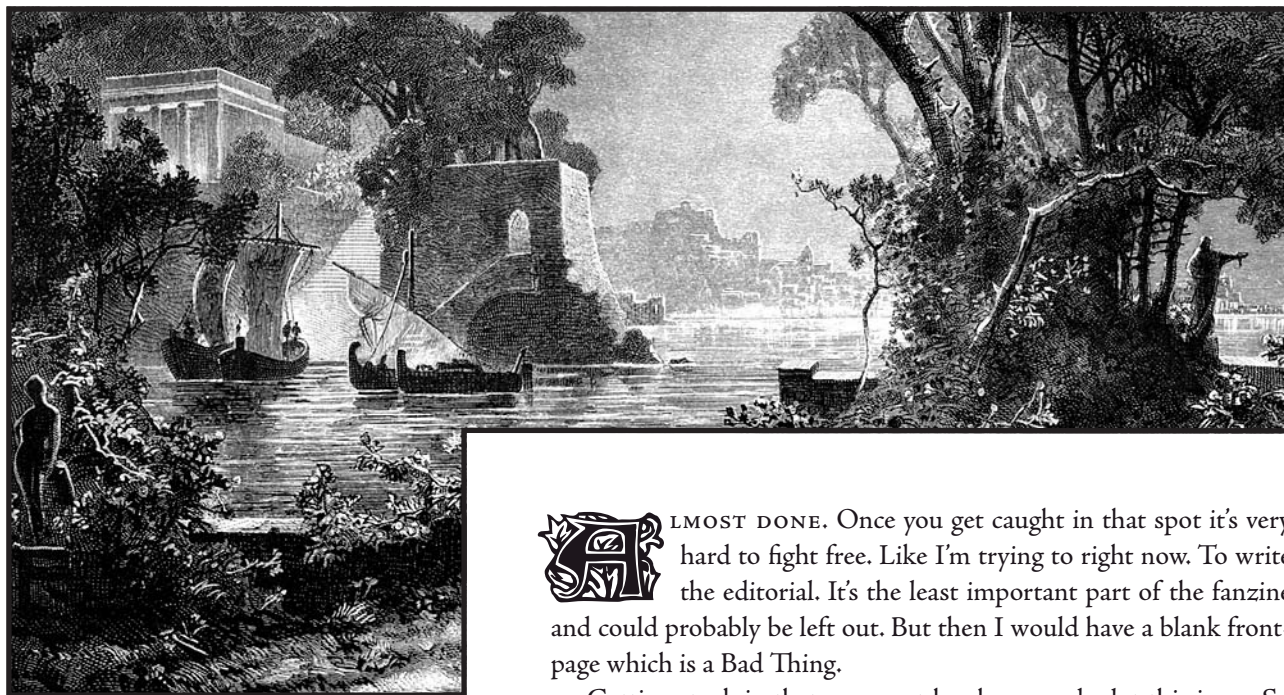


Thonahexus

THE HÂRNWORLD FANZINE



Editors: Lucas Magnusson · lucas@designverket.se
Justin Howe · heelox@aol.com
Website: www.designverket.se/thonahexus

CONTENTS

<i>Campaign Talk</i>	2
<i>Pilgrims and Relics</i>	16
<i>Gnostic Interpretation of Hârnîc Religion</i>	20
<i>Conspiracy Theory</i>	26
<i>The Graesha</i>	30

ALMOST DONE. Once you get caught in that spot it's very hard to fight free. Like I'm trying to right now. To write the editorial. It's the least important part of the fanzine and could probably be left out. But then I would have a blank front-page which is a Bad Thing.

Getting stuck in that very spot has happened a lot this issue. So I've decided to resign as editor. It's not fair that I encourage and persuade people to submit articles to THONAHEXUS when I don't keep my end of the bargain.

I'd love to stay on as designer but since I'm not a very productive writer, the fanzine needs someone who is. That someone must also be a good editor with enough time and interest to keep up the publishing pace. But most important of all that someone must be able to finish, something that almost always requires additional writing.

So I leave my seat empty, hoping that someone will walk by and decide to sit down. Because until someone does, there will not be another issue of THONAHEXUS.

—Lucas Magnusson

7

Campaign Talk

How do your fellow gamemasters run their games?

Interview by Lucas Magnusson

THIS ARTICLE IS based on a questionnaire made public on the HårnForum. The result was six very different and all very interesting replies. After a futile attempt to edit the replies into one style of writing, I decided to publish them largely unedited. The reason? I found out that the way the replies were written tells you as much about each campaign as the actual facts. Enjoy and get inspired.

The Melderyn Campaign

Rothesay (as he's known on the HårnForum) runs a campaign that has primarily taken place on Hårn, and is western-focused. There has been one trip to Ivinia as part of a larger quest, and over the last ten game years the players have been to every major kingdom, and most of the interesting sites. Additional information on this campaign can be found at www.melderyn.com.

What are the basic premises of the campaign?

Making a living—no seriously. The basic premise of the campaign is to weather the political changes which came as a result of a coup in Rethem in 720, which saw a new dynasty take over the kingdom and which in a rapid war quickly consolidated all of western Hårn into one kingdom. The players are living in these dangerous times, and seeking to both survive and to profit from the opportunities such change always brings.

How did you launch the campaign?

The original launch came in the fall of 1983, and was essentially a response to my seeing and purchasing the HÅRN REGIONAL MODULE—at that time, the only product available. I loved the map, and decided that my new campaign would be set there. I gathered a group of wholly new players, set them in Golotha during the coup, and let it rip. In the beginning, it was rather episodic (an advantage of weekly play), but the major adventure plot was the search for a mythical orange gemstone the size of one's fist called "The Flame." The search for this gem consumed five

real years of time and eventually led the party to Inor Teth and before Save K'nor himself—or maybe it was a shared dream. One never knows about these things ...

What's the general mood of the campaign?

Mystery and intrigue. The world is changing, and the players are a small part of the change. They also understand there are shadowy figures operating behind the scenes for good or for ill. However, the dividing line between those two things is very hard to discern as at times the expected forces of good have turned out to be the problem and darker forces have worked for the greater good.

What about magic and monsters?

Both exist. On the monster front they tend to be rare, and almost never encountered in "civilized" areas. I haven't used a Nolah in years. Venturing out into the wilderness, however, is a recipe for meeting gargun at some point. But most of the adventures feature humans as the primary antagonists—man is the most terrifying monster of all.

As to magic, I've made some significant additions. I use the Shek P'var, and they tend to be rare and low-key. I've also added a race of hereditary psionics (no one else has such powers) who are very powerful, but limited in their abilities and do not create new magic. They're modeled on Katherine Kurtz's *Deryni* novels, but there the similarity ends.

Who are the player characters?

There have been over 90 player characters in this campaign in the last 22 years. This is the current group:

Sir Baris Tyrestal—knight. Born in Melderyn but came west with his uncle in 719 as a young squire and fought in the wars. He is the most recent player character and joined the party after he failed to join the Royal army invading Orbaal. He has also developed an alternate persona when he doesn't wish to be known as a knight whom he has named "Karl."

Imarë Taërsi—huntress and elf. On her 'grand tour' and met up with the other players at Trobridge. The char-

acter's primary motivation is the acquisition of knowledge with which to deepen her relationship with the cosmos.

Ewen of Ravinargh—harper and enigma. A player involved in a dangerous double-game which has long-term implications for himself and the party. He has crafted layers of back story, each one containing a minuscule grain of truth, but all carefully designed to cover his ultimate goals. The consummate anti-hero.

Bevan Palliser—huntress and spy. A long-term character (started as a non-player character) who is an agent of the Royal government and has undertaken many covert operations in service of the King's spymaster. She has also grown quite wealthy in this service. Her father is a famous Fyvrian Viran.

What source material have you used?

Apart from Hårn materials and various history texts, I've used a variety of sources over the years. I set an adventure to an Ellis Peters *Brother Cadfael* mystery, I've used Chaucer, a Karl Edward Wagner short story featuring Kane, and other novels and stories I've probably forgotten. Once, as a writing exercise, I wrote a piece about the rebellion of an earl. That document has now formed the basis of several adventures in its aftermath, and is part of the ongoing history.

Did you run into any problems with the Hårn setting?

I'll take this back to the beginning—1983. In the first couple of years of the campaign, there was very little in the way of expansion materials, and I occasionally ran into contradictions when a site was released that I had already done and used (e.g. Kustan). This is less of a problem these days with so much already available canon/fanon.

Did you make any changes to the official Hårn setting?

Quite a few. Among the first things I did was to re-write and re-name the Toron dynasty to produce the middle son I needed to be the focal point of the campaign. He did not wish to bow before his brother all his life, and so set about gaining a kingdom for himself. This was the major change to the 720 setting, other than the addition of the hereditary psionics, who are primarily concentrated in Melderyn and Emelrene.

Was the campaign plot planned in advance or did it develop as the game went on?

A large portion of the overall story was planned in advance—certainly 720 to 725. I laid out the broad strokes of events up to the death of Andasin IV, and filled in details as the game progressed. Sometimes the player characters played an active role in shaping those events, but more often, they were spectators involved with their own adventures within the setting. After that, I mapped out the next five years or so around 1987, and more recently events going out to about 804. The current group of

player characters are influencing events more than the earlier groups did, and this has turned the campaign from an episodic adventure-driven focus to a campaign of intrigue.

In retrospect, would you have done anything differently?

I might have kept the name Toron for the dynasty, but other than that, not really. I occasionally have wondered about ending the campaign and starting again, but the story still works for both new and old players, and we've got a feeling of being part of an unfolding history with some ten years of game time behind us.

What are you most pleased with?

The response of the players. They like the consistency and comfort level of the setting, and have built up a store of knowledge and people which enable them to interact in expected ways. It's become expected that I'll always have an answer at my fingertips, and the detail of Hårn makes that true most of the time.

What's your best gaming memory from the campaign?

This happened some time ago with the first major player group. The party was in Lorkin, investigating strange happenings—people were disappearing without a trace. Through a series of events, the players discovered that the bodies, all dead, were stacked in the hold of a ship in the port. They decided to sink the ship (don't ask why—I still don't get the reasoning). Two of the players wanted nothing to do with this plan and they left. The others, along with a dwarf named Rilf who was with them, rowed out to the ship. It should be noted that Rilf had the intelligence of a bedbug and his vocabulary was somewhat limited. However, he did understand "chop" and when told to do so, began chopping the ship below the waterline.

The noise alerted some guards on shore, who sought to investigate, at which point the party told Rilf to stop chopping and they commandeered the ship. They cut the anchor cable and sailed out into the delta, soon followed by a viking longboat. Somewhere along the line, the stench from below-decks got to them, and they also decided that they needed to lighten the cargo so they could outsail their pursuers, so they told Rilf to throw the bodies overboard. This he dutifully did, throwing one body after another over the side—even after he had removed the bodies that had covered the hole he'd chopped in the side of the ship—and continued to do so as the water rose in the hold.

About this time, the party noticed that the ship seemed lower in the water, and one of them realized that Rilf had been pretty wet the last time he came up. They peered into the cargo hold and saw the moronic dwarf chest-deep in water, corpses floating around him, trying to get one up the gangway. Horrified, they now told him to

BAIL! However, it was a lost cause—the water was coming in freely. All this with the longboat bearing down on them. They abandoned ship and tried to hide as if they were among the corpses they had left bobbing in their wake, all except Rilf, who couldn't swim. Indeed the longboat took Rilf off and away, heading back to Lorkin as the ship sank.

One by one, they all drowned.



The Riddle of Hârn

Karl Rodriguez runs this campaign set in Tharda, Orbaal, Araka-Kalai and occasionally Rethem. Unfortunately, the campaign stalled when after harrowing events in the North the characters returned to Tharda. The group ran into the problem of too much intriguing and not enough action. There are a lot of open hooks and unfinished business. Hopefully, they'll start again from where they ended.

What are the basic premises of the campaign?

Duty and Destiny versus friendship/companionship and self-determination.

How did you launch the campaign?

In two phases since the characters were from disparate regions. All of them had a pre-game solo with me.

Eventually, one character traveled south from Orbaal and the rest traveled north from Tharda across Lake Benath escorting a senator on his pilgrimage to the Pit of Ilvir. The two parties met as the northern character came across gargun spoor and found a gargun band about to ambush the southern character's caravan. Unprompted, the northern character (Halifax—see below) yelled, "Gargun!" in warning and so the campaign began.

What's the general mood of the campaign?

From my point of view, the mood is gritty and dark. From the characters, I believe they feel caught up in events and scheming beyond their control.

What about magic and monsters?

One character is a Shek P'var journeyman. Initially there were some Ivashu and dark spirits. Towards the end I added a changeling.

Who are the player characters?

Halifax the Lucky—Thayan-born Lia-Kavair from Geldeheim in Orbaal. His mother was taken as a warbride during the Rape of Thay, but Fate smiled upon him and he was spared.

Markus Cosele—Reserve Legionaire Manus from Tharda. He is the consensus party leader who is the nephew of Sinazar Cosele of Noru.



Pelar Vomilost—Savoryan Sata-Mavari (Journeyman). Shek P'var from Melderyn.

Rhygar of Kubora—Kuboran ex-gladiator. Rescued from crucifixion by Vynscythe.

Vynscythe of Paque—knight-errant from Rethem. Son of the earl and the only Laranian in Rethem.

What source material have you used?

RETHEM, THARDA, ORBAAL, CASTLES OF HÂRN, CASTLES OF ORBAAL, the HÂRNWORLD boxed set, HÂRNMASTER 3, ARAKA-KALAI, HÂRN RELIGION, GOLOTHA and basically anything I could get a hand on—but those were the main ones.

Did you run into any problems with the Hârn setting?

None. The characters loved the setting and one of the players even laminated my heraldic map, role-playing that his character had one.

Did you make any changes to the official Hârn setting?

Yes. I hinted/solved the mystery of a missing Jarin noble. An Orbaalese lord was killed creating a small power vacuum and I solved a mystery of some of the islands west of Rethem.

Was the campaign plot planned in advance or did it develop as the game went on?

Both. I had an idea for a timeline of events and some of the character's actions modified my timeline and moved the campaign in other directions.

In retrospect, would you have done anything differently?

I would not have added the changeling in one of the last scenarios. In hindsight it was probably a bit too fantastic. Then again, the description was vague. It could have been a rogue mage.

The fantastic element seemed to kill the campaign once introduced. It seemed the players became nostalgic for *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* and wanted more fantasy (and hence more loot) instead of the grit that they had enjoyed so far. I think they lost interest as I tried to steer away from that.

What are you most pleased with?

I was most pleased with the character interaction and self-development, and dilemmas of duty versus companionship. There were times in the game when I could just sit back and act as mediator while the players debated in character about what to do.

What's your best gaming memory from the campaign?

In real-life we were drinking mead and coincidentally the characters were participating in a drunken feast with an Orbaalese lord. I believe the mead clouded the players' (and hence their characters') judgment and they were talked into assassinating the old local lord by one of his rivals. While this was going on, three of the players had fallen asleep while the others were plotting. Dawn broke in the game and we roused the players just like their character counterparts and they had no clue of the night's events. They were even less clueless, half-asleep when they were ushered onto a boat and the Ivinians that had hired them to kill the lord, turned on them. The assassins were caught off guard also and a bloody melee on board an ivinian warboat ensued. Miraculously, the party survived, though one of their number was mortally wounded and fell overboard. The characters forced a surrender and had themselves a boat to boot.



Knights of Kaldor

Joe Adams and Allan Prewett run the "Knights of Kaldor" campaign centered in Fethael Hundred, a rural area in Nephshire (eastern Kaldor). Because he wanted to write a local campaign (see below), Joe detailed all fourteen manors in the Hundred while writing the campaign's plot. By developing the plot and the settings together, the manors and their inhabitants became elements of the campaign.

Right now, only the campaign overview and the locations that are common to the campaign's three acts have been made public. As the players progress through the campaign, Joe plans to post the adventures and their settings. See: www.geocities.com/hereticjoe/knights_of_kaldor.htm for more information.

What are the basic premises of the campaign?

There are two basic premises behind the "Knights of Kaldor" campaign. For the players, they are going through a "coming of age" quest campaign with a party of young, landless knights. For me, the goal is to create a local campaign.

During the campaign, the players will progress from being newly knighted vassals of a lord to sitting at their liege's head table. They will face increasing challenges along the way. The overall campaign plot is a quest for the relics of five local Laranian saints, but this isn't revealed to the knights all at once. The campaign is designed to build from pure combat to puzzle solving to political roleplaying as the characters (and players) become more experienced. At each stage, players will have to discover or develop a new set of skills to succeed, just like people do in real life.

As a writer, I wanted to write a local campaign. Local campaigns use a small geographic area for the setting. The small geographical scale encourages intimacy, re-use, and continual conflict. The players benefit from living in a fantasy world as opposed to moving through it. They are able to build inter-personal relationships with non-player characters through continued interaction. They are also able to create their own characters within the setting's recurring events and more deeply developed locations. All this detail enables a richly interwoven plot without forcing too much information at the players at once. Plot threads lead players from location to location without railroading.

The scenario is built in three layers: strategic, tactical, and personal. Strategic level hooks remind the player characters that the setting is bigger than they are. These are events that the player characters observe from a distance but that impact them from a broad perspective. I developed these hooks from the region's unfolding meta-plot, as described in the *HÂRNDEX* and canon kingdom modules. I decided to work with the Kaldoric Patriot Movement, friction between the Indamas and the Dariunes, and the vague command relationship between the Order of the Spear of Shattered Sorrow and the Order of the Lady of Paladins.

Tactical level hooks come from the campaign's plot line. These challenges require the group's combined talents to solve or overcome as the players pursue their goals. As vassals of the Sheriff of Neph, the player characters start the campaign pursuing bandits. In addition to their "day job," they find themselves attending the social and religious events that make up the life of a young nobleman. Fighting bandits becomes tougher and tougher, as they are pitted against an organized band of outlaws that have a dark secret.

While the other levels could be crafted, personal level hooks are allowed to emerge from the combination of the character history and the setting. This level uses the detailed setting extensively. For example, the romances that have blossomed between the player characters and local noble women provide motivation for the player characters to seek glory. Another example is the enmity between the player characters and a jealous young knight from a local manor. In both cases, the player characters are bumping into these hooks whenever they have a moment that they're not "saving the world."

Ideally what happens during campaign play is that the player characters are fully engaged with tactical level hooks. Strategic level hooks occur sporadically, bringing new villains and obstacles into the campaign's scope. While personal level hooks fill in the blank spaces between the larger dramatic events. I think the appearance of personal level hooks is the difference between moving through a game setting and living in one.

Developmentally, a local campaign is easier to write, as locations in a small region share a lot of characteristics. I approached the creation of the campaign and setting from "the top down." Writing the settings from the "top-down" allowed me to see the effect that one idea might have on the rest of the locations. I started by writing a plot overview (Knights of Kaldor Overview), filling in blanks while writing the setting overview (Fethael Hundred Gazetteer). Next, a hundred-level economic model was constructed. This model helped emphasize the inter-dependency of the manors in the area. The population of Fethael Hundred is small and each manor relies on trade with its neighbors. Once I knew where all of the craftsmen were, I created article shells for each location and adventure. This way I could add to articles as I wrote.

The hardest part in creating a quest campaign is keeping the player characters interested in following the quest through to the end. I've played several linear campaigns where the group got bored and headed off to explore a blank spot on the map. Once the framework had been constructed, I wrote the locations that would feature throughout the campaign. The prologue set the "big hook," provided some background hints, and hinted at the identity of the main villain. After the prologue, I wrote the ending so that events could build toward a point. With the campaign's plot anchored at both ends, I started writing the adventure articles from the beginning, filling in details and foreshadowing clues where needed.

How did you launch the campaign?

I had posted several articles on Getha and Fethael Hundred on Lythia.com. At the same time, I included an article describing the campaign's overview on my own website. Allan contacted me and asked if he could run the

campaign at his store in Darwin, Australia. I was very pleased to have someone take an interest, so we partnered up. I did some rewriting to include character creation rules and he started the campaign with his group of players earlier this summer (2005). Currently, the group is pursuing bandits in the Chyle Forest. The mission seems straightforward enough but the twist at the end of the chase will lead them in to a deeper and more dangerous undertaking.

What's the general mood of the campaign?

Arthurian. Heroic. I wanted a campaign for a group of knights. Instead of being "adventurers," these knights are doing the "chivalry and duty" stuff of a vassal. They form romantic liaisons, build political ties, and compete with rivals as they try to rise in their liege's service. Their ultimate reward will be a manor of their own.

What about magic and monsters?

I've stuck with the monsters that are canon. Magic, as in most of Hårn, is rare and is encountered in out of the way places. In addition to the Shek P'var magic, the magic in the relics the player characters are searching for are different. This kind of magic is not passive or sterile. It is "always on" and is very dangerous to anyone that handles it without taking the proper precautions.

Who are the player characters?

The player characters' party is a group of young, landless knights that have been taken into the Sheriff of Neph's service. Sir Ambrath Baralis, Sir Kwillos Charlirien and Sir Aethelred Sarebor are scions of the Shire's ancient but now impoverished families. Tagging along and disguised as a noble-born physician, is a Fyvrian Shek P'var, Kadath Banadar. The players used a set of character creation guidelines that I wrote into the campaign overview. This was intended to help the player characters fit into the detailed background.

The player characters are assisted by some gamemaster driven non-player characters. A servant, named Patsy, and a ranger, named Oldial of Urdel, accompany these four young noblemen. Oldial is a local and has been engaged by the Bailiff of Fethael Hundred to help the player characters.

What source material have you used?

The new KINGDOM OF KALDOR module and several HÅRNQUEST articles (ghost and dragon) went into designing the campaign plot. Developing the manors involved a lot of searching through HÅRNMASTER. Two articles that gave me particular inspiration were Kerry Mould's "Lady of Paladins" article and the Ruins article in THONAHEXUS #5. I should also mention Roy Denton's "Mercantylor" article and Arthur Reyes' "HårnWorld Calendar" were also invaluable.

Did you run into any problems with the Hårn setting?



My advice to anyone who wants to write a campaign or an article is to pick a location that is not under development by Columbia Games or Kelestia. Wait for the canon-makers to lay the groundwork. Few things are as frustrating as writing a scenario and then find out that the next supplement moves major non-player characters or changes a manor's location or number of households.

Did you make any changes to the official Hårn setting?

I wouldn't call them changes as much as expansions. I added a horse breed, introduced a salt spring in Sezaze, and created some Laranian saints. There are examples of "almost there" things in canon but I was looking for specifics and added little bits of my own.

Was the campaign plot planned in advance or did it develop as the game went on?

The campaign was planned in advance but the plan involved the player characters moving from milestone to milestone along their own course. Each milestone adventure was plotted out with a defined result or end-state that contributed to the player characters moving forward in the campaign. These milestones were linked in that the end-state of one adventure (i.e., "The player characters deliver the relic to Lethyl Abbey ...") is the entry for another (i.e., "After the player characters have delivered the relic to the Abbey") but, in between the milestones, there

are hooks for ad-hoc adventures that focus on the daily life and duties of a knight.

The detailed setting meant that, while the gamemaster had all of the answers, he had to know where to look for them. In essence, there is almost too much information. Currently, the "Knights of Kaldor" material spans around 300 pages in various stages of completion. Some of this material will get used over and over, changing slightly as the player characters use the location and interact with the people. Other material might not be used at all.

What are you most pleased with?

The economic model of the Hundred has made the entire setting believable. The other thing that has been very helpful was the introductory adventure *Love at the Fair*. The player characters have gotten into the spirit of being young knights and have sought out young noble ladies to court. Besides providing good continuing side adventures, this has also led them to meet and learn more about the families in the Hundred.

What's your best gaming memory from the campaign?

During the prologue adventure, called "The Letters of Arlin," the player characters sought refuge in a ruined manor bailey. Wolves (controlled by a supernatural leader) cornered them in the old manor's hall. With scared animals, wounded knights, and vicious wolves running all over the place, a column started falling in the ruins after being knocked down by horses. The look on the player characters' faces was fantastic. Another moment during the same adventure had Sir Ambrath falling down into the hall's crypt. He was alone in the dark and then the portcullis closed behind him and locked him in. His reaction was priceless.



Savage Chelemby

Peter Leitch, Chris Maxfield, Mark Somers are all gamemasters for "Savage Chelemby"—a campaign primarily played out in Chelemby. Occasionally the action has moved on to Hårn, Emelrene and Harbaal. To Peter, the campaign was a good lesson in how humans make the best monsters even in a medieval fantasy game like Hårn-World. He also realized that it is player characters striving for a long-term goal that provides a focus that sustains a long-term campaign. And the wealth of Hårn material available is of great assistance.

But the most valuable lesson is to learn *not* to allow the wealth of material to overwhelm and straitjacket the gamemaster. The major lesson he learned from this campaign is "If it doesn't fit the campaign the players want to play in, alter it so it does fit." And the best thing is that it

doesn't take much of a change: many things only required a slight nudge in the right direction.

What are the basic premises of the campaign?

The player characters are a group of associates looking to profit in various ways. The lead player character is a mercantylor from Chelemby who wants to advance his clan's fortunes in the dynamic kingdom of Chelemby, and that usually means causing the downfall of an existing clan. The other player characters are either friends of this player character or wish to ride his coattails to their own fortune). So the basic premise of the campaign is to amass a fortune so as to buy a Nalor on the island of Chelemby ... the only path to political power.

How did you launch the campaign?

I used the "101 Adventures" for seed ideas to create fully-blown adventures to bring the player characters together, and give them a reason for adventuring together.

What's the general mood of the campaign?

Relatively serious, with moments of high levity.

What about magic and monsters?

Little (rare) magic, although one of the player characters was an Odivshean Shek P'var. His magic was very subtly used so as not to attract unwanted attention. Very, very rare use of fantasy monsters; the monsters were mostly human, with occasional large animals (grizzly bear with a septic wound, etc.). On a couple of occasions, we used undead (gulmorvrin) as opponents.

Who are the player characters?

Chelembian ship captain/mercantylor, and Odivshe Shek P'var, a huntress, an amoral but charismatic thief/assassin, a charismatic thief/seducer and a disillusioned Laranian squire.

What source material have you used?

The SHORKYNE Regional Module, HÂRNWORLD material and much material on Chelemby that was not published at the time—hey, it's a perk I get for hosting Kelestia Productions web site!

Did you run into any problems with the Hârn setting?

No. Any issues were gaps and these can be filled with ease.

Did you make any changes to the official Hârn setting?

I'm afraid I can't remember, but I'd guess the answer is 'yes'. Any changes were few and very small.

Was the campaign plot planned in advance or did it develop as the game went on?

With three gamemasters, the game's threads tended to develop over time. While there was an overall direction of advancing the principle player character's clan fortunes, the adventures were plotted on the fly and may or may not have reinforced that.

In retrospect, would you have done anything differently?

Yes; the Laranian knight was a tank and useful in any combat, but the ideals of the player character (as played by the player) didn't really match the rest of the characters, and it was sometimes a real stretch for the knight not to denounce them to the nearest authorities, or simply slaughter them for their wickedness. It was an interesting dynamic for a while, but the player found it frustrating after some time.

What are you most pleased with?

Shifting the rules used from HÂRNMASTER to SAV-AGE WORLDS early on. It changed the nature of the campaign a lot and became much more free-flowing and much less constrained ... and a hell of a lot faster to play! The sessions became much more about the world around them (more about HârnWorld) and much less about the mechanics of tests and combats.

What's your best gaming memory from the campaign?

An early session had the party up against a bunch of river pirates in Shorkyne (one of the "101 Adventures"), and the entire party (and players) meshed really well to defeat a foe who was superior in numbers, weapons, and position. A really good demonstration of subtle magic reinforcing devastating selective missile fire, and classic ambush techniques. One of the most memorable fights ever!



Peonushaven

Will Kilmer runs "Peonushaven", a campaign focusing primarily on Tharda—although the group has ranged over much of Hârn. They have used northern Kanday, the north shore of Lake Benath and up to Kiraz; they have passed through Elcall-Anuz, Kiraz, Araka-Kalai, Bejist, Horador, Azadmere; crossed Kaldor and Chybisa and recently visited Rethem for the first time. And even Yashain.

When a player leaves the game, Will keeps the character going as a non-player character if he likes it and wait for the right person to come through the door to take it on. He also keeps non-player characters in play that he can hand over to guests and some of those turn into player characters eventually. It all helps with recruiting and keeping the campaign going.

Will's policy has been that if two players besides the gamemaster can play, they play. The gamemaster runs player characters with missing players as non-player characters and only promises not to kill them—but nothing else is out of bounds.

What are the basic premises of the campaign?

The player characters are all connected in some way or in some degree to Clan Nordaka of Telen of the Thardic Republic. They have pursued Nordaka interests in the Armal Road Project and with the Miners' Guild of Shiran in Sirion. In the course of these activities they crossed paths with Panaga at Kiraz. And got the box.

They also came to the attention of the Council of Eleven and discovered that one of the principle non-player characters traveling with them is a Council of Eleven agent.

One of their number was captured by Panaga and transported to his Tower in Yashain, where he was added to the collection. The remainder of the party mounted a rescue. And got another box.

Since then Panaga is after them, but has trouble finding them because of a masking spell. Only if they remain in place for seven days do Panaga or his minions have the chance of detecting them magically and catching up with them. Of course, chance encounters may still occur.

The background for the first year of game time was the threat of civil war in Tharda. The second year has seen that civil war begin.

In addition, civil war in Rethem has also broken out. (Tormau seems to be winning.) And Marshall Jithias is attempting to recover Themeson. (Anarchy, peasant revolt, and a siege all at once.)

At present the campaign is running two threads at once and I am trying to have the player characters from one thread or the other show up for most of the important events in the west. However, it looks like no one is going to be present for the coronation of Arlun II. A disappointment as I was looking forward to staging it. And both of the groups may miss the siege of Telen.

The seven day limit on remaining in place is a constant push to keep them moving. They often see a train of events begin or end, but seldom can follow one through from inception to conclusion.

How did you launch the campaign?

We began in mid Peonu 720, one day's march south of Coranan. The Salt Caravan was moving towards Moleryn and all of the player characters were moving with it. Several were attached to Radek Nordaka, who had been tasked by his clan with finding a location for their new port (Aramal) on the Gulf of Chakro. One was attached to a Peonian mission to the Domi Goyzida. One was on the lamb from a "misunderstanding" with is Lia-Kavair boss in Aleath. All were traveling with the Salt Caravan at least as far as Taztos. Events on the road brought them together and the rest is the campaign.

What's the general mood of the campaign?

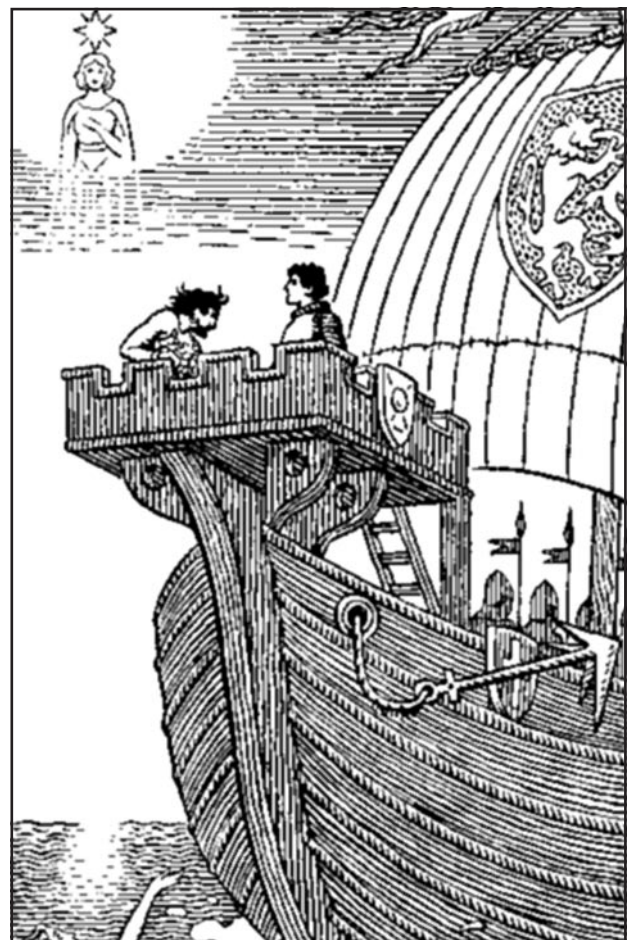
The player characters are never sure if they are moving events or being moved by them. Did they make that

choice? Or was it forced upon them? Would things have been very different if they had not been involved? Or was their involvement pivotal? None of them have died yet, but several have had close calls and one has lost an arm, another an eye. More than one has nearly drowned and all have been sick and/or wounded. Are they fated to complete some grand design? Or could the next door they walk through be the last one?

During the last year they have met the powerful and the humble, the evil and the good and everything in between. They have been cold and hungry. Lost and helpless. Sick. Poisoned. Frustrated. Some of them have killed many horses through incompetence. Repeatedly ambushed by those who wished them or their mission ill. Several of them have made more money than they could spend in a lifetime, if they could lay hands on it and settle down to enjoy it. All have hopes, ambitions and plans for their characters and none of them seem to be much closer to realizing them. They have, however, made friends in strange places, encountered unexpected kindnesses and un-looked-for grace, courage, and loyalty. And once in a while, as a special treat, they get to go shopping.

What about magic and monsters?

Most of the people the player characters encounter do not believe in magic and monsters, or superstitiously be-



lieve magic and monsters to be much more common and powerful than they are.

Through most of the campaign the only magic user often around was Nysek, a non-player character agent of the Council of Eleven who is, frankly, not very good at many magics. This character is also sexually ambiguous and probably an alien. Other than that, he seems nice enough. You tend to get used to having him (he usually appears to be a slight youngish man) around and he is a font of useful geographical and socio-political information.

The player characters have met some powerful mages, but not seen them actually do anything. Recently a fairly powerful player character mage, Keladry, has joined the party. He/she had in the pre-game performed an inadvertent sex-change on him/herself. In an attempt to perform a rejuvenation spell. (Player's choice for back story.) Thus far this character has also managed to critically fail a masking spell, turning it into a glamour spell instead and to make herself (she appears to be an attractive young woman but has the memories of a suspicious old man) invisible in the midst of an important conference so that she could not participate or advise at a crucial juncture. Among other things. Interesting.

Around Akaka-Kalai we ran into quite a lot of Ivashu of one kind or another, as you would expect. Other than that, we encounter a nolah once, some vlasta once, one ephemeral, vii on several occasions (à la Panaga), and we occasionally hear reports of other monsters or minions of the gods.

Gargun were encountered at Sirion and around the borders of Azadmere, as you might expect.



Godstone travel has been used on several occasions as Nysek was aware of the locations, or possible locations, of several of them. We are not using them currently as we fear that Panaga may have trapped them.

Who are the player characters?

Mirrim—Peonian priestess, healer, sailor, archer, capable of disembodiment. Seeks to reconcile her faith with her desire to take action when she sees wrong or injustice. Close friend to Renkandry, Peonian Primate of the West.

Caron—Sailor (able bodied), ostler, archer, handy with a glaive. Devout Peonian. Lost an eye while defending Mirrim in a cave full of Vlasta. Strong and quick and the salt of the earth.

Meadman—Thardic Legionnaire, weak willed, joined the Save-Knorean Church while he was still illiterate. Lost his right arm counterstriking against a gargun, wears a prosthesis designed by Caron (hidework) and Syrano (lockcraft). Lost a lot of his memory when kidnapped to Yashain and put into suspended animation by Panaga. Does the wrong thing at the right time, usually.

Syrano—Member of the Aleath Lia-Kavair until some money went missing that his boss thought Syrano was responsible for. Halean at the beginning, now on the outs with the Lady of Luxury due to a misplaced moment of chivalry. Recently married into a weaponcrafter family in Menekod. In-laws think he's scum, but he's a hero to his wife and her brother. Still finds frequent reasons to travel out of town. Has occasional ambitions to respectability and frequent relapses.

Honri—Kath huntress, great beauty, kidnapped by slavers and (eventually) freed by Mirrim, Caron, Syrano, and Meadman. Command of Hârníc occasionally unreliable. Has declined to return home permanently out of loyalty to the player characters.

Keladry—Gerontophobic Mage of Cherafir who managed to become her own heir. Met the party traveling west from Kaldor last winter via Akaka-Kalai. Believes that remaining with the party may give her an opportunity to visit Kiraz where she hopes to resolve some of her personal issues. Owns a rental property in Cherafir to which she would like to retire to pursue her studies once she is a he again.

Revekka—Young noblewoman on the run from an unwelcome marriage. Hiding out with the player characters.

Sirroc—Kuboran mercenary who hooked up with the party during the Sirion expedition. He is the worst horseman in the group, perhaps because he continues to think of horses primarily as lunch. Easily bored and prone to wander off and find trouble, usually more than he can handle. Above average tracker and forager with an unreliable command of Hârníc. His strength and endurance

can make him an asset in survival situations. Dislikes sleeping indoors.

Kealli—Young Hodiri tribesman, horseman, horse-trader, horse doctor, scout. Was scouting for the Sheriff of Birensire with his Wicked Uncle Korrr when he first encountered the party. When all was said and done it seemed best for Kealli, Korrr and the player characters to leave the area for a while. Agnostic by temperament, like most Hodiri, he found Araka-Kali unsettling. Though perhaps not quite as unsettling as Siroc's attitude towards horses.

Kadlin—Ivinian shieldmaiden, convert to Larani, came to Hârn to fight Agrikans, but it hasn't quite worked out that way. Though she did get to be part of Tormau's campaign against Shostim. Met the party while traveling west from Tashal via Araka Kali during which they fought against renegade Orbaaleese turned bandits who were preying on Ilvirin pilgrims. Trying to figure out how her life took this turn.

Sir Arturo—Recently knighted fourth son of a gentle family from near Thay. Became involved in opposition to the Solari Crusade and now is the owner of an enchanted sword that talks to him when it is blooded. The sword believes that it was forged to kill Agrikans, but actually reacts to the morality of persons nearby. High morality Agrikans are relatively safe, Navehians and Morgathians not so. May be the Treasure War sword. For the capture of the Baron Bekar he was recently offered a fief in Rethem by Earl Tormau, which as a good Laranian he felt compelled to decline. Originally met the party when he, as a squire to Earl Qualdris, was sent to take Ayenid (who was disguised as a Peonian novice) to safety during the influenza epidemic in Orbaal.

(Sir) Ayenid—Began as a non-player character and later became a player character. Knight of the Crimson Dancer sent to foment a border incident between Tharda and Kanday. Joined the Peonian mission to the Domi Goyzida in the guise of a novice from the covert church in Rethem. Failed in her mission. She originally believed that her failure was due to her nearsightedness. (She can recognize friend from foe at about double the length of her lance.) However, she eventually came to believe that it was her association with Mirrim and Renkandry that changed her heart and brought her to Peoni/Larani. As a non-player character she went to Orbaal to carry out a medical mission for the Peonian Church of Melderyn during the influenza epidemic.

Lycia—Junior Herald at Ostenor, she was attached to the party when they were sent on a mission to the Earl of Tormau in Rethem.

Petry, Esq.—A junior son of a gentle family of Tormau. Was attached to the party as they were to carry a



message from Tormau to Tehen. He intends to carry on to Telen as a return messenger from the Nordakas.

What source material have you used?

HÂRNMASTER I, THARDA, CITIES, SON OF CITIES, CASTLES OF HÂRN, PILOT'S ALMANAC, HÂRNPLAYER, RETHEM, KANDAY I, KANDAY II, KIRAZ, KALDOR, 100 BUSHEL OF RYE, AZADMERE, MELDERYN, CHYBISA, ORBAAL, CASTLES OF ORBAAL, HÂRNWORLD, HÂRNMASTER RELIGIONS I & II, HÂRNMASTER BARBARIANS, HÂRNMANOR, CURSE OF HLEN, IVINIA, SHORKYNE, various ENCYCLOPEDIA HÂRNICA, and individual articles I have ordered in reprint from Columbia Games. I have also drawn heavily upon various fanon, especially Pax Tharda, though there is much there with which I disagree and Lythia.com's many fine downloads from various authors.

Did you run into any problems with the Hârn setting?

Not many so far. Wagons break down too often, The PILOT'S ALMANAC is not user friendly and needs an index, very much so. Much of the river commerce seems to require that some riverside families make income by providing a tow up river, but this is never mentioned in canon. Mostly it works for me.

Did you make any changes to the official Hârn setting?

Aside from the towpaths on some navigable rivers, (see above) I have mainly been able to work with the material. There has been house rules and rules tweaking, of course.

I tend to avoid things until I have an idea of how I want to handle them in my personal Hârn. I only went to Rethem this spring because I decided how I wanted to handle Agrikan characters when seen up close. I have not yet gone to Golatha because I have not yet decided how I want to handle Morgathian characters when seen up close. Because I have to play the non-player characters, I feel I have to have a point of view and a justification for their actions, from their point of view, before I can effectively bring them into play.

My Morgathians are still ripening, we see them rarely and from a distance. My Navehians are rare, and perhaps atypical. My Ilvirians tend to seem a bit wacked to my players, but I am satisfied enough with their world view(s) that I continue to trot them out. I have stayed away from Sindarin as I don't think I could handle them to my satisfaction now, maybe not ever.

I guess I don't change much, but I avoid a lot that I am not satisfied I could portray in a consistent and believable manner. Or that doesn't particularly interest me or my players at this time. A player at the table who was eager to pit his character against Morgathians or gargun could change the balance over time.

Was the campaign plot planned in advance or did it develop as the game went on?

Major events outside of the player characters' control are plotted a year or more in advance. (HÂRNMASTER I Tables for Random major events.) And as noted, I try to have the player characters present for events that I think will make for interesting play.

However, they have missed the influenza epidemic in Orbaal, though they had a major part in containing it through their aid to Peonian missions. They also missed the crop failure in Sarkum last year, though the Nordaka's were in a position to sell grain south at a very modest price. And so Nordaka wins some good will from the house of Kand, which they needed. They have heard about the Prince of Melderyn's state visit to Azadmere, but only at a distance. A non-player characters acquaintance is involved in rallying opposition to the Solari Crusade, or was, if he hasn't been assassinated since they last saw him. They don't know, and neither, frankly, do I.

These pre-generated events help me give the feeling that the world goes on around them. But, to a certain degree I keep myself in the dark about how things are going to play out. Battles tend to be fought, either in-game or with a friend playing the opposition against me, out of game, and the results become my personal Hârn history.

The closer to the player characters something is, the more unpredictable it generally is. I use the random event tables from Hârnmaster red all the time, and the weather generation tables. And even if I know that something is

going to happen I make sure I don't know exactly when. I generate the earliest possible time that an event might occur, based on movement rates etc. and then randomize delays so that when the event comes up I haven't been telegraphing heavily that something is about to occur.

And players themselves may take the whole campaign on a side trip at any time, deliberately or accidentally. A horse is lamed getting it off a ferry and the characters must figure out whether to walk, try to acquire another mount, send some of the party ahead mounted and let the rest follow on foot, or what. A critical failure on Survival (one of the skills I use for fire starting) burns down a building and the consequences are what they are. Such things happen and we play with them.

I would hate to count how many horses have died in our campaign as we were trying to "get the hell out of Dodge." My players have learned that it is best to start a trip with spare horses equal to or greater than the number of mounts needed. And we have still wound up walking sometimes. They tend to have better luck with boats, generally. But, that is because when we are in a boat, the sailors sail and the rest are ballast. Can't do that when the party is traveling by horse, though there is a temptation to render certain characters unconscious and tie them across the saddle.

In retrospect, would you have done anything differently?

I don't know if I would use the Panaga device again. It has been useful, but I incorporated it before CURSE OF HLEN was published, and I find that module lame as a conclusion. If I wish to bring the Panaga thread to an end at some point in the future I will almost certainly have to devise another way to do it. Still, it has provided a bridge between the higher fantasy elements of the campaign and the grittier ones.

What are you most pleased with?

That the campaign has continued, playing about fifty sessions a year, since 1991. That most of the people who have been part of it for more than one or two sessions have remained as long as they could. (Until they moved away or had a job that kept them out etc.) And a number have come back when they could. That it has been pretty uniformly a pleasant table at which to sit. That I have only had to toss one player out of the game. (Killed off his character too, and served him right.) That as attrition has occurred I and my players have continued to be able to recruit replacements. That my personal Hârn has continued to become more complex and inter-related as we have continued to explore it.

What's your best gaming memory from the campaign?

The best is yet to be.





Rethemi Intrigue

Marc Renouf was the gamemaster of this Rethem-based campaign. The campaign rendered him the best compliment he'd ever gotten as a gamemaster from this game, and it was one that came from completely out of nowhere:

"One of the players (at whose apartment we played) had a visitor from out-of-town who sat in on a session. Interested by what he had seen, he started asking questions about the characters and the plot once the session was over. The players began the lengthy process of trying to explain to him who their characters were, what they were up to, and why. The 'why' part proved difficult, so they began to give him a history of all that had transpired in the campaign. As with any political intrigue setting, a large part of this history and motivation centered around the various non-player characters involved, what they were up to (or what the players thought they were up to), and how they related to each other."

"I largely sat back and listened to them explain, as it was fascinating to hear all their theories and see how they had perceived the events of the campaign from their characters' perspectives. At some point in the description of a particular plot point, the visitor became confused as to which non-player character was which, and said, 'Jeez, how do you guys keep all these non-player characters

straight?' In an offhand comment that made me beam with pride, one of my players simply shrugged and said, 'They're people.' I had always tried to convey my non-player characters as having distinctly memorable personalities, quirks, foibles, aspirations, etc, and in those two small words I knew that I was doing it right. I got more thanks from that than I could ever have asked for as a gamemaster."

Please describe the basic premises of the campaign

At its root, the campaign dealt with the political intrigue leading up to a civil war in Rethem. The player characters were all connected in some way or another to the Earl of Tormau, though several of them aided and abetted other factions.

What are the basic premises of the campaign?

The campaign started small, mainly located in the vicinity in and around Golotha. As the players gained experience with the world, the religions, and the politics of the region, the campaign expanded in scope. The players soon discovered that the smaller petty intrigues in which they were involved in Golotha were part of larger intrigues. As they got wrapped up in progressively larger intrigues, they began to get some sense of scope and complexity, which drew them in ever deeper.

What's the general mood of the campaign?

Given that the campaign took place in Rethem and that three of the players played characters who were devotees or priests of "dark" religions, I'd say that the mood was pretty grim. Mistrust and suspicion abounded, both within and outside the party. I also tried hard to convey the tragically human side of the political maneuvering and military conflict, with many valued and trusted non-player characters falling along the way.

What about magic and monsters?

I've always tried to play magic as extremely subtle in Hârn. One of the player characters was a Jmorvi Shek-P'var, but he kept his sorcery pretty low-key so as to avoid suspicion. One of the non-player characters had a gift for divination, which was sparingly used to both nudge players in a direction if they overlooked something or to plant the occasional red herring. Monsters were extremely rare, as most of the action took place in settled and "civilized" areas.

Who are the player characters?

Sir Jagoth of Malkarn (aka Sir Jagoth the Unholy) was a landless knight in service to Subla of Uldseth, Baron of Quste. He was also a lay Morgathian and generally a bad customer. Essentially a social climber, his ultimate goal was to become landed and/or wealthy. His intermediate goal was to cause mayhem and satiate his sociopathic need to hurt people.

Denyl of Uldseth was the grandson of Subla of Uldseth (his father was Subla's second son). He stood virtually no chance of inheriting the barony—until the King sacked Quste in the opening stages of the fighting, killing Subla and scattering the Uldseth, Uldsyn, Uldaen, and Hulsethy clans into the nearby forests. Subla's oldest son (Sir Sarl) was at Caer Tormau at the time, but he and Denyl never saw eye-to-eye on anything. This led to Denyl scheming to undermine his uncle in order to make his own claim to the barony once the dust had cleared (provided any of them survived the war).

Danatha of Kalphor was a Golothan mercantyleer specializing in the traffic of slaves. She had connections with the Kalphor Lia-Kavair, and was one of the more able schemers in the party. Her ultimate goal was to marry into nobility, and in the process ended up betrothed to Denyl of Uldseth (though she was willingly seduced by Sir Jagoth, something that caused Denyl significant political difficulties once it became public, Jagoth being a family vassal and all).

Karyx was the leader of a Golothan press-gang, abducting debtors, drunks, and unwary travelers to be sold as slaves. He did a moderately brisk business with Danatha. After the party left Golotha, he and his press-gang did a stint as bandits in Tormau's employ, and as the war

went on he styled himself a mercenary commander. He and Jagoth despised each other, but Jagoth needed able-bodied men and Karyx needed the aegis of Jagoth's rank to give his actions legitimacy. Karyx valued money, power, and position, pretty much in that order.

Ievenor "Blackdagger" was a member of the Lia-Kavair in Golotha. He was also a covert Navehan priest. Early in the game he became Sir Jagoth's right-hand-man in the underhanded dealings in Golotha, but his utility was short-lived. Running afoul of civic authorities in the city proper, he died kicking at the end of a rope after being hung from a gatehouse parapet.

Connor was a Jmorvi Shek-P'var. A Jarin exile from Orbaal, he sought only to finish his time as a Satia-Mavari in peace and quiet. But as tensions mounted and hostilities grew, his skills as an armorer and weaponcrafter were very much in demand. While Sir Jagoth was ostensibly his patron, he tried as much as possible to stay out of trouble and not make any waves.

Symael was a journeyman harper looking to write his opus. He happened into the group largely by chance, but stayed with them because their exploits were the stuff of legendary inspiration if he could properly put it to song (and if he survived). Something of an adrenaline junky, Symael threw himself into the intrigue business with a will once he got a taste for it, and his guile, charm, and personality afforded many opportunities that Sir Jagoth's sword or Karyx's cudgel did not.

What source material did you use?

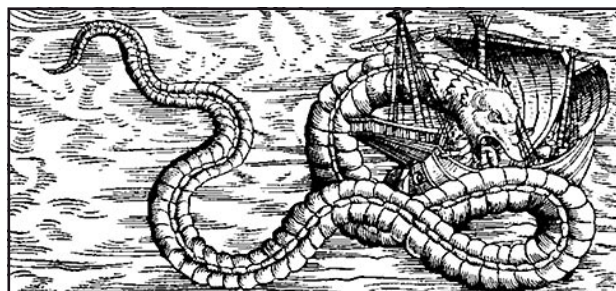
Predominantly the RETHEM kingdom module, CITIES OF HÂRN, SON OF CITIES, CASTLES OF HÂRN, AND GODS OF HÂRN. Other material was used as ancillary background (i.e. THARDA when outlining the politics of the Senate's demand for the return of Themeson, etc).

Did you run into any problems with Hârn setting?

Absolutely none. Indeed, the descriptions of the personalities of the various major players involved were tremendously helpful. It made my job deciding factions, goals, and unlikely alliances much easier.

Did you make any changes to the official Hârn setting?

One minor change I made was to add sewer tunnels (similar to those in Tashal, but more extensive) to Golotha. The sewers date from the Corani era, and were at the



level of the canals. As such, at low tide, water would drain out of the canals, through the sewers, and trickle down the banks, dropping the water level of the canals by a foot or two until high-tide came and reversed the process. These tunnels were occasionally used by smugglers, Lia-Kavair, Navehans, and worse, so sane people gave them a wide berth.

Was the campaign plot planned in advance or did it develop as the game went on?

The plot was very much fluid. Every so often, I would re-evaluate the plans of the various non-player characters and major players, decide which were successful and which were not, and make new plans accordingly. When it came to skirmishes, battles, and sieges, I introduced an element of random chance. So the King was able to sack Quste with relatively little loss in manpower, Tormau took moderately heavy casualties seizing Ithiko, and the Baron of Quiso dealt the royalist forces a major blow at the Battle of Strade.

This in turn always forced me to go back and look at my plots and schemes with a critical eye, and led to more than a few twists and unlikely alliances as the campaign progressed.

In retrospect, would you have done anything differently?

I would like to have developed the Golothan intrigues a bit more deeply. At first, it was simply a matter of trying to keep things simple enough to get the players thinking in the right directions and short-term enough to keep their interest. But there were seeds that could have been planted in those early hijinks that could have had a lot of mileage later down the road as the rest of the campaign developed.

What are you most pleased with?

I'm most pleased with the fact that players from the campaign still reminisce about it when they get together. It's been almost a decade since that campaign ended and people still tell stories about it as though it's still going on. In my mind, that means that it was memorable and made an impression on everyone involved.

I had the extremely good fortune to have a group of very accomplished role-players who took to it very quickly and needed very little in the way of nudging or direction from me as the situation shifted and changed.

What's your best gaming memory from the campaign?

The best role-playing I have ever seen came out of one episode of the campaign. Denyl of Uldseth was largely a fop and not taken seriously by his fellow clansmen. This was especially true of Sir Sarl, his uncle who was sure to become Baron in the event that Tormau was successful in the war. Sarl had men and military experience that made him extremely valuable to the Earl. In an effort to curry favor with the Earl and style himself as a military leader,

Denyl undertook the relatively dangerous job of contacting his outlaw cousins in hiding (remember, Quste and its surrounds had been sacked by the King and Clan Uldseth and its related tenants had been outlawed). Trying to convince them to harass the King by engaging in banditry in the lands between Golotha and Shostim, Denyl was flatly refused by the outlaws—because King Chafin III had been careful to take hostages (18 women and children) to keep this very thing from happening. Denyl said, “leave this to me, I will free them or die trying.”

Knowing that there was no way in the 13 hells that he had the resources to actually pull this off, he then set about an elaborate plan to kill them and blame it on the King.

The plan actually involved him stealing himself into the dungeon at Shostim where the prisoners were being held. Selling them a concocted story about how he had a sorcerous means for them to escape, he gave his aunt (the matriarch of the assembled hostages) a sleeping draught to give everyone, along with an admonishment to “trust in me.” “With my life, Denyl” was her reply. Once they were all sleeping and quiet, he sent Karyx in to kill them. The only miscalculation was that one of the infants hadn't been given enough and was still awake. Murdering people in their sleep was old-hat for Karyx, but he balked at knifing a cooing baby. Finally steeling himself to the act, he made sure to tell Denyl what he'd had to do (guilt loves company as much as misery).

Denyl then went back to his outlaw clansmen and told them, “The King has deemed you toothless dogs. He has no hostages from our clan. He has killed them rather than feed their hungry mouths this winter, slit each of their throats like so much livestock. This is how little he fears you. Let us exact our revenge and show him the error of his ways.”

As his indignant and vengeful clansmen made plans to raid and burn nearby farms, Denyl returned to Golotha and set about getting himself well and truly drunk. Obsessed by his guilt and of the opinion that it is the role of a Baron to protect his clansmen rather than kill them, Denyl's thoughts waxed suicidal. The player loved playing the character, but decided that it was wholly in keeping with Denyl's character and morals that he would be unable to live with what he had done. And so it was that Denyl of Uldseth rented himself the nicest room in the inn, threw a rope over the rafter, and hung himself.

Any roleplayer who is true enough to the character of his character that he is willing to lose said character has my utmost respect.

This didn't prove the quite be the end of Denyl, but that is another story (be wary of deals made with Morgathians). ☸

Pilgrims and Relics

Travelling the lands in search of blessings and hope.

Text: Joe Adams

PEOPLE WENT ON pilgrimages to view evidence of holy people and acts. Seeing and touching a holy relic had the effect of imbuing the pilgrim with a bit of “holiness.” Most of Hârn’s inhabitants have never traveled farther than the local market town, much less left their home shire or kingdom. Given this tendency to stay close to home, people undertake pilgrimages to show their devotion and experience far away places. The word pilgrim comes from the Latin word *pelegrinus*, meaning stranger. These strangers criss-cross both Hârn and Lythia looking for the evidence of the religious heroes that lived and died and the places where miracles occurred.

The next two sections of this article describe the reasons people make pilgrimages and the types of relics they travel to venerate. The third section discusses the travel conditions a pilgrim could expect. The last section examines how pilgrims and pilgrimages could be used in a Hârn campaign.

The Reason for Pilgrimages

Some pilgrimages are voluntary. Stories abound of wealthy merchants or grizzled warriors making a last pilgrimage to a holy site as the culmination of their illustrious career. Other pilgrims might have been forced, either as an act of penance or as part of a quest seeking redemption of some sort. Making a pilgrimage offered an exciting and fulfilling way to get away from the village and see the world.

Voluntary Pilgrims

Pilgrims visit holy sites to make their faith more ‘real’ or tangible. Actually seeing or touching something ‘holy’ or to visit the site of a miracle, makes believing much easier. Christian pilgrims started journeying from Europe to the Holy Land as early as the fourth century AD. These pilgrims wanted to see the places that they had read about in



the Bible. By making this perilous trek, the pilgrims literally wanted to walk in the footsteps of the Master.

Many pilgrims traveled to pray for divine guidance, healing, or to honor a vow. These pilgrims believed that the holy relic assured them of the presence of the saint, who would act as an intermediary or witness to the deity. Pilgrims sought out places and relics specific to their request. A leper would make a pilgrimage to the patron saint of lepers in hopes of a cure. A retiring knight might make a journey to a battlefield or the grave of a warrior saint. Newlyweds would visit a special shrine or well to pray for fertility in their marriage.

Penitential Pilgrims

Not all pilgrimages were personal journeys, however. The concept of a pilgrimage as a form of penance was common in the Middle Ages. Pilgrims would undertake the journey as a display of contrition. The pilgrim’s destination would be selected for them, the distance to the destination being a measure of the gravity of the sin. In a Hârn setting, this type of pilgrimage could be used to bring a Lythian group to Hârn or send a Hârn-based group to Lythia.

Pilgrimages were also used as a criminal punishment, especially for scandalous transgressions committed by wealthy or well-born persons. These were called judicial pilgrimages and were used for crimes ranging from murder to heresy to blasphemy. The pilgrim was forced to

wear a sign of his or her crime throughout the journey and was subjected to public humiliation. Being forced to travel barefoot or in a hair shirt was common. Chaucer even described judicial pilgrims making trips naked.

Relics

Pilgrimages led the pious to relics, sacred objects associated with holy people. Many of Earth's religions used relics as tangible reminders of God's presence, because people believed that evil and Satan also existed in the natural world. Pilgrimages were made so that people could see or touch something holy and gain benefit or protection. While some clerics compared the veneration of relics to idolatry, Saint Thomas Aquinas created three arguments to defend the use of relics. First, he argued that the relic acted as a physical reminder of the saint and made it easier for people to understand the importance of the saint. Second, because the saint worked miracles through the body, the body remained holy. Finally, because miracles occurred at sites with relics, Saint Thomas Aquinas reasoned that God must approve of the preservation and worship of relics.

Types of Relics

Relics were symbols of status and power, even leading to national rivalries and small scale warfare. There are two types of relic. The most common type is called *brandea*. These relics are often ordinary objects that have become holy through contact with a holy person or place. This phenomenon of an object gaining sanctity through contact is called *contagion* and enabled pilgrims to make their own relics, in essence. Examples of *brandea* include: a stone or clump of earth from a saint's tomb, a cloth that has been rubbed against a sacred stone, or a small flask of holy water that has been blessed in a temple. *Brandea* were carried in small reliquaries that were hung around the neck as proof of the person's piety.

The second type of relic is called a bodily relic and is, as the name suggests, a piece of the saint's physical remains. Since every part of the saint holds a measure of his or her sanctity, the saint's head, hair, bones, blood, and teeth are all highly prized. Bodily relics were more prized than *brandea*. The medieval church practiced partition, wherein the body of a saint might be divided among different churches. Partition was necessary because a church decree in 787 mandated that all new churches had to possess a relic before they could be consecrated.

The Business of Relics

The practice of partition had the effect of creating a business in buying and selling relics. Churches across the land

paid handsomely for relics, resulting in several places claiming to own the same relic. At one time there were three heads of Saint John the Baptist in three different churches. Because of the difficulty of verifying a relic's authenticity, the trade in relics became a gold mine for fakers and forgers.

When the price of relics, real or manufactured, became too high, churches took to stealing holy objects from each other. The theft was often justified by a vision. If the thieves succeeded in their plans, they often made the case the saint allowed the relics to be taken to a new place of rest.

What happened more often than not was that small, easily replicated items filled the market. Any number of Christ's milk teeth, pieces of the True Cross, or vials of a saint's blood could be found through the market in relics. The number and nature of these relics spanned the ridiculous to the sublime but they were all respected, as long as their justification was accepted by the faithful.

Other Religious Memorabilia

In addition to *brandea* and bodily relics, churches found many other ways to attract pilgrims. Artists were commissioned to paint frescos on walls and ceilings to describe the saint's deeds for the devout, but largely illiterate, pilgrims. Likewise, sculptures, stained glass windows, and tapestries were created to inform worshippers of the importance of the church's patron saint. Wealthy pilgrims who had received benefit from their visit to the saint's relics donated many of these items, thus advertising the saint's power as well as giving thanks for it.

Traveling as Pilgrims

Pilgrims usually traveled in groups. These groups afforded a measure of safety and convenience for the travelers. Often, merchants helped organize group trips to holy sites, arranging travel, food, and lodging for a negotiated price. It should be mentioned that only the freeborn made pilgrimages. Serfs could not usually travel freely and it was an extraordinary set of circumstances that allowed a peasant to travel great distances away from their home manor.

If the pilgrim was free to travel, his first consideration was cost. Pilgrimages were lengthy and expensive journeys, especially if the pilgrim expected to travel comfortably. Most pilgrims planned to spend at least a year's income, often selling land or chattels to the church to raise funds. Pilgrims that found themselves short of where-withal had to rely on the charity of people along the way.

Part of the pilgrim's preparation was to settle all business in their home manor. Debts were paid, wills signed, and disputes settled. Once the pilgrim's worldly concerns

were resolved, he had to take a holy vow at his local church. The priest would offer his blessing under the condition that the pilgrim completes the journey or face excommunication. Once the vow was made and the blessing bestowed, the pilgrim donned the appropriate uniform and set off.

The Pilgrim's Uniform

The pilgrim's uniform grew out of the practical clothing worn by poor travelers as they visited holy sites. The importance of the uniform, however, far outweighs its mundane origins, since the pilgrim's need to distinguish himself from other travelers was often the key to food and shelter along the road.

Pilgrims Along the Road

The staff, hat, and scrip were the mark of the pilgrim. The staff, made of stout wood and shod with metal, was used as a walking stick and a defense against the dangers of the road. A broad brimmed hat shaded the pilgrim from the sun and, oddly enough, provided a location for a multitude of badges and pins that signified the pilgrim's travels. The scrip was a soft pouch, what more modern travelers would call a haversack that contained the pilgrim's food, money, and documents. If the pilgrim were literate, the scrip might contain religious books or pamphlets. In addition to these items, pilgrims wore long cloaks to warm them along their travels or in roadside hostels.

Once the pilgrimage was complete, the pilgrim would pin a badge, usually made of lead, to their cloak or hat brim to show where they had been. Most sites sold souvenir badges that represented their patron's deeds. Some worldly pilgrims had hats covered with badges from different shrines as signs of their travels.

The Journey

Long distance travel in a medieval setting was a dangerous undertaking. The first decision was whether to travel by land or by sea. The pilgrim usually started his journey at the temple where he took his pilgrim's vow. There, he could join a company of other pilgrims and travel with them. Many medieval authors stressed the importance of choosing trustworthy companions. In some areas, professional thieves dressed as pilgrims or even priests so that they could infiltrate pilgrim groups. Other pilgrims were robbed or even killed by their companions.

Once the group set off, they faced a new array of trials. Land travel presented the pilgrim the challenges of poor roads, bad weather, and a host of toll collectors, innkeepers, and bandits trying to separate money from purse. A 12th century guidebook for pilgrims seeking to visit the church of Santiago de Compostella lists some of the dan-

gers of the road: thick forests, mosquito infested marshes, wild animals, and impassable rivers. Supplies of water and drink were a constant problem and pilgrims were advised not to travel at certain times of year. The pilgrim could rarely find safe respite at night, as poor-quality inns and shabby hostels were as common as nights spent in hayricks or in the open.

If possible, pilgrims stayed at temples or monasteries of their faith. While these places offered free accommodation, the quality of the hospices varied considerably, however, and usually only the very poorest received alms. Beds were a rarity and most pilgrims made do with a straw covered floor. Richer pilgrims generally preferred to stay at an inn but found that lodgings were crowded and rates high. Innkeepers along pilgrim routes were often accused of cheating the pilgrims because they set special rates for plain food and the privilege of sharing a flea-infested bed.

Sea travel was rarely any easier for a pilgrim. The sea journey was apt to be dangerous, extremely uncomfortable and often very boring. In addition to the threats of storm, seasickness, and shipwreck, there was also the problem of piracy. Accommodation was basic. Pilgrims were crammed into small compartments where they hardly had room enough to turn over in their sleep. The food was often bland and the water was stale. Experienced pilgrims packed their own food, including laxatives and restoratives such as ginger, figs and cloves. In addition to the problems of hunger and sleeplessness, there was also the boredom. The only organized activity was a daily sermon; otherwise pilgrims were left to their own devices.

The Destination

If the pilgrim survived the journey, they arrived at the destination of their journey and met with the full force of the medieval tourism industry. Billboards and criers would start appearing miles from the destination, advertising inns, stables, and taverns that catered to the pilgrim trade. Translators and guides approached arriving pilgrim groups, ready to offer their services. Peddlers would sell guidebooks, in addition to repaired equipment, pilgrim badges, and local products. Pilgrims liked to bring home exotic products, such as spices, wines and silks, which were not available in their home manor.

When the pilgrim approached the sanctuary, they often had to contend with large crowds. Entertainers, merchants, and thieves worked their crafts for the crowd. The mood inside the sanctuary was more subdued. Churches employed door wardens and guards to keep order and eject anyone who did not display the proper attitude of piety. This was not an easy task and graffiti, carved into walls or floors of the sanctuary by pilgrims, can still be seen in churches.

Using Relics and Pilgrims

Transplanting relics and pilgrims from medieval history to a roleplaying setting like Hårn is not very difficult and can result in many interesting gaming opportunities. In fact, a pilgrimage can form the core of any quest-type campaign.

Relics

The first writer to take advantage of a pilgrimage to assemble a diverse group of characters was Geoffrey Chaucer. People of different backgrounds and social classes mingled along the pilgrim trail or on deck of a ship bound for a holy site. Fellow pilgrims might be useful as sources of knowledge. The “odd little man by the fire” might have collected many travelers’ tales, not all of which are necessarily true. Other pilgrims might be smugglers, or refugees, outlaws, or bandits.

Adopting the pilgrim’s uniform might be the player characters’ best chance to visit forbidden cities and inaccessible temples. Sir Richard Burton (the explorer not the actor) used this ploy to visit the forbidden city of Mecca. The pilgrim’s hat might also hide player characters as they try to leave problems or unresolved legal matters behind. Or the group may have been sentenced to complete a pilgrimage for the same reasons.

Pilgrimages

Regardless of the reason the player characters are traveling, a gamemaster can take advantage of the lure of holy relics to provide a goal for a campaign. In a fantasy world, relics can have genuine powers to cure disease, heal wounds, or even defeat powerful beasts. Player characters might be encouraged to use the property of contagion to make their own relics.

In addition to true relics, fake relics litter the scene. The player characters might be tricked into purchasing a false item or could be responsible for making and selling the same fakes to gullible pilgrims. If a relic cannot be visited or touched, the player characters might decide to steal it. Powerful relics might have several claimants, any of whom might hire the player characters to retrieve it. Even the reliquaries were valuable and provide another temptation for player characters with low scruples and empty purses.

An Example Pilgrim’s Trail

Making a pilgrim route is as easy as picking a saint, selecting a site, and giving the group a place to start from. Agrikans might travel to Kustan. Save K’norians might go to a great library, such as are found in Harper’s Halls, Col-

leges of Heralds, or the primate’s palace in Cherafir. Other religions draw pilgrims to the palace of their pontiff, leading groups of player characters to Thay, Golotha or Shiran.

In my campaign, which involves a lot of Serelindian history, pilgrims travel the roads of Neph and Balimshire visiting sites associated with Calsten I and his son Medrik I. The pilgrim’s trail begins in Gardiren, the ancient capitol of Serelind. The pilgrims receive the Serolan’s blessing and set out along the old Royal Road toward the monastery at Aldryn. The pilgrims charge their spiritual strength with a special Soratir at Chalced and are accompanied by knights of the Order of the Lady of Paladins as they enter the wilderness. The pilgrims’ trail takes them west at the crossroads and they enter Getha after a few days’ walk.

Few pilgrims stop for long in Getha, however. Most push on to the abbey at Lethyl, where the bodily relics of Saint Syrele lie in a magnificent reliquary behind the abbey’s public altar. After seeing the relics and buying a pilgrim’s badge, the faithful continue their journey by following the small road westward to Hyzevel. There, in the manor house chapel, pilgrims file past the armor of Saint Ebryn, a knight who commanded Medrik’s army.

The village makes a steady income from the pilgrim traffic, especially the innkeeper who knows that even his crowded little rooms are more appealing than sleeping on the cold forest floor. The visit to Hyzevel is quick and groups find that that they cover the distance to the Lady of Paladins Chapter Houses at Hakstyn and Jenkald in an easy day’s walk. The knights of the Order provide places to stay and warm food to eat to the pilgrims. Wealthier travelers are requested to leave a donation but the destitute find that they can pay for their dinner with some work in the stables or at the woodpile.

The pilgrim’s trail turns south at Jenkald and leads to Fisen, where Medrik’s banner and spear hang in the Constable’s hall. Since the Sir Dagald does not care to entertain hordes of gawking pilgrims, only the wealthy or politically important worshippers are actually allowed to view the relics. Others must satisfy themselves with a mural painted in apse of the local Laranian temple.

From Fisen, the trail continues to Kiban, the site of Medrik’s great victory. Some pilgrims walk the distance along the Silver Way but others find space on a talbar for the trip. The priests of the Laranian temple in Kiban lead pilgrims on a tour of the battlefield, stopping to pray or chant at the battle’s critical locations. From Kiban, the pilgrims begin their journey home or continue to the primate’s palace in Thay. ☸



Gnostic Interpretation of Hârníc Religion

Religions on Hârn is not an easy subject. Will this essay perhaps shed some light over the gods?

Text: Ilkka Leskelä

THE HÂRNIC RELIGION and the Hârníc churches have been discussed on the HârnForum often enough to show that many think the sources fail to give a fully sensible account on what is going on in western Lythia. While agreeing that this can indeed be a great asset of the published Hârníc sources—allowing for myriad individual interpretations depending on individual needs—I will once again venture towards a “grand explanation of it all.” In this interpretation based on Gnosticism the basic assumptions about Hârníc cosmos have to be fixed a bit. But the sources are not overruled,



and the dicotomy between published Hârn and my interpretation can indeed be real in different p-Hârn, serving as a cosmic campaign hook.

Writing this I have consulted only “Religion”, pp. 1–2, and “Hârn”, p. 18. Considering the basic nature of these texts I assume the following to be intelligible and probably compatible with everything else that has been written about Hârníc religion and churches in the sources.

What is Gnosticism?

Gnosticism explains the physical world to be inherently confusing, illusionary and wrong. The world is a battle ground of the powers of Light and Darkness, and Darkness is often the stronger one. Still, every human (or living) being has a sparkle of Light in her. Kindling this Light, trying to guard and grow it, is the only meaningful reason of existence. Those who do not know or do not care about their Light are swallowed by the Darkness, leading into a futile and destructive life. Those who know about their Light have the wisdom (Greek *gnosis* = knowledge/wisdom) to do things right.

Gnostics believe that the powers of Light and Darkness gave battle in the beginning. Most believe Light won. Thus the true divine world is a world of Light, and all creation comes from Light. Light is the God, the Creator, the principal Order. Darkness is the force of destruction, non-being, Chaos. All living beings strive to reach the Light. (Taken to the extreme—so that living beings strive to become the Light, to be included in it—this leads to a concept not much different from Brahma in Hinduism.)

However, in striving to become part of Light, one of the entities of Light ventured to make a creation of its own. This entity is the Demiurg (Greek *demi-urgos* = semi-creator) or the Demigod. His creation went wrong

or at least is not yet complete. The power of Darkness got into this creation either by subterfuge or by invasion, either by disposing the Demiurg or by corrupting him (cf. Lucifer). The resulting world is a world of Darkness, where the sparkles of Light are constantly threatened by the attacks and temptations of Darkness. It is an apocalyptic world, where the last battle is constantly present.

This world is divided between good and evil, the good being connected to spirit, mind and intelligence, the evil being connected to materiality, body and emotions. To save herself, a human being has to control her body and emotions and not let the material temptations to overcome her. This is impossible without the true knowledge (gnosis) of what is right and what is wrong. While all people basically have the sparkle of Light, not all have the knowledge, and not all know equally much. Thus there are people who know more and act as teachers and priests (princes, Brahmins, rabbis, sultans, dervishes). The knowledge is kept hidden, because it is a weapon to be used against Darkness that is everywhere. Hence Gnosticism often includes secrets and hidden writs.

What is written above sounds perhaps way too on the edge. I am not proposing that Hârn should be changed into a Yashain where armies meet every day. To make a comparison, all the major monotheistic creeds on Earth owe much to the idea of Gnosticism. Gnosticism was bitterly fought in the ecclesiastical meetings of emerging Christianity, and all the major heretic movements of Christian Middle Ages harbored teachings that can be interpreted as Gnostic—as did the Muslim sects, like the chashashini (root of the word assassin). Secret or encrypted writings like the Cabala and the apocryphic evangeliums can be seen as Gnostic texts, which were believed to lead to further knowledge and salvation. The belief in the secrets of the Templars, for example, belongs to the same set of thought. While there were religious wars (Iconoclastic civil wars in the Byzantine Empire, the Albigensian crusade in Occitania) the different gnostic sects led for the largest part a quiet existence. Western and eastern Gnosticism can even be seen as two parts of the same set, as an aspect that brought Muslims and Christians closer to each other than the religious leaders wanted to admit. Both were “people of the book”, i.e. they were granted with the right wisdom.

Kelestian Gnosticism

The Kelestian world is believed to be the result of a battle between Order and Chaos. The First Gods may represent the Order and the Chaos, in which case one could imagine there are two First Gods, a good one and an evil one. Or the First Gods may be minions or entities of a Primal

Being, who is the Order. Or they may be parts or powers of a Primal Being, in which case they together are the Primal Being.

The layer between this world and the divine world is created by the action of one or several incomplete demigods. If there is only one demigod, the Hârníc deities are his followers or prophets. If there are several demigods, they are the Hârníc deities. In this latter case one could say that the peace the First Gods made is actually the demiurg, because the peace led to the creation of the present, incomplete world.

Now this is getting pretty academic and close to nonsense—which is good. Gnostic Hârn can be full of speculations and secrets about the true order of things. But for the sake of simplicity I will take the Hârníc deities to be beings of this world, creations of one Demiurg. They may even be mortals who have achieved some sort of divinity based on their knowledge, and who are able to divide their knowledge to their worshippers through bonds of faith, i.e. piety. Or they have never existed, but people have invented them as idealized focuses for different creeds.

The most important thing here is that the Hârníc deities are seen as existing inside the same order of things, representing different facets of the truth. They are not the primal truth itself, but represent ways to reach that primal truth. It may well be that none of the Hârníc deities possess the full knowledge. But they are still on a higher level than any human being or any lesser god or spirit, and there can be several layers of semi-divine beings between the deities and human beings.

Gnostic Interpretation of the Deities and their Churches

The basis of Gnosticism is the logic of good and evil. No one follows a deity that is evil. All followers are followers in good faith. They believe that following the way represented by a certain deity is a way to knowledge and salvation. The human society has its moral standards, and according to these standards some deities are esteemed moral and others immoral or amoral. But the standards differ from place to place. Thus the deities accepted and followed in Rethem are good ones for the Rethemi, while the deities accepted and followed in Kanday are good ones for the Kandi.

In a given society several paths to salvation can be accepted, if the followers of the different paths can co-exist peacefully. However, no society accepts all paths/deities. Also, no path can be simply changed to another path. Even paths that co-exist peacefully are independent and seclusive. A Peonic serf is sure that his path leads to salvation while his lord's Laranic or Agrikan creed is unpure.

Thus the Peonic serf is inclined to serve his master while harboring thoughts taught by a Peonic priest. In a similar manner the Laranic lord is inclined to let the serfs live their lives and to tax and protect them. He is on his way to his salvation. Both parties are thinking of an afterlife where the other has no share. Both parts are living in the same society without too many grudges against each other. The important question is how to best kindle the Light to battle the Darkness.

Agrik: the path of urgency

PHILOSOPHY: The battle between Light and Darkness is raging, and we're not doing that well. Any means to win the battle should be accepted. To guard one's own flickering flame of Light is more important than to care for the others. The battle is a physical one. Body is the armor of the soul, it should be trimmed and used in the battle. The outcome of the battle can be vividly seen in the world every day, the doom is near, there's no time to finesse and words. Those who don't give their all to the battle are already lost souls. Inefficiency is a sin. The passive ones can be fed upon.

OTHER PATHS: Individual situations are handled separately. Those that are with us are good ones, those that are silent are unimportant ones, and those that oppose us are evil ones. People who follow irrelevant paths are either stupid and to be scorned upon, or enemies.

CRITICISM: The rage, selfishness and physicality of Agrikans is often despised and held to be clear marks of Darkness. Most of those who think there's something good in Agrikans also think the Agrikans have settled their principles too low.

Halea: the path of hedonism

PHILOSOPHY: Darkness thrives when mind and body are not balanced. If they are not balanced, one doesn't feel good. Thus one should strive to feel good, both physically and mentally. The means to get to this goal are free. Feeling guilt is a sin. Thus pleasure without guilt is the perfect state and takes one closer to the Primal Light.

OTHER PATHS: All the other paths are masks of the right path. Deep inside, everyone strives to have pleasure

without guilt. Thus all creeds that build obstacles on the road to this destination with restrictive rules and unimportant goals are to be despised. On the other hand, every individual who is able to feel happiness is to be respected. Individuals that don't feel happiness can be used to create joy in every possible way that doesn't result in guilt.

CRITICISM: The open happiness and enjoyment the Haleans show is often taken to mean that they have found something good. However, on a closer look their ways to reach that good are often selfish and physical in an unacceptable way. Most, however, are ready to accept the Haleans as a necessary evil in the world—an evil that can be moulded to make even good things.



Ilvir: the path of existentialism

PHILOSOPHY: I am. The knowledge to lead a good life is to be found instinctively. No amount of reasoning or logic can explain our existence. That is why the understanding of existence must be sought through existence itself. The goal is to exist without of thinking it. To be alive without any explanations is a primal state, where both body and mind merge together with the Light itself. The more there is irrational existence, the smaller is the power of Darkness. Hence it is good to create anything that doesn't make sense.

OTHER PATHS: Their reasons, rules and logics are against existence itself and thus from Darkness. To take any of their teachings and make it irrelevant is the only way to converse with them.

CRITICISM: The total abandon of the Ilvirians is a denial of the very concept of Path. They are the utter crap of existence, to be left alone or to be disposed of.

Larani: the path of severity

PHILOSOPHY: The battle between Light and Darkness is both mental and physical, and is fought both inside and outside of one's physical body. The principles of Light exist as good things that should be upheld, protected and spread. Light and Darkness can be separated on every occasion. A pious person always seeks this separation and tries to either guard the Light or better to destroy the Darkness. Order, justice, honor, loyalty, bravery and mercy

are among the principles that keep up Light against Darkness. In the end Light is going to win and all the worthy souls saved.

OTHER PATHS: Deities whose followers accept or at least don't act against any of the principles of Light are worthy ones. Deities whose followers do otherwise are plagued by the Darkness to different degrees. Some of their followers can be saved, others must be destroyed. Previous deeds are always balanced with present ones, but people of other paths should also be given the possibility to do better in order to save themselves.

CRITICISM: Laranians are unable to follow their codes. Their mishaps cause more wrongs than they're ever able to correct. Their logics are too lofty to be practical. However, there are situations where Laranians can combat the Darkness in a decisive way. Perhaps the best Laranian is a dead hero—a thought many Laranians themselves also seem to accept.

Morgath: the path of death

PHILOSOPHY: The battle between Light and Darkness was lost ages ago. The sole purpose that is left for the knowing ones is to fulfill the destruction so that this polluted creation ceases to be. Life itself is polluted and weak, even chaos is more divine than this pitiful sparkle of Light called spirit. The only way left to use the Light is to burn it.

OTHER PATHS: All the others are gravely mistaken. Pitiful fools, they deserve no respect, no mercy, nothing at all. If they can be used to further the destruction, it makes them useful—before it is their time to go.

CRITICISM: A path to nothingness is no path at all. The destruction the Morgathians bring upon the world is a blasphemy. If they openly admit they want to get rid of Light, they should be destroyed as beings of Darkness. (Agrikans: The Morgathian's understanding of death and Darkness could be used to fight the very things themselves, but not in a way that brings credit to or furthens the goals of the Morgathians. Navehans: The same as the Agrikans, but it can bring credit to the Morgathians and further their goals as long as it doesn't reveal us and brings something for us, too.)

Naveh: the path of deceit

PHILOSOPHY: Darkness has won, but we're still here. To understand Darkness is the sole means to be able to exist and keep one's Light burning. Because everyone else is a minion of Darkness, it's better to go with the flow than to give open battle—Because in time opportunities for action will open ... We are very few and very weak, so we must be disciplined and follow the orders of those who have survived the longest.

OTHER PATHS: All the others are minions of Darkness and masters of deceit. Co-operation is a possibility only if it is necessary to future survival and if it doesn't break our cover.

CRITICISM: The Navehans are minions of Darkness and masters of deceit. There is no path to Light.

Peoni: the path of simple deeds

PHILOSOPHY: People are suffering, so there's work to be done. Light and Darkness meet every moment, both visibly and inside people's hearts. The best way to fight Darkness is to keep one's own heart clean and to help others to do the same – if one has the energy. To keep one's heart clean one has to concentrate on simple thoughts, simple things and simple goals. Nourishment, protection, sleep and healing are basic good things that keep the Darkness away. Order, justice and mercy are good values if based on the cleanness of heart. Weakness can be a blessing, selfishness is a sin.

OTHER PATHS: Some are desperate, others are too sure of themselves; some have too big goals, others have no goals at all. With a clean heart one can be an example to these complicated people. Helping them to achieve their destinies in harmony with others will make the world a better place. Some, however, cannot be cured from the touch of evil. They must be protected from themselves.

CRITICISM: Little things and naïvety will not win the day against Darkness. But Peonians can be very helpful in supporting others to do the actual work.

Sarajin: the path of greatness

PHILOSOPHY: This is a good day to fight! This is a good day for glorious deeds! This is a good day to meet my destiny! Light? The fire of my heart is the Light; the power of my arm is the Light; the shimmer of my armor is the Light! At the end of the day, warriors gather in the chieftain's hall to celebrate the Light! Darkness? Show me Darkness, and I'll overcome it!

OTHER PATHS: Companions in battle I gift with rings; men who stand behind their words I gift with trust; those who carry my shield and provide for me I gift with protection; those who give me their love I gift with mine! Where the shadows of Darkness conquer hearts I hear a challenge to arms!

CRITICISM: With that boasting about themselves and their gifts the Sarajians are hard to come by, unless one succumbs to their power. With battles, riches and enjoyment anybody can feel OK, but seeking only those things is not a productive code of life. The Sarajians can be a good asset, though, and are quite easily persuaded to deeds that actually cause good things to happen. Sadly,

they can as easily be persuaded to further the goals of Darkness.

Save-K'nor: the path of understanding

PHILOSOPHY: Without understanding the world, one cannot understand the Light one has inside. And without understanding the Light inside, one cannot understand the world and see the Darkness in it. Simple things are to be problematized and complex things should be made intelligible. Deeds are based on knowledge, knowledge on understanding, understanding on the inner Light, the inner Light on the original deed of creation. The world has a meaning, a course, as does every living being in it. Understanding the world means understanding oneself and vice versa. Being able to transmit ones understanding with writing, sounds, pictures or movements of ones body is the fulfillment of understanding. Good order is a friend to understanding. Physical things are secondary.

OTHER PATHS: There are paths that mean well but either don't understand what they mean or don't understand what's good. These we help to find the needed understanding. Then there are paths that lead to oblivion and people who don't care to understand. These are to be despised, because they represent Darkness.

CRITICISM: Their ordering of the world doesn't mean that the Save-K'norians actually do something to make the world better. The Save-K'norians are most useful when they (are forced to) share their knowledge in order to help the actual doers and makers to achieve real goals. They can be quite entertaining at times, though.

Siem: the path of mastery

PHILOSOPHY: The battle of Light and Darkness is a battle between spirit and body; between mastery of ones destiny and the force of circumstances; between abandoned opportunity and fulfilled need; between gentle maturity and harsh rawness; between the caring hand and the undisciplined strike. In the decision to grow a flower when one could move a mountain the power of Light is present. It is present in a tool that's been crafted in place of a thousand tools. It's present in a tool that has crafted one thing instead of thousand things. Light is the beauty of taking one step in place of traversing a thousand miles. Light is the shadow that hides the Light.

Other Paths: Every path leads into this one path. The loss is enormous but eventually the spring will come.

CRITICISM: Blah blah blah. If Siem is all paths, how can it be any path at all? The sum of all paths means no movement at all, and the beginning is long since past. To embrace everything is not the same as to take responsibility of it. When did day-dreaming and mushrooms save the world?

Earthmasters: the keepers of the knowledge

PHILOSOPHY: The Ancients found the true knowledge of Light and were able to transport themselves from this world straight to the divine eternity of Light. Theirs is the knowledge of the straight path, and by studying their artefacts one can learn to know this path. The artefacts themselves show that material world can be made to serve spiritual needs, while the opposite is also true. The uncaying constructions of the Ancients stand as eternal milestones to mark this path. The hidden genius of the Ancients is there just waiting to be uncovered. Actually, just going to those places may help us to remember what we always knew.

OTHER PATHS: Other paths may lead to the Light, too. But none of them has shown their efficiency so far, and it can be that they are fakes. It is, however, not against the Ancient's path to study these other paths. Indeed, the other paths may hide secrets to better understand the Ancient's artefacts. Perhaps if we could bring together all the rites of the different creeds and combine them on the summer solstice of 723 in a yet-to-be-found-secret-complex-of-the-Ancients they will return and show us the way ...

CRITICISM: See, there goes another one.

Piety Points

Piety points represent the quantity of Light a human being has accumulated through her deeds. Using the piety simply decreases the quantity of Light in her, so accumulating and guarding this asset is essential if one wants to "use" it. Depending on the interpretation of the game-master, following some paths may actually decrease piety. Thus if the Morgathian interpretation is chosen as the thruth (ie. the world is going to end soon, and this is a good thing), following the Laranian path may decrease piety. However, it is probably unnecessary to think that there should be one truth of the order of things. Perhaps faith itself—the belief in doing things right—increases the life-force (the Light) of human beings. In this way it is the human beings collectively who in the end will choose the future of the world. How beautiful. How scary.

Yashain

Gnosticism means believing in at least two different worlds: the eternal world of Light, and the mortal world where battle between Light and Darkness is raging. The existence of several intermediate or parallel worlds (creations of several Demiurges) is basically acceptable in Gnostic faith. Because of this, belief in the co-existence of several worlds in the Kelestian cosmos is in harmony with



Gnostic faith. The most important world, at least from the Hârníc perspective, is Yashain, the place of afterlife for most of the Hârníc faiths. As Gnosticism is based on knowledge (*gnosis*), Gnostic interpretation of Hârníc religion needs to define Yashain. However, my point in this article is not to give one ultimate explanation, but rather to give food for thought. Because of this, I will present three or four interpretations of Yashain in relation to Gnosticism.

The simplest way is to see Yashain as the fulfilment of a good life. Yashain is the name for paradise, where only one (the “right one”) of the paths described above rules. The battle going on in Yashain is a symbolic one, a cyclüs to regenerate Light. Implicitly this interpretation also means that only the followers of one of the Hârníc gods (the “right one”) will see the Light. In its simplicity, this interpretation is the one that leads very easily to religious fanaticism and splintering of society in the mortal world, i.e. to inquisition and wars of religion on Hârn.

Yashain may also be a go-between world (like Nangi-jala in Astrid Lindgren’s *The Brothers Lionhearted*). Yashain is a world where the principles of Light and Darkness are separated, where there is no question of what is good and what is bad, where the true knowledge shines clearly, and can be noticed by everybody. The raging battle or the contemplative rituals on Yashain are, however, real. In a way, this interpretation of Yashain creates an active

Purgatory, a go-between state obligatory to everyone, where they finally can—but also must—show their Light openly in company of co-believers to be able to reach the final, single brightness of Light. The actions taken may either be symbolic (and repetitive) or cause actual (but slow) change on Yashain itself.

In a more philosophical way, Yashain can be seen as a state of mental fulfillment, of being illuminated by the knowledge, by the Divine Light. In this interpretation the physical world (or worlds) is what it is, a place of physicality, irrelevance and Darkness. In this world souls travel, carrying and protecting the Light and striving to increase it, to make it visible. Rather than passing from this world to Yashain, a human being can bring Yashain into this world. Yashain is the name for pure deeds of Light. At certain moments, when acting out in total harmony with the knowledge and goals of Light, pious people may find themselves in Yashain. “To have seen Yashain” means that one has lived through a moment of purity, a moment of full knowledge and understanding—been filled with Light. The eternal battle of Yashain is actually fought in this world every day.

It should also be noted that none of the three examples above rule out the possibility of reincarnation, i.e. the travel of souls from Darkness, through cosmos, towards the world of Light and then back into the Darkness, to begin their cycle of life again. In such a cycle Yashain could be Nirvana, and to get there the soul needs to reach the full knowledge of all the different paths. Seen from Yashain, for example the Laranian and Morgathian paths would both be important, as would be the opposition between these paths.

Conclusion

Introducing Gnosticism does not change the Hârníc religion very much. Instead, Gnostic interpretation gives something common to all the different churches/paths, and thus helps to bring the parts better together into one system of belief—something that Hârníc religion as depicted in the sources has to my mind always lacked, even if it is the basic prerequisite of a polytheistic religion.

In a world with several different yet central churches/paths one should expect discussions about the spiritual side of life to take place. With a common ground comparisons and discussions become possible, and these can add up to the actual role-playing situations. In the end, Gnostic interpretation can also give totally new meanings to Morgathianism and Navehianism, which to my mind are too often simply seen as inherently evil creeds. In this interpretation of the cosmos they make sense to their believers and can be compared to other creeds. ☸

Conspiracy Theory

The truth isn't always easy to find. But sometimes it's just in front of your eyes—if you dare to look ...

Text: Shagwell

OUTSIDE THE HEAVILY shuttered windows, blue skies and a hum of activity from the docks and streets of Cherafir prevail. The room inside is cool, quiet and dim. The furnishings are expensive but understated, complementing rather than overpowering the antique artworks and scholarly bric-a-brac on display. A youngish man in dark robes (let's call him "Golden") sits in one of the overstuffed chairs. He has a rather shaggy head of blonde hair, a bent nose and piercing blue eyes—which are currently staring into space as he toys with a cup of wine. His thoughts (could you read them through the wards placed on the room) would probably be incomprehensible, except to another person possessed of certain brilliant 'talents'.

Another man enters, closing and locking the door behind him. A pipe is clenched in his teeth, and the smoke wreathing his head has an aura of permanence about it. Otherwise, "Smoker" does not hold the attention very easily. The lines on his face show that he is much older than Golden, with thinning dark grey hair carefully arranged for maximum scalp coverage. His clothing features various shades of grey, and the light cloak that he hangs on a peg is slightly damp. He sits primly in the other chair and pours himself a drink with his non-pipe hand.

Golden's eyes focus, as he completes the mental filing of a particularly interesting train of thought. "Welcome back to Cherafir, my old friend. Is it two years since we last had the pleasure of your company?"

"Yes—much happens in Berema that I need to follow closely", replies Smoker. "It's actually good to get away for a little while."

Raising his cup in a small toast, Golden says "Well the weather is good for your visit anyway. So, before you start your vacation, how fares our little community of friends and associates? What is the latest news?"

Smoker makes a face. "The Chymak continue to concern me. Some of the ones who take passage on ships know things. One day your brothers will miss one of

them. If not erased, that knowledge could filter out to anywhere on the Western seaboard of Lythia." He stabs his finger down repeatedly on a fine map resting on the table between the two men. "We could all sorts of adventurers, Navehans or technologists poking around up and down the coasts of Belna and Horadir, subject to destruction or corruption by those bound in the heart of the Ancient Domain!"

"Calm yourself, my friend," says Golden reassuringly. "All of our precautions remain in place, as they have for century upon century. The Shield of political and military plausibility is to hand in the guise of the Modern Domain of the Emela. The Shek-Pvar provide no less of a swift and sharp Sword than they have in the past. Our allies—the Sindarin, Merfolk and 'white dragons'—are strong and well placed. We have other agents working for our interests both inside and outside of the Rightful Domain. The churches of knowledge—Save K'nor, Siem and Ilvir—are secure. All that the controlling Mind needs to do is remain calm, steady and focussed on the workings of our enemies."

"Yes, but it's all a very fine balancing act!" exclaims Smoker, apparently unappeased. "Anything could be thrown awry by rogue elements. The Ivinians are still aggressively expansionist, and who knows what some factions of our own people are up to?"

"We've dealt with the Ivinians before," replies Golden, vainly trying to smooth his hair down. "And if things come to the point where we must declare ourselves more openly, we can make trade and communications very difficult for Ivinia—and Shorkyne—by blockading the Melderyni Channel and the Indatha Straits. Add a few Kandian 'privateers' to make a journey around Harn even harder ..." He looks directly at Smoker as he continues. "You have yourself overseen large parts of our contingency preparations for the annexation of those parts of Shorkyne, Palithane and Kaldor that would enable a full-scale exclusion zone around our Domains. The involve-

ment of Trierzon should be able to prevent any concentrated opposition, but Trierzon would then itself be stretched to consolidate its share of the gains—whilst preparing against the resurging threat from the Empire.”

Smoker nods slightly, but also frowns and says, “One of my fears is that these measures might need to be invoked prematurely.”

Golden fires back quickly: “Of which I am glad, since it is part of your work to maintain cohesion and prevent unsanctioned actions from within our own ranks.”

Smoker takes a moment, to change tack. “mmm ... and at any rate, your Kandayan privateers are not secure from the Empire’s old influence. The Morgathians in Golotha have a larger larder than ever before, and a king cold enough to cut a deal with them should the Agrikans look like failing him. The Thardans are also aggressive, particularly Elernin. We may have tried to extend our reach too far, and several persuasive voices have argued that we should not push beyond the Rightful Domain.”

“Heh ... Morgathians!” chortles Golden. “While Morgath retains the strength to contend with Bukrai and muddle the messages to its creatures, they are no serious threat. They are drawn to the Ancient Domain as moths are drawn to flame, but they know not why. As you say, there is a sizable swarm in Golotha, but I have faith in our Western agents.” Golden sweeps his hand over the map. “If the worst happened I daresay we could once again use refugees to bolster our foothold on the Harnic mainland—increase settlement in Birenshire this time, or perhaps even Solora. And the resistance between Golotha and our borders would still spend the force of the undead.”

Smoker is caught adding more fuel to his pipe. “Ah ... yes ... your old ... resettlement tricks. Well, Solora may indeed be ready for settlement in a decade or two. In the meantime, it keeps our Laranian friends well occupied and out of our wider affairs. A pity the Solori could not be co-opted more peaceably, but I gather that they have always been an unreasonable people.”

“They were corrupted as soon as they first arrived on Cape Horab, and openly plotted to conquer our island here once they had dealt with the Codominium” says Golden. “Hence their special treatment in the Battle of Sorrows; and they have been withering on the vine ever since. It is time that they were cleared away.”

While Smoker nods, Golden continues. “Fortunately the Hodiri generally avoid the sea, revile the Deep Ones and accept only fish from the Chymak. Did we not need rapid progress in the next couple of centuries, I think we could leave the horse clans in place to be assimilated by trade and piecemeal struggles. If we can bring them into serious conflict with the Pagaelin, and perhaps ally with



them in that conflict, we will be within sight of our goal of securing the Ancient Domain again—hopefully all within two millennia!”

With his pipe back in full operation, Smoker’s animation increases again. “We’ll need to have secured and bolstered Chybisa by then,” he says, “else the Hodiri will probably attack it rather than the Pagaelin. Hopefully we will be able to bring some extra numbers down from Kaldor, depending on how events unfold during and after the succession.”

“Miginath will not fail us—he knows what is at stake” replies Golden reflectively. “Our ‘improvements’ have kept his sickly body functioning long enough now for him to have arranged the fragmentation of the kingdom upon his death. We already have Vemion and Qualdris, and Kobing needs only the right motivation to be supplied. Two sons to control south of the Nephen—and the other son, nephew, the Dariunes and whoever else can be happy with their new principalities or fight to keep the north as one. The only real threat now is the local Laranians, should they back one faction en masse and from the start.

Once Chybisa links with the new earldoms, we should be able to place pressure on the Pagaelin and make alliance the more attractive option for the Hodiri.”

“And Azadmere will definitely end its isolation to help secure the north of Vemion, between the two rivers?” asks Smoker.

Golden shrugs. “Nothing is ever definite in this great game. The elements of chance swirl constantly and must be seized where favourable and reversed or neutralised where unfavourable. We can only work patiently and remain alert for such elements. Advisors with Prince Jervas will be negotiating some of the remaining details during his coming sojourn with the Khuzdul, I believe. The dwarves must believe that the Sindarin are seriously com-

mitted to re-securing the Ancient Domain, and our hold on the prisoners within, before they will move.”

“Well, all reports from your people here suggest that the elves are keen enough to help us”, says Smoker hopefully. “This talk of specialist elven ‘strike teams’ is exciting—mayhaps we could look at something similar in our own operations? Possibly they want things secure enough that they can hand their sites over to our people to control, whilst the remainder of their people move on towards the Blessed Realm.” Arching an eyebrow, Smoker exclaims ruefully, “Best not mention that theory to the Khuzdul! If the Sindarin do stay, the new Pagostrian territories will also serve as good neutral ground where we might badger both races into talking ...”

EXPLANATORY NOTES

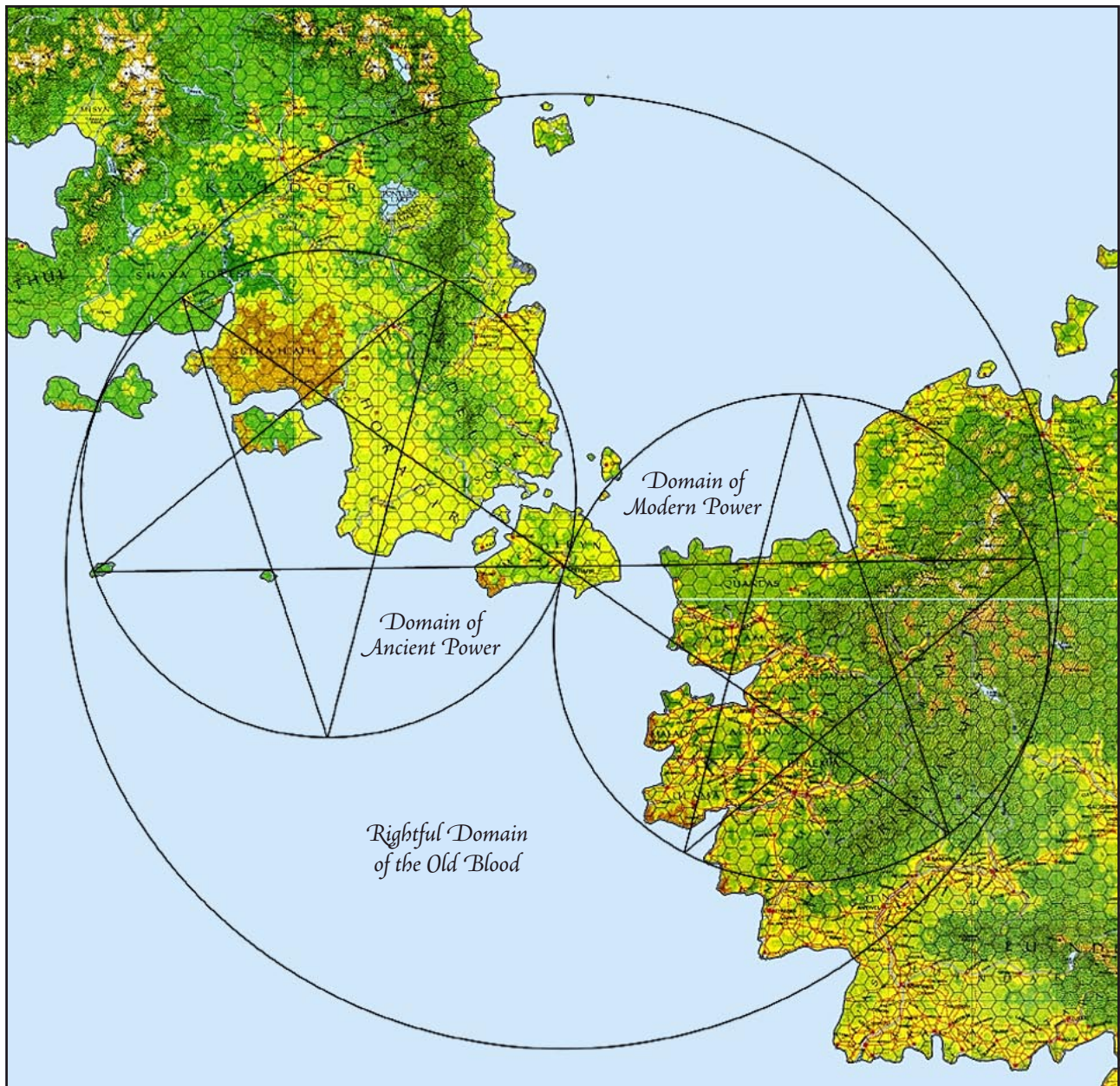
- ☞ *The kingdom of Melderyn was, I believe, consciously set up to present an enigma to Harniacs. Questions such as “What are they doing?” and “Are they good or evil?” are all left hanging for the individual GM to consider. Fans of conspiracy theories are drawn to Melderyn, and many have come up with elaborate theories. My own interest in conspiracy theories recently hit a peak after delving into the “Da Vinci Code”/“The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail” stuff in books and on the Web.*
- ☞ *The idea of looking for lines on the Harnic landscape was originally just an idle thought after reading “The Treasure of Renaissance-Chateau: A Mystery Solved”, by Putnam & Wood. This book contains a good explanation of the high probability of finding alignments between points in an area with a large number of established landmarks (such as long-settled areas in Southern France). I set out with only the intention of finding some interesting single-line alignments around Melderyn that might be interesting. I am lucky enough to have my large regional maps trimmed and set up together on one wall at home.*
- ☞ *I started off by swinging the ruler, mainly around Cherafir. Of course once Cherafir is your central point, you soon start looking at Emelrene and surrounds out on the Eastern side. I noticed a couple of good possibilities, but nothing that really fired my imagination. Then I started to play with circles ...*
- ☞ *Imagine my surprise at being able to line up Cherafir, Ridow, Telumar and Elshavel as four points on a pentagram that looks reasonably regular to the naked eye! Refer to the Western pentagram labelled “Domain of Ancient Power” (for purposes of my own future development) on the accompanying map/diagram. The first three locations are known Earthmaster sites, while Elshavel was the spot supposedly hand-picked by Siem as the Sindarin capital. Perhaps He had some inside knowledge of the history of the place? Is all of this coincidence—or part of a sinister plot devised by NRC ...?*
- ☞ *One explanation for the slight irregularity of the pentagram could be geographic shifting. The period between the Earthmasters departing and the Sindarin arriving has speculatively been linked to*

significant earthquake activity (as well as ‘fell beasts’ etc.). It is also possible that exact positioning is not required for whatever purposes the alignment was serving—the points just needed to be in a ‘footprint’ area.

- ☞ *Questions for further development include: What is that point out in the Gulf of Ederwyn? What (if anything) is/was the focus at the centre of the pentagram? I have my own Lovecraftian views, which are reinforced by the proximity of the Chymak people ... As far as Melderyn and Emelrene go, I see their aims as being generally for the benefit of mankind, but with a degree of ‘the end justifies the means’ mentality that varies between different factions.*
- ☞ *The Eastern Pentagram (“Domain of Modern Power”) joins up the two ‘wizard kingdoms’ and the traditional range of the Emelan people, in a way that suits my p-Hårn. It provides some useful potential linkages to Emelan enclaves in the Eastern foothills of the Jerinialian Mountains—people who nominally ‘belong’ to other nations (Shorkyne, Trierzon, Palithane). There are two oceanic points to explain in this pentagram, but one of these sits squarely in the seaward approaches to Berema! See how nicely this pentagram nestles within the arms of the Jerinialians. Perhaps the central point could be some sort of symbolic meeting ground for representatives of the ‘free’ Emelans and Emelrene.*
- ☞ *The large circle (“Rightful Domain of the Old Blood”) muhahaha! provides some scope for aggressive political or military manoeuvring by shadowy conspiracy factions. Alagon, Northern Palithane and Southeast Kaldor are all in the mix.*
- ☞ *Anyway, I hope that this map/diagram fires the imagination of GMs out there with some appropriately dark and brooding campaign themes. I am sure that the editors would have preferred a more complete scenario, and I have developed some good possibilities. Personal issues/delays and the growing word count has made me think, though, that I need to work in more manageable chunks. Also, I would prefer any fundamental flaws or canon clashes to be pointed out by more discerning Harniacs before I go too far down a wrong path. One person can too easily miss something.*

The meeting continues for some time, moving over various plans, permutations and time frames in mystifying detail and breathtaking scope. The personalities and likely reactions of key political and factional figures are considered. Technical matters relating to projects being carried out by Pvaric or K'norran adepts are reviewed. Eyes and fingers constantly move over the surface of the masterful map on the table.

As Smoker takes his leave, before proceeding to the townhouse of a certain discrete lady, the map becomes clearly visible—free from gesturing hands and curls of haze. We draw closer, hoping for some clarification of what we have heard...and are immediately intrigued by the arcane patterns inscribed over the top of the lands and seas ... draw closer ... ☉



The Graesha

The tree devils of the Loalan forest.

Text: Lucas Magnusson

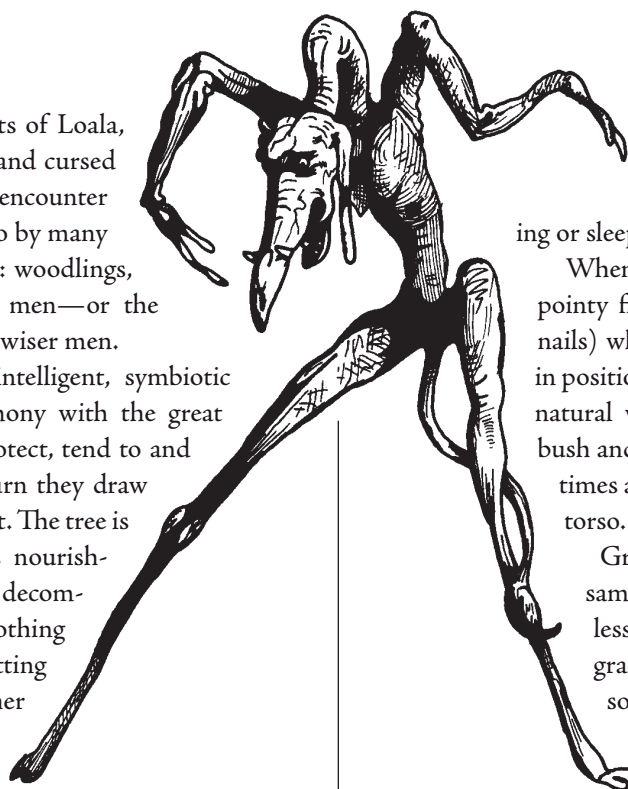
IN THE DEEP forests of Loala, in hidden valleys and cursed groves, one might encounter these weird creatures that go by many names in the local folk lore: woodlings, treelings, tree devils, stick men—or the *graesha* as they are called by wiser men.

The *graesha* are semi-intelligent, symbiotic creatures that live in harmony with the great trees of the forest. They protect, tend to and feed a host tree and in return they draw nourishment from their host. The tree is fed anything that provides nourishment for the earth when it decomposes and in this respect nothing is more effective than rotting flesh. It's unknown whether they are natural occurring animals, aliens from another planet or dimension or supernatural creatures. However, they seem to be concentrated in the Moeldaren forest and around Imeruva (see *THONAHEXUS* #6).

A *graesha* resembles a living multi-armed branch. They appear to be sexless. Their skin is camouflaged in shades of brown and green and very rough to the touch. They average 12 feet in height and are very skinny although they are not as fragile as they appear.

The *graesha* spend most of their time connected to their host tree. They entangle themselves among the roots and tap in to the tree's life vein using their sharp claws. In this position they are impossible to detect until they start to move, giving the impression that the very root system of the giant tree comes alive.

This strange creature follows the annual cycles of its tree host. During the winter it's largely dormant, only to awaken in a feeding frenzy during springtime. In the summer the *graesha* is less aggressive but also at the peak of



its strength, and as autumn grows ever colder it spends more and more of its life resting or sleeping.

When they hunt they use their long, pointy fingers (that end in thick strong nails) which they fold together and lock in position to form a very sharp spear-like natural weapon. They attack from ambush and stab their prey swiftly—several times and with lethal precision—in the torso.

Graesha are very old. They have the same life-span as their host tree (unless killed) which means that most *graesha* are several centuries old—some have even been around for millennia. Very old *graesha* are often living in small groups that inhabit a grove of ancient trees. Such places are known as “Living Groves” and have an extremely bad reputation among locals.

Adventures

1. A *graesha* is responsible for the murders at the logging camp at the head of Realen River (see *THONAHEXUS* #4, page 6). The loggers have stumbled upon a tree hosting a young *graesha* and caught the horrible creature's attention.
2. An important transport from Isheres, supervised by teamster Vjune Bursq (Ostelones [7]), is several ten-days delayed. His brother, Tatro, puts together an expedition to locate the missing transport. Sadly, Vjune and his companions are all dead and hauled off to a Living Grove. But the trouble really starts when the Lia-Kavair start asking questions about the secret message that Vjune carried on his person ... 🌀