must be protected at all costs.

The magic of the Obscure is impressive and extremely varied. Azaël the Unfaithful, the **Coryphaeus**, the **Gorgon**, **Sophet Drahas** and **Asura de Sarlath** are, at their respective levels, terrifying opponents. When used slyly, they can annihilate enemies far superior in value and can greatly increase the other Acheronian fighters' potential.

The **quaestors of Acheron**, being Living-dead Warrior-mages, are of vital importance in the army of the Ram. They can become Leaders of Living-dead Units, thus bringing added security to the chain of command. Their special capacity lets them share gems of Darkness to perform incantations. This advantage takes on all its meaning in a council of magicians. Thus supported by his peers, a quaestor can cast rituals that are so costly in gems that they are normally reserved to pure magicians.



Regular

ZOMBIE WARRIORS

Death doesn't care much for the origins of the ones it reaps. All are equal when they serve under its sinister banner.

Zombies are corpses that have been resuscitated by the evil powers of the necromancy of the Ram. The souls of the deceased have long ago left for another world. It is the most abject of Darkness that takes possession of their bodies and turns them into atrocious pawns controlled by the Obscure. Zombies feel neither pain nor fatigue nor pity. In addition to the dread that their appearance causes, they also inspire resignation: zombies tirelessly get up again and they continue fighting despite being inflicted with the worst of wounds. Their mission only ends once they have been disintegrated or they have fully extinguished the flames of life.



Flying

MORBID ANGELS

Enveloped in the ghostly fog of the Dark Stranglehold, the hordes of Acheron sow corruption and death in their wake. Their arrival is sometimes announced by gruesome raptors: the morbid angels. These macabre and fascinating creatures are only angels in name. Their wings were sculpted by the fiends of the Ram.

At first far and scattered, like birds of ill omen, these fleshless angels quickly grow in numbers until they form entire flocks. Carried in the air more by evil spells of Darkness than by their withered wings, the morbid angels block out the light of the sun and throw themselves at the living with horrifying zeal.



Cavalry

SCAVENGERS OF ACHERON

Brave horsemen who fell on the fields of glory are sometimes raised from the dead by the necromancers of Acheron. Their mounts return from the beyond at the same time as they do. Having become companions again in non-life, they share only one inhuman spirit as cold as a tomb: the spirit of Darkness. Until they both turn to dust, a deceased horseman will surely never get off his zombie mount.

The Scavengers owe their moniker to the use the Obscure usually make of them. Their disgusting odour prevents them from being sent too far in advance of the hordes of the underworld. They are therefore detached to sow terror among the enemy ranks, to intercept adverse generals, and to pursue those fleeing.



Ghoul of Acheron.

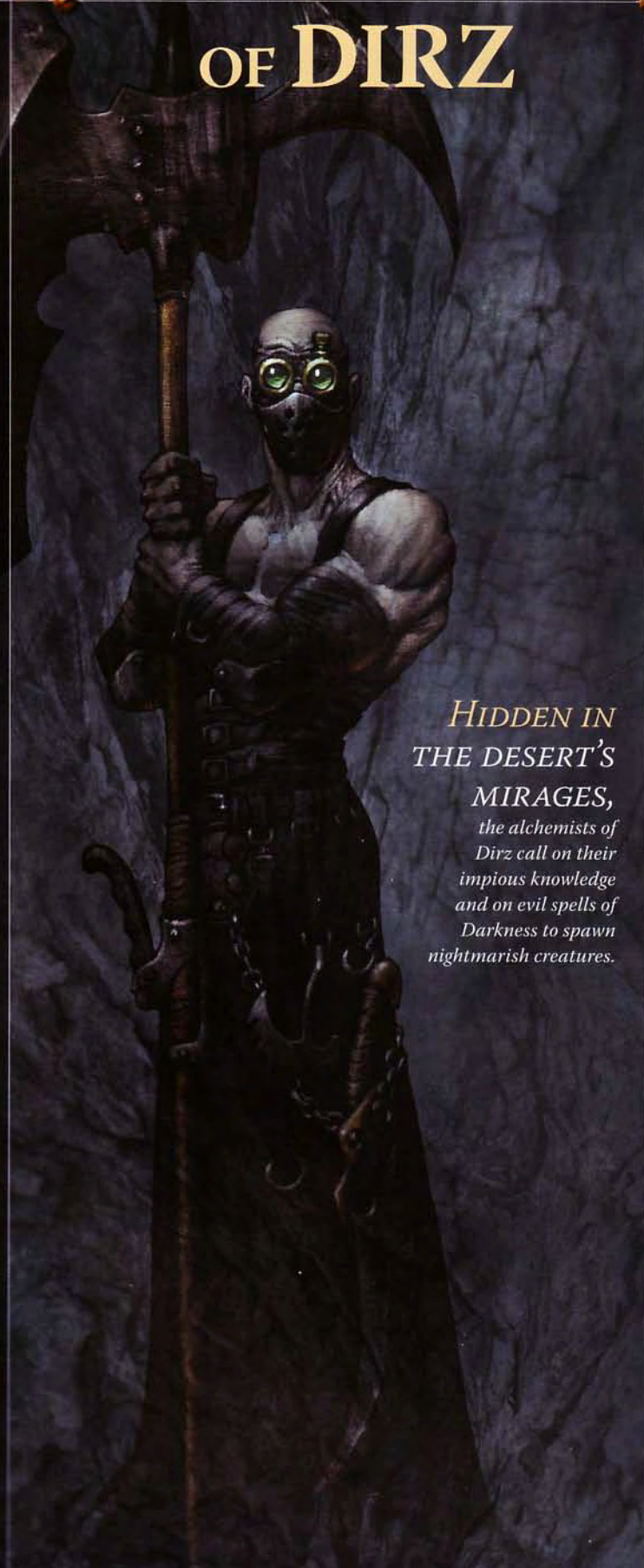


Asura the Lord of Insanity reigns as master over the forces of Darkness.



DIRZ

THE ALCHEMISTS OF DIRZ



HIDDEN IN THE DESERT'S MIRAGES, the alchemists of Dirz call on their impious knowledge and on evil spells of Darkness to spawn nightmarish creatures.

ARMY

Dirz, a visionary scientist, once used Darkness to attempt to create the perfect being as Merin had defined it. Hunted by the Akkylannian inquisition for heresy, Dirz and his disciples wandered for a long time before settling in the merciless desert of Syharhalna. Hidden in the dunes and their mirages, they founded the alchemical empire of the Scorpion. Over the centuries, the alchemists of Dirz – the Syhars – developed a true civilisation based on the mastery of life and matter. Inspired by Arh-Tolth, a god of science who came from elsewhere, the Syhars have perfected their sacrilegious knowledge and have mastered the powerful magic of Darkness in order to breed legions of clones and counter-natural creatures.

The time for vengeance has come. A new age will soon begin, an age dominated by the science of Evil. An army of perfect warriors has risen from the sands to crush the Scorpion's enemies and conquer Aarklash!

EMBLEM

Scorpion

CAPITAL

Shamir

ALIGNMENT

The Meanders of Darkness

ALLIANCES

Limbo of Acheron, dwarves of Mid-Nor and Akkyshan elves

CULT

Arh-Tolth, god of alchemical, bodily and mental perfection

MAGICIANS' PRIMARY ELEMENT

Darkness

HISTORY

A mad project was hatched one day in the mind of Dirz, an Akkylannian scientist-monk: the creation of the perfect being according to the criteria decreed by the one god. To do so he called on the impious knowledge of the Order of the Black Togas of Acheron. His ambitions brought him to his downfall and then to exile. Accompanied by about a hundred followers he was forced to flee the Akkylannian lands when the Inquisition declared him a heretic.

It's in the heart of the desert of Syharhalna that he found the salvation and support of a god, namely Arh-Tolth. From their communion was born what was to become one of the most powerful nations of Aarklash: the Empire of Dirz.

Dirz used the knowledge given by Arh-Tolth to develop a first generation of clones, the Arhteths. These creatures, as aggressive as they are gigantic, protected the desert against Akkylannian troops before turning on their own creators.

So the alchemists created a second generation of clones, the Isateph, who allowed the Syhars to conquer the desert.

Several events then marked the history of the alchemists of Dirz, among which is the arrival of the goblin ambassadors of No-Dan-Kar. From their extremely rich genetic potential were born the first orcs, who later rose in rebellion: some fled into the desert while others attempted to overthrow their masters.

Weakened, the alchemists then knew the most tragic incident in their history. Mysterious warriors appeared one desert night and attacked Shamir. Hundreds of Syhars – men, women and children – died atrociously. Dirz was found badly wounded in a Shamir in ruins.

Unable to govern, the Heresiarch transmitted his powers to Basyleüs Antykaïn before falling into a torpor from which he never awakened.

A new Shamir was built a few days march from where the old one stood. The Syhar Empire was slowly being born again.

Basyleüs Villa currently reigns as supreme emperor over the Empire of the Scorpion. He continues the research started several hundred years earlier by the Heresiarch himself.

THE FORBIDDEN SCIENCE

The alchemical swarms are among the most powerful armies of Aarklash. However, leading such troops into battle requires constant attention because using the "Mutagenic/X" ability means making choices and meeting crucial decisions all along the encounter. To which Units should the benefits provided by this ability be given? Which characteristics to improve? These dilemmas are often hard to solve, yet at the end they make this army totally unpredictable. (Its enemies can expect to see the most harmless of fighters suddenly turn into true killing machines.)

COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

Discipline is certainly not the Scorpion soldiers' strong point, but when needed, their Commander-in-Chief can call on the "Mutagenic/X" ability to raise this characteristic's value. In this way the player increases his chances of winning the Tactical Roll and benefiting from a greater number of additional Orders. Concerning the Commander-in-Chief himself, **Thissan Ka** (DIS 8; Elite) is one of the best choices for armies of small and medium size. For bigger armies, **Razheem the Insane** (DIS 8; Living Legend) is more appropriate.



GEOGRAPHY

The wind and the sun, ordinary agents of life and prosperity, are doubtlessly the worst traitors of the desert of Syharhalna, after those who have chosen to live there. Storms can suddenly rise and cover whole acres of desert within minutes. The Syhars have made maps indicating the main "corridors" used by these tornados and the formulas that supposedly allow to predict the date and time of their appearance. Alas, neither the maps nor the formulas are always reliable. Ancient cities with foundations filled with treasure lie dormant beneath the dunes, waiting to be freed from their sandy tombs by the desert winds.

ALPHABET

A	B	C	D	E	f	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
⤴	⤵	⤶	⤷	⤸	⤹	⤺	⤻	⤼	⤽	⤾	⤿	⥀
N	O	p	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
⥁	⥂	⥃	⥄	⥅	⥆	⥇	⥈	⥉	⥊	⥋	⥌	⥍

THE RAG'NAROK

After having built the first Shamir and taken control over the desert, the alchemists of Dirz understood the advantage of striking up relations with the other nations of Darkness. The necromancers were the first ones with whom the Syhars built ties. Intelligence, occult knowledge, gems of Darkness, clones and prominent prisoners are commonly exchanged between these two peoples.

The relationship that binds the servants of Dirz and the Akkyshan elves is more ambiguous. Several alchemical troops have been "traded" for children of the Widow. Living in the foundations of Shamir, these fighters are willing to give their lives to honour the bond that links these two peoples.

Recently the dwarves of Mid-Nor have taken up contact with the masters of the desert. Despite their protests, the Despot's envoys couldn't meet the Emperor. They did, however,

negotiate with the magon, the high priest of Arh-Tolth.

Two peoples regularly oppose the Syhars, thus delaying Arh-Tolth's unavoidable offensive. The fiercest of these are their former brothers, the disciples of the Griffin Empire.

To the north of the fortress of Danakil stretch the canyons of Bran-Ô-Kor, the land of the orcs. The Scorpions' former servants are now among their most dangerous enemies.

Spies are dispatched daily to observe every army and hatch conspiracies worthy of the alchemical emperor's designs.

The war that will tear the peoples apart and see the rise of the reign of Arh-Tolth is coming.

THE DESERT TRAP

Many hundreds of years have passed since the arrival of Dirz in the Syharhalna desert. The soldiers of the alchemical swarms are now counted by the thousands and are ready to flood over their enemies. Scattered all over the desert in gigantic underground

CLONES OF DIRZ

The clones of Dirz (11 A.P.) are among the least costly Regulars of any army. With reduced efficiency in combat, they mainly form a shield to protect the advance of Elite troops by absorbing enemy blows for them. They can nevertheless have some surprises in store for their opponents thanks to the "Mutagenic/X" ability. Using this solution is certainly risky, but such a gamble can be a wise choice if the clones are in contact with one of the opponent's prize miniatures.

HYBRIDS

A hybrid is a mix between a foot soldier and a crossbowman, and is a perfectly versatile warrior. This type of trooper's Aim rate (AIM 2) is lower than that of the Dirz crossbowmen, but in return they benefit from Mutagenic/0 (instead of Mutagenic/-2). In addition to this, the hybrids' crossbow has a better range. Their combat characteristics are average, but their Strength (STR 6) as well as the "Mutagenic/0" ability allow them to measure up to a large variety of opponents, even those who appear to be stronger than them.

cities, the Syhars work to fulfil the dreams of their empire's founder.

The Syharhalna hasn't changed much since the arrival of the Scorpion people over three hundred years ago. Terrifying winds blow over these savage and arid stretches of land, shifting the dunes day after day. Here the slightest wound can become mortal within a few hours and a body disappears in less than a day.

CITIES

There are several cities in the Syharhalna built according to a plan laid out by Basyleüs Antykaïn shortly after the fall of the first Shamir. All of them have an enormous ziggurat that is several dozen metres high. This structure can be seen for kilometres around and is in reality an artifice designed to trick any eventual assailants. About a hundred combat clones of lesser quality live in each one, forming the first Syhar line of defence. Their sacrifice gives the Scorpion's troops the time needed to organise themselves and crush their enemies.

Several metres under ground is the first stratum, that of the warriors. Unlike the clones stationed in the ziggurats, these fighters are subjected to strict discipline.

A staircase leads down to the second stratum, that of the bio-surgeons. It is made up of a multitude of private quarters that no one can enter

except their owners, the magon and the neuromancers. Every one of these dwellings includes three rooms and four slaves. Clones and the Trueborn share this stratum, the latter openly looking down upon the former.

At the centre of this stratum is a staircase that leads to the third stratum, the one devoted to experiments. A glacial cold reigns in this place, which echoes with the cries of agony of those being experimented on or tortured. At the bottom of this level are the annihilation rooms, which are cells reserved for valuable prisoners.

Several metres further down is the fourth and last stratum, the one of the neuromancers and the mentats. Only they know how to reach this level and any outside individual caught here is summarily executed. On some nights screams of suffering coming from this storey can be heard all the way to the second stratum.

Shamir is an exception to this architecture. The superposition of the strata is respected, but they rise towards the heavens as if to defy the gods. At its summit reigns the one on whom the future of the Syhar society depends: the basyleüs.

THE CASTES

Scorpion society is made up of four castes, each one having its role and duties.

The first one, directing all the others, is that of neuromancers,

composed of the faithful of Arh-Tolth and mentats. Only the Trueborn are accepted within this caste whose members are continuously in contact with the spirit of their god. They feel his disgust with humans and his thirst for destruction. Only the suffering that they can inflict on a victim gives them any sort of pleasure.

Then comes the caste of bio-surgeons, made up of technomancers and biopsists, among others. Composed mainly of Trueborn, a bit more than a third of its members are nevertheless clones. Charged with the elaboration of new beings, but also with the production of serums and treatments, they very often dislike leaving their laboratories.

The third caste includes all fighters, whichever army corps they are part of. No matter if they come from the Skorize, Keratis or Centurus programme, in the neuromancers' eyes they remain simple combat clones.

And at the bottom is the last caste, that of slaves, which counts twice as many members as those of neuromancers and bio-surgeons combined. They make up the base of Syhar society.

THE CLONES

Many months can pass between the designing and the putting into service of a clone. The time it takes to produce one can vary greatly depending on the strength and intelligence



The garrison of Danakil patrols the border between Syharhalna and Bran-Ö-Kor, the land of the orcs. •

RAZHEEM THE INSANE

The masters of the desert wished to place warlords worthy of the Scorpion's ideals at the head of the alchemical swarms. So they decided to spawn some of the most powerful clones there are: the commodores. The fruit of several decades of research, Commodore Razheem was to represent the physical and intellectual perfection so sought after by the alchemists of Dirz. The Syhars were far from imagining that their greatest creation would be a warrior who is as mad as he is reckless, ready to throw himself into a fray without heed for danger. Razheem was therefore nicknamed "the Insane" by his own soldiers. Only his martial exploits and his brazen luck push the Scorpion's tacticians to forgive him the cold sweat he causes them on a daily basis.

CROSSBOWMEN

Dirz crossbowmen don't have a very long range, but this weakness is compensated by their low cost (in A.P.) and the Strength of their projectiles (STR 6). This makes them terribly deadly at medium and short range when they are numerous. Their Mutagenic/-2 makes using this ability very uncertain. However, it can be worth attempting it during the battle's first rounds when combat hasn't begun yet and the other Units don't need to raise their characteristics.

THE DOMINATORS

Keratis warriors are among the most reliable troops of the alchemical swarms. Fast and endowed with Mutagenic/1 (which guarantees them an often high bonus), they also inspire fear. Their rather weak Initiative (INI 2) and Defence (DEF 2) can easily be improved thanks to the "Mutagenic/X" ability. Furthermore, they have a good Resilience (RES 8), which minimises the risk of being wounded. It is recommended to assign Mutagenic points to their Resilience rather than their Defence, since by choosing to endure blows instead of parrying them, the Keratis warriors can devote their combat dice to what they do best: attack!



OF DIRZ



CREATURES

The army of the Scorpion can count on the presence of numerous Creatures spawned by the technomancers' impious experiments. Strong, fast and endowed with a good Attack rate (ATT 5), the tigers of Dirz are also very versatile thanks to their alternative abilities. With Scout they can be used to stalk enemy magicians and faithful. With the "Consciousness" ability they can take advantage of their high Movement rate (MOV 17.5) in order to take the enemy cavalry unawares and bog it down by using the bonus given by the "Brutish charge" ability. And finally, thanks to the "Leap" ability they are able to jump over obstacles (and even frays) to reach opponents who thought they were out of reach. Bigger but slower, the Nemesis and Dasyatis clones as well as the Aberrations are also stronger and have the "Mutagenic/X" ability (which the tigers don't have). Thanks to this combination they can be used to decimate whole Units of foot soldiers as well as to finish off the toughest elite troops or even to eliminate enemy Creatures.

• Cypher Lukhan •

• Sasia Samaris •

• Sykho Volesterus •



sought. There are very many different classes of clones, but only a handful of models are usually produced. Their development is at once easy and hazardous. The bio-surgeons breathe life into these counter-natural creations using gems of Darkness. A few weeks later a living being is "born," unaware of anything about the cruel world it has just landed in.

Even after several hundred years the production of a clone remains largely subject to luck. The alchemists simply follow the production instructions rather than truly master this art!

It can happen that a standard clone ends up being a true genius or develops a taste for magic. Unfortunately the contrary can happen just as well: a combat clone as prestigious as a Centurus can end up being defective. It is then recycled: its body is transformed into a protein-rich mash used to feed clones and slaves.

Totally enslaved, clones must give their masters complete satisfaction at the risk of being recycled too.

In order to avoid all risks of uncontrolled evolution, as was the case of the orcs, the clones are sterile. At the dawn of the Rag'narok the Syhar Empire cannot risk another insurrection.





THE SOLDIERS OF THE SYHARHALNA

Thanks to their sword axes that let them re-roll results of ☒ as well as ☒☒ on their Damage Rolls, the dawn warriors are the perfect warriors for confronting resilient opponents or those endowed with several Wound levels. Supplied with the same equipment, the **sentinels of Danakil** are particularly adapted for the destruction of imposing Creatures. More courageous than the dawn warriors (COU 4), they also have a better Attack rate (ATT 4) and a more interesting Mutagenic value (+1). In addition, they are endowed with the "Survival instinct" ability, which gives them an extra chance to avoid their enemies' deadly blows.

SCOUTS

Skorize warriors are not equipped with projectile weapons. And when they are deployed behind enemy lines, they have no other choice but to engage in hand-to-hand combat. This is greatly made up for by their excellent combat characteristics and their "The Scorpion Claws" special capacity. Beware, however, because they absolutely must charge their target in order to benefit from this aptitude. So it can be wise to assign them Mutagenic points in the first round so as to be able to increase their MOV. Thus they can be deployed far enough from their target to avoid being charged themselves.

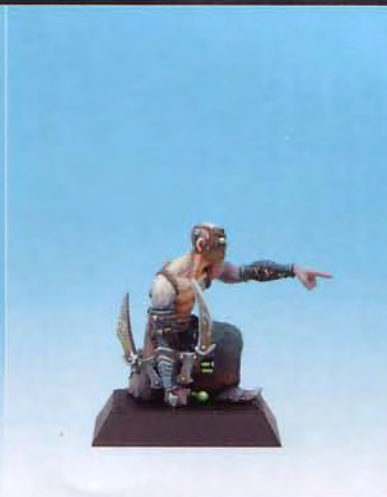


Regular

CLONES OF DIRZ

The clones of Dirz were designed almost three centuries ago by Dirz the Heresiarch himself to defend his young empire, and they have evolved very little since then. These warriors are spawned in cloning tanks using the most reliable genetic strains there are. Their accelerated growth is ensured by the power of gems of Darkness and the technomancers' impious know-how.

Once removed from matrices of metal, the clones are quickly indoctrinated and subjected to basic martial training. The weakest among them are mercilessly put to death. Some clones are born, fight and die within the same week.



Marksman

DIRZ CROSSBOWMEN

The most skilled and servile clones are trained to use the desert crossbow, a projectile weapon made of strange mechanisms born of inhuman technology. Like nomadic sentinels, they roam the desert in small groups on the lookout for the enemy and abominable creatures that sometimes escape the laboratories.

Under certain circumstances the Dirz crossbowmen take great pleasure in observing their opponents' reaction when they deploy the branches of their desert crossbows. This weapon's characteristic metallic clicking is the prelude to a hail of poisoned bolts that can pierce the best of armour.



Creature

DASYATIS CLONE

As long as they have a laboratory stocked with a great amount of gems of Darkness, the degenerate scientists of the Scorpion are able to spawn beings that nature would never have given the right to exist. This is the case of the Dasyatis clones, the dreadful alchemical offspring created using the genetic heritage of numerous predators. These creatures are governed by an instinct close to that of a wild animal: though they are incapable of uttering more than a few words (and even less able to reason in an abstract manner), they are sometimes extremely resourceful when it comes to eliminating the prey their masters have chosen for them.



Thissan Ka



Terrifying Aberrations are confined in the Heresiarch's laboratories.



THE KELTS OF THE DRUNE CLAN



THE FEROCIOUS

BARBARIANS

of the Drune clan live in Darkness. Consumed by anger, they are coming out of the Black Woods in search of the ancient horned god.

ARMY

In the northeast of the plains of Avagddu, at the heart of the forest of Caer Maed, lives a clan that is feared by all, be they man or god.

A very long time ago all Kelts were united. Alas, Cernunnos, the High King of Kel-An-Tiraidh, one day became the victim of divine machinations and left for other horizons. His people split in two: those who wished for peace remained faithful to Danu and became the Sessairs. The others shunned the names of the gods and also left in search of the only real king of the human tribes. Thus was born the terrifying clan of the Drones.

Having found refuge in their troglodytic city of Drun Aeryfh, the Drones survived the centuries and the ravages of the permanent war that they waged on the gods. They are few in numbers compared to the other peoples, yet their reputation for cannibalistic barbarity has spread all over Aarklash like a wave of panic. The Drones' determination is faultless: they will know neither rest nor hope for as long as they haven't found Cernunnos again and haven't drowned the gods in the blood of their hounds.

EMBLEM

Black stag

CAPITAL

Drun Aeryfh

ALIGNMENT

The Meanders of Darkness

ALLIANCES

Devourers of Vile-Tis, limbo of Acheron, dwarves of Mid-Nor

CULT

The Drones don't worship any god. They follow the way of Cernunnos the Horned-One.

MAGICIANS' PRIMARY ELEMENT

The four Elements (Air, Water, Fire and Earth)

• HISTORY •

Like that of the Sessairs, the history of the Drune clan is hard to retrace since it is so difficult to separate myth from reality.

The root of the conflict that now opposes these clans is unclear, though it is certain that it is linked to the tragic fate of Cernunnos.

After Elhad, son of Avagd, king of the tribe of Kel, was united with Danu, and the goddess gave birth to their three daughters, peace returned to the land.

Elhad abandoned his old name and kept the one under which he had presented himself to the goddess: Cernunnos, the Handsome Horned-One.

Lahn, the sun god, was jealous of Cernunnos and of the love Danu felt for him. His rancour became so deep that he split into two. One of these two suns recognised that Cernunnos had brought fertility to the land; the other was filled with a desire for vengeance. The latter part of him became embodied as Scáthach, the Shadowy-One.

Scáthach led Cernunnos to his downfall. She tricked and bewitched him to make him lose both his people's esteem and Danu's love. She schemed so much and so well that she managed to get him to flee Kel An Tiraidh.

Their king's disappearance rekindled the anger of some Kelts who thought that the gods had duped them once again. Yet the majority of the men of Kel chose to remain faithful to Danu. The others, determined to find their king again, left Kel An Tiraidh with their families and took on the name of Drones. This term can be translated from the Kelt language as "clear-sighted."

According to legend Scáthach tricked the Drones again. She sent her demonic children, who pretended to be men, and massacred their women and children. Then these same demons came looking for survivors and convinced them that all this was the fault of the gods who, with the druids' complicity, had made their king disappear and now wanted to get rid of them out of fear that they find Cernunnos again.



THE CLAN OF THE HORNED GOD

Drones have Initiative and Strength rates superior to the average of human troops, and suffer from the same lack of Discipline. However, their Defence/DEF and their Resilience/RES, which are generally higher, allow them to make up for their impetuous tendencies. Most Drune troops also benefit from a high Movement/MOV rate, but they cost fairly much in A.P. Its capacity to surprise is one of the best weapons this army has available. Thus it is of utmost importance that Drune Commanders-in-Chief resist the temptation of launching a massive assault without having carefully evaluated the enemy's strengths and weaknesses.

COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

The Drones value individual performance in combat and don't make much of discipline. Their potential Commanders-in-Chief are not exempt from this rule and have a mediocre DIS, which can cause some problems, especially when attributing Orders. With a DIS of 4 and a leadership range of 10 cm, **Gwahyr the Merciless** and **Corwyn the Hunchback** (equipped with *Horns of Cernunnos*) are not made to command armies. They are more efficient as Leaders. **Wandyr the Bloodthirsty**, with his DIS of 6 and the "Leadership/15" ability, is a much more efficient Commander-in-Chief, especially when a large number of karnaghs is integrated in the army. (Thanks to *Kilgorn*, his former axe, all karnaghs within 15 cm of him get the "Fierce" ability.)



• GEOGRAPHY •

The forest of *Caer Maed* is called the *Black Woods*. There the gigantic pine trees spread their densely covered branches until they almost hide the sky. The gloom that reigns there justifies the name of these woods as well as their sinister reputation. In such conditions undergrowth is rare. The forest floor is covered with a thick layer of dry needles, pinecones and fallen branches.

In its northern part the forest is crossed from east to west by the *Wall of Giants*, the cliffs that separate the plains of *Avagddu* from the plateau of *No-Dan-Kar*. In several places the forest is also marked by deep gorges and by small limestone overhangs dotted with natural tunnels.

• ALPHABET •

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
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N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
𐌽	𐌾	𐌿	𐍀	𐍁	𐍂	𐍃	𐍄	𐍅	𐍆	𐍇	𐍈	𐍉

THE RAG'NAROK

The life of the Drones is devoid of hope. Only those born under Cernunnos's reign can look forward to a happy life.

The others are just instruments in the struggle against the gods, and their life only has value of any kind as long as it serves the clan's designs.

Influenced by the formors, the Drones have turned towards Darkness. For centuries they have observed the other peoples that fell into the grasp of Darkness with a certain disdain.

In their eyes these have only renounced their former gods to be enslaved by new ones. Nevertheless, they continue maintaining relations with some of them.

The barony of *Acheron* supplies them with gems of Darkness of which the formors make great use. In exchange the Drones entrust their victims' corpses to the necromancers of the *Ram*.

The Drones have also closely followed the appearance of the *Despot's* servants. Intrigued by these beings who carry a piece of their god with them, they allied themselves with them to protect themselves from the people of the east as well as to learn more about the true nature of those they battle.

Yet the only people with whom the Drones have built a real alliance around a common interest is not subject to Darkness. The *Devourers*, like the Drones, have become aware of the gods' cynicism and hypocrisy. They are both willing to commit the worst atrocities to exterminate all divine influence from *Aarklash*.

THE GNOSIS

The Drones are an even more secretive and mysterious people than the other Kelts. Few can claim to have been able to approach the Drones. To be precise, few remain alive to be able to tell of what they saw. Yet it is possible to apprehend their way of life and their customs, for unlike other

PERSECUTORS

Tough (DEF 3; RES 6), aggressive (ATT 4; STR 7) and endowed with the "Implacable" and "War cry/5" abilities, the persecutors are a good choice of intermediate troops. Condemned to charging in order to take advantage of their very belligerent profile, they are even more effective if they are many, especially when facing Regulars with low resilience. Persecutors are less adapted for encounters with elite troops, but they can nevertheless block or even worry their opponents for several rounds. Furthermore, the potential resistance to Fear that the "War cry/5" ability gives them makes them a decisive asset when fighting fear-inducing enemies.

FORMOR FIENDS

Endowed with impressive offensive power (ATT 5; STR 10) and able to resist opponents much stronger than they are (DEF 4; RES 8), the formor fiends present themselves as the Drune army's rapid intervention force. The *Demonic Auras* capacity lets very useful abilities, such as "Fierce" or "Hard-boiled," be given to them at an acceptable cost in A.P. This strengthens their potential on the battlefield. All these advantages, combined with a FEAR of 7 and the "War fury" and "Regeneration/5" abilities, make the formor fiends true killing machines that are ideal for confronting the enemy elite or slaughtering the rank and file.

Kelt clans, Drones use writing. Many fragments of texts have been found in the form of parchments, wooden and clay tablets, or on the walls of caves visited by the Drones.

These texts are part of one and the same whole that the theologians of Akkylannie refer to under the name of "Gnosis." This is no more, no less the philosophy that describes the Drones' relationship with the divine.

Since the birth of their clan the Drones were forced to become more united in order to survive at the heart of a hostile environment. The Drune population is concentrated in one unique place: Drun Aeryfh, the Invisible City.

As long as Cernunnos hasn't returned amongst his people, it is the Wyrds, a caste of dignitaries of great power, who manage the clan's affairs. The Wyrds are numerous and every one of them is given specific responsibilities. The reading of the Gnosis – which the Drones call Abrahd an Iyfh Scáthach, "*the Book of Those who See Among the Shadows*," – the education of the young, and the regulation of births are among their responsibilities. But the Wyrds themselves get their orders from a higher authority: the Wyrd Lords. This council is made up of seven Wyrds, the high priest of the necropolis, and a ninth and mysterious individual charged with the naming of the eight others.

The clan's whole social organisation is based on the application of the

Gnosis. In order to do so, all manifestations of individualism are strictly prohibited. The pursuit of any form of personal satisfaction, love or friendship must never become a Drune's preoccupations. He must never become attached to his existence or that of his neighbour.

Nothing in anyone's daily activities is of accessory character. The craftsman makes the weapons of victory and the search for food is an important part of the fulfilling of the Gnosis. And this also explains one of the most terrifying aspects of the customs practiced by the Drones: anthropophagy.

For it is said that in order to totally free themselves from the yoke of the gods, the Drones must attack the source of their power on Aarklash: the believers. Because a god's influence on the plane of reality depends on the fervour of his faithful, the Drones work on tormenting and weakening the divinities by inflicting the greatest of suffering on their servants.

THE FORMORS

The Drones are few; Caer Maed shelters at the most 100,000 men, women and children. But they have made a pact with powerful allies: the formors. No one really knows where these demons came from or the reasons for their presence on Aarklash.

In Sessairs legends they are presented as being Scáthach's accursed mob. According to other sources they were born by the dark goddess, but she denied and abandoned them. Whether they manipulate the Drones or they really share their views, the menace they represent for the other peoples of Aarklash is very real.

MOUNT SILENCE

At the middle of the forest rises Mount Silence. This place is the heart and soul of the Drune clan, for beneath its surface lies Drun Aeryfh, the Invisible City.

Only the suspended bridges thrown over torrents and the morbid trophies stuck in the ground give away the presence of this city hidden in the mountain's innards. But for those who venture under the surface, it is the beginning of a journey to the heart of horrors. Placed at regular intervals in the busiest roads, braziers make disquieting shadows dance on the tunnels' walls. In this dim light one can make out the drawings of dreadful scenes painted onto the naked rock. Here the charcoal and ochre images tell of great battles and the slaughter they caused.

Wherever one looks, there isn't a spot that doesn't evoke the inhuman acts witnessed by this place. The bloodstained stalagmites still bear the scratch marks of those who were tied to them. Human bones are



The lanyfhs unleash their fury upon those who dare enter the Black Woods.

FEYLHIN AND MORGWEN

The lanyfhs, women who have gone into exile to escape the laws of the clan, are the guardians of the Black Woods. These furtive shadows prowl in the gloom of the undergrowth, looking out for those careless enough to venture into their accursed forest. These cruel predators are usually lone hunters, but the twins Feylhin and Morgwen are an exception to this rule. Formidable warriors, they are even more dangerous when they fight together, for the bond that unites them is so strong that they seem to share the same mind for their two bodies.

As beautiful as they are cruel, they are like legendary witches who enslave their victims with their beauty before tearing out their heart... in the true sense of the word.

LANYFHS OF THE BLACK WOODS

With their low defensive capacities (DEF 3; RES 3), lanyfhs can easily be underestimated by an overconfident opponent. Fast (MOV 12.5 cm) and endowed with the "Leap" ability, these female warriors can surprise the enemy by making unexpected moves. Furthermore, their special capacity (*Rage of the Sorceresses*) considerably increases their chances to inflict losses, even on resistant troops. Be they deployed in small groups to harass the enemy (with the Scout profile) or in true assault Units (with the Survival Instinct profile), the lanyfhs are an excellent choice of light troops in a Drune army.

DRUNE KARNAGHS

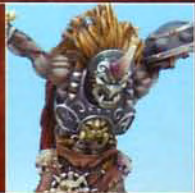
Speed (MOV 12.5 cm) and offensive strength are the karnaghs' main assets. Endowed with an INI of 4 and high Attack and Strength rates (ATT 4; STR 8), they can just as easily crush the rank and file (as long as they are numerous enough to avoid being overwhelmed) as they can eliminate enemy Creatures or elite troops. Despite their RES of 5 (insufficient when facing fighters with a Strength/STR greater than 6), the "Possessed" ability allows them to hold out long enough to inflict heavy losses. The karnaghs' problem is that their profile limits them to fast and brutal offensives. Yet, with a cost of 28 A.P. apiece, their sacrifice represents a considerable risk. It is therefore better to play them in large numbers with Wandyr the Bloodthirsty at their head to increase their destructive potential.



Feylhin the Savage



Morgwen the Bloody



DRUNE ARCHERS

Despite their weapon's relatively low Strength (STR 4) and their INI of 2, the archers form an essential element in a Drune army. Indeed, their shots allow them to harass the enemy and to cover the Units' advance during the first rounds of the game. Then, when most of the troops are engaged in hand-to-hand combat, they can aim at fragile targets such as the servants of siege machines or isolated Characters (especially magicians). The Drune archers' capacity to consider a "5" as a "6," combined with the "Toxic/1" ability, allows them to cause their toughest enemies great worry. Furthermore, their RES of 4 makes them harder to eliminate than most human marksmen.

• Gwahyr the Merciless

• Corwyn the Hunchback

• Ardokath



scattered all over the ground, testimony to the horrible feasts that were celebrated here.

This is where the Drones live and their enemies die.

Further to the south, in the continuation of Drun Aeryfh, rises another hill. A bit smaller than Mount Silence, it is also riddled with numerous galleries and underground chambers. But the living are rare in this place. Here rest the manes, the mummified bodies of the inhabitants of Drun Aeryfh. Here lies Gwyrd An Caern, the Drune necropolis.

The Drones' relation with death is conflicting. For when the soul leaves the body, it also leaves the plane of mortals' reality to fall into the hands of the gods. The Drones embalm their dead and prevent their soul from leaving their body. Thus, at the heart of Gwyrd An Caern, the dead don't rest in peace; they are simply waiting for their hour to come.





DRUNE WRAITHS

Despite their slowness (MOV 7.5 cm), their INI of 1 and a certain vulnerability (DEF 2; RES 5), **Drune wraiths** can play an important part in a Drune army. Their weaknesses can become a strength as long as they are accompanied by one or several soul snatchers. Indeed, the latter's presence allows wraiths to use the "Regeneration/5" ability and, if they happen to die, to be brought back to life. Thus these living-dead soldiers are able to hold objectives or block powerful Units for several rounds without fear of rout or being overwhelmed.

MAGIC AND FAITH

Drune magicians master the four elements and benefit from a vast range of spells. Thus, **Corwyn the Hunchback**, despite his rank of Initiate and his POW of 4, can cause great damage if he is escorted by a council of **soul snatchers**. As for the latter, though their choice of paths is limited, they can choose their element (including Darkness). Thus, Drune magicians have the possibility to adapt their spells to all kinds of situations and opponents. However, the Drones' strong point remains Divination. Indeed, thanks to Ardokath they can call on the terrifying Na'goth, lord of the Elementals of Darkness.



Veteran

Marksman

Elite

DRUNE PERSECUTORS

Right from their youngest age the Drune clan's male children are conditioned to become merciless warriors. Trained very early on and in a very strict manner in the handling of weapons, the adolescents, at the eve of their twelfth birthday, undergo an initiation rite to mark their passage to adulthood and to the status of warrior. Left to their own devices, they are condemned to a ritual exile at the heart of the forest where they have to spend three years before returning to the clan. Many of them meet a violent death during this period and it is estimated that at least a third of those who are sent off never return. Those who survive become formidable warriors and have earned the right to bear the clan's weapons and shed blood in the name of Cernunnos.

DRUNE ARCHERS

Drunes enjoy seeing fear and pain in their victims' eyes more than anything else, but killing from a distance is sometimes necessary. Made from various types of wood and bone, the Drones' composite bows are more efficient at long range than most other kind of bows, and Drune archers are known for their deadly precision. What more, according to rumour they practise shooting at live captives, and they make it a point of honour to avoid killing their targets when possible so that they can have the pleasure of finishing them off with their own hands. For though Drune archers are excellent marksmen, they are nevertheless redoubtable in hand-to-hand combat where their thirst for blood and their savagery is equal to that of the clan's other warriors.

FORMOR FIENDS

According to the rare observers who were able to report what they knew about the formors, these demons can roughly be classified into three categories.

The **Crawlers** are demons of little power. Puny and deformed, they generally suffer from a multitude of physical and mental defects, and their lives are almost worthless in the eyes of their kind.

The **Fiends** form the warrior elite of the formors. They are the cherished children of Wretch, who has given them all the attention that she has deprived the Crawlers of. They are the strongest, the most skilled, the fiercest and the most vicious of the former fighters.

And last but not least, the **Mighty** are the caste of former leaders. They are all more or less talented magicians who have the power to subjugate the Crawlers and Fiends.



The Drones gather to battle the servants of the gods and avenge Cernunnos.

DWARVES
OF MID-NOR

THE DWARVES OF MID-NOR

LURKING IN THE DEPTHS

*of the chasms, the
dwarves of Mid-Nor
steal their victims' bodies
and souls as an offering
to the most powerful
among them: the Despot.*



ARMY

In ancient times the goblins were the dwarves' slaves. When they rebelled, the lords of Tir-Nâ-Bor sent five powerful warriors to the depths of the earth to exterminate the god Rat and his whole demonic brotherhood who were responsible for the goblin uprising. The dwarven warriors accomplished their mission, but they couldn't find Rat. Only four of them returned to see the light of day: one of them, Mid-Nor, had remained in the depths to guard the passageway between Aarklash and the underworld.

It is whispered that the dwarven warriors confronted a thousand perils and finally ended up face-to-face with a monstrous nine-headed hydra. So the dwarves, being frightened, betrayed their sermon and fled. All but one: Mid-Nor. He battled the nine-headed god. When the creature was about to finish him off it offered him a pact. In exchange for his allegiance the hydra would give him the power to get revenge on his cowardly brothers.

The truth probably lies somewhere in between these two versions of the myth of Mid-Nor. Whatever it may be, reality is more frightening still: after centuries of lies the demonic brood again appears from the abyss. The dwarves of Mid-Nor, at the orders of the terrifying Despot, spring from the shadows to profane the body and the soul of their victims.

EMBLEM

Hydra

CAPITAL

The chasms of Mid-Nor

ALIGNMENT

The Meanders of Darkness

ALLIANCES

Limbo of Acheron, alchemists of Dirz, Drune Kelts and Akkyshan elves

CULT

Mid-Nor, god of the chasms

MAGICIANS' PRIMARY ELEMENT

Darkness

• HISTORY •

The history of the Despot's sons began at the time when the dwarven Ancestors, the fighters chosen by the gods of the Aegis, went down to the centre of the earth. According to legend they exterminated a whole kin of abominations. But the dwarves of Mid-Nor know what really happened. Instead of a lair of monsters the Ancestors found themselves face to face with a hydra with nine gigantic heads!

The Ancestors became scared and all fled like cowards... All except the one they called Mid-Nor. The fight was terrifying and seemed to last forever. But in the end Mid-Nor managed to bring down the creature at the price of many horrible wounds.

His mind blackened by rancour, Mid-Nor cursed those who had abandoned him. Before dying he enchanted his sword, which was still soiled with the blood of the hydra-god.

The Ancestors' story had long ago become a legend among others when Van-Ahn-Kaer, valiant Defender of

the Plains, had to fight to push back a Wolfen raid. While trying to take his enemies from behind he suddenly disappeared in a deep crevasse... He ended up in a vast hall strewn with bones.

A very ancient sword was planted at the top of a mound of bones welded together by the limestone. Van-Ahn-Kaer climbed this forgotten tomb to take the fascinating weapon. He wasn't aware of the fact that he had just sealed his fate.

When Van-Ahn-Kaer reappeared in Kâ-In-Ar he wasn't the same any more. He went straight to the fortified-town commanded by Moln-Dan Keîr-Amrik, the chief of the armies. When he got there he began a massacre like no other in all the dwarven city's history! Those who tried to stop him fell under his blows to rise again and join the traitor. Within barely a few minutes Van-Ahn-Kaer had pulverised the fortress's defences. Then, accompanied by his army of the possessed, he rushed into the depths of the Aegis Mountains, never to reappear for many years...



THE LEGIONS OF THE POSSESSED

The demonic hordes of Mid-Nor are made up of a great variety of troops. At first sight they seem to suffer from the same lack of mobility as the dwarves of Tir-Nâ-Bor (MOV 7.5), but they benefit from the presence of many fast-moving fighters of which some can even fly! However, the main asset these warriors have is the "Possessed" ability, which makes them even more dangerous when they are wounded and allows them to carry out a last attack before being killed. In short, an army of the Chasms should have only one priority: attack!

COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

There are numerous Characters in this army, but Discipline not being these demons' strong point, all don't have the qualities required to take on the responsibility of Commander-in-Chief. Yh-Karas (DIS 6) and Yh-Ibenseth (DIS 6) dispute the command over armies of small and medium size. Yet their Discipline (DIS 6) and their rank (Elite) aren't enough to control huge invasion forces, whose command most often goes to the terrifying Yh-Sabahal (DIS 8; Leadership/30; Living Legend).



• GEOGRAPHY •

Surviving in the chasms of Mid-Nor is not an easy task. The shortage of oxygen and of light, combined with a humid and piercing cold, would kill a normal human within a few hours. Yet this is where the sons of the Despot have established their domain, for the temperature prevents the bacteria eating away at their flesh from proliferating and significantly slows the decomposition of the fresh skins they wear. The dwarves of Mid-Nor are, however, not the only inhabitants of the chasms: a multitude of creatures live side by side in the underground obscurity, from eyeless worms to dormant monstrosities dreaming of a forgotten age.

• ALPHABET •

A	B	C	D	E	f	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
Z	Y	x	w	V	u	t	s	R	q	p	o	n
N	O	p	Q	B	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
m	L	k	j	i	h	g	f	e	d	c	b	a

THE RAG'NAROK

After the carnage and the death of Moln-Dan Keîr-Amrik, the Despot and the first Dominants retired deep down in the entrails of the earth and patiently awaited the right moment to carry out their designs. Their only activities then consisted of expanding their underground domain, going on reconnaissance and capturing dwarves to make their ranks grow.

It seems that this long period of inactivity is coming to an end. At first isolated and far apart, the sons of the Despot's interventions happen more and more frequently and are more and more destructive.

For the moment these demons have few sworn enemies excepting the kin of those they have skinned alive. Only the dwarves of Tir-Nâ-Bor harbour an absolute hatred towards them, for the Possessed are the manifestation of their own weakness and of the corruption of one of their greatest heroes. The cities of the Aegis, with the

support of the Griffins of Akkylannie, are always ready to send true cleansing brigades to the places where they suspect the presence of the sons of the Despot, even in hostile territory.

The dwarves of Mid-Nor are unquestionably the masters of underhand dissimulation and in-depth infiltration. No one knows how many they are or the reach of their underground network, so it is practically impossible to predict when or where they are going to strike!

ONE MIND... A THOUSAND BODIES

In the deepest parts of the caverns of the Aegis, far beneath the underground cities of Tir-Nâ-Bor, live the dwarves of Mid-Nor. These skinned demons only exist to serve the first and the most powerful among them, the one they call the Ymsur, the Despot.

In a disquieting silence these demons lurk in the natural cavities of the mineral cathedrals made of colossal stalactites and stalagmites.



WARRIORS OF THE ABYSS

The warriors of the Abyss are the backbone of all the hordes of Mid-Nor. Having a low cost (11 A.P.), they get their strength in numbers, and their main role is to protect the advance of more valuable troops by forming a shield between them and enemy marksmen. In hand-to-hand combat the "Possessed" ability allows them to only lose half of their normal attack dice when some of them are killed. Like this they remain able to strike back, even after having lost the Initiative Roll and having suffered heavy losses. With this in mind, the war pick that gives them a bonus in Strength (STR +2) is very often the most appropriate weapon for them.

CYCLOPES

Cyclopes of Mid-Nor are combat monsters made to crush Units of foot soldiers. One must admit that cyclopes really excel in this type of task. Endowed with titanic Strength (STR 14), they can also acquire an additional combat die thanks to the "Sequence" ability. These parameters, combined with the "Implacable" and "Possessed" abilities, allow these monsters to make one devastating attack after the other like no one else and massacre all opponents reckless enough to get in their way.

They only move when necessary, on a simple thought of the Ymsur or when it can be beneficial for the community. Otherwise they resemble simple corpses embalmed by a madman and set in the walls like a macabre collection of dolls.

The dwarves of Darkness have an often incomprehensible mindset for the other peoples, since they don't reason on an individual level but rather at a communitarian one. Against them surrender is impossible and there is no honourable way out: there is only total victory or death. Their tactics always seem confused until the moment when the obvious is finally revealed to their opponents' eyes. A war chief must be very clever in order to discern the real goal of their seemingly incoherent attacks!

Since their recent appearance to the eyes of the world, the sons of the Despot have attempted to communicate, in their own way, with individuals carefully chosen among the ranks of their potential allies. All the peoples of Darkness and a few marginal ones have been visited by the Despot's envoys. They were more or less well received, and every time the dwarves of Mid-Nor offered to forge an alliance in the simplest of ways and without any conditions. Many emissaries of Darkness were disconcerted by their direct attitude and their language close to that of the Immortals of the Abysses! But none were tricked: like their parents of the Aegis Mountains,

the Despot's servants conceal their intentions well while being perfectly transparent in their dealings. Small communities of Mid-Nor have settled the borders of the Obscure domains like strange embassies, like the heads of a dreadful hydra.

THE CULT OF THE DEEP

The profane often do not make the difference between the Despot and Mid-Nor himself. They see the latter as some kind of god of Darkness. But in reality the Ymsur is the incarnation of Mid-Nor's will, the receptacle of the fallen Ancestor's soul. As such, he is the ultimate conscience that guides all the dwarves of the Abyss, like the primordial intelligence that guides the hydra's heads. Nevertheless, the difference with the soulless puppets of Acheron is subtle: every one of the Despot's creatures keeps a certain degree of individuality, but it is possessed by the irresistible conscience of Mid-Nor. Each one's thoughts resonate like an endless echo in the community's mind, and the will of the strongest dominates that of the ones nearby. Mid-Nor has managed in one way or another to keep the power that the gods of the Aegis had given him.

The cult of Mid-Nor has nothing in common with that of the other gods. For his faithful the best way to pay him respect is not by carrying out

endless ceremonies, but rather by offering him new receptacles.

Since their recent emergence, the dwarves of Mid-Nor's ranks have been reinforced by the presence of individuals of other peoples. How surprised were their adversaries when they saw that Mid-Nor didn't only possess dwarves! The most talented lictors have even pushed the mastery of their art all the way to the conception of true golems made up of fragments of various species. It is even said that some of these monstrosities have magic powers.

When an individual is judged worthy of hosting Mid-Nor's spirit, he is quickly captured and brought to the chasms in order to undergo a terrifying transformation. He is ritually put to death and his soul is temporarily locked into a precious stone. While the ashes of the victim's innards are inserted into a canopic doll, Mid-Nor takes possession of the corpse and enslaves the spirit of the deceased. The operation ends when the soul returns to the body. Bound to each other for eternity, the victim and the canopic doll simultaneously come to life. Excepting a true miracle, only his destruction will save the unlucky victim's soul... if it hasn't been reduced to shreds by helplessly witnessing the horrors committed by its host.

Alas, it often happens that the sons of the Despot capture their prey for reasons other than possession. The



The demonic hosts will flood over Aarklash.

NERÂN THE SCARY

In the gloom of the chasms of Mid-Nor rise mineral cathedrals with walls that ooze with humidity, mucus and blind vermin. From these blasphemous sanctuaries the chants of the possessed sometimes can be heard, taken up by a chorus of unnatural creatures that, hidden in countless alcoves, await their hour. They worship Mid-Nor, the god of the chasms, under the tutelage of his sinister priests. Among these preachers of the deep, Nerân the Scary is a true missionary. Accompanied by a brotherhood of canopic dolls, he gathers skinned warriors around him and leads them to the surface in order to carry out missions known only to him. He steals bodies and souls in the name of the Despot – in the name of Mid-Nor!



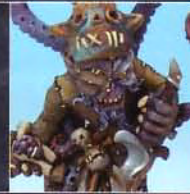
FIRE-SPITTERS

Fire-spitters have an advantage over other artillery with zone effect: their projectiles always land somewhere. This means that even if the Aim Roll is failed, there still is a chance that one or several enemy fighters are hit. Another particularity is that their projectiles can hit miniatures standing at the rear of the targeted Unit. With these two points taken into consideration, the wisest choice for these machines is to aim at the biggest Units and in priority those that include Independents (especially magicians and faithful).

SENTINELS

The **sentinels of Mid-Nor** (MOV 12.5) are endowed with the "Scout" ability, which allows them to rapidly strike the enemy in the back. Yet be careful because they may not resist very long when alone among the enemy's positions. They must therefore choose their target with care. A council, an isolated conclave or a Unit of marksmen are their ideal victims. As for the **sentinels of the Abyss**, they are very efficient when they are outnumbered by foot soldiers. In such a situation the "Implacable" ability allows them to make devastating attacks more easily.





**PROWLERS
OF THE ABYSS**

Of the three existing prowler of the Abyss profiles, two are especially efficient in *Rag'Narok*. With a remarkable Strength (STR 6) combined with their Damage Roll bonus when charging, the prowlers endowed with the "Brutish charge" ability are particularly adapted to confronting very resilient opponents. The profile with the "Implacable/1" ability, on the other hand, is designed to crash into ranks of infantry and carry our devastating attacks using its Strength (STR 9).

SCOURGE BEARERS

Scourge bearers are good fighters (STR 8; RES 5) who can confront almost any opponents. Their main advantage is their special capacity that lets them get the "Bane" ability against a specific enemy fighter or a type of enemy trooper. This capacity has, above all, a psychological impact on the enemy, who will try to keep the Units targeted by this ability at a distance from the scourge bearers and thus risk completely disorganising his tactical plans. Yet one must take care not to try to engage the concerned Units at all costs, for the scourge bearers would then risk spending most of the battle running after them.

• Yh-Sabahal
the Winged Fury •

• Mahal
the Enchanter •

• Yh-Ibenseth •



carnal shell of the Possessed slowly decomposes with passing time or if it remains in fresh air, the sunlight or in contact with water for too long. So the demons skin their victims and steal some of their organs in order to preserve their own body. This is how children and whole armies disappear without leaving a trace, since the monsters come out from under their beds to capture them in their sleep.





INCUBUSES

The **incubuses of the Despot** are specialised in the elimination of fighters endowed with several Wound levels. Thanks to the "Toxic/X" ability they can inflict their enemies with additional damage and thus finish them off more quickly. These opponents most often being formidable fighters, the incubuses are endowed with Survival instincts and their special capacity gives them the possibility to benefit from Regeneration/5. The combination of these two abilities allows them to take out troopers who are much stronger than they are.

REAPERS

Despite combat characteristics that at first sight may seem worthy of a scrawny goblin, the **reapers of Mid-Nor** are a major strategic asset for this army's Commanders-in-Chief. The "Flight" and "Scout" abilities allow them to threaten any part of the battlefield right from the first rounds of the game. No one is sheltered from their dive attacks. Thanks to the bonuses this type of charge gives them, they can eliminate isolated magicians and faithful, and if this isn't enough to make the most resistant fighters start worrying, they can even bring to a halt Units of cavalry or of Creatures of Large Size.



Regular

WARRIORS OF THE ABYSS

Due to its proximity to the fortified cities of Tir-Nâ-Bor, most of the bodies Mid-Nor has taken possession of are those of unlucky dwarven warriors. These rotting shells are then condemned to fighting their brothers in the name of their worst enemies. The warriors of the Abyss are the main body of the Despot's armies. Only being the receptacles of a part of their master's essence, their life is unimportant and they are generally sent to the front lines to absorb the impact of the enemy's charge. Indifferent to the wounds inflicted upon them, they strike back blow for blow, worrying more about sending their opponent to the grave than about preserving their own miserable existence.



Artillery

FIRE-SPITTERS OF MID-NOR

Some dwarves of Mid-Nor have been given the gift and privilege of being able to use magic by their master. These individuals, known as "lictors," are, among other things, able to summon and control demons for a variable lapse of time. They notably use this talent to force demons to build mighty artefacts. Some of these are magic objects of great power, but the most common ones, such as fire-spitters, are strange weapons made to support the possessed hordes during large-scale battles. These machines are infused with demonic powers, and project bursts of corrosive flames onto their enemies, inflicting them with horrible burns that are impossible to heal using traditional means. Only treatment of magic origin is able to appease the suffering caused by this substance.



Special

INCUBUSES OF THE DESPOT

The dwarves of Tir-Nâ-Bor are not the only beings that the Despot's corrupting power has enslaved. Many other life forms have received the demon's accursed gift and are now subjected to his evil will. There are numerous other abominable creatures crawling in the darkness at the depths of the chasms. The incubuses are one of these, and though their appearance seems more grotesque than that of their brethren, they count among the most formidable fighters in the Despot's legions. Able to regenerate their wounds, they also secrete an acid substance that burns flesh as well as steel, which they use to coat their weapons.



Collector of Mid-Nor.



The cyclops of Mid-Nor sows terror among his enemies.

ELVES

THE AKKYSHAN ELVES

THE
AKKYSHANS

EMBODY

*all the cruelty that
nature is capable
of. Woe to those
who venture into
the spooky Forest
of Webs where the
shadows come to life!*

ARMY

Beyond the Behemoth Mountains, on the coasts of the sea of Söl, lies a forest of Darkness where the worst nightmares can spring from the shadows and take their terrified prey to an undesirable fate. This sinister place is Ashinân, the domain of the Akkyshan elves.

Here and there it is claimed that Akkyshan spider-women devour their males and that their slaves are only there to be sacrificed in combat.

Reality is different. The Akkyshans haven't all been touched by the metamorphosis that transforms their holy warriors into arachnoid furies. And their women don't look down upon all men with disdain. The Akkyshans are perfectly aware of their rightful place in their people's matriarchal hierarchy. As for the slaves... the rumours are true!

EMBLEM

The Spider

CAPITAL

Lythis

ALIGNMENT

The Meanders of Darkness

ALLIANCES

Limbo of Acheron, alchemists of Dirz, dwarves of Mid-Nor

CULT

Lilith, the goddess of blackness

MAGICIANS' PRIMARY ELEMENT

Darkness

SCAËLIN'S TRAGEDY

The history of the Akkyshans began several dozen years after the end of Serrëlis. The only heir to the throne was Silmaë's daughter Scaëlin. Her beauty was radiant as the sun, sweet was honey and intoxicating as the scent of the flowers of Laureken. The princess was so perfect that even the gods noticed her. One of them decided to give her a visit using one of his faithful.

Beauty also heard the news and found Inspiration disguised as a simple courtier. Discovering his attraction for a mere mortal, Beauty went into a fit of anger and bewitched all of the palace's guests. When dawn came, all Scaëlin saw in mirrors and her servants' looks was the reflection of ugliness itself. The princess didn't appear before her subjects that day, or on any of the following ones. One night Beauty appeared before her in the shape of a spider with a shimmering body and presented herself as Lilith, the Black Widow. Lilith mocked her rival and offered a deal: she would give her her lost beauty back if she swore to worship her unflinchingly. Scaëlin accepted without

hesitating and thus became the Widow's first priestess. She was invested with incredible powers and didn't hesitate to use them, drawing her closest servants along with her. Her mind was suddenly confronted with the reality of the physical transformations her body underwent every time she used her dark magic. Every day her obscure powers made her look more like the Black Widow she had sworn to serve.

The doctors sent by her father and courtiers who worried about her health didn't take long to discover, at the risk of their lives, that the palace had become a monstrous lair in which Evil reigned as master.

Scaëlin managed to escape and was hunted across the Emerald Forest by her former suitors. In a final burst of fury and despair, she sacrificed what was left of her beauty by casting a curse onto all of the women of her people.

The dishonoured princess and her court settled a cave in the forest of Ashinân. A short time later their offspring was born and claimed a whole territory in the Widow's name. They took the name of Akkyshans, the Spawn of Blackness.

ELVES

THE SPIDER'S BROOD

The more numerous the warriors of Lilith are, the more their thirst for blood is intense. The pretentious generals of Light who have tried to march on the Forest of Webs have discovered at a great price that the Akkyshans have no survival instinct at all. The Akkyshans' rage consumes everything in its path.

AKKYSHAN BLACK WIDOW

Lilith, the goddess of blackness, marks the cruellest of her female fighters with her dark imprint. After several months of suffering in a cocoon of black silk, the chosen ones become black widows - holy warriors who are part-woman, part-spider. Like the arachnid whose voracious appetite they share, their deadly grace hides a superhuman dexterity and herculean strength.

AKKYSHAN SPIDER

Hidden in the shadows of the Forest of Webs, the city of Daëlit is the cradle of the sect of spiders, the Widow's fierce assassins. These fighters, who are born to kill, learn to move and eliminate their victims without making a sound. They have no fear of perishing for their cause. On a priestess of Lilith's order, several of them can spring forth from the shadows in an instant and embark on a hunt that only ends either in victory or in death.



• GEOGRAPHY •

It's hard to describe the strange impression that takes the traveller by the throat when he enters the Akkyshan elves' territory. The place is dominated by a disquieting tranquillity mixed with the smell of rot and death. The forest's density and its macabre appearance strengthen this feeling of oppression. One needs a very good reason, if one is not Akkyshan, to confront such an inhospitable place. The impetuous harmony of life that one observes in the Emerald Forest gives way to a most merciless natural selection.

On the contrary to Acheron or Syharhalna, Darkness hasn't destroyed or corrupted anything in Ashinân. It has simply extinguished the flicker of hope to replace it with limitless cruelty.

• ALPHABET •

p	t	c	b	d	g	f	v	s	z	ch	j	g	l
At	K	h	f	e	f	v	s	z	p	z	l		
r	m	n	gn	x	ng	i	é	è	a	â	ô	o	
ou	u	æ	eu	e	in	un	an	on	y	u	w		
y	y	æ	ø	ø	œ	œ	ø	ø	j	y	w		

THE SHADOWS COME TO LIFE

Sheltered in the Forest of Webs, the Widow's priestesses have had all the time they needed to prepare the merciless war they will wage against the Daikinees. The Akkyshans have always openly declared their hatred for their former brethren: sooner or later Scaëlin would reign over the domain promised her and the emerald of Quithayran would then become the obsidian of Lythis.

The mentality of the Akkyshans and that of the alchemists of Dirz have a lot in common. These two civilisations seem to be fascinated with each other despite the distance that separates them. The Akkyshans also have allies in Acheron. Despite the

relationship that once bound Scaëlin to one of the masters of the accursed barony, the ties between the two countries are often limited to commercial trade in gems of Darkness and slaves of all peoples.

The dwarves of Mid-Nor have contacted the Akkyshans several times for specific reasons such as sharing of bounty or extending their territory. Every time the elves of Lythis were stupefied when they realised that the Despot's dwarves knew beforehand where their next battles would be fought and sometimes showed up there to give them a hand.



THE DWARVES OF TIR-NÂ-BOR

OBSTINATE TO THE DEATH,
*the dwarves form a
people divided between
tradition and technology.
They have fortified the
Aegis Mountains and are
readying themselves for
the war of the world's end.*

ARMY

The dwarves, a proud and tenacious people, live in the heart of the Aegis mountain chain ever since the world is the world. The legends of the plains say that these lofty summits, which touch the domain of the gods, are alive. Rock comes to life with a secret shiver and the mountain rumbles and smokes to the rhythm of huge mechanisms of bronze that animate the underground cities of Tir-Nâ-Bor.

The dwarves have lived for a long time by their own means without counting on anyone and without taking part in the dangerous game of treacherous alliances. Their homeland is their soul and strangers are rarely welcome. Those who live on the plains have perpetuated their people's martial traditions while those of the mountains pierced the secrets of the forge and of steam. They all await the Argg-Am-Orkk, the final age, an era of destruction predicted by the gods.

There is no longer any time left for experiments and for helping each other, for the long wait is over with the coming of the Rag'narok. It is time for war. The dwarves raise their weapons and await death with their feet firmly planted on the ground. He who lives last, lives best!

EMBLEM

Boar

CAPITAL

Kâ-In-Ar

ALIGNMENT

The Paths of Destiny

ALLIANCES

Griffins of Akkylannie

CULT

Odnir, god of the mountains

MAGICIANS' PRIMARY ELEMENT

Earth



• HISTORY •

As far back as their writs can remember, the dwarves have always existed, just like the animals and the mountains. Like many others, the history of the nation of Tir-Nâ-Bor begins during the Winter of Battles.

At the time the climate was so harsh that herbivores began hunting other animals to feed themselves. Civilisations did the same and the people that was harassed the most was the only one to have stocked up massive reserves: the dwarves... That is when the gods came to them to offer a deal. Their children, the giants, were dying and their heavenly parents were no longer there to come to their aid. So the gods invited the dwarves to their domain of the Aegis, thus protecting them from winter and the desires of the other peoples in exchange for food that would allow the giants to survive. The deal was made and the dwarves settled the caves of the Aegis Mountains. Tir-Nâ-Bor was born.

When the Winter of Battles was over the dwarves appeared from their sanctuary: some returned to the plains and got on with their lives while others decided to remain in the mountains. So the dwarves lived through the ages, renewing the vow that bound them to the gods of the Aegis. Tir-Nâ-Bor developed, sheltered from need: the mountain dwarves discovered the secrets of metal and the power of steam. As for their brethren of the plains, they became formidable warriors. In time the dwarves' isolationist traditions became less rigid and they finally decided to go and explore Aarklash. That is how Tir-Nâ-Bor came to sealing its first alliance, that with the Empire of the Griffin...

Alas, an important event caught the dwarves with their backs to the wall: the appearance of the demons of Mid-Nor. The divinities of the Aegis are powerless, for the god of the chasms is their equal... Until now the dwarves always felt protected from outside threats, but this one comes from the inside.

Has the hour of the Argg-Am-Ork, the end of days, finally arrived?



• GEOGRAPHY •

The Aegis Mountains can take pride in their height and also in the diversity of their ecological and climatic systems. Many animal species thrive on their grassy plateaux and in their valleys, while others survive the intense cold and the endless snowstorms at their peaks.

The Aegis Mountains act as a barrier that influences the whole region's climate. The cold currents of the seas of Ephren and of Migol collide with the volcanic activity of Akhylahn, causing much climatic turmoil on either side of the reefs of the Fangs of Fire. The combination of these two factors leads to a cruel paradox: strong warm winds sweep the desert of Syharhalna before rushing into the canyons of Bran-Ô-Kor. This doesn't make the land of the orcs any milder: these same winds, laden with sand and dust, end up making the air, already overheated by the leaden sun, unbreathable.

• ALPHABET •

A	B	C	D	E	f	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
Z	Y	æ	ω	V	ū	t	s	R	ϕ	P	φ	η
N	O	p	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
œ	L	k	j	i	h	ç	f	e	ð	ç	B	ϕ

THE RAG'NAROK

Never has a representative of a different people, not even a Griffin, been able to go any further than the great hall that serves as the entrance to the dwarves' underground cities. These halls are often used for markets or trade fairs for exchanges with the outside world, but they are always very well guarded.

The dwarves have many more enemies than they have allies: orcs and Wolfen regularly launch raids on the outposts of the surface fortresses in order to steal metal to forge their own weapons. The alchemists of Dirz and the Drones respectively target the forge's secrets and the sanctuary of the gods. Their attacks are a lot rarer, but much deadlier. A few necromancers have been spotted prowling near the abandoned city of Lor-An-Kor and were chased away after a hunt lasting several weeks. In spite of all this the dwarves' true enemies remain those who have dishonoured

them. The goblins' opportunism and mediocrity are opposed to the values shared by the dwarves. The only one responsible is the one who pushed them to revolt: as long as they haven't managed to exterminate Rat, the usurper god, the dwarves would not know peace.

Rat is most certainly the cause of the second thorn in the dwarves' side: the Darkness that saw the birth of the goblins' god has taken possession of an Ancestor, thus turning brother on brother. Mid-Nor and his Possessed rise from the depths to try and subjugate their kin of Tir-Nâ-Bor. How could Hyffaid, the divine patron of Mid-Nor, let such a catastrophe come to pass?

OF HARDENED STEEL

The dwarves of Tir-Nâ-Bor are endowed with a personality that measures up to their constitution: one of hardened steel. Once on their way, nothing can turn them from their objective, whatever means are used and the powers against them may be.

THE DWARVES OF TIR-NÂ-BOR

OF HARDENED STEEL

The dwarves of Tir-Nâ-Bor are, with the Griffin Empire's soldiers, the most disciplined warriors on the whole continent of Aarklash. Courageous and resistant, they only suffer from one weak point: their slowness (MOV 7.5). They cannot really hope to take their opponents by surprise or to react very quickly to enemy manoeuvres. Their deployment must therefore be carefully thought out, for they will barely have the pleasure to reorganise once the battle has begun. For the proud warriors of Tir-Nâ-Bor there is no reason to run: they are the rock on which all waves break!

COMMANDERS- IN-CHIEF

With DIS rates between 7 and 12, all dwarf Characters of Tir-Nâ-Bor can claim the leadership of an army. Two among them are, however, naturally destined for this job. **Kaël the Irascible** (in his First or Second Incarnation) has the advantage of being exceptionally mobile for a dwarf (MOV 15). Furthermore he can increase his Discipline/ DIS and his Courage/ COU by forming a war staff. **Slower** (MOV 7.5), **Tan-Kaïr** (DIS 12; Leadership/30; Living Legend) can command a very high number of Units.

SOLDIERS OF THE PLAINS

Despite a relatively low Resilience (RES 4), soldiers of the plains are in reality as resistant as Griffin conscripts thanks to the "Hard-boiled" ability. They thus partly make up for their lack in Initiative. In addition to this their Strength/STR can go up to 6 if they are equipped with hammers, which makes them particularly efficient against other Regulars and when facing creatures or lightly protected cavalry such as Kelt centaurs. When opposed to troops of higher level they only have a slim hope of winning, but their Resilience can allow them to block a much more costly Unit than theirs.

ARMoured CHARIOTS

Due to its low manoeuvrability, an armoured chariot can usually charge only once. However, this charge is not only deadly but can also considerably disrupt the opponent's strategy. If elite troops, such as Khor warriors, are transported on its board (they can disembark at the end of the charge) and it is accompanied by several Khors on razorback, then the chariot can create a practically indestructible focal point that can break the enemy's momentum. This then lets the slower dwarven troops advance and get organised as they wish while the chariot's gun turret pummels the opponent.

When they are described as being narrow-minded and stubborn, the dwarves don't take offence, on the contrary. Their way of thought has kept ingrained traces of the Winter of Battles, when their people had to fight day and night to protect its food reserves. This cultural trauma still persists in the form of a strong desire for autarchy: the dwarves are reluctant to trust anyone, for deep down they know that as a last resort all peoples prefer treason to sharing. When danger is near, a dwarf will simultaneously close the door to his house and to his heart, no matter what may happen to the poor soul who remains outside. Earning a dwarf's friendship and extraordinary generosity is harder than climbing a mountain, but once they have been won, then nothing will make them falter... except for disloyalty, which is often a declaration of merciless war.

THE UNDERGROUND CITIES

The Aegis Mountains get their name from the dizzying altitude of their highest peaks, which in dwarven folklore are said to reach the domain of the gods, the Aegis. Over the centuries the dwarves have fortified the place and made it impregnable, though a traveller can cross the mountain chain without ever seeing a single warrior of Tir-Nà-Bor. The inwards of the Aegis are criss-crossed

by a gigantic web of underground galleries that are sometimes high and wide enough for a giant to walk upright or for a whole column of fully equipped warriors to march through. These tunnels connect the fortresses at the surface and the underground cities like a priceless network that was carefully and rigorously thought out.

Only a dwarf can know how many cities are hidden beneath the mountain flanks. The most known among them have no reason to be envious of the beautiful cities of the neighbouring empires, on the contrary. The dwarves even manage to cultivate fields of crops and to raise farm animals in them! Steam allows every home to be supplied with water and heating. Strange machines travel along the caves' walls and throughout the underground network, ready to take passengers wherever they want. Lighting is ensured by growing luminescent lichens, called hysneh, on sticks like torches or like household plants inside tinted glass lanterns.

DWARVEN SOCIETY

The mountain dwarves are unequalled blacksmiths whose weapons and armour are unrivalled, except perhaps by the Akkylannians.

The dwarves of the plains' way of life differs from that of their troglodytic brothers, yet the relations between the two "families" are full and

cordial. Those who settled the plain of Naël-Tarn live in fortified villages and, like their ancestors, they keep up their people's martial traditions. For them, every good dwarf must be a good warrior! How many young dwarves eagerly await the moment that they can go to battle and maybe become one of the formidable heroes that are the Defenders of the Plains?

Among the dwarves, authority often lies in the hands of the family's patriarch, the Firstborn. Every city is led by a circle of family heads, which is placed under the responsibility of the oldest one among them, the Elder. Logically, the Elders of all the cities lead the whole of the dwarven nation, and their august assembly in turn chooses its leader, the Senex. More than just the mediator of the Assembly of Elders, the Senex is the only dwarf with two voices in their votes by show of hands. Seeing that the Assembly of Elders has an even number of members, the Senex wields considerable power...

THE GODS OF THE MOUNTAINS

Despite their differences, all dwarves worship the same pantheon of gods. They have a special place in the hearts of Tir-Nà-Bor's inhabitants, for they aren't seen as the creators of the race. The gods of the Aegis are their protectors and allies, in the same way that the dwarves are the protectors



As strange as it is unstable, the dwarves of Tir-Nà-Bor's arsenal is above all terrifying – and destructive.

KAHINIR THE SAVAGE

The son of Mol-Dan Hank-Haïrn, who fell into disgrace among his people, Kahinir led a life of vagrancy for a long time, hunting down his father's assassins with the hope of rehabilitating his memory. His peregrinations led him to great many places including the fabulous city of Laroq, the fortress of the Cynwäll dragon knights, where he remained for some time before continuing on his quest. What happened then is more of a mystery. It is said that he ended up finding his father's killer, but that he didn't manage to fully quench his thirst for revenge. Whatever the truth may be, today Kahinir has rejoined dwarven society and has put the knowledge he gathered during his journeys to use to become one of the most prized armourers of the time.



KHORS

In their version on foot, **Khor warriors** can benefit from two types of equipment. Against opponents with a low resistance but a high Strength rate, such as Sessairs, the profile equipped with a shield gives better protection (RES 10) and gives Khor warriors the freedom to attack without worrying about the blows they receive. On the other hand, when faced with heavily protected enemies such as Griffins, the version with the two-handed sword offers better efficiency (STR 7) against opponents wearing armour. **Khor warriors on razorback** are true masses of steel who can stand up to any opponent thanks to their exceptional Defence (DEF 6) and an excellent Resilience (RES 12). However, they lack in Strength and are generally used to block the most dangerous enemy fighters. A bit less resistant (RES 8), the **Khor warriors on assault razorbacks** are slightly stronger and in addition benefit from the "Brutish charge" ability, which makes their charges more devastating. For those who wish to deploy a true strike force, the Khor knights of Uren are made for them. They benefit from steam equipment and an additional combat die, which makes all the difference.



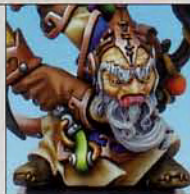
STEAM

Because of their low mobility, the strategy of the armies of Tir-Nā-Bor is usually not surprising. However, the introduction of troops with steam equipment has given them an unpredictable edge that can catch their enemies off balance. Thus simple **forge guardians** (14 A.P.) can reach an impressive Strength (STR 12!). Their weak Attack rate (ATT 2) not leaving them much hope of hitting too skilful opponents, these warriors are more in a position to confront other heavily protected regulars, such as Griffin conscripts (or even Creatures), as long as they manage to surround them.

Thermo-warriors are better and more resistant fighters, and moreover they benefit from Fear. All these parameters, in addition to their potential bonus in Strength, make them especially efficient against opponents such as Wolfen or Devourers. Steam equipment can, however, prove to be instable. No one is sheltered from an incident, and it is best not to use this type of equipment when it isn't necessary (but when it is, then one shouldn't hesitate to use it at all!). It is possible to avoid incidents by equipping boilers with pressure regulators or by integrating a mechanical familiar or a provost of Uren in the Unit, for example.



• Tan-Kaïr •



• Magnus
the Mystical •



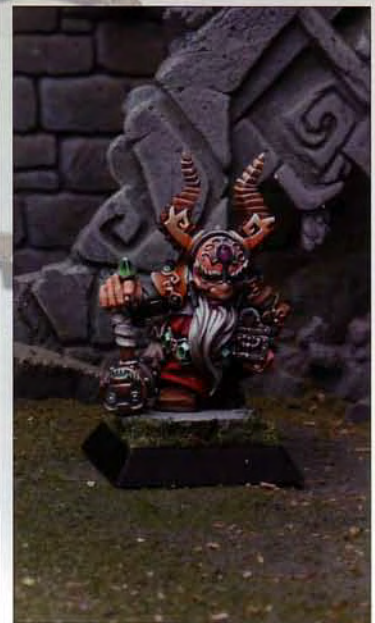
• Elghir the Resolute •

φVh nL,mgZ,tmVh
wāVh wāRVfç

and allies of the children of the gods, the giants.

Odnir is the father of all the gods. The dwarves say that he was born of the encounter between Gheim, the Original Fire, and Nylheim, the Void. This giant gave birth to Aarklash and to all beings that inhabit it. Lyfh is Odnir's mysterious wife, the goddess of life and of death who delivers women during childbirth and whispers into the ears of the dying. Caradoc is the god of commerce and of subterfuge. No one can hear him, for his voice makes one deaf... Uren is very popular among the dwarves, for he is the god of the blacksmiths. He sometimes blesses warriors by giving them a part of his power. His brother Bleddig is more esteemed among officers for he is the god of the warrior nobility: courage, boldness and strategy are his domains. As for Gylfa, she reigns over nature and all things of love. Her cult is especially followed among the dwarves of the plains.

And finally Hyffaid, who has a special place: he is the god of the Argg-Am-Ork, the battle that will destroy the earth. Few dwarves dare to openly worship him, for it is under his patronage that the Ancestor named Mid-Nor left to confront the brotherhood of the god Rat and returned centuries later at the head of the Possessed, who now threaten Tir-Nā-Bor.





Regular

SOLDIERS OF THE PLAINS

While the mountain cities make up the fortified heart of Tir-Nâ-Bor, the villages of the plains principally have an agricultural vocation and help supply the fortresses in the Aegis with food. Their protection is therefore essential for the survival of the entire population. So small forts have been raised all over this region in order to prevent all raiding attempts by the many bands of goblin pillagers and others that infest the area. These forts are manned by garrisons of soldiers of the plains, young dwarves who are doing their military service under the command of great champions known by the name of "defenders of the plains." Thus every young dwarf must devote twenty years of his existence to the protection of his lands before returning to civilian life.



Artillery

DWARVEN BOMBARDIERS

Skilled smiths, the dwarves of Tir-Nâ-Bor can also, despite their conservative character, prove to be innovative and inventive, especially in the field of weaponry. Thus, under the guidance of two visionary armourers named Bâl-Khan and Fenggar, they have recently developed a whole arsenal using the energy of steam. Steam cannons were the very first weapons to benefit from this revolutionary technology. Equipped with a portable boiler linked to a huge steel barrel, this machine is so cumbersome that it must be handled by a team of two servants. In spite of this, it remains much easier to handle and faster to move than any other piece of artillery of equal power.



Elite

KHOR WARRIORS

The caste of Khor warriors is one of the most prestigious in the hierarchy of the armies of Tir-Nâ-Bor. Joining this elite corps is a dream for many ambitious young warriors hungry for glory, but the Khors only recruit their members among the fighters who have already proven their courage, their skill at wielding weapons, and their abnegation.

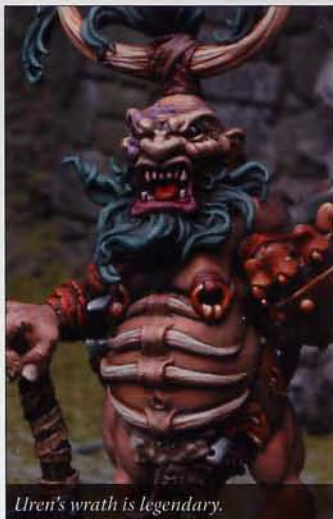
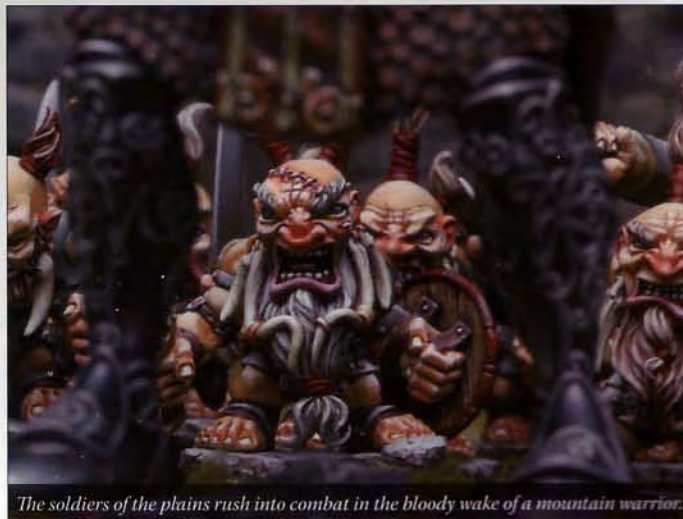
Those who are chosen then receive the great honour of wearing the order's traditional armour and bearing its coat of arms. In battle these fierce warriors are the rocks that never give up an inch of terrain to the enemy and return blow for blow without blinking. Talking about them, an officer of Alahan once declared that "confronting a Khor is like attacking a block of granite, the only difference being that the rock doesn't hit back!"

BOMBARDIERS

Bombardiers may seem very imprecise at first glance, but with their firing range (30-60-90) they can easily place themselves within medium or short range of their target. When also taking into consideration the potential Strength of their projectiles (STR 22), it becomes obvious that these teams are best suited for hunting fighters of Large Size. Thanks to his steam bonus a bombardier can make any minotaur, troll, cyclops or other Creature bite the dust. Characters of Large Size or sitting on mounts are also choice targets for the bombardiers since their size gives them a bonus on their Aim Roll.

UREN'S SONS

Like all other creatures of Large Size, Uren's sons are particularly efficient against Units of foot soldiers who they can decimate thanks to deadly devastating attacks. Furthermore their Resilience (RES 10) combined with the "Hard-boiled" ability makes them especially hard to wound. Uren's sons also have an asset that makes them true Character killers: the combination of their "Brutal" and "Master strike/2" abilities, associated with their steam weapons, lets them strike blows whose Strength/STR can surpass 30!


Uren's wrath is legendary.

The soldiers of the plains rush into combat in the bloody wake of a mountain warrior.

THE GOBLINS

OF NO-DAN-KAR

*THE GOBLINS ARE NUMEROUS,
extremely resourceful and incredibly
sly. One should never trust them
and not be deceived by appearances:
nothing can resist them!*



ARMY

When dealing with goblins one should never trust appearances. Their prolific race has multiplied all over Aarklash. Wherever you may go, they will already be there before you. When anger takes hold of them, they gather and swarm over their enemy.

A very long time ago the goblins were the dwarves of Tir-Nâ-Bor's slaves. Attempting to enchain them was madness: at the calling of the god Rat and using their strength in numbers, they fled while causing an indescribable panic. So they founded an empire in the swamps of No-Dan-Kar and then spread all over the continent. According to the brash-est among them, they have already conquered Aarklash!

The goblins' tireless vitality is both their greatest quality and their biggest fault. Among the goblins there are an impressive number of inventors who must also be sorcerers, or else how could they make their extravagant machines work? The goblin race is divided into a multitude of tribes that don't all speak the same language. And many goblins would have a hard time naming the emperor of No-Dan-Kar, Izothop.

Scattered, the goblins are a nuisance. United by a common language and under the same banner, they would become a scourge.

EMBLEM

Rat

CAPITAL

Klûne

ALIGNMENT

The Paths of Destiny

ALLIANCES

Devourers of Vile-Tis,
orcs of Bran-Ô-Kor

CULT

Rat, the god of the throngs

MAGICIANS' PRIMARY ELEMENT

Air

• HISTORY •

Establishing a timeline of the great events that have marked the peregrinations of the goblin people is a superhuman task. For from north to south, east to west, even in the furthest corners of Aarklash, the Rats are everywhere.

The goblins originally lived in the north of the Aegis Mountains. They were grouped into small, primitive clans living in the depths of underground tunnels. Their fearful temperament didn't really incite them to venture to the outside, which they considered to be the domain of the gods and of monsters.

Their history was turned upside down the day that the dwarves, coming from the southern mountains, settled in their territory.

Did they take the dwarves for envoys of the gods or even for the gods themselves? This remains a mystery. But after some time they began bringing them food and small statues of carved stone. This amused some dwarves. Others

watched this with great interest. These creatures were puny but numerous. So the dwarves joined in their game.

First they ordered them to dig galleries and to develop underground caves. The goblins carried out these tasks willingly and with fervour. But while doing so they discovered numerous veins of metal. Within a few years all of the goblin tribes were enslaved. This situation lasted for hundreds of years, but it couldn't last eternally. The goblins became aware of the fact that the dwarves weren't the divine beings they claimed to be. There was a great uprising and for a long time the tunnels echoed with the noise of battle. The goblins outnumbered the dwarves, but the latter were stronger, better armed and still inspired great fear in their opponents. The goblins left the Aegis Mountains and scattered in small groups. Most of them crossed the Zokorn River north of the mountains and found refuge in the swamps of No-Dan-Kar.



• GEOGRAPHY •

Hidden in the shadows of the Aegis, No-Dan-Kar is a land that is unpredictable, treacherous and infested with swamps and vermin. The Zokorn River is probably the only thing that makes this place inhabitable. Everywhere else the elements show themselves in their worst light: putrid chasms open in the rock corrupted by an infertile earth. The presence of vegetation is irregular and the thickets often hide at best unfriendly forms of life, even though they are usually harmless. Yet the goblins are satisfied with it and thrive there in a more than reasonable way, which is all they care for! The most intrepid among them sometimes try their luck in the most isolated parts of the Plateaux of Giants. There the soil is richer and the forests are lush.

• ALPHABET •

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
ⱱ	Ⱳ	ⱳ	ⱴ	Ⱶ	ⱶ	ⱷ	ⱸ	ⱹ	ⱺ	ⱻ	ⱼ	ⱽ
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
Ȿ	Ɀ	Ⲁ	ⲁ	Ⲃ	ⲃ	Ⲅ	ⲅ	Ⲇ	ⲇ	Ⲉ	ⲉ	Ⲇ

THE RAG'NAROK

Wherever on earth they may live, all peoples of Aarklash have one day dealt with goblins. Though many consider them to be a bothersome pest, their relations with certain nations are sometimes complex.

Some goblins are specialised in the sale of slaves. Yet all goblin merchants are not slave traders. Many of them are honest salesmen who travel across the continent selling the wares pillaged by the pirates, highwaymen and other bandits with whom they maintain excellent relations.

They are also on pretty good terms with their "cousins" of Bran-Ô-Kor. This relation is obviously in their interest since the goblins have discovered a new source of wealth in the orcs' territory: petroleum!

This flourishing commerce has let many goblins establish themselves in the biggest cities of No-Dan-Kar, and some even among the nobility of Cadwallon. They name themselves "duke"

or "marquis," and though no one is fooled, no one would dare make fun of them openly since their fortune lets them pay for a lot more than just titles of nobility.

So within a few hundred years the primitive people that was once enslaved by the dwarves has become one of the main actors of life on Aarklash. Nowadays, though many powers openly show contempt for the Rats of No-Dan-Kar, none would risk taking lightly the underlying threat they represent.

KLÛNE, THE MUSHROOM CITY

The biggest concentration of goblins known to date is located on the plateau of No-Dan-Kar. Their most ancient cities – Klüne, Züog and Barg – are in the swamps along the northern coast where the plateau descends to sea level at the mouth of the Zokorn River.

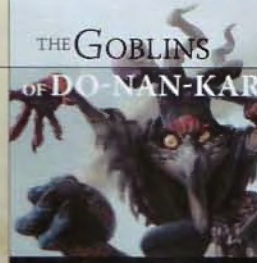
Today Klüne is considered to be the capital of the goblin nation. This is where the goblins fleeing

THE GREEN SWARM

The troops of No-Dan-Kar are generally not disciplined, resistant or gifted for combat. On the other hand they are numerous. With fighters whose value is often less than 10 A.P., goblin armies usually count on outnumbering their enemies in order to submerge them. Any losses suffered don't matter very much; thanks to the "Reinforcement" ability there are always more goblins to take the place of those who fall. The biggest difficulty is then for their opponents to hold out until the end of the battle without being flooded by this merciless tide.

COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

With Discipline/DIS rates most often around "5," goblin Commanders-in-Chief can barely claim to keep control of their numerous troops. Yet the latter's insignificant cost allows a Leader to be given to all Units in order to ensure at least one basic Order for each of them. If goblins must confront fear-inspiring opponents, then using full war-staffs when possible is also suggested. The terrifying **Golborak** (DIS 8; Living Legend) nevertheless represents a most efficient Commander-in-Chief, in addition to his potential for destruction.





MILITIAMEN

With characteristics that are globally below average, the Klûne militiamen are the most representative fighters of the goblin armies. They do, however, have three advantages. Firstly, their optional equipment lets them increase one of their combat characteristics to an average level. Secondly, their speed (INI 3) allows them to attack first at least as often as most of their opponents. Finally and foremost, they only cost 6 A.P each, which makes their losses insignificant at their level. In a fray there will always be a militiaman to take the place of those who are slain.

GAS-BLOWERS

Goblin gas-blowers are a tactical resource that no goblin Commander-in-Chief would do without. The range of possibilities offered by their gas vapourisers can, if they are used wisely, change the course of a battle by reducing the opponent's strategy to nothing. When placed at the front line of a huge army, a few gas-blowers let the biggest goblin Units advance unseen by enemy marksmen (thanks to the "veil of soot") while preventing the enemy from charging them. It is also suggested to keep small Units of gas-blowers a bit to the rear of combat Units. Like this they can intervene by the flanks to use their other gases right at the heart of the fray.

the Aegis Mountains settled to escape the dwarves. In the heart of the marshes they discovered the ruins of an ancient city and thought the place perfect.

Currently Klûne is one of the most amazing cities. Over the decades the heart of the city has vastly spread in area. Goblins proliferate at such speed that their slums grow every day like mushrooms.

The old centre of Klûne is surrounded by ramparts of stone and wood, but for a long time already dwellings have been built outside of this boundary. The outskirts are ten times more populated than the city centre. Most of the time the "houses" are built against the trunks of giant mangroves and small habitable annexes are built up in the branches to protect the inhabitants from floods. These hovels are made of wood and reed and of all kind of odds and ends pillaged in the four corners of the continent.

The old town, though founded on the ruins of a city that was surely prestigious in its time, also has the same chaotic character. The imperial palace is the best example of this penchant for anarchy. Built on the site of an ancient temple, it is at once a remarkable collection of priceless elements and a true anthology of bad taste. Every goblin emperor has brought his personal touch to its decoration without bothering to put it

into harmony with that of his predecessors. Immense statues stolen from Akkylannian temples stand next to Kelt idols. In the middle of the throne room stands a menhir engraved with Wolfen inscriptions, which was brought back from the forest of Diisha at the cost of hundreds of goblin lives. In his time, Emperor Fréhon decided to have the council hall repainted. So he made a deal with two Daikinee prisoners who won their freedom by painting a magnificent fresco for him.

THE RULE OF GOLD AND FAITH

Goblin society more or less resembles this disorderly structure. Rather than being an empire united around a strong leader, it really is a plutocracy, a society in which money rules as master and whose dignitaries give themselves pompous titles. The barons, dukes, counts and others don't stem from any kind of nobility. Most of them would even have a hard time tracing back their lineage. They are just goblins who are smarter than the others and who have managed to make a fortune, no more, no less. For among goblins, wealth opens all doors!

The notion of empire is therefore limited to an association of influential individuals united solely to resist the rise of those who are constantly trying to take their place.

Under such circumstances it is obvious that conspiracies and mysterious disappearances are daily routine in Klûne and in other goblin cities.

There is, however, a power other than that of gold. That of faith.

The cult of Rat is particularly steadfast and its faithful, like its prophets, are legion. The goblin "nobility" must constantly deal with this parameter, which can push the populace to take up arms in the name of any holy quest. It has happened that a goblin city is emptied by two-thirds of its population because it followed a visionary going on a crusade. The goblin ruling classes are extremely wary of Rat's faithful. They are constantly under surveillance and generous sponsors handsomely encourage their tranquility. But when one of them suddenly begins stoking the people's religious fervour with a bit too much spirit, he is usually "called back to be with Rat." Yet it happens that the emperor encourages the faithful to wake certain passions among the population. Like this raids made really only to pillage take on the appearance of a true holy war. This has many advantages. First of all, gathering an armed force in a climate of great religious fervour takes a lot less time than normal conscription. Secondly, the goblins fight with much greater courage when they do so in Rat's name. And last but not least, and here lies the cynicism of their manipulation, when goblins act



Captain Krill and his terrifying pirates sow terror in the seven seas.

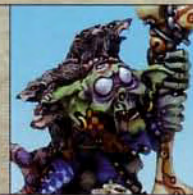
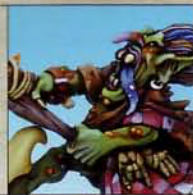
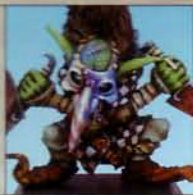
KOBALT THE CAUSTIC

One of the principles taught to candidates at the No-Dan-Kar Battle Academy in Klüne is that in order for a goblin army to always move forwards, its soldiers must fear its officers more than its enemies. Though he is only a sergeant, Kobalt has perfectly assimilated this rule, and consequently treats his soldiers in the most odious of ways. Tyrannical and irascible, he never misses a chance to make an example of one of them to maintain some kind of order and discipline among his troops, never hesitating to publicly humiliate his victim – or even give him a thorough thrashing. This is why, despite his relatively old age and his weakness for mushroom brandy, his superiors as well as his underlings still respect him.



STRÖHMS

Beyond the masses of marauders, spearmen, militiamen and the likes, the armies of No-Dan-Kar can count on the support of a dependable elite corps: the Ströhms. For 18 A.P. the **Ströhm warriors** on foot have good combat characteristics (4 in ATT or DEF depending on the chosen profile) and especially have an exceptional Resilience (RES 4) for goblins. Thanks to this they can be used to absorb the impact of enemy charges or, on the contrary, to act as a second wave by attacking the flanks of enemy Units bogged down by a multitude of goblin regulars. Slightly stronger (STR 6) and better fighters, the **Ströhm bodyguards** can in addition be assigned to protect a Character, which naturally designates them to escort Commanders-in-Chief, magicians and faithful in battle. Less efficient than other heavy cavalry (such as the knights of Alahan or the orcish brontops riders), the **Ströhm knights** are no less a respectable strike force, and are especially cheap (27 A.P.). Resistant (RES 8), hard-hitting (STR 10 when charging) and endowed with the "Brutish charge" ability, they additionally benefit from an exceptional movement rate (MOV 20), which gives them a good chance of pinning down enemy creatures and cavalry before they can take the initiative of charging.



• Cyanhur •

• The Babayagob •

• Xhérus the Visionary •

ARCHERS

Just like Klüne militiamen and marauders in a fray, **goblin archers** apply the principle of outnumbering to their projectile weapons. What does it matter that their short bows only have a modest range (15-30-45) and low strength (STR 2)? These marksmen are only worth 10 A.P. apiece! Furthermore, though their bows' performances are rather mediocre, they themselves are rather good archers with an Aim/AIM rate of 3. Also, when they unleash a volley, then a true hail of arrows falls onto their opponents. Of all of these, some arrows must end up hitting a gap in their armour.

MUTANTS

Less resistant than Ströhm warriors (RES 5 or 4 depending on the chosen profile), **goblin mutants** are, however, stronger (STR 6 or 7) and less costly (14 A.P.). Moreover, they benefit from either the "Additional limb" ability, which lets them reach a good combat value (4 in ATT or DEF), or the "Mutagenic/0" ability, which can hold many surprises for their opponents. (Since one mutagenic point affects five fighters endowed with Mutagenic/0, it is suggested to form mutant Units made up of multiples of 5.)



in their god's name they willingly offer most of the fruits of their ransacking to the members of the clergy, who then pass a big part on to the nobles.

In such a climate it isn't very surprising that the emperors' longevity is at the least uncertain. And in some cases appearances can be misleading. One very savoury anecdote is the fact that the current emperor, Izothop, isn't the same Izothop who ruled until recently. The latter accidentally died by suffocating under his pillow and his successor, careful not to cause any kind of disorder, took on the same name for the common good.





BALL AND CHAIN

Goblins suffer from a lack of Courage and it isn't rare to see them refuse to charge a fear-inspiring opponent. In order to minimise the consequences of such inconveniences, the goblins with ball and chain offer certain possibilities that should not be neglected. With a fairly low cost (8 A.P.), they have the advantage of being endowed with the "War cry" ability, which, though it isn't enough to frighten the enemy, exempts them from having to make a Courage test when charging a fear-inspiring opponent. Thanks to this, the goblins with ball and chain can create a point of focus while waiting for their brethren to muster the courage to give them a hand.

TROLLS

For 69 A.P. a troll is a safe investment (STR 12). Such a creature gives a goblin army the strength and the reliability that the rest of its troops generally lack. Like all other creatures of their size, trolls are perfect for decimating infantry or for unhorsing heavily protected riders such as the knights of Alahan. Moreover, they have the particularity of being extremely hard to kill thanks to their Resilience (RES 12) and the "Survival instinct" and "Regeneration/5" abilities, which largely make up for their low Initiative (INI 1).



Regular

KLÛNE MILITIAMEN

Supposedly charged with making some kind of order reign in the goblin capital, the Klûne militia is, in reality, corrupted to the bone by the city's "nobles." In the best of cases, its role is limited to protecting the interests of wealthy dignitaries who encourage its vigilance with generous bribes. However, the militia's auxiliary activities are very often more than just breaches of their supposed responsibilities. Intimidation, racketeering and violent repression are the daily lot, so much so that for many goblins of low birth the only way to escape these extortions is to take up the bludgeon themselves. Thus the militia's ranks are never in shortage of volunteers more willing to deal out beatings than to receive them, especially if this activity, in addition to being entertaining, is also lucrative!



Marksman

GOBLIN SPEARMEN

Courage has never been and most probably never will be the goblins' strong point. The stories being told about the spearmen tends to strengthen this impression even more.

According to rumour, General Xylocaïn founded this armed corps after the first full-fledged battles the armies of Klûne had to wage against their neighbours of the forest of Diisha. It is said that most of the goblins were so terrified by the Wolfen that they didn't dare get within thirty paces of their opponents and simply threw their weapons at their faces before running off as fast as their feet would carry them. Repeatedly confronted with these military disasters, General Xylocaïn spoke these now famous words: "If they're too chicken to fight, they should at least learn to aim!"



Special

GOBLIN GAS-BLOWERS

Originally designed to cleanse the streets of the goblin capital by chasing the vermin towards the slums, the gases developed by goblin engineers quickly found a military use. The first ones were simply used to create smoke screens between the goblin ranks and the enemy army. Officially this innovation was made to protect the troops from enemy projectiles, but in reality the goblin officers saw a whole different advantage provided by the thick smoke: it prevented their troops from seeing the enemy before it became too late for them to flee! Later a lot more harmful gases appeared. According to rumour, some of these substances were even developed with the help of Syhar neuromancers.



Winged death taking off.



The goblins' mountain-breaker can pulverise any enemy.



THE ORCS

OF BRAN-Ô-KOR

ENDOWED WITH HERCULEAN STRENGTH,
the orcs have shattered the chains that held them in slavery and conquered Bran-Ô-Kor, the land of the brave.



ARMY

The result of the crossing of human and goblin genetic strains, the orcs were created during the Age of Steel by the technomancers of the Scorpion. While trying to create warriors to defend their empire, the depraved scientists didn't think that the seeds of insurrection had been sowed in the blood of their creatures. The orcs revolted and took the road to freedom, not without having caused an indescribable massacre. Their journey led them to Bran-Ô-Kor, the "land of the brave." The god Jackal took them under his wing. After having ensured their strength by giving them the soul of noble warriors, he opened them the gates to the world of spirits.

Like this the orcs survived for decades despite the dryness of the ochre soil, the thirst for revenge of their creators, and the numerous invasions of their territory. Nowadays they are numerous enough to claim their sovereignty. The raïks, the orcs' warlords, are getting ready to begin the war that will either give them a new life or cause the destruction of their people.

EMBLEM

The Jackal

CAPITAL

None

ALIGNMENT

The Paths of Destiny

ALLIANCES

Devourers of Vile-Tis, goblins of No-Dan-Kar

CULT

Jackal, god of the canyons and of thunder

MAGICIANS' PRIMARY ELEMENT

None. They use instinctive magic.

• HISTORY •

When Shamir was still only the capital of the very young Scorpion empire, goblin emissaries appointed by Klüne presented themselves and requested a meeting with the city's leaders. All they got for an answer was a forced stay in the biosurgeons' laboratories.

To their great satisfaction the biosurgeons discovered that some of the goblins' genes already had latent mutagenic qualities that only needed to be stimulated.

The third generation of orcs they developed lived up to all their expectations.

The Syhars quickly realized that the orcs were resistant to authority and could even be aggressive towards their masters.

Basyleüs Antykaïn, the high priest of Arh-Tolth, ordered all orcs put to death. When the orcs saw the crossbowmen get into position in front of their cells, they immediately understood what was happening. Raging mad, the orcs managed to break open the bars of their cells. Taken

by surprise, the crossbowmen trapped in the narrow corridors were slaughtered barehanded by the unleashed giants. Then the orcs freed their brothers and sisters before spreading out in the city.

A long and exhausting march then began for the fugitives. Of the four hundred orcs who left Shamir, only half reached the canyons north of the Syharhalna. They then decided that this land was theirs and that, like the sly and patient Jackal, they would end up vanquishing the Scorpion.

After their journey through the desert of Syharhalna, the orcs named their territory Bran-Ô-Kor, "the land of the brave," and they swore that nothing and no one would ever force them to flee again.

For decades Jackal's protégés hid to escape the expeditionary corps sent by the Syhars. Then, more and more often the hunters became the hunted. Nowadays the alchemists don't dare trespass the territory of Bran-Ô-Kor without a good reason and sufficient manpower.



• GEOGRAPHY •

Bran-Ô-Kor's landscape is made up of a multitude of ravines, deep canyons, arid plateaux and rocky peaks rising into the sky. The dominant colour is the red of the rocks whose erosion has covered the ground with a thick layer of ochre-coloured dust.

Scorching winds permanently sweep the plateaux and rush through the narrow ravines with a loud howl.

The fauna and flora are more varied around watering holes and along the small rivers that twist and turn at the bottoms of gorges. These rivers are only fed for a few months a year when the snow melts at the lower peaks of the Aegis Mountains, but this is enough to turn certain canyons green for most of the year. In these zones the fauna of Bran-Ô-Kor is the most abundant.

• ALPHABET •

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
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THE RAG'NAROK

Until now, with the exception of a few adventurous individuals, the orcs barely sought to surpass the boundaries of their territory. Their everyday life was still too full of uncertainties concerning their very own survival for them to spend time on other things than defending their land.

The first to take up contact with the orcs were no doubt the goblins. The orcs were sincere in their friendship for their close kin, but the goblins came to them more out of interest than compassion. The orcs quickly became aware of the crude attempts at manipulating them made by No-Dan-Kar's emissaries. Nowadays the tribes of Bran-Ô-Kor still consider the goblins to be natural allies, but they have only limited trust in them.

Other travellers spontaneously came to them. At first the orcs were wary of them, for their appearance was terrifying and their mores even more so. They called themselves

Devourers and the mystics sensed such a dangerous aura in their presence that they wanted to chase them away.

But the emissaries of Vile-Tis persuaded the orcs to listen to them. In the hearts of the warriors of the Beast blazed a hatred for the Syhars even deeper than that of the orcs. Since then the orcs regularly inform the Devourers of the Scorpions' activities.

For some time now the orcs have begun showing a vague desire for conquest. Their chiefs have learned the art of war. Today they are ready to take revenge on their past.

THE LAND OF THE BRAVE

The orcs live in perfect harmony with Bran-Ô-Kor. According to them they don't occupy the land but they are part of it, for it has always been promised to them. The shakas, the orcish priests, claim that the god Jackal made Bran-Ô-Kor rise from the desert to welcome their people. So the orcs are extremely respectful

TO LIVE FREE OR DIE

The orcs were created by Syhar technomancers to be warriors, and, though they are far from being the brainless brutes one might expect, their main assets lie in their combat characteristics. Except for the Wolfen, no other people on the continent of Aarklash equals the orcs' physical qualities, and very few can rival them in the handling of weapons. So in battle Jackal's children count mainly on this superiority to make the difference in hand-to-hand combat, but their troops have a relatively high cost in A.P. and are therefore regularly outnumbered by their opponents.

COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

Orcish war chiefs have sufficient Discipline/DIS rates, considering the relatively small number of Units they are led to command. With a DIS of 7 and the rank of "Special," **Avangorok** makes an excellent Commander-in-Chief, just like **Umran Kal** whose Discipline is lower (DIS 6) but who has better Leadership (15 cm) and is also more mobile (MOV 15 cm). However, when required by the circumstances, the command of great coalitions of tribes is given to the Jackal Lord **Shaka Morkhaï**, who has a DIS of 8, Leadership/30 and the rank of "Living Legend."



BRUTES

Though their rank is "Regular," the **orc brutes** combat characteristics (ATT 4; STR 7) allow them to confront most veterans and even enemy elite troops on an equal footing. Thanks to their optional equipment their Strength/STR can be increased up to 9, in which case they become able to menace well-protected fighters. However, if their army's strategy has them encounter opponents with a low resilience, then it's best to equip them with scimitars whose +1 bonus in Initiative/INI lets them make up for their low rate in this characteristic.

ORCS WITH CROSSBOWS

Orcs with crossbows are versatile marksmen because their characteristics in hand-to-hand combat are higher than those of most regulars of other armies. Due to their AIM of 2 and their crossbow's fairly limited range, they are better at ambushing than at giving support with long-distance fire. An effective tactic is keeping them in reserve to have them enter by a side of the battlefield and shoot at an enemy Unit already engaged in hand-to-hand combat. Like this they can place themselves within short range to harass the enemy's flanks and rearguard.

of their environment. They only burn dead wood and only hunt the strict minimum needed to feed themselves. For their religion is very marked by animism, and they believe that every natural thing, be it animal, plant or mineral, has a soul.

The orcish tribes are scattered throughout all of Bran-Ô-Kor. Some say that this proves a shortage of social cohesion among this people. This is false. The multiplicity of communities is a necessity that has its roots in the orcs' history and in their surroundings.

In the years that followed their flight, the Syhars sent numerous expeditions to Bran-Ô-Kor to eradicate their creations. Therefore the orcs made it a habit to live in small communities in order to escape their pursuers more easily.

Nowadays they are able to defend themselves, but their land is so poor and food is relatively scarce. This makes it impossible for a populous community to survive for long in the same place. For this reason the tribes are dispersed in such a way as to make the most of the natural resources available.

But when faced with adversity, the orcs have always been united. Of course every tribe has its chief, but they know to give up their position when the mystics name the Kal-Raik, the warlord who commands the united tribes. For the orcs respect the value of their brethren as much as

they do that of their land. As a general rule they never bother with quarrels for power. On the contrary, they are always proud to serve under the orders of a chief whose qualities are respected by all.

When an orc claims to be his land, he isn't speaking in symbolic terms. The mystics' rites give them a more than intimate relationship with their direct surroundings. This bond is closer still than the one uniting the Kelt shamans with the Elemental Realms. For where a Kelt is able to project himself and communicate with the neighbouring planes of Aarklash, an orc pushes his separation from himself so far as to actually become an animal, tree or rock.

As its name says, the instinctive magic practised by the orcs is an innate aptitude.

Concerning this subject some theoreticians put forward the hypothesis that it isn't really true empathy with nature but rather an astounding capacity of abstraction. This allows a receptive subject to completely free itself of its physical limits in order to project itself mentally to the heart of a new element.

Based on this postulate, it is highly probable that this power appeared following the genetic manipulations the Syhars had made the orcs undergo. As for the orcs, they are intimately convinced that it is a gift that Jackal has given them to allow them to prosper

in a territory where no one else but they would be able to survive.

Whatever the exact origins of this absolutely unusual psychic potential may be, it is the source of one of the strangest forms of magic found on Aarklash.

It is commonly admitted that in matters of magic, essence precedes form. Nothing is created, nothing is destroyed, but everything can be transformed. So like this magicians, whichever paths of magic they follow, perceive and manipulate the essences of the Elements and of the Principles to alter their form. The orcs do not handle these essences, for they themselves are the essence of their magic. And this essence is instinctively able to copy certain other elemental essences to acquire their properties. Thus an orcish shaman is his own source of power, but he needs a model to be the catalyst of his magic.

**THE TRACKERS
OF BRAN-Ô-KOR**

For many years after their flight from Shamir, the Orcs had to rival in tactics and in tenacity with the Syhar expeditions that were sent to purge the edges of the desert of their presence.

It is during these decades of guerilla warfare that the caste of the Trackers was born. These Orc warriors have broken all bonds with their



Shaka-Morkhai, the Jackal Lord, leads his clan across the desert.

SHAKA UMRUK

Orcish *Shakas* are the faithful of the god Jackal. Invested by divine inspiration, their sole presence is enough to galvanise the warriors, who are then convinced to be fighting under their divinity's benevolent gaze. Umrük is the Shaka of the tribe of the Dead Tree, which was also that of Avangorok before he became a Tracker. Umrük is one of the oldest and surely also one of the wisest Shakas of Bran-Ô-Kor. Many are the young faithful who come begging him to teach them his priceless experience. It is even said that Shaka Morkhaï himself came to see him shortly before entering the Jackal's Lair to receive the supreme sacrament there...



BRONTOPS

Brontops riders have the advantage of combining the strong points of heavy cavalry and those of large Creatures. Endowed with a good Movement rate (MOV 15 cm) in spite of their imposing size, they also have a decent Initiative rate (INI 3). However, their true asset lies in their strength when charging. Thanks to a Strength/STR when charging of 12 combined with the "Brutish charge" ability, they can trample most of their opponents. Furthermore, they have the advantage of being set on a Creature base whose wide front edge allows them to come into base-to-base contact with a greater number of enemy fighters than regular cavalry and therefore profit even more from their exceptional charging potential. After the initial impact, a brontops rider can face a high number of opponents thanks to his two combat dice and his Strength/STR of 9 or 10 depending on the profile being played, and especially thanks to the "Implacable/2" ability that lets him make consecutive and deadly devastating attacks. In short, brontops are very versatile: they can use their powerful charge to finish off an imposing Creature or rush to the heart of infantry Units to trample their foot soldiers.

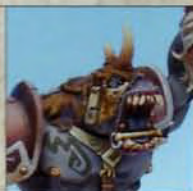


JACKAL WARRIORS

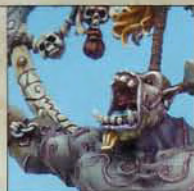
The Jackal warriors were a result of the Syhars' quest for the perfect warrior. With impressive combat characteristics (ATT and DEF 5; STR 10), they have only two weak points: a fairly low Initiative rate (INI 2) and an average Resilience (RES 6) for fighters of their size. So it is better to devote most of their combat dice to their defence if they don't manage to impose themselves on the Initiative Roll. On the other hand, if they take their opponents by surprise, then they can place their bets on an all-out attack, their high Attack/ATT and Strength/STR rates leaving their enemy very slim chances of survival.

AMOK SLAYERS

Faster and more resistant than Jackal warriors, yet with similar combat characteristics, the Amok slayers' only disadvantage is their higher cost in A.P. (37). This is nevertheless a more than profitable investment! With the "War fury" and "Master strike" abilities, combined with their good Resilience (RES 9) and their "The Amok Flail" special capacity (which improves their offensive potential), the Amok slayers can stand up to any elite troops, especially since the "Brutal" ability allows them to succeed terrifying master strikes more easily.



• Kal Shadar •



• Shaka-Morkhai
the Jackal Lord •



• Tamaor
the Vulture •



tribes to vow their lives to the defence of their sacred lands.

Having become masters in the art of laying traps and ambushes, the Trackers always hit there where they are least expected.

A Tracker's life consists of confrontations, privation and suffering. These warriors, who are completely vowed to their people, are always ready to intervene wherever needed. Truce is rare.

Since the beginning of time the vulture is a survivor that finds its means of sustenance wherever it can, without asking itself for how long it has been there. The vulture is the guardian of Bran-Ô-Kor whose piercing eye relentlessly watches over the desert, the canyons and the plateaux. No intruder escapes it and its presence is a sign that death is about to strike. The vulture is patient. It knows to wait for hunger, thirst and exhaustion to bring its victim to its knees before giving it the final deathblow. Seeing all this, it is not surprising that the Trackers have chosen this raptor as their totem.





Regular

ORC BRUTES

By essence and by nature, orcs are warriors above anything else. This is so true that when the winds of war blow over their territory, not a single one of them doesn't answer the calls of their chiefs. Impressed by their massive build and their strength, the men who have had to confront them have nicknamed them "brutes." Seeing the determination with which these warriors fight in combat, one can only admit how fitting this moniker is. Bigger than most of their opponents by a head, they relentlessly bring their enormous scimitars down to chop off the limbs, crush the armour and shatter the bones of their enemies without the faintest pity for those who violate their territory.



Marksman

ORCS WITH CROSSBOW

Most of the time the orcs are considered to be an underdeveloped people. Yet, though it is true that their culture is exempt of any technology and that most of their weapons were salvaged from their opponents' corpses, they nevertheless have a sense of observation and are able to copy certain mechanisms. Thus, using a Syhar crossbow of the sands as model, they managed to create a crossbow that may be crude and less precise, but which is just as powerful. These weapons are still rather uncommon because the orcs who know how to build them are not many. Moreover, orcish warriors generally prefer close combat. However, the use of these crossbows during guerrilla operations is becoming more and more frequent.



Cavalry

BRONTOPS RIDERS

Brontops are among the biggest animals on the continent of Aarklash, and though they aren't of an aggressive nature, they can prove to be extremely dangerous when they feel threatened. The orcs very quickly saw the use they could make of these mastodons if they managed to train them as mounts, and so began domesticating them. A brontops's training is long and delicate, the main difficulty being making them docile enough to ride without making them inoffensive or even fearful in combat. However, the result is worth the trouble, for rare are the fighters who can resist a charge by one of these pachyderms. Made furious by the fighting, they mercilessly trample and gore anyone mad enough to get near them.



The jackal doesn't fear death.



The charge of the brontops awakens the thunder of Bran-Ô-Kor.

RAPTORS

While most of the orcish army's troops are made more for a simple tactical plan that consists of advancing towards the enemy to strike him with blows until dead, the **orc raptors** represent a tactical alternative that can considerably perturb the enemy's plans. Thanks to the "Scout" ability and their combat drugs they can strike anywhere right in the first round. Their main objective should be to neutralise enemy marksmen and war-machines to which the other orcish troops are often very vulnerable.

MAGIC

Magic is certainly not the orcs' strong point. They have access to few rituals and their spells often have negative side effects. However, they nevertheless have certain advantages, beginning with the fact that a result of \square is not an automatic failure when making Mana Recovery Rolls. Moreover, their Warrior-mages have certain spells that are especially efficient in *Rag'Narok*, such as *Vortex of Quartz* or the animistic shaman's spells, which greatly increase the brontops riders' strength.



THE WOLFEN
OF YLLIA

THE WOLFEN OF YLLIA

THE MOON IS FULL

and her terrifying children, the Wolfen, are on the hunt. Soon the howls of the pack's warriors will mingle with those of their prey.



ARMY

It is said that in ancient times, in the age when the gods still walked on Aarklash, the moon-goddess gave her blessing to the most powerful of the wolves. He became the First-Born, the ancestor of the noble and savage race of the Wolfen.

Ages have passed. Whole empires have been founded and have fallen into oblivion. Vain warlords fight amongst themselves for their few lines in the annals of history. But the Wolfen remained faithful to the eternal cycle of nature that has made them the continent's greatest predators.

Alas, the age of the Rag'narok has befallen Aarklash, bringing with it the corruption of Darkness and the promise of a war without mercy. Anger consumes the heart of the Wolfen and obscures their pure soul. The packs of war multiply. Those who once fought for domination now struggle for the very survival of their race.

EMBLEM

The Moon

CAPITAL

Mörn

ALIGNMENT

The Paths of Destiny

ALLIANCES

Daikinee elves

CULT

Yllia, the moon-goddess

MAGICIANS' PRIMARY ELEMENT

Water

HISTORY

The history of the Wolfen is in their image: instinctive, savage and primitive. The people of the Moon hasn't kept a real trace of its evolution.

Yllia's wolves perpetuate their culture through a collection of legends transmitted by word-of-mouth or represented by shamans on Strips of Whispers. The great Wolves of the past and of the present are thus shown as an example and define the Wolfen's warrior ways better than dates...

➤ One night Yllia came down from her celestial throne to visit the Realm of mortals. While the Moon was filled with wonder by nature's beauty, her gaze landed on a pack of wolves. The purity and the power of these noble animals subjugated the goddess. Of all creatures, no other deserved to become lord of this Realm more than the Wolf.

Except perhaps the Craftsman: this being had rejected its instinct in order to build tools. The Moon plunged her gaze deep into a body of water and there she saw the future: the Craftsman would use his corrupt mind to enslave the Wolf. This should not be so.

So Yllia went to see the most powerful of all wolves and blessed him with her love. Thus the First-Born and his descendants, the Wolfen, would eternally punish the Craftsman's offspring for having foresworn the laws of nature.

Yllia revealed to her children the secrets of her magic by teaching them the language of the Strips of Whispers. The Moon also showed them how to forge weapons as sharp as her own crescent.

But Yllia had to prevent the Craftsman's corruption from tainting the mind of her warriors. Every time the Wolfen used the goddess's divine gifts, Yllia came to test their purity by demanding a sacrifice, be it small or large.

That is how the Wolfen crossed the centuries, always faithful to their traditions and to their powerful instinct. They prospered all over Aarklash, travelling in packs and raising Circles of Stones wherever Yllia transmitted her wisdom, her strength and her magic.

BORN KILLERS

Speed, strength, ferocity... The Wolfen are born to fight and few adversaries can stand up to them in singular combat. Yet they are more used to hunting in small groups than to fighting in large-scale battles where strategy and discipline play an essential role. Thus their first weak point is their lack of Discipline. The second one is the direct consequence of their high cost in A.P. With an average value between 30 and 40 A.P., the Wolfen are usually outnumbered (a situation from which they nevertheless very often manage to emerge victorious thanks to their exceptional martial qualities).

COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

Paradoxically, the low number of fighters the Wolfen armies are generally made up of is an advantage from a strategic point of view. Having fewer Units to control, their Commanders-in-Chief suffer less because of their low Discipline than other armies such as Sessairs or goblins. In these conditions the pack leaders (Asgarh, Killyox and even the Second Incarnation of Syriak) can lead their brothers to victory by taking advantage of the speed of their troops to make up for the disadvantage bound to the fact that they risk losing the Tactical Roll fairly often.

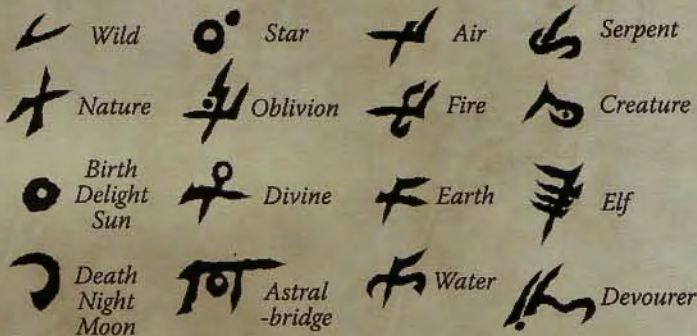


GEOGRAPHY

Everything leads to believe that in ancient times Diisha was trapped in a sarcophagus of ice. The latter melted and gave way to vast tracts of sparse woodland where game is as diverse as it is robust. While retreating, the ice left behind whole rivers of polished stones whose sizes vary from pebbles to hills.

The seasonal cycle is a lot more pronounced in this part of the continent. During the cold season temperatures fall well below the freezing point and cover Diisha with a thick coat of snow that is swept by blizzards. As for the warm season, it lets the pine trees show their full splendour but doesn't keep frost from hardening the ground...

ALPHABET



THE RAG'NAROK

Warlords have been concerned ever since the Wolfen's protectorates started to become fractioned. Today Yllia's children unite around pack leaders as powerful as they are vindictive. More and more often they launch destructive assaults against other peoples without any other apparent reason but the lust to kill. When questioned about their people's ever more violent ways, Yllia's children answer... that only the strong will survive.

A recent phenomenon causes the shamans great concern and constantly shows up in the predictions of Whispers. Ophyr the Guardian has given a name to this peril that threatens the whole of the Wolfen people: the Spawning of Destruction.

This scourge is especially present among the younger generations and pushes the Wolfen to wage war more

and more often and in the most ferocious of ways. Stranger yet, the faithful of the goddess Yllia encourage their brothers to follow this path whenever they aren't themselves at the head of the packs decimating supposed enemies. It is hard to determine if this increase in violence is the consequence of an abandoning of customs or a divine sign, but if it continues in this way, all the peoples of Aarklash will unite to eliminate Yllia's children.

Some Wolfen preach all-out war while others are partisans of harmonious cohabitation, and all turn towards the shamans to take a decision. The latter do not know what to answer: Yllia remains deaf to their appeals.

THE SAVAGE PACK

Wolfen usually travel in packs of several individuals and are ready to place tribal grudges aside when they

FANG WARRIORS

Fang warriors make up the base of most Wolfen packs. There are two different profiles representing them: **fang warriors** and **great fangs**. For 25 A.P. the former are, with hunters and repentants, the least costly fighters a Wolfen army can enlist. Endowed with a good Attack rate (ATT 4) and considerable Strength (STR 9), they are best at confronting armies made up of numerous but not very resilient troops such as goblins. Great fangs have better combat characteristics and are endowed with two Wound levels, which allow them to better resist assaults by opponents who are more dangerous individually.

HUNTERS

With characteristics and a value that are relatively close to those of fang warriors, **Wolfen hunters** are nevertheless faster thanks to their high Movement rate (MOV 17.5). Their speed lets them rapidly move around the enemy's flanks while the other troops charge head on. Thus, thanks to such a manoeuvre, a Wolfen army can catch its opponent in a jaw-like trap, which also lets them avoid being overwhelmed. Beware, however, of enemy marksmen! Hunters, even more so than other Wolfen, are very vulnerable to projectiles (RES 4).

must unite to confront bigger and better equipped armies than theirs.

Two kinds of packs have been observed: nomadic ones and sedentary ones.

Sedentary packs establish a territory, a "protectorate," around the sacred sanctuaries of their people, the Circles of Stones. Most of these domains are known and carefully avoided by those who care for their life. Many others, however, have been abandoned for one reason or another and are now an integral part of a lord's territory. So when a pack appears and reclaims its ownership of the sanctuary, the situation often turns into a massacre. Some sedentary packs mark the borders of their protectorate with Strips of Whispers and use intimidation rather than force to scare off any intruders. Others, however, don't hesitate to mercilessly slaughter those who dare enter their territory.

As for nomadic packs, they follow their game wherever it wanders and only recognise the borders of their people's protectorates. The nomadic Wolfen packs are a constant cause for concern among the populations that are often powerless when faced with the destruction caused by these wandering predators. Crossing paths with a Wolfen pack that is in the midst of a frantic hunt is one of the worst things that can happen to a convoy.

**THE LAW
OF THE WOLF**

The Wolfen respect the traditions of their forefathers. Their nature and intransigence can vary from one pack to another depending on the pack leader's severity or on the abundance of their resources.

Each pack is led by a dominant individual: in times of peace this is often a shaman or a faithful of Yllia who manages the pack's business. In times of war this role is given to the best warrior. Alas, many packs are in a permanent state of war... in which case the shaman becomes Yllia's voice among his brethren. He then inscribes the pack's history and unveils the secrets of the future on carefully prepared Strips of Whispers.

The Wolfen ensure the vigour of their people by pitilessly condemning weakness. If one of their kind is unable to assure his own survival using his fangs or his cunning, his status within the pack quickly sinks until he is finally abandoned by his pack or he puts an end to his life in an honourable way.

**THE CIRCLES
OF STONES**

The protectorates of sedentary packs are the children of Yllia's sanctuaries, for at their centres stand the Circles of Stones that mark the places where

their goddess has appeared. Circles of Stones are sacred places where magic can almost be touched and where the most valiant warriors are buried. This is also where the Wolfen address their prayer howls to Yllia and where rituals are organised every time the moon has a particular aspect.

The greatest of these Circles of Stones is Mörn in the north of the forest of Diisha, the land of the Wolfen. According to legend this is where Yllia gave birth to her children... Once every year, when the winter solstice is nigh, all the packs reunite at Mörn and exchange their tales during great festivities. They also say that it is among the ageless trees of Diisha that the First-Born and the Worgs, the heirs to the moon's immortality, roam.

**THE CALL
OF THE WILD**

No advice, as good as it may be, can prepare a war chief for an encounter with the Wolfen. Waging battle against them is like confronting implacable wild beasts to who killing is second nature. In open ground Yllia's children use their long hind legs to swiftly strike their enemies at their weak spot as if they were chasing a docile herd, and then use their strength to crush their prey before retreating out of reach. In difficult ground, such as a forest, the situation



The Fangs of the Moon—Goddess ensure that the law of nature is respected, namely the survival of the fittest.

ASGAHR

Mörn is the first and the most scared of the Wolfen Circles of Stones. Rising at the heart of the forest of Diisha, it marks the place where Yllia gave birth to her terrifying children. Asgahr is the pack leader of the Path of Opal and the protector of Mörn. After having consulted the oracles, the other pack leaders designated him to bear the sacred arms of Yllia, three legendary artefacts that, when united, generate immeasurable power.

Asgahr, champion of the moon-goddess, must lead his people to the final battle that determines the destiny of the whole of the Wolfen race. This extraordinary warrior is condemned to vanquish.

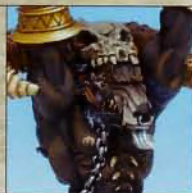
PREDATORS

Predators can be considered to be the Creatures of a Wolfen army. Endowed with combat characteristics almost equivalent to those of a troll or a minotaur, these fierce warriors are able to confront any opponent. There are several predator profiles with differing weapons and characteristics. Among these, the predators of blood of the pack of the Red Oaks clearly stand out from the others. Endowed with the "Hard-boiled" ability (which makes them harder to wound), they can furthermore be possessed by a sylvan animae and thus see their combat potential grow tenfold.

VESTALS

Fragile in appearance, **Wolfen vestals** nevertheless have a formidable asset: their "The Shadows of Yllia" special capacity, which lets them assign their combat dice after their opponents, even when they have lost the Initiative Roll. Sacred vestals have the same capacity, but in addition they can make counter-attacks. Thus, with their high Defence rate (DEF 5) and the "Born killer" ability, which lets them re-roll their failed Defence Rolls, they can protect themselves efficiently while conserving their considerable offensive potential.





• Killyox •

• Ophyr
the Guardian •

• Syriak
the Intrepid •

PROWLERS

Wolfen prowlers aren't as dangerous as predators or great fangs. However, their presence in an army offers many strategic possibilities. They are above all scouts endowed with a formidable crossbow who can set traps within the enemy's deployment zone. They also play the role of mentors: when under their command, Wolfen hunters can acquire the "Scout" ability and learn to set traps. Together, prowlers and hunters then form redoubtable Units of scouts that can rush an enemy army from behind within the blink of an eye.

GRAVE GUARDIANS

The **grave guardians'** combat characteristics are similar to those of great fangs. Yet they are distinguished by their extreme ferocity when encountering certain peoples. Indeed, when facing alchemists of Dirz, warriors of the Drune clan, the Living-dead of Acheron or goblins of No-Dan-Kar, they benefit from the "War fury" ability that, when combined with the "Born killer" ability, makes them especially deadly. They represent a considerable danger for the Living-dead of Acheron thanks to their "Immunity/Fear" and "Bane/Wolfen zombie" abilities.



is even worse: the enemy is isolated, ambushed and cut to pieces before even having time to react.

Wolfen very rarely mingle with other peoples. Their beliefs make any compromise with the Craftsman anathema to them. Despite appearances, the mind of the Wolfen is most often closer to that of the wolf than to that of men. For all of these reasons the Wolves of Diisha are often seen as being monstrous, savage beings that must either be killed whenever possible or avoided as much as possible. Their culture is little known, and most don't even believe that they have one at all!

Generally speaking the Wolfen nation doesn't have any hereditary enemy. The Wolfen nevertheless regularly confront all of the other peoples of Aarklash... The nature of this adversity depends on the situation: it is occasional if the pack is nomadic, recurring if it is sedentary. The forest of Diisha, the homeland of the Wolfen, is thus constantly being assaulted by the Empire of No-Dan-Kar, which wishes to expand its territory at any price. As for the dwarves of the Aegis Mountains and the orcs of Bran-Ô-Kor, they have understood a long time ago that nothing and no one will chase the Wolfen from their frozen forest. It seems that Emperor Izothop doesn't want to hear about it...





LONEWOLVES

Far from being the best magicians in the world, **Wolfen lonewolves** are above all formidable warriors. With a cost in A.P. above 50, a lonewolf benefits from two combat dice. Moreover, thanks to the "Warrior-mage" ability, he has three Wound levels that, associated with a high Resilience (RES 8) and the "Hard-boiled" ability, make him a fighter who is hard to kill. If the need to strengthen his pack's magic potential becomes felt, it is always possible to call on a selenite lonewolf* whose POW is of 2 instead of 1.

CROSSBOWMEN

Wolfen packs can make use of two types of crossbows. The small Wolfen crossbow has a maximum range of 45 cm and a slightly higher Strength (STR 7) than a normal crossbow. Their interest lies in the fact that the Wolfen using them benefit from the "Harassment" ability (which lets the **crossbowmen** fire during the movement phase and take advantage of their high Movement /MOV rate to harass the enemy while remaining out of his range). The second model, which is much heavier, has a range of 60 cm and an impressive Strength (STR 10), making it the perfect tool for injuring the opponent's prize fighters, such as Creatures or Characters.

* Card available in the "Warriors of the Rag'narok" pack.



Regular



Marksman



Special

FANGS

All of the moon-goddess Yllia's children are born with the predator's instinct. They begin hunting at the same time as they learn to stand upright and run. When they reach adulthood, the young Wolfen have naturally become terrifying warriors. They are always at the top of the food chain in the region where they have established their hunting territory.

Wolfen warriors are nicknamed "fangs." Fang warriors and great fangs (who are more experienced) wield their people's traditional weapon, the reaper, by pairs. They use their strength, their speed and their ferocity to devastate enemy ranks by literally "reaping" their opponents.

WOLFEN CROSSBOWMEN

The Craftsman, the force that pushes its prey to build tools to protect itself, is the moon-goddess Yllia's enemy. As a consequence the Wolfen balk at any form of technology. Alas, the Craftsman's slaves have built treacherous weapons that can slay a Wolfen from a long distance: bows, rifles, cannons... To avoid perishing in a degrading way like a deer at a hunter's arrows, the Wolfen have built crossbows. These true ballistae (to a human scale) can stop a galloping warhorse in its tracks or destroy a small war machine.

WOLFEN VESTAL

Certain female Wolfen are born bearing Yllia's mark. Educated by the elders of their kind, they follow the way of the moon-goddess's female warriors. Agile, quick and elusive, they handle their weapons in such confounding ways that no one can anticipate their attacks.

The vestals' initiatory journey is a succession of trials that only the most resistant of them survive unharmed. Yet there are some among them who choose to surpass their limits and undergo the suffering of the rite of the White Shadows. Those who survive become sacred vestals. Fiercer and more skilled than their sisters, they show an indefectible faith and fight to quench their goddess's thirst for blood.



The grave guardians watch over the tombs of Wolfen heroes.



The predators of blood are the strongest and most ferocious of Yllia's sons.

THE DEVOURERS OF VILE-TIS

ARMY

"My name is Zeiren. I am what you call a 'Devourer,' an 'enchained one' or also a 'disciple of the Beast.'

I was once part of the pack of the Moaning Moon in the eastern part of Avagddu. The Beast came one night, borne by a shooting star that crashed in our circle of stones. Vile-Tis, the god of carnage, had been cast out and condemned by his kind to roam Aarklash until time got the better of him. Resolved to get revenge, he told us his story and revealed the gods' terrifying secrets. To prove what he was saying Vile-Tis broke the chains of our ignorance. He showed us Yllia's true intentions for us and every one of us finally felt the truth that had been slumbering within us come to the open like an obvious fact that was ignored for too long a time. Yllia doesn't love her children. Our lust for murder isn't a noble heritage but rather her curse. The gods keep us enslaved and lead us straight to the slaughterhouse.

We made a pact with the Beast. If he prevented the gods from silencing us we would help him get his revenge.

You hate us for our cruel words and the massacres we commit. You fear us because we eat your flesh. Know that you have the choice to be the masters of your destiny or to remain the servile dogs of the usurpers. Don't let anything or anyone decide for you... but just try and get in our way and you will know pain."

— Extract from a conversation transcribed and reformulated by Vistan the Faceless

EMBLEM

The Shooting star

CAPITAL

None

ALIGNMENT

The Paths of Destiny

ALLIANCES

Goblins of No-Dan-Kar, Kelts of the Drune clan, orcs of Bran-Ö-Kor

CULT

The Devourers want the gods to die. Vile-Tis's revelations give them dreadful powers to alter reality.

MAGICIANS' PRIMARY ELEMENT

Water

GUIDED BY THE BEAST,
the Devourers of Vile-Tis sow destruction and death wherever they may go. They are a scourge that the gods themselves are learning to fear every day.



HISTORY

“One night Yllia came down from her celestial throne to visit the Realm of mortals. While the moon was filled with wonder by nature’s beauty, her gaze fell upon a pack of wolves. The purity and the strength of these noble animals captivated the goddess.”

To the Devourers all this is a bunch of lies. Vile-Tis, a fallen god coming from the stars, has revealed the true story of their origins to them.

“One night Yllia came down from her celestial throne to visit the Realm of mortals. While the moon was admiring her own reflection in a pond, a powerful Wolf became spellbound by her beauty and wished to make her his mate.”

Vile-Tis, carried by a fallen star, crashed in the heart of the territory of Ellis, a pack leader. The Wolfen, sensing his incredible ferocity, named him the Beast.

“How could a wolf rouse the love of a goddess? Then came a strange god who offered the Wolf a deal. The Wolf accepted it and the god used his powers to turn the Wolf into a man of divine beauty. The disguised animal introduced himself to Yllia and she gave in to his advances.”

Vile-Tis revealed the gods’ games and the atrocities they made their own children suffer to the stupefied Wolfen.

The rebel god wanted to crush his celestial brethren with his own hands. The gods had united to vanquish Vile-Tis and cast him down onto Aarklash. This is how the insolent warrior god came to share the fate of mortals.

“The moon became aware of the lies when she gave birth to a litter of wolf cubs. Her wrath was terrible: she cursed the Wolf and his children. They would never find love, neither with nature nor with humanity. Their savagery would be their curse. Thus were born the Wolfen.”

In fact, Yllia hated her children...

Dumbfounded and sceptical, the Wolfen asked the Beast only one question: which deceitful and lying god had offered to transform the enamoured Wolf into a man? Vile-Tis’s answer came like a clap of thunder.

The Beast was preparing to confront his divine brothers when Ellis proposed a deal. They both desired one thing: to see the gods die. Ellis and his pack would be Vile-Tis’s warriors if he helped them get their revenge. A new pact was sealed.

Thus were born the Devourers.

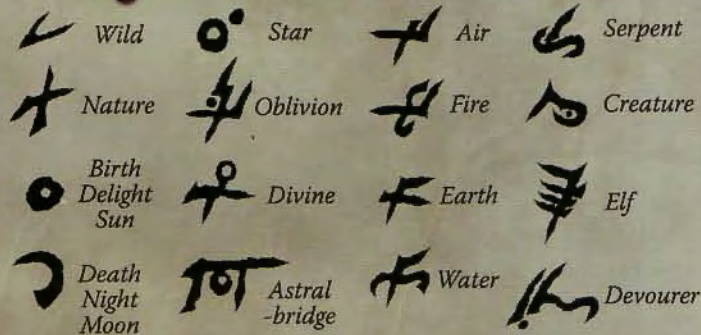


GEOGRAPHY

Before becoming the warriors of the Beast, the first Devourers made up the pack of the Moaning Moon, whose territory lay in the forest of Caer Laen. After having desecrated their own Circle of Stones they scattered in all directions.

The Devourers have no territory of their own, though the first encounters made with them were recorded between the swamps of No-Dan-Kar and the Black Woods of the Drones. Bands have been reported in the Plains of Giants, the Forest of Webs and in Bran-Ó-Kor. They are constantly on the move and leave behind makeshift camps whose boundaries are marked by the mutilated remains of their victims, who are most often of civilised peoples.

ALPHABET



THE RAG'NAROK

Devourers aren't immediately hostile towards representatives of other people. At least not as long as they aren't starving and their interlocutors show themselves to be inoffensive... The Beast's disciples can even prove to be curious and communicative, though it may be in their own unique way. The Devourers have traded a part of their animal nature for a painful and indefinable sensitivity that constantly wavers between good and evil: conscience.

The Wolfen of Yllia only seem to be able to ally themselves with those who appear to be close to the ways of savage nature. A subtle nuance: the Devourers only ally themselves with those who can bear their savagery.

The Devourers have just appeared on Aarklash. Nothing about them can be claimed to be certain and no one knows if their beliefs will survive themselves. Is their different perception of existence and conscience a sign of greatness or of decadence? Some take pleasure in eating their opponents' flesh and others seem to be looking for a goal to pursue during their infernal existence. Never has the moon's curse been stronger than amongst those who have renounced her.

Their crusade against the gods is desperate, and they don't hesitate to sometimes stray in order to satisfy their tenebrous desires. But until now no divinity has been able to crush them. In the hour of the Rag'narok the Devourers are the symbol of the role

GOD KILLERS

The Devourers of Vile-Tis share many similarities with their enemy brothers, the Wolfen of Yllia. Like them, they benefit from excellent combat characteristics, but their cost in A.P. is such that they are usually outnumbered. Devourers often have an excellent Resilience/RES rate and can easily endure barrages of enemy fire. Their Strength/STR, on the other hand, is slightly inferior to that of their cousins, making good troop coordination essential to avoid being bogged down in frays and overwhelmed by more numerous enemies. The army of the Beast is fast, powerful and flexible.

COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

Discipline/DIS is not the Devourers' strong point. Two basic techniques allow this shortcoming to be compensated for: either the inclusion of Leaders in each Unit (so as to generate basic Orders) or the use of a Commander-in-Chief with a moderate cost, such as **Kalyar the Awakened** (93 A.P.), to control the front of regular troops thanks to a high leadership range (15 cm). The Devourers can also count on a merciless and particularly dreadful (FEAR 10) Commander-in-Chief: **Nekhar the Ecstatic**. His Discipline (DIS 6), though low for a Character of his rank, is a welcome asset in the army of the Beast. One of his artefacts, the Arch of Torment, allows his leadership range to be increased to 25 cm. He can then transmit basic Orders to many Units while conserving his additional Orders. Some Units can then be given two Orders and thus play on a level field with a more disciplined enemy.

that the forces of Destiny will play in the war opposing Light and Darkness for the future of Creation.

EATERS OF FLESH

Considering their recent emergence and their low numbers, it is still impossible to know if the Devourers are a people on the rise or a branch of the Wolfen that is destined to vanish. Only Time, the scourge of the gods, will tell. Until now the relations the Devourers have had with other peoples have been restricted to short, often extremely violent encounters. Many a lord has had a hard time enduring the presence of these shadowy Wolfen in his lands. The Beast's disciples owe their name to one of their most dreadful customs: unlike their Wolfen brethren, they don't hesitate to "devour" their victims who fell in combat, sometimes even alive.

WARRIORS OF THE BEAST

The Watcher, a Wolfen close to the Sessairs, has given essential testimony concerning this nomadic community when his human companions questioned him about this new menace. This is an approximate transcript of his testimony, which has been passed around from the mists of Avagddu to those of Cadwallon.

"The Devourers differ greatly from the other Wolfen. Each one of them is absolutely free to do and say as he pleases. Among them there is no hierarchy, no authority of a chief: each one only eats what he manages to hunt. They don't travel in packs but rather in "bands" of several individuals with shared interests. Nevertheless, one of them can very well travel without any other companion but the stars and sell his services to the highest bidder... Such a lone traveller is formidable, for he survives without his companions' help while the gods wish for his death. In times of war as in times of peace they do, however, recognise the skill of the strongest or the wisest amongst them and sometimes accept to follow his orders.

Devourers can show ingenuity as brilliant as that of humans, which they only use to feed their unquenchable thirst for cruelty. Their faith in the Beast, which turns them into merciless warriors, has perverted their animal instinct. They have forgotten that one must hunt to live, and not the other way round! I'm sure that the Devourers could accomplish great acts and yet... I believe that this doesn't interest them.

They barely make a difference between their prey and their enemies. They don't even consume their victims to steal their strength or to fulfil a symbolic act, but only to satisfy an unnatural desire. Their customs are

neither those of the Wolfen nor those of the moon, and even less so those of life. For this reason a Wolfen would try to punish a Devourer on the first chance he gets and this is also why wild creatures flee from them. As strange as it may seem, the Devourers feel no rancour towards either of them.

Under other circumstances I would have shown tolerance. But I cannot accept such monsters as brothers. The way they treat their enemies and the despair gnawing at them are absolutely obscene."

GOD KILLERS

To the Devourers the gods are in no way the creators of the universe. On the contrary, the primordial forces, such as the ones that gave birth to wind, death and magic, have engendered them. The gods are thus just extremely powerful individuals who reign over Creation by enslaving the beings that are weaker than they are. The Devourers know this, for it is a fallen god who guides them towards a fate that will free Aarklash from the yoke of his brothers: this fallen god is Vile-Tis, the Beast, the incarnation of war and carnage. The Beast has taught his secrets to his warriors and protects them from all perils that may befall them. This is why the Beast's faithful manage to infringe the divine laws until they collapse onto themselves in a maelstrom of negation and

VORACIOUS WARRIORS

Costing 30 A.P., voracious warriors are endowed with combat characteristics close to those of elite troops of the most common armies. Furthermore they benefit from two Wound levels and are naturally made to eliminate enemy foot soldiers. Their good defensive values (DEF 5; RES 7) can also allow them to take the impact when faced with more powerful but less numerous opponents. Beware, however, of their Discipline (DIS 0), which represents the frenzy they abandon themselves to in combat. Voracious warriors are limited in the manoeuvres they can make and quickly become uncontrollable without a Leader's presence.

HEAD HUNTERS

The head hunters' high Movement rate (MOV 17.5 cm) lets them intercept fast-moving enemy Units and compensate for the relatively low range (15-25-35 cm) of their projectile weapons, the Stars of the Beast. They also have a formidable special capacity at medium and long range: the faculty to select a second target if they miss the first one. Combined with an Aim/AIM rate of 3, this capacity lets head hunters increase their chances of slaying ever more victims. There is a second reference profile for the head hunters ("hunter of Vile-Tis") endowed with an increased firing range (20-30-40 cm) and the "Harassment" ability.



The art of murder holds no secrets from Managarm and her eclipsantes.

NEMETIS THE SACRILEGIOUS

Nemetis the Sacrilegious is one of the first Profaners of Vile-Tis. His power is nothing compared to that of the faithful of the secular cults, but it grows disproportionately when he attacks places of worship and their guardians. His disquieting presence and his lucid words inspire his companions and guide them on the paths of carnage and of freedom... and of the Beast.



FLESH EATERS

Flesh eaters are the elite of the Devourer warriors. Their strong point lies above all in their excellent Defence rate (DEF 6), which, combined with the "Born killer" ability, allows them to parry most attacks. Against enemy fighters whose Strength/STR is no higher than 6 they can even place all their dice in attack and count on their high Resilience (RES 10 or 11 depending on the profile), which makes them very difficult to wound, for their defence. If they suffer a wound, then they only become more dangerous thanks to the "Possessed" ability and the "Demonic Rage" rule bound to it.

TYRANTS OF VILE-TIS

The tyrants of Vile-Tis are the top grade warriors of the Beast, at least at a non-Character fighter's level. Endowed with extremely high Strength and Resilience (STR 11; RES 11) and the "Fierce" ability, they can stand up to creatures with a greater A.P. value than theirs. To make the most of their high Defence rate (DEF 6) it may be wise to give them Minor Awakened Weapons, which allow them to counter-attack. Equipped in this way, they become true nightmares for their opponents who will be as unable to injure them as they are to resist their assaults.

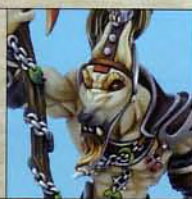




• Managarm
the Traitoress •



• Velris, Prince
of the Impure •



• Bysra
the Black Shaman •

**THE MASTERS
OF CARNAGE**

The Warrior-mages of the Beast's title of "Master of Carnage" is far from being unwarranted, for the combination of their characteristics and their abilities makes them bona fide killing machines. First of all, being Warrior-mages of Large Size worth 60 A.P., they have three Wound levels and two combat dice available. In addition to this, the "Warrior-mage" ability lets them make counter-attacks that are easily carried out thanks to their Defence/DEF of 5 and the "Born killer" ability. And finally, the combination of the "Born killer" and "War fury" abilities gives them the possibility to re-roll failed Damage Rolls. The masters of carnage also have a supporting role thanks to their special capacity called "The Path of Perfection." This allows them to use their mana gems to increase the other Devourers' potential depending on the type of chains they are equipped with. The masters of carnage are endowed with a Movement/MOV of 17.5 cm, allowing them to become Leaders of head hunter Units and to give their support wherever it is deemed necessary.



paradox. In their presence dreams and devotion give way to disillusion and emptiness. Vile-Tis has also given them the secret of metal, allowing them to forge weapons and armour without equal on Aarklash... except perhaps among the alchemists of Dirz. This fact is doubtlessly a valuable clue to the cause of the hatred felt by the Beast and his disciples for the Syhars.

The Devourers are free predators who despise the cycle of life's weakness. Aarklash will learn this in suffering.

**THE PROFANERS'
ALLIES**

The war they have declared on the gods, as well as their ferocious appetites, have drawn the Devourers and the Kelts of the Drune clan together. They both embark on pitiless raids followed by nightmarish feasts. Some Devourers have thus joined the Drones.

But flesh isn't the only bait: profit isn't far behind. The goblin generals of No-Dan-Kar know to take advantage of the Devourers' unclear moral standards and pull them into their wake, for the better and for the worse.

The Devourers' latest allies are the only ones who didn't raise their weapons on seeing them arrive, namely the orcs. The sons of Jackal and the disciples of the Beast share the same taste for independence and especially the same enemy: the alchemists of Dirz.





HALF-ELVES

Vile-Tis's disciples are not exclusively Wolfen. Elves of mixed blood, nicknamed the "Impure," have also embraced the cause of the Beast. Though they are far from having the Wolfen's imposing size, the half-elven **warriors of blood** are no less fighters who should not be underestimated. Endowed with a Defence/DEF of 4 and the "Ambidextrous" ability that lets them get an additional attack die for every successful defence, they are perfect for playing a defensive role strengthened by their Resilience/RES of 7. They can act in this way either in the middle of the battlefield while the Wolfen Devourers outflank the enemy, or at the flanks in order to avoid having their own army be overwhelmed by the enemy. With a higher cost in A.P. but being better fighters than the warriors of blood, **slashers** are perfect for eliminating or neutralising enemy Independents. Thanks to the "Assassin" ability they can hide in any of their camp's Units and choose their target in the fray at the opportune moment. Beware, however, of the type of Unit they accompany, for their Movement/MOV of 12.5 cm doesn't allow them to keep up with Wolfen Devourers. It is therefore better to integrate them in Units made up of other half-elves.



Regular

VORACIOUS WARRIORS

Many Wolfen refuse to believe Vile-Tis's revelations when they discover them. Doubt nevertheless grows in their mind and the echo of an obvious fact that has been ignored for too long comes to rise. Most of them persist in their blindness and remain faithful to Yllia, the moon, the goddess who has always controlled the rhythm of their existence.

Some of them, gnawed at by contradictory instincts, go mad and throw themselves into combat in order to get over with it in an honourable way. The others, their mind and instinct freed from the chains of their old beliefs, join the Devourers.

Voracious warriors are the most numerous warriors of the Beast. Barely has the battle begun that they let their bloodthirsty impulses run loose and give in to an orgy of slaughter.



Marksman

HEAD HUNTERS

Though they share a taste for massacre and human flesh with their brothers, head hunters give privilege to cruelty over savagery when putting their victims to death. While warriors crush and slash the enemy, head hunters go looking for the chiefs, magicians and especially the faithful. A morbid competition then follows and is won by the one who brings back the most trophies.

The Star of the Beast, a thrown weapon with which head hunters slay their prey, is forged by the profaners of Vile-Tis and enchanted by the haruspices. It slices the air looking for blood, following unpredictable trajectories that plunge its targets into a state of confusion.



Special

ECLIPSANTES

All Devourers are equal in war. The females have their place in combat and their incredible ferocity easily equals the fierce violence of the males. The most agile and the most murderous among them are defied, vanquished and then trained by an eclipsante, an assassin of the Beast. Gathered in "Eclipses" around their mistresses-in-arms, they learn to mete out death in a thousand different ways. They also discover their caste's secret techniques, among which are the Black Veil and the Sabbath of the Shadows.

Once their apprenticeship has ended, eclipsantes are free to go wherever they wish and to choose their victims among the Devourers' numerous enemies. Some join a band; others embrace a life of criminal wandering...



Slashers of Vile-Tis



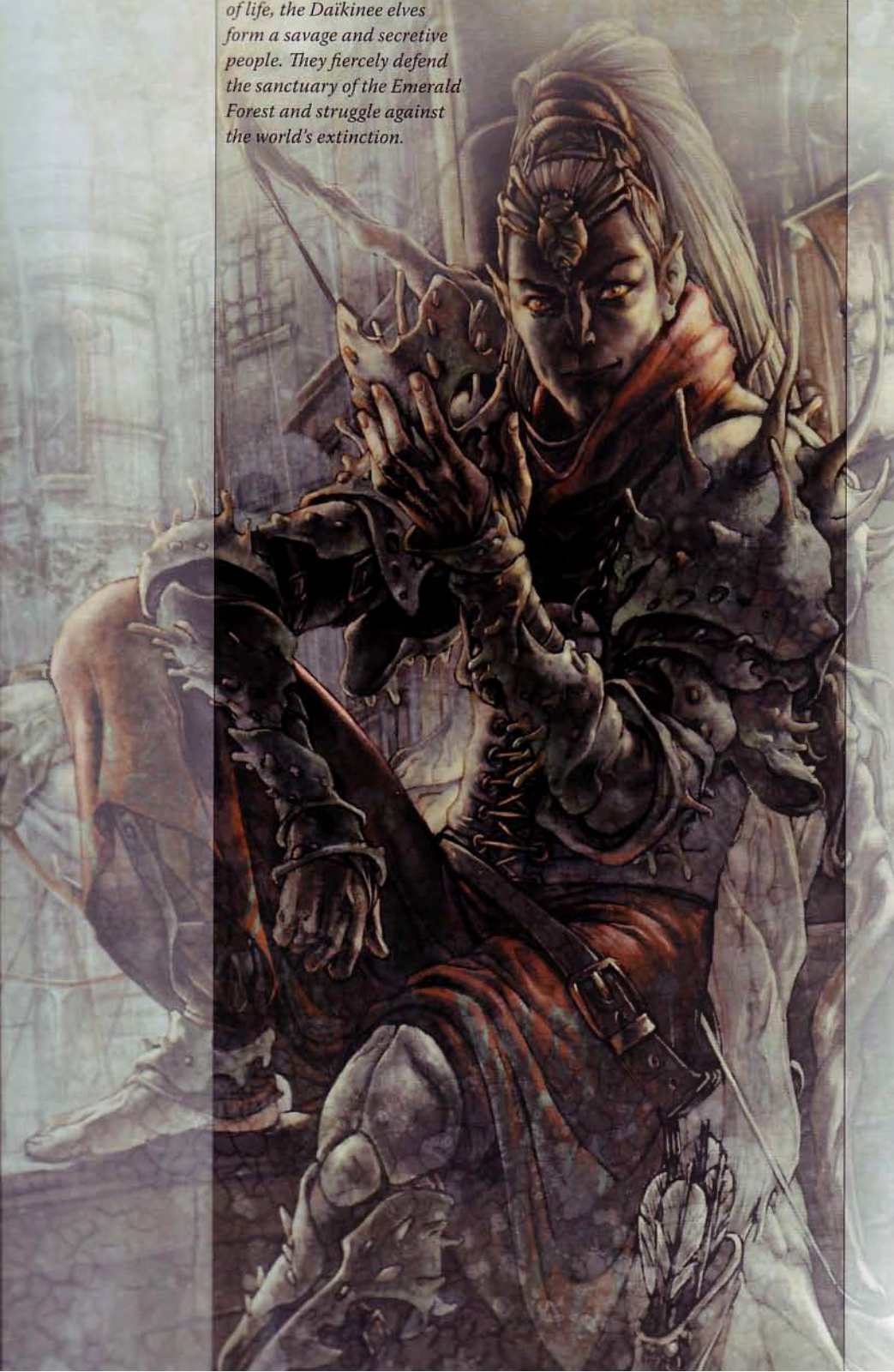
The tyrants of Vile-Tis rip bloody trophies from the enemies of the Beast.



THE DAİKINEE ELVES

WARRIORS OF DREAMS

Guardians of the power of life, the Daikinee elves form a savage and secretive people. They fiercely defend the sanctuary of the Emerald Forest and struggle against the world's extinction.



ARMY

In the other peoples' eyes the Daikinee elves often pass for mysterious and savage beings lost midway between the world of reality and that of dreams. Their organic armour, their composite weapons, and the devastating effects of their poisons make them strange companions and formidable foes. Even when dressed to accompany a diplomatic mission, a Daikinee always keeps instinct sparkling deep within his eyes.

The Daikinees rarely leave Quithayran, their emerald kingdom. Those who venture outside the forest's borders are usually veterans accustomed to the hardships of the laws of nature. When they decide to show themselves, their aura is immediately noticed, for behind their sometimes frail appearance hides a life force that no one can ignore. An individual who bumps into a Daikinee will most probably be the only one to fall, as if he had hit an invisible wall.

EMBLEM

The Scarab

CAPITAL

Laureken

ALIGNMENT

The Paths of Destiny

ALLIANCES

Wolfen of Yllia

CULT

Aoh, the spirit of all life

MAGICIANS' PRIMARY ELEMENT

Water

THE EMERALD PEOPLE



KAËLISS THE SILENT

The Daikinees most often live in tight-knit communities, protected by the lush haven formed by the Emerald Forest. Some, however, still feel the call for adventure and give in to this imperious desire to leave their brethren. Kaëliiss is of this temperament. He embarked on a Sylvae, a Daikinee vessel made of plants, which brought him to Cadwallon. Far from Quithayran he discovered the torment of Cynwë – exile. Cut off from the fayas' influence, he has become a Maalivatë, literally meaning an "uprooted one." Faced with the vice that reigns in the City of Thieves, Kaëliiss is still alive thanks to his exceptional martial talents.

There is no trace of the elves before the Age of Re-birth. Their first steps in Aarklash's history are compiled in the tales of the other peoples. As for the Daikinees' collective memory, it begins at the moment that a handful of courageous warriors leave the Emerald Forest to go looking for the god of dawn.

Aoh, the spirit of all life, had lost his mind. Having become the Spirit of Winter, he sent his warriors to petrify the Eternal Forest. Eäkhyn and Earhë, the spirits of Quithayran, were on the lookout. Eäkhyn, the god of dawn, left to confront Winter accompanied by the fayas, the spirit guardians of nature. Earhë, the goddess of dusk, asked the elves to protect Quithayran while she went to cure Aoh.

When the fayas returned, Eäkhyn had disappeared. All understood the reason why on Earhë's return. Within her she carried Aoh's pain and she gave birth to Wisshard, a gigantic beast.

Wisshard was consumed by an unmentionable hunger that he sought to appease by devouring all the creatures

that passed within his reach. Earhë was still too weak to fight, and the fayas were swallowed up one after the other. Only Eäkhyn could vanquish Wisshard. So the elves and the fayas decided to embark on a quest for the god of dawn.

The Daikinees thus roamed in the borders of History. For a long time they remained an isolated people who resisted the presence of strangers in their territory.

Everything changed about five centuries ago when Queen Faye Në-Inëkia, the wife of King Seos, gave birth to the twins Elhan and Silmaë. At Seos's death, Serrëlis, the war of succession, broke out. Elhan abdicated and founded the Cynwäll nation in the region of Lanever. A generation later Silmaë's daughter Scaëlin succumbed to Darkness and fled. She then cast a terrible curse onto her people: every Daikinee woman would die shortly after having known love. A year and a day later, Scaëlin took possession of the domain of Ashinän without anyone being able to stop her.

Fatality has befallen the Eternal Forest. Quithayran and the fayas are dying off. Darkness has swept over Aarklash... Aoh is ill once again.



ALPHABET

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THE END OF LEGENDS

Unavoidable fatality hangs above the Eternal Forest. Like Wisshard devouring the creatures of Quithayran, Scaëlin's curse gnaws at the Daikinee elves a bit more each day. Their people's women die within hours after having given birth to their first child, thus reducing Quithayran's population generation after generation.

The Sentinels, magicians of Quithayran, aren't powerful enough to lift the Widow's curse. They can sometimes circumvent it by favouring the birth of twins or triplets, but

without much success. If it weren't for the Daikinees' exceptional longevity, their people would already have been extinct for a long time.

The curse takes on all its meaning when the Daikinees' gaze turns towards the other bank of the Ynkarô, towards the Forest of Webs. The exceptional fertility of Lilith's daughters lets them foresee a most gloomy future. As for the Cynwälls, the question of asking them for help hasn't even been raised. The Exiles have abandoned Quithayran, and even if they agreed to return, their

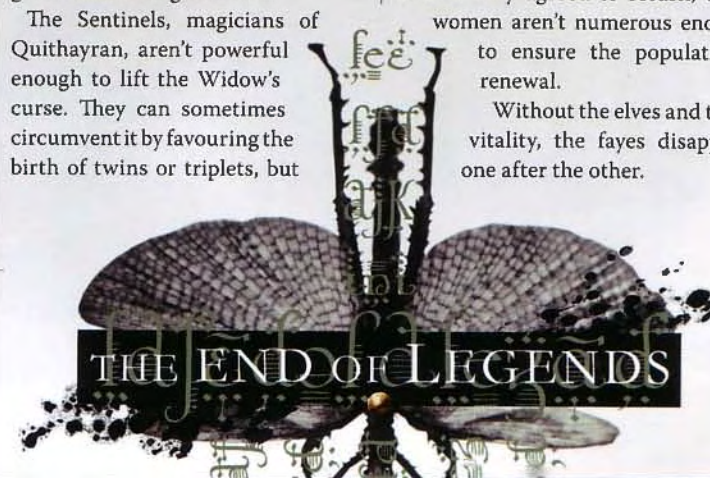
women aren't numerous enough to ensure the population's renewal.

Without the elves and their vitality, the fayas disappear one after the other.

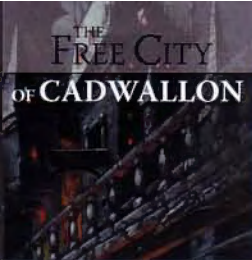
• GEOGRAPHY •

The scissions of the elven people have considerably reduced the extent of the Daikinees' domain. What are now three distinct territories were once one and the same domain, that of the Eternal Forest. Though Quithayran is only the shadow of what it once was, it remains an infinite source of life. Unknown animals roam its forest's ferns and can cause wonder just as well as dread.

Along the Gulf of Syrlinh rise the ruins of ancestral cities. No one knows their age or their origins.



THE END OF LEGENDS



THE FREE CITY OF CADWALLON



Cadwallon is alive in many ways. The first thing that springs to mind is the stereotypical image presenting it as the City of Thieves, a place of wealth and poverty where all the peoples mingle with indecent apathy. But beyond its unique atmosphere Cadwallon is alive for it continues to rise proudly towards the sky despite all the perils threatening it, like a rose made of diamond and venom, insolent and magnificent.

Cadwallon was once one of the symbols of the Cynwäll's golden age. This city sitting at the mouth of the Ynkaró and the Leák'Shear rivers was not only a military stronghold, but also a major trading post in this part of the continent. Already at the time all the peoples of Aarklash met there to do business and to conspire.

Then strange events agitated the life of the city.

Rumour and superstition emptied the city reputed to be accursed in no time at all, abandoning the pretentious Cadwallon to the jungle for decades...

A band of adventurers of which a renegade Barhan named Vanius was a part returned to Lanever one day claiming to have discovered fabulous treasures in the ghost city. No one returned from the brief gold rush that followed, and for good reasons: the Dark leaders of Acheron also desired the wealth of Cadwallon and had sent three Necromancers to claim it. Among them was the infamous Sophet Drahas, who is still present in the city today. Vanius and his kind set up an expedition aiming to take back Cadwallon and promised all those who followed them a huge piece of the spoils. This band of mercenaries coming from the four corners of Aarklash was named the Dogs of War.

The versatility of their talents and the unsuspected resources of the Dogs of War allowed them to overpower the forces of Darkness shortly before the armies of Light intervened to liberate Cadwallon.

Through skilled negotiations Vanius managed to obtain the independence of the city he had conquered. He proclaimed himself Duke of Cadwallon and set his mind to restoring the free city to its former glory.

Over the years, a growing number of bandits and souls longing for freedom came to Cadwallon to find a new life or new sources of profit. When the city's housing became too scarce to shelter all the new arrivals, the architects built additional storeys on top of the houses. Then another. And yet another...



Cadwallon was nicknamed the City of Thieves by visiting ambassadors. Laws and institutions were strengthened at the same time as the crime rate rose. Over time, the Dukes succeeded each other at a slower rate. When Cadwallon's militia defended itself without any outside help against an assault led by the Akkyshan Spiders from the city of Loth, no longer did anyone dare challenge the free city's sovereignty on its own territory.

Cadwallon had forged its identity in its diversity; the robber-kings' composure had defeated the curse and pushed back Darkness.

Yet many secrets still lie dormant within the walls of the ancient Elven city. They say that its tunnels have never been explored and that there, the darkness spawns life!

Vanius's dream has come true: Cadwallon has again found its former glory, even though it may seem more inspired by the Abyss than by the Heavens. The only advice to be given a traveller wishing to try his luck in the City of Thieves is to remain on his guard: in Cadwallon anything can happen, everything can be done, can be undone, can see the light of day and especially... can die.

THE JEWEL OF LANEVER

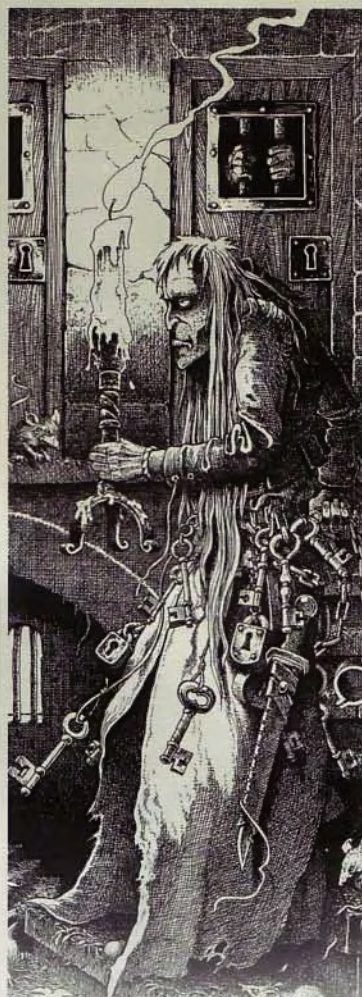
Cadwallon is a city where Good and Evil mix in endless shades of grey hidden behind multicoloured masks. Its foundations are of elven origin, but the progressive adaptation of its architecture to the tastes and needs of its inhabitants makes the City of Thieves a unique place on Aarklash. No one knows exactly where Cadwallon got its nickname Jewel of Lanever: from hidden treasures in its unexplored tunnels, from the incredible aura that it radiates or from the specific style of those who live there?

An occasional visitor would no doubt be dazzled by the free city's splendour. A few minutes later he would be the victim of one of the bandits who live behind the scenes of this splendour. This reality isn't only present in the Lower City, the stage of the biannual carnival and the empire of the scum of Aarklash, but also in the lavish ceremonies in the palaces of the Upper City. Appearances are sometimes deceptive, and a thief can be dressed in silk... In fact, crime is an institution like any other in Cadwallon. One can even say that it is an integral part of the city's economy, so much so that the thieves have a highly organised guild. It even has its say in the application of laws and in the treatment of its members who have been placed behind bars!



The Guild of Thieves isn't the only one of Cadwallon. Many professional and social groups have associated to weigh in on the city's matters.

Over time, many completely different Guilds have fused to be able to satisfy economic, political or occult requirements. Others hide sects with unmentionable goals within their organisation. Among the most influential Guilds are the wealthy Guild of Goldsmiths, the Guild of Fortune-Tellers, the learned and ever-building Guild of Architects, the mercenaries of the Guild of Blades and the secret



Guild of Usurers. And the sinister Guild of Ferrymen gathers sailors, ship owners, caravaners and also assassins who were expelled from the Guild of Thieves or who refuse to pay its Valuables Appropriation Tax.

All the peoples of Aarklash are represented among the population of Cadwallon. Some neighbourhoods have even been colonised by particular ethnicities, such as the area

THE GUILDS

The fighters of Cadwallon are affiliated either with the militia or with one of the guilds that reign over the city. They can be played in two ways.

AS AN ARMY OF CADWALLON

If the army's main body comes from Cadwallon, then you can enlist any fighter from Cadwallon, be he a militiaman or a member of any guild. On the other hand, a Cadwallon army cannot have any Allies. It can, however, hire Mercenaries in the normal way. In this type of army the Mercenary fighters of Cadwallon are put in the same category as the militia.

AS AN ALLIED FORCE

To play Cadwallonian fighters as Allies of another army, you must first define of which guild this force is from. The chosen guild must be able to ally itself to the main army. An army can call on only one guild to be its Ally, and at least one fighter affiliated with this guild must be enlisted. The rest of the Cadwallonian troops can then be selected freely among the guild's fighters or those of the militia. Whichever way these fighters are played, the rules concerning the constitution of armies apply in the usual way.

GUILD OF ARCHITECTS
Alliances: Cynwäll elves, Griffins of Akkylannie, Lions of Alahan, dwarves of Tir-Nà-Bor.
Primary Element: Light.
Forbidden Element: Darkness.

GUILD OF FERRYMEN
Alliances: All peoples.
Primary Element: Water.
Forbidden Element: None.

GUILD OF GOLDSMITHS
Alliances: Limbo of Acheron, Alchemists of Dirz, goblins of No-Dan-Kar, Griffins of Akkylannie, Lions of Alahan, dwarves of Tir-Nà-Bor, Wolfen Howling Pack.
Primary Element: Earth.
Forbidden Element: Fire.

around the port, which is shared by Goblins and Kelts. Of the intermingling of all these cultures was born the soul of Cadwallon and the many intrigues that are schemed and unravelled every night in the City of Thieves. Cadwallon even has its own language, Cadwē, which is a melodious mix of the various tongues of all the peoples.

Despite the incredible diversity of its population, only four embassies are represented in Cadwallon: those of Alahan, Akkylannie, No-Dan-Kar and Syharhalna. There once was an embassy of Tir-Nà-Bor, but it was closed under strange circumstance. In the depths of the Lower City reigns the most obscure of ambassadors, the one who the Accursed Barony of Acheron had once sent to conquer the city: Sophet Drahas, the King of Ashes.

All voyagers are welcome under the only condition that they submit to the laws of the free city. One might think that Cadwallon would be a haven of tolerance, but this is not the case: most of its laws only exist to serve some absurd cause. Among these one can find the tax on the transport of slaves even though slavery is illegal in Cadwallon, and the prohibition of bearing weapons in the Upper City by individuals bigger than one metre and a half! This law, which was pro-

mulgated by Duke Koliandre of Tir-Nà-Bor, gave birth to a typically Cadwallonian custom: to circumvent this rule the wealthiest individuals hire Weapon Bearers of small size who follow their employers around carrying weapons that are often twice as big as they are. The more modest individuals use Goblins or even their own children. Some Weapon Bearers are reputed, and even sought after, for their formidable shooting skills. And there are also the polymorphic elemental servants summoned by the Tarot-Mages.

These Cartomancers have promoted the reasoning of their caste that claims that Essence precedes Form. To them, Essence is only the Mystery of Magic, and Form is the representation of power. Mystery is thus the source of Power. The formidable protection from Darkness enjoyed by Cadwallon is only one of the many facets of this adage: for inexplicable reasons the Dark Principle has many difficulties manifesting itself in the City of Thieves ever since Vanius and his Dogs of War took it over. Despite all their attempts, never have the Necromancers, or anyone else, managed to open a Portal of Darkness within the city's walls.

At least no known Portal...

The Cartomancers attribute this relative immunity to Darkness to the legendary Tarot of Vanius, a magical deck of cards that once allowed the Dogs of War to free the city. Even though its cards have been dispersed in the four corners of Aarklash, the Tarot supposedly still protects the Jewel of Lanever.

THE CITY OF THIEVES

One cannot really talk about Cadwallon without having been there and felt this indefinable sensation that grabs one by the throat, the mind and the heart. But not everyone has this wisdom... To many, Cadwallon is just an insult to the gods and civilisation. The Duke should show more gratitude towards the Cynwäll Elves for their generosity and patience. To the others, the City of Thieves is just a den of iniquity where those most skilled can amass a true fortune.

Yet gold is the least valuable of gifts that Cadwallon can give. Its endless effervescence and the promiscuity of all the peoples make it the ideal playing field for all the spies, plotters and traitors of Aarklash. Whole wars are started and defused in the corridors of the catacombs and palaces. Summits between the continent's most influential individuals have been held in Cadwallon!

The Jewel of Lanever is also a cultural and commercial crossroads. Because the city follows its own rules and wisely remains neutral in most conflicts, it is often the theatre of exchanges as surprising as they are discreet. Knowledge, gold, flesh, friendship, love... everything can be traded in the dirty alleyways, in shabby rooms hidden behind curtains and in the shadows of the port's docks.

The game of intricate intrigue and exchanged favours allows Cadwallon to have neither ally nor enemy among the other nations. It is sometimes the object of raids by the Akkyschan Elves of Loth or other adversaries, but the goal of these attacks is rarely conquest. The continent's highest authorities have understood that to take control of the Jewel, one must prove to be even more subtle and patient than the Thieves protecting it. The Cynwäll themselves have never bothered attacking or defending the free city though it lies in a strategic part of their territory. Cadwallon may still be cursed, and it knows how to defend itself very well.

VANIUS'S TAROT

The story of the origin of Vanius's Tarot goes back to the age when Cadwallon's fate was being played out between the Dogs of War and the Barony of Acheron.

Sophet Drahas's vanity had caused the destruction of Erciles de Vanth and Vejovith de Sarlath, the two other Liches who had come to help him conquer the city in ruins, when the King of Ashes finally decided to ask Feyd Mantis for help. The Dogs of War had already taken a foothold within the city, so Drahas laid it to siege on two fronts: from the outside and from underneath. Sooner or later the Dogs would starve to death... but



that was without counting on an intervention of destiny.

Vanius, the leader of the Dogs of War and the future first Duke of Cadwallon, woke up one morning and found a magnificent deck of tarot cards lying on his bedside table. Great was his stupefaction when he saw that his best warriors and himself were pictured on the major Arcana cards! On the Force card, the Wheel of Fortune card, the Star card... and him, on the Pope card. Even his adversary Drahas was pictured in all his sinister glory: he was on the Emperor card. Feeling the immense inherent power of each Arcanum, he hid the Emperor card in his pocket and gave the other cards to those they were destined to. Every one of them instinctively guessed his card's incredible power. So, with the energy of despair, the Dogs of War launched a final assault and broke the siege in the battle of the Wall of Earth. The armies of Light arrived shortly thereafter to find that Vanius and his two hundred mercenaries had defeated the biggest horde of Living-Dead seen since the battle of Kaiber.

The power of the Arcana seemed so great that the generals of Light thought twice about trying to dislodge Vanius's warriors. In the end an agreement was made with the Cynwall Elves and the city found its freedom.

It's after this bitter defeat that Sophet Drahas was bound to his throne by his master Feyd Mantis. The Divine Baron condemned his servant to remain in Cadwallon until he has conquered it. Such was the price of his arrogance.

Yet the brotherhood of the Dogs of War didn't survive their victory. The Arcana of Vanius's Tarot were scattered all over Aarklash at the same time as their owners. Ever since, their powers and the histories of the individuals they represented feed the troubadours' tales. It is said that the Arcanum of the Devil once represented Aghovar, the master of the Guild of Thieves of Cadwallon. Since his disappearance, the Devil card took on the face of the

very holy pope of Akkylannie, Innocent. Is this symbolic humour or a scathing revelation?

This version of the history of Vanius's Tarot is the one most often told by the Cartomancers of the City of Thieves. It is probable that reality was somewhat different, but no matter... The power of the Arcana aroused and inspired the Magic of the Cartomancers in Cadwallon. The true Tarot-Mages are a lot less numerous than is claimed and they all follow the adage that Mystery is the source of Power.



GUILD OF USURERS

Alliances: Meanders of Darkness.

Primary Element: Darkness.

Forbidden Element: Light.

GUILD OF THIEVES

Alliances: Akkyshan elves, Alchemists of Dirz, Limbo of Acheron, Devourers of Vile-Tis, goblins of No-Dan-Kar, Lions of Alahan, dwarves of Tir-Nâ-Bor.

Primary Element: Air.

Forbidden Element: None.

GUILD OF FORTUNE-TELLERS

Alliances: Cynwall elves, Griffins of Akkylannie, goblins of No-Dan-Kar, dwarves of Tir-Nâ-Bor, Lions of Alahan.

Elements: Magicians of this guild choose the Elements that they master during the building of armies. They cannot simultaneously master an Element and its opposite one. When choosing the Elements mastered, Darkness is only opposed to Light. The number of Elements mastered depends on the magician's rank: Initiate / 1, Adept / 2, Master and Virtuoso / 3.

GUILD OF BLADES

Alliances: All peoples.

Primary Element: Fire

Forbidden Elements: Light and Darkness.

CADWALLON

THE SECRETS OF THE ELDERS

Exploring all of Aarklash would take several lifetimes. Some individuals have the privilege of knowing that Aarklash is only one Realm among so many others. One must have great powers just to visit an External Realm, let alone conquer one.

Nevertheless, even the most humble of men can deduce that in the shadow of a known Realm lie ten thousand others at the edges of mortals' perception.

Aarklash's history has been written and deformed by the victors or the survivors of countless wars. Like for the Realms, every empire of Aarklash grew at the price of thousands of sacrifices that will forever remain unknown. Entire nations have been erased from the annals of history solely in the name of the vanity of both mortals and immortals. Behind a lie can be buried ten thousand truths. The ghosts of the past could return at any moment, and could in turn modify the course of history by getting bloody revenge!

The books of Aarklash do not teach a single and unique way of seeing things. Those who have lived through the terrible battles of the past and who have transmitted their knowledge to their descendants know that the truths of history serve the powerful.

No institution can control the thousands of rumours that abound in all of the taverns of Aarklash. These make many an ignorant smile and preoccupy many a lord.





THE ANCIENT PEOPLES

Scholars claim that the Serpents of the Ophidian Alliance and the idealists of the Utopia of the Sphinx eliminated each other in a short, sharp war and that they left only ashes behind. Who knows where the remains of their domains lie and what treasures they hide? A lasting rumour tells of a very strange attack by serpent-men at the border of Diisha and Bran-Ö-Kor, and the stories told by adventurers searching the innards of Cadwalon tell of bizarre sloughs discovered in the ancient ruins. What link can there be between these vanished peoples and the ruins of Lanever?

THE LAMENT OF THE CHRONICLERS

"No one can tell how this story begins or ends, not even we, though we have told it many times.

We are the Chroniclers.

The gods have given us the duty to compile the fabulous history of the continent of Aarklash for their sole pleasure.

In the past, we were the most powerful amongst the powerful and the wisest amongst the wise. Each one of us has wandered the countless gardens of the Second Creation. By felling the wall separating the Empire of Flesh from the Realm of Shadows we thought we had won a decisive victory and had reached immortality. Yet it was only the first battle of a long war... Today we still do not know if we really shall be victorious.

In the name of the gods we have relentlessly imagined and written the destiny of millions of individuals, nations and worlds. And then we erased it just as often before continuing again with our endless task. We have drawn our inspiration from our wildest dreams and from our darkest nightmares.

Our power and our wisdom symbolised the crowning of Creation. Once the fate of the Realms lay in our hands. But now we have become the scribes of cruel and ever-hungry gods.

Sometimes, when we are condemned to write a chapter of your history once again, we like to believe that maybe ours shall come to an end one day. Our salvation shall depend on the way in which it ends.

Another page will be turned.

Is it the beginning or the end? This decision is yours, the Incarnates... for it is you who shall write this page in the history of a world of its own.

Chronicler. Simply mentioning this name either causes indifference or mistrust. It is said that this mysterious assembly has existed for centuries... Where are they and who are they? Why have they forbidden necromantic practices? Do they really have something to do with the discreet disappearance of certain Prelates of Akkylannie and the birth of the elves?

It is claimed that Aarklash is near the centre of Creation. What really lies at its centre? In this case why is this Realm at the 'nexus' of the elemental forces that animate the whole of the Realms? Why are the divine Immortals watching the continent with anxiety and delight? What role will Aarklash play in the destiny of Creation?

Where does the strange power of the Selenites come from? What unfathomable secrets does the Temple of the Griffins hide? Where does the Beast, the unknown god of the Devourers, come from? What happened to the High King of the Kelts? What are the dwarves of Mid-Nor looking for? Where do the goblin mutants come from? Is the Almighty Crâne of Acheron really a former Immortal? Who destroyed the first Shamir?

Does the Rag'narok mean the end of Aarklash?"

The shadows are gathering but the secrets of the Elders still remained well guarded...

Protected by their shining armour, the valiant and proud warriors of the kingdom of the Lion of Alahan are

preparing themselves to push back the dreadful assaults of the living-dead, who have appeared again on their lands...

The wicked necromancers of the Ram and their tenebrous armies open Portals from their dead world to satisfy their thirst for vengeance on their future slaves...

The Cynwäll elves and their dragons are observing the continent anew, as if they had just awakened from a long sleep and were readying themselves to taste the world that they abandoned a long time ago...

The dwarves of Tir-Nâ-Bor are getting ready for the Argg-Am-Ork, the end of their Age, and are forging weapons and armour to confront their destiny...

The disciples of the empire of the Griffin are organising their armies to go on a new crusade, which will allow them to take back the sacred place where their god's tomb is buried...

The orcs are gathering, reforming their vast nation that, once a chief has been chosen, will sweep across the world like an army of the apocalypse...

The alchemists of Dirz and their superhuman warriors await the signal from their Commodores to crush their enemies and establish a new world order...

The Akkyshan elves, with their gloomy skin and hearts as black as the night, are preparing to offer Aarklash to Lilith, the spider goddess...

The Wolfen shamans are weaving Strips of Whispers and Howlings on which the pack's warriors will inscribe the names of the prey they slay in combat, testimony to the strength of their horde...

The goblins venture ever further onto the continent, ransacking the villages in their path, razing the fortresses of the various peoples to serve the grand designs of the god Rat...

Less and less populous, the Daikinee elves are preparing themselves for the Great Migration to ensure the very survival of their people...

The barbarians, fierce nomadic warriors, seek the High King who will guide them on the path of the goddess Danu or Cernunnos...

And you?

Which pawns will you choose to confront your peers on the chessboard of the world?

CHRONOLOGY OF AARKLASH

Trying to determine a precise date of certain events is near impossible. The various peoples of Aarklash don't all use the same calendar and the conversion tables are far from being exact. Yet Kyllion the Elder has put himself to this task and has managed to establish an approximative timeline based on the most universal calendar there is, the solarcalendar, in which the planet's revolutions around Lahn are counted. Kyllion has the timeline's beginning set at the Winter of Battles. Him being a Barhan, we can note a more precise dating as of the founding of his homeland. His work, and also that of his disciples after him, suffers from several incoherencies and is challenged by some of the continent's scholars. But we can be sure that Kyllion worked with all his characteristic seriousness and application.

The version below is far from being complete. It nevertheless allows the reader to situate the principal events of the four Ages of Aarklash's history.

THE AGE OF BATTLES

- ? Appearance of the Wolfen
- ? Exile of the gods
- 0 The Winter of Battles

THE AGE OF REBIRTH

- 1 Colonisation of the Aegis by the dwarves
Arrival of the people of Kel
- 20 Scission of the Drunes from the people of Kel
- 100 Discovery of the goblins by the dwarves
- 150 Appearance of the elves

THE GOLDEN AGE

- 50 - ? Division of the people of Kel into smaller clans
- 200 Emergence of the Lahnar and Ylliaar clans
- 250 Emancipation of the goblins
- 255 Disappearance of the Ophidian Alliance
and the Utopia of the Sphinx

- 270 Founding of Klûne
- 419 Founding of the Kingdom of Alahan
- 558 Serrelis, conflict of succession
between Elhan and Silmaè
- 573 Founding of Akkylannie

THE AGE OF STEEL

- 675 Treason of the Barony of Acheron - Battle of Kaïber
- 676 Discovery of the Heresy of Dirz
- 684 Advent of the Despot
- 701 Invasion of Ashinân – beginning of Scaëlin's reign
- 706 Alliance between Tir-Nâ-Bor and Akkylannie
- 808 Creation of the orcs in Shamir
- 832 Battle of the Wall of Earth – Independence
of Cadwallon
- 852 Uprising of the orcs
- 999 The first sightings of the Devourers
- 1000 The Dawn Ritual in Shamir



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