

HÂRNWORLD INTRO 1

Hårn, and HårnWorld, are the fictional creations of N. Robin Crossby, a Vancouver-based writer. Hårn is an island located on the world of Kethira approximately where the United Kingdom is on Earth. It is a land of feudal kingdoms, barbaric tribesmen, and vicious monsters. It is also a land of secretive wizardry and religious turmoil, knights and hapless peasantry. HårnWorld is the name given to the overall environment, including the geography, history, cultures and societies; in other words, everything.

HårnWorld has:

- over 2 million words in print,
- highly detailed colour maps,
- a vibrant, believable history up to a certain point and no further,
- numerous cultures with detailed societies,
- a pantheon of 10 gods & goddesses and the religions that surround them,
- large details, like plate tectonics, winds & ocean currents, language families,
- small details, like the number of workers in a village smithy, the quality of the land surrounding a manor, names of everyone.

The attention to detail, the inherent internal consistency, the believability...these are what separate HårnWorld from other fantasy role-playing environments.

Published by Columbia Games Inc. since 1983, the detailed environmental information has slowly grown to include the western portion of the continent of Lythia, including the Ivinian kingdoms in the north and the central-western kingdom of Shorkyne. All other areas of the planet have been defined, but are not as fully detailed. This Introduction concentrates on the island of Hårn, the most detailed region of all.



Poetic Map of Hårn

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Geography and Weather

Sometimes known as The Misty Isle, Hårn contains a living, breathing ecology. It doesn't have huge numbers of carnivorous animals constantly stalking the wilds, or myriad dungeons from some lost civilisation crammed to the rafters with monsters, traps and treasure. It has mundane dangers enough, with wolves, bears, mountain cats, and other, less natural creatures called gargun and ivashu (more on these later). Everything exists for a reason, and there is a believable internal consistency to the material that makes gaming so much easier. The island has pristine primordial forests, four high mountain ranges, expanses of heath land and mixed woodlands in the fertile river valleys. The island's climate is described in the HårnWorld Second Edition as "...basically maritime-temperate (cool summers, mild winters, and damp)". It's wet, folks. Overcast skies are normal, fog is common, drizzle more so. Huge numbers of rivers and streams flow into Lake Benath, which dominates the interior of the island. It is drained by the mighty Thard River, which provides water and a transport medium for the three western kingdoms. On the eastern side of the island, the Kald River flows into the Gulf of Chakro along the southern coast.

Societies & Cultures

Hårn has seven human kingdoms and two non-human kingdoms. There are also eighteen different tribal nations living in the wilderness around the island, remnants of the last great migratory wave to hit the island sixteen centuries ago.

The Kingdoms of Melderyn, Chybisa, Kaldor, Kanday and Rethem are all feudal in nature. That is, a nobility of knights, barons, earls, bailiffs and sheriffs own and control the land under a single sovereign, the King (or, sometimes, Queen). The Thardic Republic has the appearance of a late Roman republic, but

Kingdoms of Hårn

Western Hårn

Rethem, Kanday, Tharda

Eastern Hårn

Kaldor, Chybisa, Melderyn

Northern Hårn

Orbaal

Non-Human Kingdoms

Evael, Azadmere

Tribal Nations

Adaenum, Anoa, Bujoc, Chelni, Chymak, Equani, Gozyda, Hordiri, Kabloqui, Kamaki, Kath, Kubora, Pagaelin, Solori, Taelda, Tulwyn, Urdu, Ymodi

CREDITS

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HÂRNWORLD INTRO 2

in truth, those who can afford to buy their seat in the Senate, and the various factions see to it that no one clan garners enough power to make a bid for Imperial power. The last kingdom, Orbaal, is really nothing more than a number of independent principalities that notionally answer to a central authority, but in practice, rule their fiefdom as they choose. The Orbaalese are invaders, only conquering and settling the rocky northern coast of Hârn in the last generation. Of the feudal kingdoms, tiny Chybisa is squeezed between Melderyn and Kaldor, while Rethem is a hotbed of treachery, rebellion, and raw savagery, where the king controls less than half the country, and fewer of the nobles. Kaldor's king is old and sickly, and has yet to name an heir, Kandy's king is seen as weak by the nobility of that country, and no-one really knows what the reaction of mysterious Melderyn will be in any given situation. Of course, for the game master, these provide limitless role-playing opportunities.

The two non-human kingdoms, Evael (Sindarin or elves) and Azadmere (Khuzdul or dwarves) maintain their distance from the human nations and each other. Travel through the great Shava Forest in Evael is discouraged; the only regular contact is by ship through the Sindar port city of Ulfshafen, where the Enorien River meets the Kald River estuary. The capital, and only other city, Elshavel, is further up the Enorien, deep in the Forest.

Travel to Azadmere, the single Khuzan city, is equally difficult, although for other reasons. The name of both the kingdom and the city, Azadmere is located high in the Sorkin Mountains of eastern Hârn, on the north-eastern shore of Lake Arain. The trail, called the Silver Way, follows the Nephén River gorge, a steep and rocky path that is sometimes no wider than a single pack mule. And once the dangers of the trail are conquered, you still have to pass the scrutiny of the suspicious Khuzan warriors of Zerhun, the guardians of the great fortress that blocks the only pass into Azadmere.

Where are all the monsters?

So, where's the excitement? What is there to do? Where are all the monsters??

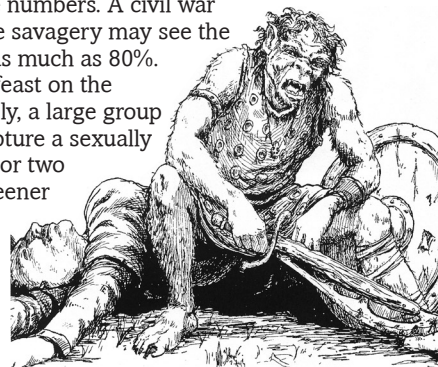
There are plenty of things to do on Hârn. There's political intrigue galore, religious wars, conspiracies, trade, exploration, overt and covert wars between states, thievery in some very BAD cities, bounty hunting, quests, murder mysteries...the list could go on for hours. But eventually, the player characters will come across one of Hârn's distinguishing characteristics...its monsters. One of the gods of the Hârníc pantheon, Ilvir, is said to "live" on the island of Hârn. Ilvir seems to have a creative bent; he makes creatures and then releases them onto the island. They wander around, look for food, and are generally pretty harmless, although dangerous in an animal sense. They are also usually sexless and unique, which is fortunate, otherwise the island would be overrun with these creatures.

But Ilvir has a set of favourite creatures that he creates over and over. Among these are the insane umbathri (the Hârníc gargoyle), and lightning quick vlasta (very fast bipedal creatures under ½ metre tall that live in groups of 2 to 12 – they like to eat eyes, and can jump six feet or more in the air to get them). Other favourite types of creatures include the aklash, nolah (the Hârníc troll), and hru (rock giants).

But the forests of Hârn hide more than a few Ivashu. There are also mundane creatures; bears, mountain lions, wild boar; and the most dangerous of all...man. As mentioned above, the island is home to 18 different tribal nations. There are the yelgri, or Hârníc harpy. These semi-intelligent, quasi-reptilian, scallop-winged humanoids inhabit high mountain ranges and are hostile to man. They are predatory carnivores, and have taloned feet, but also use primitive weapons, like sharpened sticks and wooden clubs. The northern and western meadows are home to centaurs. These horsemen are very hostile to man. Fortunately for the player characters, both the yelgri and the centaurs are quite rare these days.

Gargun

However, gargun are NOT rare. It has been estimated that between fifty and a hundred thousand of these vicious creatures inhabit dozens of primitive cavern complexes, called hives, throughout Hârn. Also called orcs, the five species of gargun occupy the top of the food chain, and they are an ecological nightmare. With an imbalance in the sexes where 99% are born male, only the toughest, meanest orc gets to breed. Warm-blooded, egg-laying, carnivorous by choice, and with a genetic memory that provides them with a language, a semblance of society, and a primitive level of technology, they breed incessantly until the hive can no longer sustain the numbers. A civil war will erupt, and the savagery may see the population drop as much as 80%. The victors then feast on the fallen. Alternatively, a large group of gargun will capture a sexually immature female or two and depart for greener pastures. Such an occurrence is called a swarm, and anything in its path is killed and eaten.



Gargun

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These, then, are the monsters

of Hârn, and they are more than enough for players to cope with. Along with the most dangerous monsters of all, other humans, they will provide endless opponents to test the mettle of any type of role-playing character.

Conclusion

There are many other topics that could be covered in this article, including religion, commerce and the guilds, kingdom organisation, manor life, international relations, magic, technology, history...but then it wouldn't be an introduction anymore. To find out all these things, write to Columbia Games Inc and order a copy of HârnWorld™ 2nd Edition. The address is POB 3457, Blaine, WA 98231, U.S.A. Come and join the ranks of Hârníacs. You won't regret it.