

SETTING AND RELIGION GUIDE

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This guide covers the geography, social institutions, and religion of Kishar's world setting. Players are encouraged to familiarize themselves with this information, as plots and interactions between characters may contain elements that simply don't make as much sense otherwise. The material here reflects what the average starting character might know – those who have special access to information or who have the wealth and influence to acquire more detailed knowledge may have a different perspective.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	2
Setting Overview: Samazar and Kishar	7
The Other Jeweled Cities	9
Recent Wars	11
The Kishari Civil War	11
The Great War of Flame.....	11
The current War with the Nocturnal Empire	12
Power in Everyday Life	13
Organizations: Rank and Privilege	13
Institutions and Organizations in Samazar	14
The Diamond Assembly	14
The Samazar Sentries	14
The Academy of Innovation	15
The Crafter’s Guild	15
Institutions and Organizations in Kishar	16
The Sultanate	16
The Great Council.....	16
The Ruby Court	17
The Royal Academy.....	18
The Sultan’s Might and the Palace Guard	18
The City Militia	18
Mercenary Companies	19
Shared Institutions and Organizations.....	19
Merchant’s Guild	19
The Daihonsha	20
The Jin Shi.....	20
The Guild of Wind and Flame.....	21
Thieves’ Guild	21
The Hidden Court.....	21
The Adventurer’s Guild.....	22
A Guide to the Diamond City	23
The Tiers.....	25
Low Tier.....	25

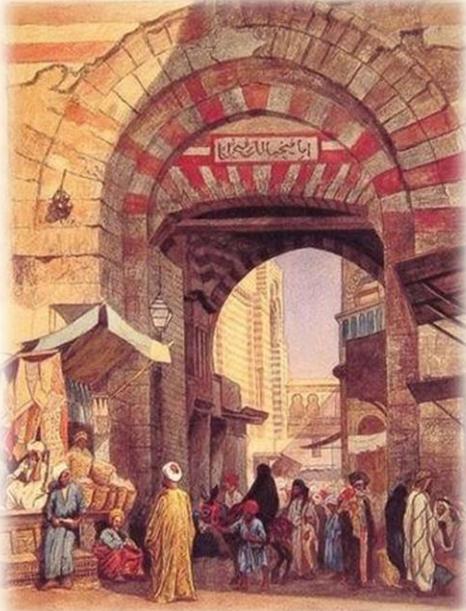
The Academy of Innovation	25
Victory Square	25
The Adventurer’s Guild	26
The Spice Bazaar	26
The Metalworks District	26
The Free District	26
The Temple District	27
The Wandering Bazaar	27
The Fire-Home District	28
The Wind-Home District	28
The Stone District – Or “The Falling District”	28
The Rim	29
Middle Tier	29
Opportunity Park	29
The City Museum	29
The Guild of Wind and Flame	29
The Merchant’s District	30
Jin Shi Headquarters	30
Samazar Sentries Main Barracks	30
The Cage	31
The Kind District	31
The Green District	31
High Tier	31
The Great Library	31
The Diamond Assembly Hall and the Sky District	32
The Operator	32
The Quiet District	33
The Undercity	33
Tunnels	33
Below the City	33
The River	33
The Outpost	34
Settlements	34

The Shrines.....	34
The Lost Valley	34
A Guide to the Ruby City.....	36
The Quarters	37
North Quarter	38
The Docks	38
The Sorrows	38
Tannery District.....	39
Cooper’s District	39
Merchant’s District	39
Docks District	39
Stone District.....	39
Sailor’s District	40
East Quarter	40
Heart District.....	40
Matriarch’s District	41
South Quarter	41
High District.....	41
Rice District	42
Scholar’s District	42
Masque District	42
Artisan’s District.....	42
West Quarter	43
Temple District.....	43
Public District	43
Low District	44
Bone District.....	44
Moonlight District	44
The Hornet’s Nest.....	44
The Bazaars	45
The Memorial Plaza	45
The Jackal	45
Foreign Nations.....	46
Farlanders	47

anDwapeh	47
Dessanora	49
Embra-Jaka	51
Hinterlands.....	53
Maha'vira	55
The Nocturnal Empire (Kaewan).....	57
Northreach	59
Prinya	61
X'a	63
The Corsair Islands	64
Crythia	65
Cyrillia.....	66
Commonly known Regional Languages	67
Ancient and Rare Languages.....	67
Religion in the Jeweled Cities.....	69
Religion and the Common People	69
Faithful	69
The Gods of Good	70
The Brothers (Corth & Khal) - Valor, Endurance, Earth	70
Gloriel - Freedom, Just Rewards, Air.....	70
Nivone - Life, Birth, Family	71
The Neutral Gods	71
Auran - Day, Sun, Light, Fire.....	71
Avahlei - Nature, Healing	72
Kora - Creation, Merchantry	72
Laurela - Moon, Shadows, Liminality, Water	73
Lyla - Fortune, Travelers.....	73
Maenir - Might, War, Victory	74
Suhl'Sekh - Death, The Soul, Knowledge	74
Thul - Order, Tradition, History.....	75
The Dark Gods.....	75
Gorgath - Chaos, Unmaking, Void.....	75
Sulith - Darkness, Evil, Raw Power	76
The Twins (Ebon & Alabast) – Desire, Lust, subversion	76
Noctus	77

The Dynamae	77
The Fey Courts	77
The Calendar of the Jeweled Cities	78
Naming and Numbering the years	78
The Cycle of the year	78
Fauna and Flora of the Jeweled Cities and the Great Wastes	81
Fauna.....	81
Wild Animals	81
The Great Wastes and the Elfwall.....	81
Forest dwellers.....	82
Wildlife that crosses ecosystems	84
Special: Cyrillian wildlife	84
Elementals and Demi-elementals	85
Elementals.....	85
Demi-elementals.....	86
Constructs, natural and unnatural	87
Natural Constructs	87
Undead Constructs.....	87
Djinn-made constructs.....	88
“Difficult to classify”	89
Formians	89
Unique Cyrillian lineages.....	90
“Demons” of Cyrillia.....	90
Flora	91
Alchemically useful flora.....	91
Medicinally useful flora.....	92

SETTING OVERVIEW: SAMAZAR AND KISHAR



Our game takes place in the **Jeweled Cities**, a collection of loosely allied city-states located in a geographic region resembling ancient Babylon. These city-states are named after various precious gems, and the core of our game currently takes place in the Diamond City, Samazar.

While the primary themes for culture, costume, and daily life in the Jeweled Cities are drawn from sources such as *One Thousand and One Nights* (aka the Arabian Nights), the *Mahabharata*, or *Hēi Àn Zhuàn* (the Epic of Darkness), characters from vastly different backgrounds find themselves in the Jeweled Cities for all manner of reasons.

Until a few years ago, when several wars rocked the region and the entire known world, the Ruby City of Kishar was pre-eminent among the Jeweled Cities, being the largest and most opulent. Since the Kishari Civil War and the Great War of Flame, Kishar itself has been much less influential. Modern Samazar inherits many things from Kishar, and so this guide will cover both, as well the region and the rest of the world.

Samazar, or the Diamond City, is a sparkling, opulent city that is incredibly ancient and at the same time, completely new. In ancient times, the Diamond City was the first of the Jeweled Cities, but according to legend, it was destroyed over a thousand years ago in a great conflict between the Djinn and the Efreeti.

The Adventurer's Guild, along with various scholars, made amazing discoveries of artifacts in the Great Waste, the vast desert south of the city of Kishar, and eventually discovered that the Diamond City was not destroyed but simply hidden by magical technology. In time, the Adventurers Guild built an Outpost in the desert, allied with the gnollish tribes living there, discovered and unraveled the secrets of the Hub, and revealed the Diamond City high in the sky – a towering city magically floating above the endless sands, hidden for over 1000 years and now ready to receive inhabitants again.



When the floating city swelled with refugees from all parts of the world during the Great War of Flame, it was inevitable that something new would emerge. Far too many were disillusioned by the Kishari Civil war, and rather than select a Sultan, the city has given rise to the region's first tentative experiment in

democratic representation. After the Great War of Flame and the Kishari Civil War, the Diamond City was settled not only by daring Adventurers but by refugees from countries around the world and Kishari citizens. The diverse populace formed its own way of government, blending cultural traditions from around the world with the sensibilities of the Jeweled Cities, and most of the other Jeweled Cities now recognize Samazar as a sister city and an equal.

The city is overseen by the Diamond Assembly, a collection of elected Councilors representing each former nation in the new population. No new nobility has been created in the city, per se, but differences of wealth and education are clear, and rank within various other Organizations persists. Many of the residents of the city left their homelands with only what they could carry, so poverty is a continuing issue. Others with marketable skills and the means to use them have prospered.

Some wealthy residents of Kishar took advantage of the opportunities the new city presented and have done very well, while other ventures failed and those unable to adept to life in the skies returned to their places of origin after the wars ended. Samazar's three-tiered physical structure is reflected in the social tiers of its young citizens. The technological marvels found in the Great Library have reinvigorated the populace as artificers who create new and marvelous inventions. But many problems and inequalities remain – can this ancient city of wonders truly become the birthplace of a new way of life?

Kishar itself is placed along several important trade routes and surrounded by ample natural resources. The Kishari people show a particular vibrancy and lust for life that has historically make the city a cultural center as well as an economic one. Kishar is ruled by the Ruby Sultan and the Great Council. The Sultanate is hereditary, although dynasties have ended due to lack of children or revolution. In a normal succession, the eldest child inherits, regardless of gender. Members of many lineages and backgrounds are represented on the Great Council, an advisory body that controls financing and therefore has great influence in the city. Councilors wield significant personal power and are often behind the larger intrigues, although rarely are these traceable to them.

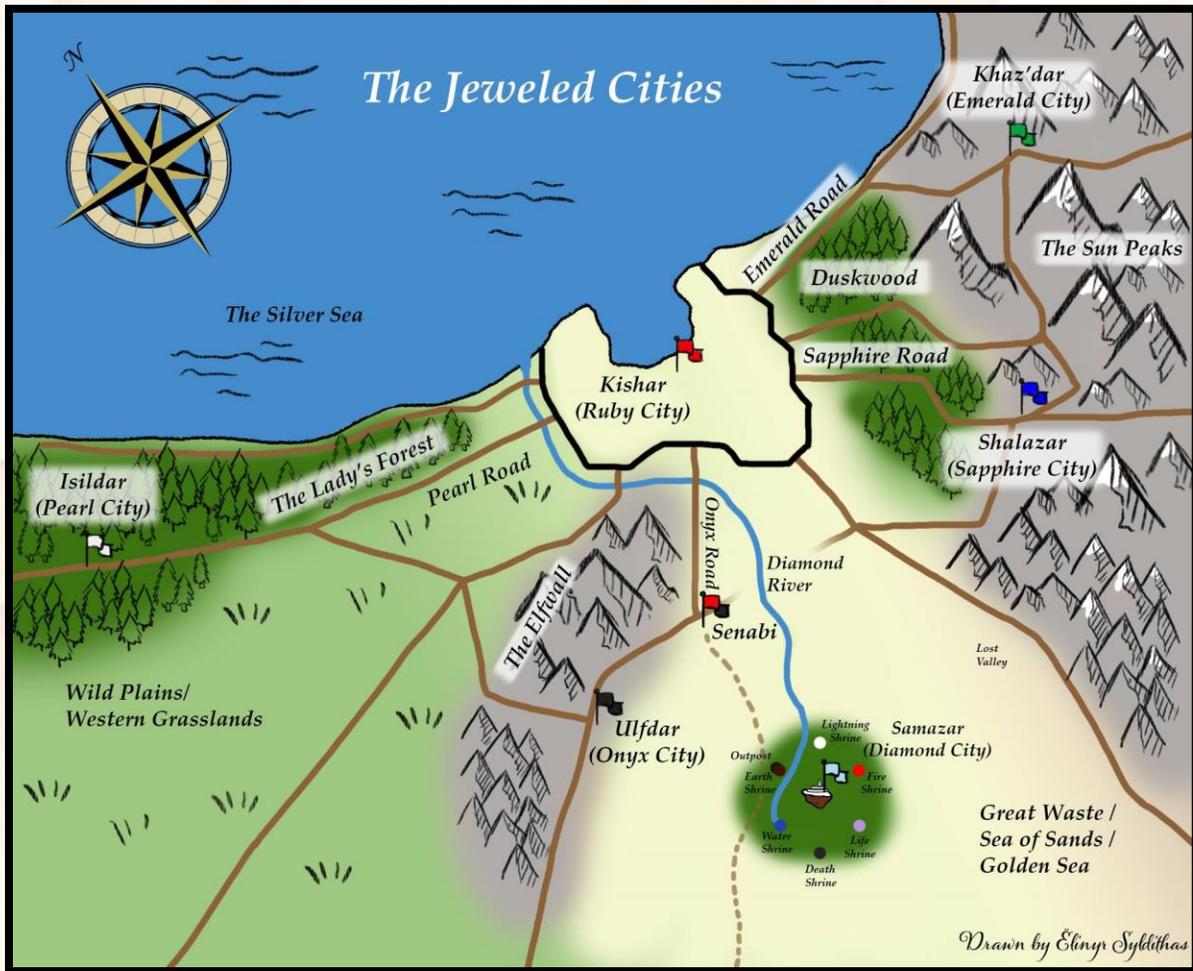
Various noble houses play prominent roles in the affairs of the city. Competing Organizations cater to all facets of economic life, including the Merchant's Guild, the various magical guilds, and even the rumored Thieves' Guild. A large and dedicated bureaucracy runs the day-to-day affairs of Kishar, from areas as small as a city block up to entire Districts.

Palace soldiers, mercenary companies, and gangs each control various parts of the city and its surroundings – those Districts that are prosperous are much more heavily policed than the near lawlessness of the poor Districts south of the harbor. Since the end of the Kishari Civil War, the rebuilding of the parts of the city destroyed in that conflict has sapped much of the cities once vibrant energy, and many of its more prominent inventors and tradespeople have moved to the Diamond City to pursue to opportunities. Because of this the mood can often be somber in modern Kishar, with an awareness of what has been lost.



THE OTHER JEWELLED CITIES

In addition to Samazar and Kishar, there are four other Jeweled Cities, each associated with a precious gem as well as its own name.



(Maps are not to scale)

To the southeast of Kishar is Shalazar, the Sapphire City, which lies in a valley between the Sun Peaks. The sultan of Shalazar is a celestine, and many shar'vin are found in the city as well. Shalazar is known for wool goods, alchemy, and cut jewels. In addition, Shalazar has a reputation for scholars and philosophy, with its Academy having a reputation in the region second only to the Royal Academy of Kishar – and perhaps, some are beginning to quietly suggest, the Academy of Innovation in Samazar. Many scholars that fled Kishar during the wars escaped to Shalazar, and while some returned afterwards, many remained permanently in their new home.

[OOO note: the Sapphire City is imagined to have influence from the Indian subcontinent (Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi, as well as Hindu and Kashmiri, etc. cultural notes) in costuming and fashion, naming conventions, etc. – but imagine that the region was never colonized.]

To the southwest of Kishar is Ulfdar, the Onyx City, which lies between the Elfwall and the Great Waste. During the long history of the Jeweled Cities, Ulfdar has often vied with Kishar for pre-eminence. Ulfdar's sultans are usually fellblooded, although aetherites are also more common there. Ulfdar manufactures glasswares, including fine bottles for alchemy, hourglasses, and rare and expensive lenses for vision. In addition, traders from across the Great Waste have historically brought ivory and other trade goods from anDwapeh through this city. When trade routes changed in recent years to pass through Samazar instead, the Onyx City became more isolated. Where Ulfdar had been the wealthiest of the Jeweled Cities, the tensions between them and both Kishar and Samazar began to impact the region directly. The Onyx City secretly negotiated a non-aggression pact with the Nocturnal Empire that put them at odds with the rest of the Jeweled Cities. After four years, the sultan who signed the agreement was deposed by his daughter, who ascended to the throne in an event known as the Day of the Tower. In keeping with Onyx tradition for sudden and dramatic action, her forces killed or otherwise expelled the Nocturnal Empire from the city, dropping many of the administrators running the occupied city from the Tower of Vultures to fall to their deaths. The new sultan reestablished ties with the other Jeweled Cities, and the Onyx City once more stands with them against the invaders.

[OOC note: players have established that the Onyx City has a certain degree of influence from traditional Mandarin Chinese culture in costuming and fashion, naming conventions, etc.]

To the east of Kishar is Khaz'dar, the Emerald City, home to dwarven sultans. The population of Khaz'dar is heavily invested in crafts and artisan skills, and the city produces the finest tools and weapons, along with raw ore and gems. Many say the musical instruments produced there are also exceptionally fine. Trade from Embra-Jaka has historically flowed through this city, although the occupation of this neighbor by the Nocturnal Empire has decreased this. Khaz'dar is reputed to have the world's best training programs, and many an apprentice dreams of landing a position in Khaz'dar in order to best launch their future career. This designation is contested by the Diamond city and its Crafter's Guild. The dexterous and nimble skilled fingers of Khaz'dar's populace are also known for, shall we say, *finer* pursuits.

[OOC: players have established that the Emerald City has a certain degree of ancient Babylonian culture in costuming and fashion, naming conventions, etc.]

Isildar, the Pearl City, lies west of Kishar in the Lady's Forest. It is known for its division into Wards, with the largest ones being named after the seasons. The Shikone Bastion is a fortress overlooking the Pearl Road, and the city's main garrison. The Midoriyama complex, the traditional palace of the sultan, is known for its koi ponds. Located near the palace is Washida Academy, a traditional school for scholars and warriors alike. The city's Rice and Salt Bazaar is a sprawling enterprise often said to rival the Gold Bazaar in Kishar. During the Kishari Civil War, Isildar fell to the hands of the expansionistic Nocturnal Empire. Being the smallest of the Jeweled Cities and the most distant from major trade routes, it was the easiest city for the Empire to take. (The Empire's attempt to conquer the Ruby City immediately afterwards failed notably.) The conquerors renamed it Buseong, "The Cauldron City" in their language, and executed most of the nobility and many of the high-ranking members of the guilds there. While Isildar has recently been freed of the Empire's grip, it will be years before the shadow of five years' occupation and death fades. The Pearl City was once known as the home of high fashion and art, with schools dedicated to specific arts with a long history of great detail and meaning – including such respectable careers as flower arranging and kimono design. Can this home of beauty, having been broken and held captive for years, recover its former glory?

[OOC: players have established that the Pearl City has a certain degree of traditional Edo-era (and a bit of Meiji-era) Japanese culture in costuming and fashion, naming conventions, etc.]

RECENT WARS

THE KISHARI CIVIL WAR

In the fiftieth year of the reign of Sultan Sulaiman, while the city prepared to celebrate, the Sultan died under sudden and mysterious circumstances. His recently returned sister, Taslima aibna Osman, accused his heir, Saleema aibna Sulaiman, of conspiring with the al-Zarka family to assassinate him, and made a claim to the Sultanate. Saleema, in turn, accused Taslima of the same, as she had been gone for many years as the Admiral of the Expeditionary Armada and had little other claim to the throne. The resulting fighting divided the city into warring factions, with different Organizations choosing sides. The fighting eventually culminated in a sea-based siege and the destruction of significant parts of the city. During the final battle, two unexpected arrivals changed the course of events. First, the Maha'viran navy arrived to support Princessa Saleema and challenged Taslima's monopoly on the port side of the city. Second, ships from the Nocturnal Empire appeared and attacked both navies and the city, with secret agents of the Empire springing up within the city itself in an attempt to subdue it.

The threat of an external force bent on conquering or destroying the Ruby City, along with the abrupt revelation of information about the assassination gathered by the Adventurers Guild, provided a reason for Saleema and Taslima to set aside their difference and unite against their foes. The Maha'viran navy assisted the newly reunited city in routing the Nocturnal Empire forces. Amidst widespread destruction, Princessa Saleema aibna Sulaiman ascended to the Sultanate under her new ruling name, Eismana, and appointed Taslima aibna Osman the head of the Sultan's Might.

The Kishari Civil War, while now a few years in the past, left an indelible impression on the city. Some residents died or fled permanently, and some parts of the city are forever changed. The Copper Bazaar, one of the areas where fighting was most intense, was thoroughly destroyed and many people died there. Rather than reconstruct the bazaar, the city built a memorial plaza in its place. Smaller changes include the destruction of various parts of the Docks District, including the Adventurer's Guild Hall that once stood there. Other effects are less tangible but no less real; the Ruby City's pre-eminence among the Jeweled Cities and its wealth and international prestige have all diminished. Scholars permanently fled to other cities, most notably Samazar. The Nocturnal Empire's attack, along with the arrival of refugees from the Great War of Flame, led many native Kishari to become more xenophobic and isolationist. The city is rebuilding, but it is not the thriving world power it was a few years ago.

THE GREAT WAR OF FLAME

While the Ruby City mourned the death of Sultan Sulaiman, news arrived that the icy Northreach city of Wuldkest had been subject to a great and terrible inferno. Refugees arrived in the Ruby City with very little information and even less resources. As farlanders, they were only begrudgingly welcomed. Perhaps a month later, refugees from the Hinterlands arrived, claiming that a great creature of flame had destroyed their home, Belgia. These refugees were followed not long after by further bad news for the Hinterlands; Ardan burned too.

By the time the Flame Lord struck Embra-Jaka's capital of Kimbasha, the Adventurers Guild saw the pattern and knew what was coming for them. A benevolent Efrete, known as the Prince of Swords, met with members of the Guild and explained the situation. Over a millennium ago, the Djinn and Efrete waged a great and terrible war over the Diamond City, and while the city was saved, and Djinn that survived it were imprisoned in magical bottles by the Efrete. The other people living in the area were

destroyed or enslaved as well. For centuries, the Efreeti went about their secret business deep in the desert, until the Diamond City was once more revealed. Thwarted through a series of tricks by the Prince of Swords, a powerful Efreet known as the Flame Lord was trying to find the people responsible for revealing the Diamond City. Eventually he did arrive in the Great Wastes, his army proceeding him.

The ensuing battle had many casualties. The Adventurers joined with various gnollish tribes, servants of Sulith, Sultan's Might soldiers, and others to hold back the Efreeti army long enough to lure the Flame Lord to a ritual circle underneath the city, where the Engines of Fate were manipulated to push the Flame Lord into another dimension, much like the Diamond City itself had been for over a thousand years. This permanently damaged the Engines of Fate, and the City no longer has the defensive capability to shift dimensional planes.

Refugees from the various nations, finding no solace in the warring port city of Kishar, fled into the welcoming arms of the Diamond City, which scholars eventually revealed to be called Samazar. This new-and-ancient city also saw Kishari refugees and opportunists arrive and, in the wake of the war, all has begun to thrive. The Desert Outpost below the city, largely destroyed during the war, has been rebuilt with taller walls in the years since, and the war – while the trauma of a lifetime for many Samazari citizens – is beginning to fade into memory.

THE CURRENT WAR WITH THE NOCTURNAL EMPIRE

Currently, the Nocturnal Empire is waging war on the Jeweled Cities and other nations in its region. It occupied the Pearl City of Isildar for five years but has recently been driven out. In the meantime, it has also taken control of the nation of Embra-Jaka. In reply to this offensive, all six Jeweled Cities have allied together with the nations of anDwapeh and Prinya (or rather, part of Prinya) to form The Daylight Alliance. The Alliance works with the Kaewani resistance, known as the Army of Flowers, to thwart the Nocturnal Empire. The Iron Hundred of the Corsair Islands (mostly orcish pirates) and the Dessonoran Confederacy's airships (also mostly pirates) act as universal belligerents, taking what they can.



POWER IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The people who inhabit this world vary greatly, but one thing they all have in common is that everyone, even the young pickpockets in the marketplaces, tends to know a trick or two. In game terms, this means that even the common people often have access to powers, albeit not many. While most PCs will be more powerful than say, a shopkeeper or day laborer, they should not expect to be able to maraud across a city without running into significant opposition. This might come in the form of gangs of thugs, mercenaries, or city guards. People who start too much trouble often wind up dead... or so people say. Some people even tell stories about seeing strange beasts and creatures of nightmares prowling the streets at night, although most of these tales are easily discredited as gossip and folklore.

ORGANIZATIONS: RANK AND PRIVILEGE

There are many Organizations in the Jeweled Cities, all of whom have their own spheres of influence and political ambitions. Within each Organization there exists a structure to differentiate those who have achieved varying levels of personal achievement or prestige. This system is collectively referred to as Rank, and in general terms, individuals of the same level of Rank will command roughly the same deference and rights, even if those Ranks come from different Organizations. Individuals of particularly high Rank are thus set apart from the common people (those with no Rank), and they often get special treatment. Some of these privileges are codified by law. Any individual of Rank may retain a small number of armsmen or servants, but this must be commensurate with their station. Individuals who have achieved at least the second Tier of Rank in an Organization may be given access to certain buildings that commoners cannot easily access (such as libraries). Individuals who have achieved at least the third Tier of Rank in an Organization will usually be tried in a special court convened for such worthy individuals, and should they be imprisoned or confined, their quarters will be much more accommodating. Individuals who have achieved at least the fourth Tier of Rank are allowed to petition for access to the Sultan or the Great Council (although they may not have much chance without substantial bribes).

Other privileges are unofficial but no less real. Certainly, individuals of Rank get away with more than your average person. A street fight between a person of Rank and a healthy commoner with weapons, barring the presence of numerous witnesses, will be presumed to be the commoner's fault. A Master Merchant will not be questioned for carrying large amounts of wealth around (although they might be advised that it's foolish in certain Districts). The city guards respond faster to areas where individuals of Rank live and are better trained and armed when they do so. Anyone can lose their Rank due to a long list of offenses, most of which can be summarized as disobeying or displeasing those of higher Rank, most especially within their Organization. The most serious of these offenses would be treason against the Sultan, in Kishar, or the Diamond Assembly, in Samazar. Anyone who obtains proof of such treason can go to the person's Organization (if they want to handle the matter quietly) or an opposing Organization (if they want to cause the most trouble) or summon the Palace Guard in Kishar or the Samazar Sentries in the Diamond City. Largely, Rank means being able to get much closer to the 'line' than a commoner could without repercussions. A temple priest, merchant, or Jin Shi member who (minus mortal provocation) draws a weapon and stabs someone in front of witnesses is still going to have trouble, but the amount of that trouble varies greatly by Rank.

INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN SAMAZAR

THE DIAMOND ASSEMBLY



The Diamond Assembly is the semi-elected ruling body that governs the Diamond City. Formed in the early days of settlement, the group represents a compromise between the various factions and cultures in the city. Some members are de facto appointed, such as the leader of the city's Jin Shi, and others are elected from the groups within the city, such as the representative of the Northreach population.

A simple charter lays out the Diamond Assembly's structure, election requirements, and legal functions. The Assembly passes laws, regulates trade, oversees large organizations within the city, and holds the power of the purse. Taxation of the citizenry is fairly minimal, though there are always those who will complain nonetheless.

The membership of the Assembly consists of Peng Dao, the city's ranking member of the Jin Shi; Rashad al-Wabi, the head of the Adventurers Guild; Emberclaw, the leader of the Lightning Stones gnoll tribe, the only tribe to permanently reside within and near the city; Orcus and B'hari, as representatives of the celestines, who claim some hereditary lineage from the original Celestials of the ancient Diamond City; and an elected representative from each of the regional refugee populations, including Margaret de Leon, cleric of Gloriel from the Hinterlands; Tambo Kamari, dusk elf shaman and community leader from Embra-Jaka; Mina Aadland, a tactician and former Senior Sentry, of Northreach; and Allegría de Rossi, Dessanoran artificer and docent at the Academy of Innovation.

THE SAMAZAR SENTRIES



Early on, the Diamond Assembly declared that the city would hold no standing offensive army; only a defensive service known as the Samazar Sentries would serve to protect the area. The Sentries include trained individuals from various nations as well as former members of the Sultan's Might, Ruby City Militia, and various mercenary guilds, the latter of which is excluded from the city except for the Adventurer's Guild. The Sentries wear blue tabards with the simple gold shield symbolic of their order and of their directive to protect the citizens of the Diamond City with their lives. In conjunction with the Jin Shi, with whom they share District offices known as kouban, the sentries keep order in the city and assist citizens with day-to-day problems. They also protect airships

and the elevators and patrol all tiers of the city as well as the important Shrines that lie in the desert below. The head of the Sentries, known as the Shield of the City and appointed by the Diamond Assembly, is a hill dwarf woman named Beathra Honorstone, who originally hails from the Hinterlands. Having a farlander in charge of the city's security often makes settlers from the other Jeweled Cities nervous at first, but they come to understand the choice once they grow accustomed to the city's diversity. She has become known as a wise and steadfast leader, earning the respect of her subordinates, and is generally seen as a wise choice for the role.

THE ACADEMY OF INNOVATION



The Academy of Innovation is a new organization, made up of scholars from the Ruby City's Royal Academy and Daihonsha as well as the diverse citizens of the Diamond City itself. In contrast to the Royal Academy, admission to the Academy of Innovation is proudly based on merit and ability, rather than wealth or rank, and students often receive scholarships to cover their living expenses while in attendance. Given the value and rarity of knowledge of artificing – and that this is the only institution in the world which teaches it – admission to the Academy is very competitive. Primary schools across the Jeweled Cities, and even beyond, are now seeking to prepare students for this new field of study.

The Academy is led by Jaya Sato, an air aetherite and former high-ranking scholar of the Daihonsha. Sato oversees the Academy with logical and fair – if somewhat unforgiving – leadership, and the faculty they have brought on reflect the diversity of the Diamond City's citizenry. Somewhat controversially, one of the lower faculty, docent Allegría di Rossi, also sits on the Diamond Assembly.

THE CRAFTER'S GUILD



This organization is a relative newcomer that was founded in the Diamond City in response to shortages of crafting supplies and material components in the years following the dual wars. While the formation of this guild was initially opposed by the Merchant's Guild, the concept of an egalitarian organization of many types of crafters and makers, not mere *sellers of goods*, was very popular and won widespread support. The hope was that, working cooperatively, their greater leverage and buying power could help individual crafters arrange better, bulk prices and increased security for shipments to and from the Diamond City. However, the Guild's influence remains too small to affect some of the issues causing the shortages, such as the war with

the Nocturnal Empires and continued raids from orcish corsairs.

In notable contrast to traditional guilds, instead of being headed by a single individual, decisions are made by a council composed of 5 Circle Leaders. One of these Leaders, Vama Chakraji, a high-caste human originally from Kishar, was among the citizens of the Diamond City who advocated most publicly and loudly for the formation of the Guild and so she often serves as the Guild's spokesperson. It is also said that a taciturn hill dwarf woman from Khaz'dar by the name of Ammi-ditana (of House Stonecircle) wields a great deal of quiet influence among the guild's leadership, but she is rarely seen in public.

INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN KISHAR

THE SULTANATE



From the lofty height of the Badshahi Palace, the Sultan rules Kishar, although in practice her orders manifest themselves through the actions of the Palace Guard, the City Militia, and the various administrators who control sections of the city.

After the unexpected death of her father, Sulaiman the Second, his daughter became the current Sultan. Eismana, whose name is usually followed with “by the grace of the gods” if spoken, is considered a popular ruler, although she is as yet inexperienced and burdened by a city partially destroyed in warfare.

The colors of the royal house are red, purple, and gold, and its device is a red-maned lion, passant, wearing a purple sash. Royal messengers and pages wear the purple sash bordered in white. Failing to answer a royal summons is generally considered ill-advised, and with most commonly result in a visit by the Palace Guard.

THE GREAT COUNCIL

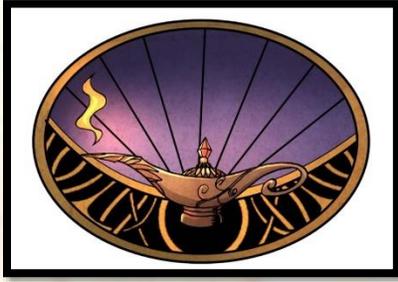


Of all the institutions in Kishar, the Great Council is the one most visibly responsible for touching every aspect of the city. While the Sultanate was once an absolute position, unrest and revolt among the noble houses in the time of Ibrahim the Fourth brought concessions. A weak Sultan, Ibrahim IV allowed a council of appointed nobles to subvert most of his power, a process that has been gradually reversed in the centuries following his rule. These days, the Great Council retains financing as its last great power, but holding the purse strings means it is still a force to be reckoned with. In addition to nobles, the heads of powerful guilds sit on the Great Council, although they are largely there to be consulted.

The Council has no formal colors, but its device is a golden key, and Councilors commonly wear white robes to formal gatherings, with golden sashes. The current First Councilor, Samiyah Zhao al-Zharka, of the powerful al-Zharka family, is said to be a great beauty whose

elegant features exemplify the best blood of high caste humans. She has jet black hair and the piercing blue eyes of her family. Paintings of her in the formal robes of her office sell almost as well as depictions of the Sultan.

THE RUBY COURT



While there are hundreds of noble houses in the Ruby city (collectively referred to as the Ruby Court), only a few wield sufficient power to affect the day-to-day life of the common people. Noble houses are largely family units – a person is born into one but might marry into another to seal an alliance. A few rare houses are adoptive, and survive by admitting new members based on merit, wealth, or some other criteria, but these are generally seen as debased by the other houses. About half of the noble houses in Kishar are high caste humans, although there are

certainly plenty of elves, feytouched, and the occasional desirable low caste human who are found as consorts and spouses.

House al-Zharka, a high caste human house, are likely the most powerful house in the city. Certainly, they are one of the oldest houses. While illegal for any house to keep a guard large enough to challenge the Palace Guard, they are said to keep small units of their troops under the uniform of allied houses. It is believed that all of them together outnumber the Palace Guard, if not the city militia, and rumors abound that this sheathed sword has more to do with the First Councilor's election than her oratory. Al-Zharka colors are blue and green, and their device is a white ibis.

Second in power are the Tang, a noble house of high caste humans that was a minor house until the previous century, in which a single ruthless and energetic leader managed to be elected First Councilor, and the house's fortunes altered overnight. The Tang hold more with scholarship than any other noble house, and they keep one of the smallest guards, although senior members of their household receive training in Qi-Gong, a martial art said to elevate the mind and calm the nerves. Tang colors are yellow and black, and their device is a couchant tiger.

Third among the houses are the Khazâd, a mountain dwarf house that accepts some hill dwarves into its lower ranks. An old and highly traditional family, the Khazâd take a much longer view on politics than many other houses and have remained in their current position for hundreds of years, while other houses have risen and fallen. Despite their position, they are often rumored to be the wealthiest of the houses, even if they choose not to flaunt this. Khazâd colors are black and red, and their device is an unbroken peak in these colors.

While they are in truth many separate houses, the high elven nobility of Kishar speak with one voice, and this causes them to wield more power and influence than their differences would suggest. Collectively, they refer to themselves as the Cinduril Houses, and their Speaker, who changes frequently according to unfathomable elven rules, uses the device of a white lotus blossom. For this reason, others often refer to them as the Lotus Court.

THE ROYAL ACADEMY



As a center of trade, travel, and culture, Kishar boasts two proud symbols of its intellectual achievements: the Royal Academy and the Daihonsha, or Great Library. The Royal Academy is open to all of at least the second Tier of Rank, and well-to-do children are commonly sent there to be educated in all manners of scholarship. Graduation from this academy guarantees a high-ranking position in civil service or the military as well as excellent marriage potential. Scholars from the university are generally identifiable by their black, blue, or maroon robes, the omnipresence of books, scrolls, or writing materials, and a certain detached air of refinement. The Royal Academy uses the device of a lit oil lamp.

THE SULTAN'S MIGHT AND THE PALACE GUARD



Best equipped and trained of the large military forces in the Ruby city, the Palace Guard protects much more than just the Badshahi Palace. The Royal Academy and Daihonsha boast contingents of these troops, and small guardhouses are found all across the city and at the gates, in case the Sultan should need a more local display of power. Traditionally, membership in the Palace Guard is restricted to certain families, but those who display exceptional martial prowess and are willing to undergo the magical geas to guard the Sultan's life and obey his will can gain entrance as well.

The large-scale military under the Sultan's command are referred to as the Sultan's Might. Forbidden by ancient law from being used against the citizens of Kishar (or brought in any large numbers within the city's walls), the army exists to remind foreign nations

(as well as other Jeweled Cities) that Kishar's prominence is built as much upon its ability to wage war as its ability to profitably ensure the flow of commerce. The leader of the Sultan's Might is Taslima aibna Osman, aunt to the Sultan and a famous naval admiral.

THE CITY MILITIA



The City Militia serves as a general police force, and includes everything from minimally trained and often underpaid watchmen to elite forces designed to quell riots. The rank-and-file of the City Militia are drawn from all lineages and economic levels. Since ability is a valid way to rise to the top of this Organization, it is used as a recruiting pool by both the Sultan's Might and the Jin Shi.

Like the Jin Shi, members of the City Militia carry batons of office. Given their responsibilities, these often tend to be less ceremonial and more functional, some being maces in truth with a little decoration and (usually) the name of the officer in case they are lost in a fight or hectic pursuit.

MERCENARY COMPANIES

Kishar welcomes mercenaries, as the constant squabbles between noble houses and other factions produce a demand for expendable soldiers. Some companies work as caravan guards for the Merchant's Guild, and a few are large enough to be hired for true military engagements. The smaller groups of mercenaries are largely kept employed by prosperous merchants or minor noble houses who cannot field a force of their own, and some are even employed by the gangs in their turf wars.

Mercenary companies may number as small as two dozen members, or as many as several hundred, but they all have one thing in common – their primary trade is the waging of war and displays of martial power. While player characters might have a background in such groups, they are not the focus of our story.

Notably, mercenary companies are absent from Samazar, except for the Adventurer's Guild, as outlined below.

SHARED INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

MERCHANT'S GUILD



A formalized coalition of the major craftsmen in the Jeweled Cities, the Merchant's Guild is most active in Kishar. It is here that they have their main Guild Hall, overlooking the Gold Bazaar, most opulent of all the Ruby city's open-air markets. The Merchant's Guild levies a quarterly fee from all of its members, and in return, provides services such as appraisal, caravan guards, and storage for goods. Non-guild merchants exist, but they are not permitted to establish shops in the Gold Bazaar nor Metal Works, nor stalls in the Silver Bazaar nor Spice Bazaar, and they generally face some hardship and occasional intimidation.

Noble houses exclusively take commissions from Master craftsmen that are Guild-certified. All merchants who bear the Guild's seal of approval display this affiliation prominently and are periodically inspected by the Guild. Those selling shoddy merchandise or who are caught defrauding their customers are expelled. Falsifying Guild credentials is an actual civil offense with lengthy punishments.

While many merchants commonly use symbols of Kora or Thul, the Guild itself uses the emblem of a bronze or copper cup, in accordance with their motto, "Trade is the water of life". Many Master Merchants commission actual cups along this specification, which are traditional for ceremonies in which particularly profitable bargains are sealed.

THE DAIHONSHA



The Daihonsha, as an organization, falls somewhere between the Royal Academy and the Jin Shi. The Daihonsha headquarters in Kishar is an enormous three-winged building that harbors the largest collection of written works in existence, as well the Hall of Archives, an extensive collection of documents that provides the foundation for the legal code, land grants, and tax administration. The final wing houses the offices of the Jin Shi, or civil service. Commoners are not allowed in the Daihonsha headquarters as a general practice, although the right amount of money can procure a scholar willing to serve as a guide and sponsor.

In the Diamond City, the Daihonsha bases itself out of the High Tier, specifically in and around the Great Library. Any citizen or properly accompanied guest can enter the library, but much of the library is restricted to Daihonsha members only, though a scholar of the Royal Academy or Academy of Innovation can usually enter with a proper escort. Certain parts of the Great Library are further *Restricted*, even to members of the Daihonsha, without permission of the High Curator – someone whom, for whatever reason, no one ever seems to see around or even be able to describe in detail later.

THE JIN SHI



The Jeweled Cities are each divided into quarters – or tiers, in the case of the Diamond City – and these are in turn divided into Districts. The head administrator of the Jin Shi in each District is known as a Satrap. The head of a quarter is known as a Suzerain. All promotions within the Jin Shi in their area require their approval. As a result, these bureaucrats are extremely powerful, and can wield as much influence as the head of a noble house.

Beyond the lofty offices of Satrap and Suzerain, the Jin Shi are the backbone of the government at all levels and are responsible for managing the day-to-day affairs of the city. In Samazar, they report to the Diamond Assembly. In Kishar, while they in theory report to the Sultan, their need to seek funding from the Great Council places them in a position to work closely with this body. The Jin Shi wear formal robes with square panels in the front. These panels bear symbols that indicate the branch of service and rank of the individual, although this code is complex and difficult to understand for outsiders.

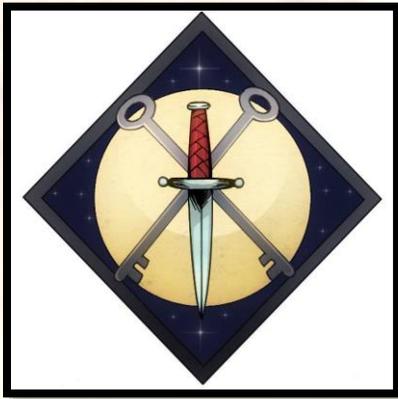
THE GUILD OF WIND AND FLAME



Magical guilds exist in great number in Kishar and are mostly allowed to operate independently. Most focus on a particular area, and are generally comprised of apprentices, journeymen, and masters of that art. Programs that funnel the most magically talented students from the Royal Academy into one or the other of the magical guilds are common. As commoners are unlikely to need or be able to afford their services, these guilds are not spoken of much. While scholars would argue that what they do is not magic, technically, those who follow the path of Mind also sometimes form guilds, and these are lumped into this category.

The largest and most respected of these guilds is the Guild of Wind and Flame. Their area of expertise is elemental magic, and they are frequently at the head of innovation in this field. As such, they are constantly looking for new sources of important reagents such as elemental cores of high purity. Their symbol is the eponymous combination of the elements of Air and Fire.

THIEVES' GUILD



While not a recognized Guild, most people believe there to be a formal Organization that regulates theft in the Jeweled Cities. Unsurprisingly, there is no known location for its headquarters. Occasionally, people publicly claim membership, often as leverage to extort money. The frequent and permanent disappearance of these people lends some credence to the rumors.

Should such an Organization exist, it would most likely keep tabs on those who presented talents for the removal of other people's property.

THE HIDDEN COURT



While the Thieves' Guild might have a particular area of expertise, much of what transpires in the less-than-entirely-legal commerce within Kishar is regulated by a group of powerful crime bosses, who have established their own system of Rank. Bearing a passing semblance to the structure of the Ruby Court, and having adopted the notion of Houses and fealty, this Organization has come to be known as the Hidden Court. Membership in a crime family is seldom based on blood alone – instead, these ruthless enforcers have a strict code of achievement that requires repeated demonstrations of effectiveness. As the name suggests, certain things are anathema to the members of the Hidden Court, and foremost among these is bringing the Organization's actions to the

notice of more upstanding authorities. Smart members operate on systems of reputation and plausible deniability, and few expect to be bailed out of imprisonment should they trip up enough to get caught.

For all that the City of Kishar is home to regulatory bodies such as the Jin Shi and the City Militia, the streets in the less pleasant Districts are just as likely to belong to any number of criminal groups who extort the local population. Too irregular to be easily identifiable, and too knowledgeable of back streets and alleys to be wholly confined, gangs operate openly in some sections of the city, and by night in others. When they are large or powerful enough to become a nuisance, the militia or hired mercenaries prune them back, but any lives lost in such engagements are easily replaced, and they are notoriously hard to fully uproot. In the poorer Districts, membership in a powerful local gang is one of the few means of advancement, and some are honestly benevolent, protecting their neighborhoods against those who would threaten them. Many of these gangs have agreements with the Hidden Court, if they are not simply extensions of it.

THE ADVENTURER'S GUILD

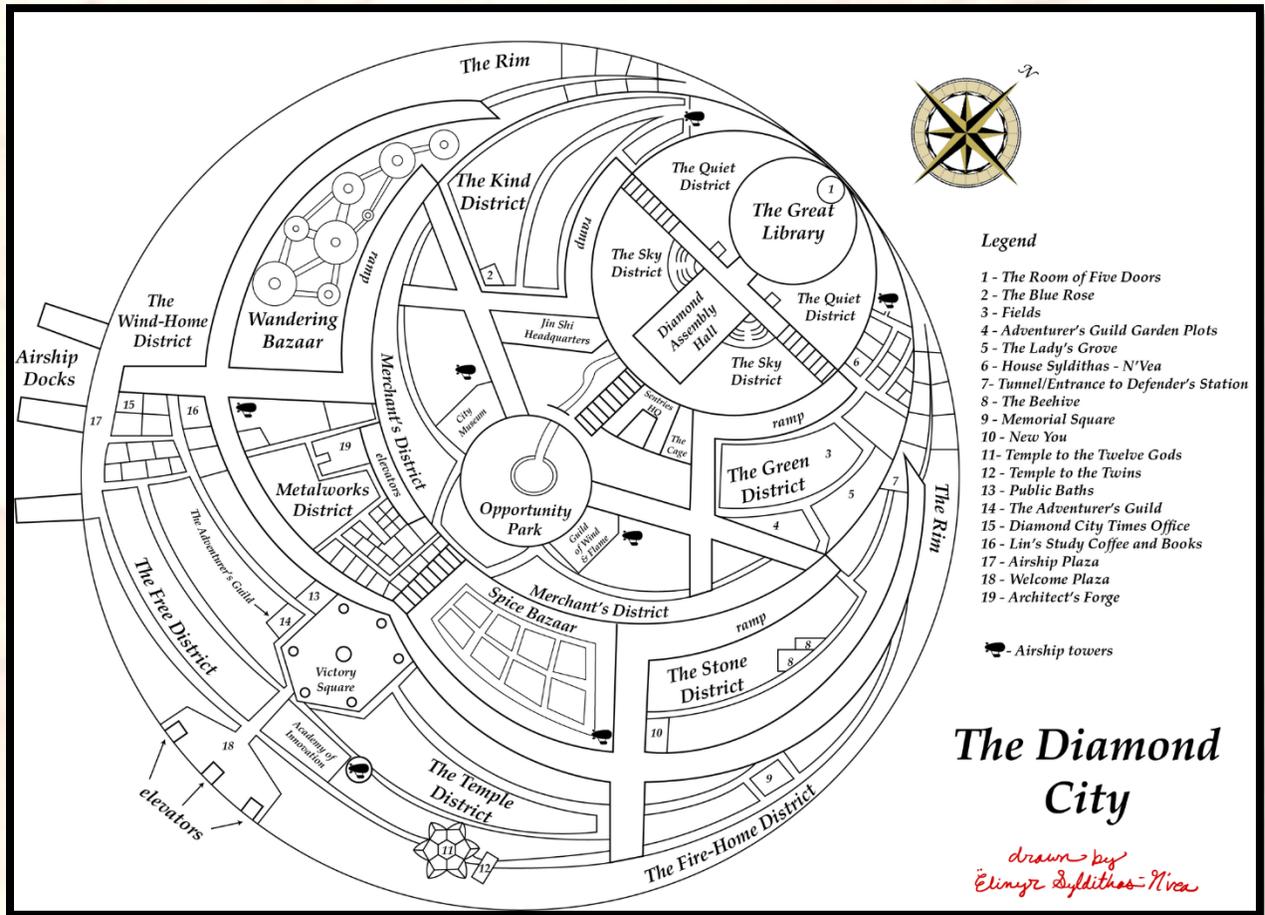


The Adventurer's Guild is of very recent origin, with its first location being founded two decades ago. Formed in the wake of the dissolution of the Serpent Guard, one of Kishar's more famous mercenary companies, the Guild's motto is "Service to the people", and their business model of taking a great number of jobs too small for a traditional mercenary company seems to be bearing fruit. In Kishar, tensions between the Adventurer's Guild and smaller mercenary companies, which accuse it of poaching their jobs, occasionally spill over into brawling. In the Diamond City, however, the Adventurer's Guild has won exclusive rights.

The Adventurer's Guild has several Chapter houses, each headed by a Chaptermaster. Serving under them is at least one Quartermaster, who is often assisted by Scribes. The Guild as a whole is headed by Rashad Al-Wabi, the Guildmaster. Under Rashad's leadership, the Adventurer's Guild has grown from a small group of former mercenaries that contracted out odd jobs to a major force for change in the region. The Guildmaster now also holds a seat on the Diamond Assembly.

Because ordinary people are not supposed to bear weapons inside of the Jeweled cities, the Adventurer's Guild takes care of securing special permission for its members to do so. This permit is commonly known as an "Adventurer's License", and all PCs are considered to begin the game with one. Characters who commit violent crimes and are caught can be stripped of this license (in addition to other punishments), making it illegal for them to carry weapons other than knives and walking staffs within city walls.

A GUIDE TO THE DIAMOND CITY



Samazar, the Diamond City, is a glistening mixture of ancient and new. Most of the structures of the city are ancient, but in excellent repair, and follow a beautifully filigreed, lofty style. Many buildings tower upward in thin spires and bronze ornamentation is everywhere. There is some new construction, whether repairs or additions to existing buildings or the occasional completely new structure, and these follow a mishmash of cultural styles adapted using local materials.

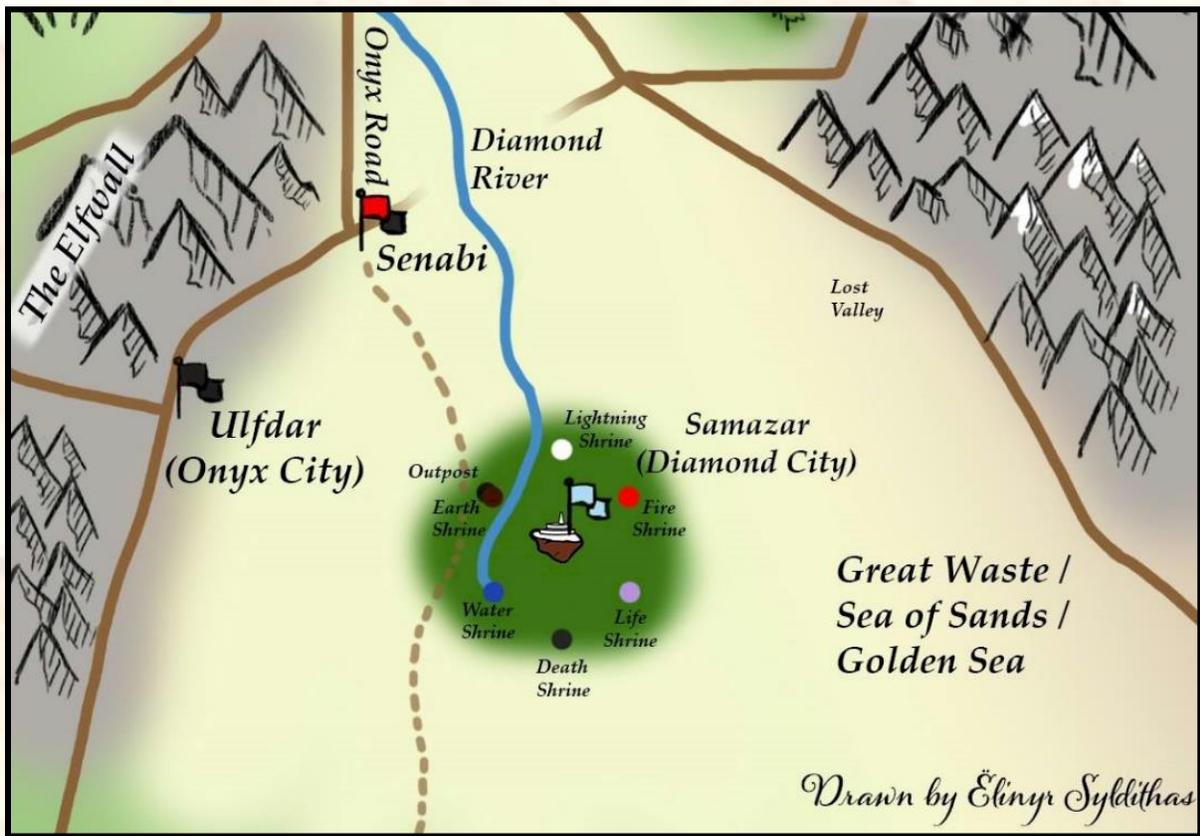
Physically, travel to and from the city follows two methods; either wait in line for one of the restored, yet small, elevators that ascends from the ground beneath the city, or hitch a ride on a regularly-schedule airship transport. Large and filigreed in bronze in the same style as the city, barge-style airships routinely move cargo and passengers to and from the city to the Outpost below or to other Jeweled Cities. Small, agile airships are rare, and only owned by a select few artificers and the wealthy. Airship docks are located throughout the city.

In addition to the beauty of the city and the exciting magical technology it has brought back into existence, there are other universal advantages to residing in this glittering, floating world. Every residence in the city has running water and indoor plumbing, which are connected via underground tunnels. The magi-tech that makes this possible is still shrouded in mystery, as the under-tunnels are

somewhat dangerous and have only been partially explored. Even the Adventurer's Guild has not fully explored these underground systems.

Early on, the leadership of the Diamond City declared that the city would hold no standing offensive army; only a defensive service known as the Samazar Sentries would serve to protect the area. Another major declaration, given the diverse population of the city, was to accept the Jeweled Cities currency as standard; lunari are the main currency for trade, although foreign coin is also more common than elsewhere. Finally, it was decided that no one who dies in the Diamond City will be there interred; instead, the dead would be either cremated or buried in the Lost Valley, far from the city. In practice, this area turned out to be occupied by a menacing force of Sulith's necromancers, and burials are generally conducted elsewhere in the Great Waste.

Samazar is physically divided into three tiers between which individuals may travel freely but which reflect different needs within the city – and different social classes as well. The Low Tier, being largest, is where the majority of people live and where much business is conducted. The Middle Tier is home to organizational headquarters and the city's middle class. The High Tier, where the Diamond Assembly meets and the Great Library can be found, is home to only a few, particularly pre-eminent citizens.



THE TIERS

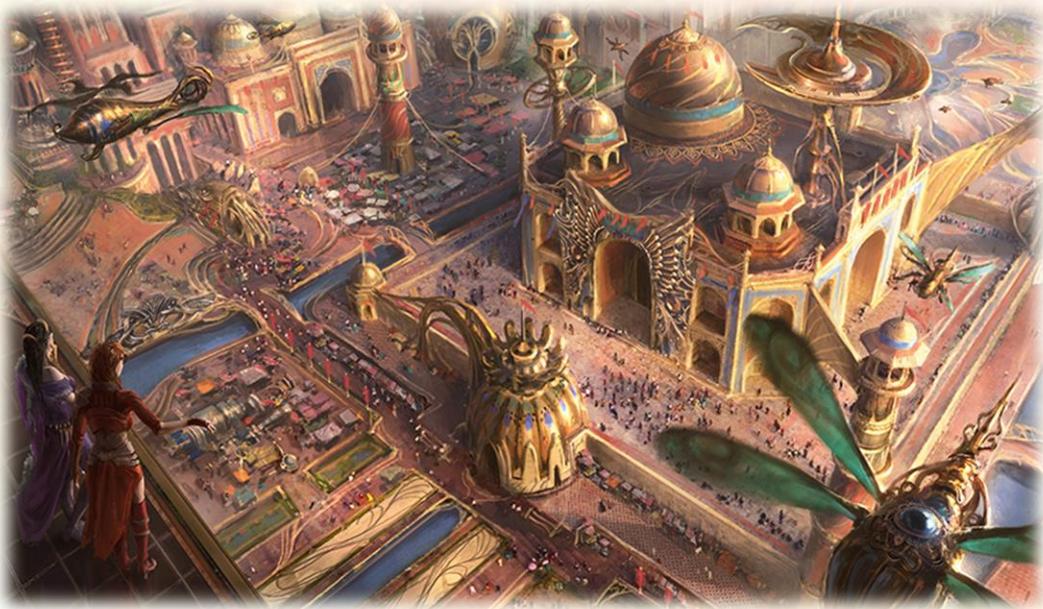
LOW TIER

THE ACADEMY OF INNOVATION

The Academy of Innovation is perhaps the single most sought building in Samazar. The largest building in the Low Tier, the Academy overlooks Victory Square and has its own airship dock tower. In these walls, students – admitted through on a highly-competitive, merit-based process – challenge themselves to learn the best the city’s scholars have to offer, including the much-sought-after artificing skill. While they partner with the Daihonsha to utilize the Great Library, the Academy keeps its own copies of many important tomes and documents, copied carefully by hand in the last few years. Students have access to esteemed instructors and an excellent library, and the Academy – while still very young – boasts that in its few years it has already matched the Ruby City’s Royal Academy in quality – though scholars elsewhere, of course, dispute this.

VICTORY SQUARE

After the defeat of the Flame Lord, many called for a fitting memorial to those who lost their lives fighting his army or in the infernos he caused in cities across the world. This large, open-air forum allows for public gatherings and tributes, and a gilt building in the center of the square includes a memorial to everyone who was lost in the war. Statues of those who died with particular bravery stand evenly spaced around the Square. It is common for citizens to come here bearing flowers, drawings, and other small tributes to those they lost, whether they died at home in one of the Lost Cities or fighting the Efreeti army to defend their new home. Victory Square also celebrates the defeat of the Flame Lord and the rebirth of Samazar as a new hope for thousands of displaced.



THE ADVENTURER'S GUILD

Adventurers, being the first to visit the elusive Diamond City in centuries, laid claim to a choice building as their local guild hall. The Chapterhouse is conveniently located near the original working elevator to and from the ground below as well as a nearby airship dock tower. The Adventurers often have cause to travel extensively and on short notice, so this location is key, but the building has its quirks. Protected by a Zone of Simplicity, combat and use of powers indoors is magically prohibited. Outside, a sparring area has been set aside for members to practice and aspiring newcomers to try their luck. Some artifacts and magic objects are stored in the Chapterhouse, with some readily available to members and others carefully packed away and guarded in the Vault.

THE SPICE BAZAAR

This large, open-air market includes numerous stalls, set up each morning and closed each night, that sell all sorts of “soft” goods – not just spices, but all food and other consumables, as well as some other inexpensive daily-use items like simple cloth. To Kishari citizens, this seems like a combination of the Copper and Silver Bazaars, yet many durable goods are not sold here – the Metalworks is home to permanent shops and “hard” goods. The Spice Bazaar is carefully overseen by the Jin Shi, who organize stalls and keep everything laid out in a tidy grid. Additionally, an airship tower in the corner of this District is where the freshest perishables – like fresh fish from Kishar and Prinya – are brought in daily. Sentries patrol the Bazaar regularly, so thieves and pickpockets are not a frequent concern here.

THE METALWORKS DISTRICT

Metal is indeed worked here – there are forges and silversmiths – but all sorts of durable goods are sold in the Metalworks. Household goods, tools, jewelry, books – most permanent shops in the city are set up in this District, and shoppers from all tiers visit daily. An airship tower in the corner of this District brings in raw materials – ore and ingots, thread and fiber, etc. – and exports finished goods. A single, very large smithy at the center of the District is dedicated to Kora and has become known as The Architect’s Forge. The building also includes a single enormous loom, manned by constructs, which can produce wide swaths of fabric big enough for entire stall tents. Given that this was clearly a center of production of goods for the ancient residents, current citizens see this as a natural place to work their crafts. Like the Spice Bazaar, the Jin Shi and Sentries keep order here. Recently, the Merchant’s Guild has opened a cargo elevator that runs up the edge of this District to the Merchant’s District, though it has not yet been declared safe for passengers.

THE FREE DISTRICT

The Free District – “the one place in the city,” as the saying goes, “where nothing is ever free.” This District is home to large public baths, theatres, restaurants, taverns, brothel and the soft trade, and all other sorts of entertainment. While the District includes housing, only people who work within the District generally live here, and this includes Adventurers from the nearby Chapterhouse who choose to find private housing. At the edge of the District and the City, close to Victory Square and the Temple District, three elevators operate frequently. These small elevators move a few people at a time, not large cargo, and a small fee is required to use them.

Luckily, Adventurer's Guild members are exempt from this fee – and may also jump to the head of the line if they are in need of doing so.

THE TEMPLE DISTRICT

When people first arrived in the Diamond City, they easily found the prominent, large temple building, which already included shrines dedicated to all the gods – with the notable exception of the Twins. Even Sulith and Gorgath have shrines here, though they are not often publicly sought out. The large statues of each of the gods are unusual in that each statue bears an animal head. Given the nature of the settlement of the city, Laurela, goddess of transition, has seen particular popularity here, and she is considered the unofficial patron goddess of Samazar. Small shrines to Laurela are popular in many homes and in public areas in other Districts as well.

Also in this small District are a few shops – selling incense, flowers, milk, and other common offerings – and another building that lies in the shadow of the Temple. This building, the temple to the Twins, sees few people enter through the main front door. More commonly, worshippers enter through the shadowed side doors, where their identities are less likely to be noticed. While worship of the Twins is legal in Samazar, there is still a bias against it – some would call it an unfair prejudice. This bias seems to be decreasing in the last year or two, in young people in particular.

For the curious, the dieties' statues' animal heads are as follows:

- The Brothers - Rams
- Gloriel - Dove
- Nivone - Dog
- Auran - Falcon
- Avahlei - Cobra
- Kora - Fennec
- Laurela - Cat
- Lyla - Hare
- Maenir - Lion
- Suhl'Sekh - Jackal
- Thul - Ibis
- Gorgath - Hippopotamus
- Sulith – Crocodile

THE WANDERING BAZAAR

The Wandering Bazaar is a strange, labyrinthine District of the city that thwarts any scholarly attempt at mapping. By unspoken law, shops are never set up in the same place twice, lest they should attract the attention of evil spirits. The area is full of strange, open buildings up to five stories tall with wide, wooden pathways between them. These bridges between buildings shade the alleys below, and only the District's few residents seem to know their way around with confidence. The wide, tall buildings are only used around the edges, because in the center of each is a large, circular hole that permeates all levels of the building and deep into the ground (the undercity). This all makes the area rather dangerous. Unusual, rare, and sometimes quite expensive items can be found here, along with medicines, oracles, luxury goods, and "discreet" services. Servants from higher tiers can often be found here, shopping for their masters, but wise ones never travel unguarded. Because of the difficulty in mapping and understanding this District, it is less patrolled by the Sentries than the other Bazaars. In fact, many businesses here are not licensed by the Jin Shi and are, to one degree or another, illegal.

THE FIRE-HOME DISTRICT

The Fire-Home District (so named because of the way the sun glints on its spires, towers, and windows as it rises each morning) is a modest but comfortable residential District. Many of the city's lower-ranking civil servants, guild members, and shop owners live here, where housing remains affordable despite the buildings being in excellent condition. A small square set a full story down into the stone of the District was discovered when the area was first explored, with a covered platform at its center. This area was converted into a shrine to those who perished in the Great War of Flame, with the rising sun greeting what is now called Memorial Square at the start of each day. While it isn't a perfect alignment, this section of the city faces the desert in the direction of Shalazar, the Sapphire City. Many of the people who live here hail from there originally and wear a small blue cord at their belt to identify themselves. "Blue-belts", as they are termed, have a reputation as scholars and crafters who are level-headed and make good mediators, and even the Jin Shi has been known to bring them in when formal charges may not be appropriate.

THE WIND-HOME DISTRICT

The Wind-Home District is named for the winds out of the west that buffet it most of the day. This District is a working-class residential area where many of the workers involved with airship trade live. Day laborers loading and unloading the great airships mingle with the crew of the airships themselves. For safety reasons, the edge of this District is lined with rope barriers – at least once a day someone unaccustomed to the high winds ends up needing them. The reliable presence of the strong winds in this District has also led to the development of gliders (originally designed by the Academy of Innovation) and that in turn has led to racing leagues and gambling. Once a week a sanctioned race can be found from the edge of the District to Victory Square – a challenging course due to the many tall spires in between. Less official racing means pilots sometimes interfere with airship traffic, a practice the Jin Shi and the Merchant's Guild are both working to reduce through hefty fines.

THE STONE DISTRICT – OR "THE FALLING DISTRICT"

The Stone District was, for the first few years of settlement, known commonly as the Falling District. Originally named for the exceptional stone façades on many of the buildings there, the name fell out of common use because those same pieces started falling apart. Not only façades but also other large pieces of buildings would crumble into the street or collapse in sudden and unexpected ways. Across the streets in the Fire-Home District and the Spice Bazaar, buildings stayed in complete repair, but mysteriously, this section of the city alone seemed to decay. The automatons that clean and repair the city ignored this District, and as such, only the city's poorest residents and outcasts live here, including a disproportionate number of fellblooded – so some call this area the Fallen or the Fell District. Residents originally hailing from the Ruby City have taken to jokingly calling their new home "the New Sorrows". Outsiders to this District are regarded with suspicion, especially those who come in only to get information without contributing.

Eventually the Adventurer's Guild was able to determine that the Mechanist, one of the original nine constructs of the ancient, Djinn-created Quintessence Forge, was malfunctioning and had been using the Engines of Fate to pull energy from this District to fuel episodes of rewinding time. Once the Mechanist was defeated, the Stone District stopped facing dangerous, entropic decay and repair could begin. Now the District is being renovated and its weary residents fear being pushed out by outside investors looking to capitalize on their good fortune.

THE RIM

The city's unique circular structure leaves small slivers of each Tier largely unusable. In the Lower Tier, this area is known as the Rim. There are buildings here which go right up to the edge of the city, and if you were to punch through their external walls, you would face a terrible drop off the edge of the city. As such, there isn't much traffic in this area, and it tends to be relatively quiet, since no legitimate shops or business want to set up in quite such an out of the way area. A popular and persistent rumor is that some of the city's shadier dealings take place in the Rim, where the Sentries and Jin Shi patrol less often and fewer people might happen by. This association of criminality further stigmatizes those who live in the unusually long and narrow houses in this section, and 'Rim-dweller' is an insult likely to start a fight. The Rim is another popular place to find gliders and glider-racing, although the unpredictable wind currents here have resulted in several deaths.

MIDDLE TIER

OPPORTUNITY PARK

Opportunity Park is a large public park central to the Middle Tier. A stream emerges from the wall between the Middle and High Tiers and flows through the park to a small pond, from whence it must drain to the under-tunnels, though no one is entirely sure. Regardless of the city's enduring mysteries, the park is a pleasant place to visit, with lawns, flowers, shrubs, even trees and small wildlife, as well as artfully arranged stones, a combed gravel "garden," and benches and picnic tables for families to gather. The park is primarily used by the city's middle-class residents. It is patrolled regularly by the Sentries and cleaned by the Jin Shi. At times, public events are held in the Park, such as summer evening concerts and the like, but large public events primarily take place in the Lower Tier to accommodate greater numbers.

THE CITY MUSEUM

Adjacent to the Park is a stolid building, fairly plain except for artful blue glass windows that run the height of the building. In the first few months of their rule, the Diamond Assembly commandeered this otherwise empty building and declared it a public museum, where artifacts and art could be displayed for the edification of the general populace. Historical pieces from the Great War of Flame are displayed here, as are rotating selections from current artists and carefully tended historical pieces from the city's past. Small concerts are held here in the wintertime and when the summer heat becomes oppressive. Admission is free to the public during daytime hours, and Sentries patrol the museum while Daihonsa guides host formal tours.

THE GUILD OF WIND AND FLAME

On the other side of the park from the museum is another massive building, this one with narrow, red glass windows, which appealed to the Guild of Wind and Flame in the early days of exploration. Before settlement had even truly begun, the Guild claimed this building as their own. Typically, only Guild members are allowed entrance, but special dispensation is giving to certain allies and high-ranking citizens. The reason, they say, is less the snobbery that some people might call it than

it is a simple matter of safety. Guild laboratories here sometimes run dangerous experiments, and even some routine alchemical or magical work can be quite unfortunate to interrupt. Young scholars of the path of Magic often take formal classes here. There is no quarter given to anyone who interferes with the exchange of magical knowledge, so intruders are promptly ejected.

THE MERCHANT'S DISTRICT

The Merchant's Guild, which understood a new city as a golden opportunity, naturally claimed an elegant building for their local guild hall, and many merchants also reside nearby in this large, crescent-shaped District. The Guild hosts a small bank based out of their main hall. Moneylenders can also be found in this District, and their services exchanging foreign coin are called upon daily. Some farlanders might grumble about unfairness in exchange rates, but only guild certified moneylenders are legally allowed to operate in the city, and crooks are dealt with by the Jin Shi without mercy.

Senior Merchant Nemori Bashir, formerly of the Ruby City, is well respected by many across the city. Her right-hand man, Merchant An Jin of the House of Saffron, is known for fairness and diplomacy, and often serves as a messenger for Nemori or her advisors.

JIN SHI HEADQUARTERS

Near the center of the Tier and not far from the park lies the Jin Shi Headquarters building. From the first days of settlement, the Jin Shi took control of the situation easily, administration and logistics being their forte. They are responsible for everything from record-keeping to peacekeeping, issuing permits to issuing judgements on crimes. The breadth of the Jin Shi's responsibility is strange to some farlanders, who expect more separation of duties. Others expect an authoritarian ruler with universal authority, and so the Jin Shi's dispersed authority and dedication to fairness, logic, and diplomacy is a breath of fresh air.

The current Suzerain – leader of the city's Jin Shi – is Peng Dao, a high caste human woman who also sits on the Diamond Assembly. Like many of her colleagues, she is known to wear a plain uniform with the standard square front panel and the Jin Shi baton of office. Known to be no-nonsense, efficient, and dedicated to her ethic of fairness and justice, she is well-respected by citizens around the city.

In addition to their headquarters, the Jin Shi have small stations, called koubans, in each District. They share this space with the Samazar Sentries, and each kouban serves as a sort of general city services building, responding to all sort of neighborhood requests from providing directions to assistance in emergencies.

SAMAZAR SENTRIES MAIN BARRACKS

Located behind the Jin Shi Headquarters, a large and surprisingly beautiful building hosts the main barracks and offices of the Samazar Sentries. The building is utilized as both administration center, living quarters for the Sentries, training ground, and temporary holding facilities for those accused of crimes. A central courtyard allows for relaxing lunch break and regularly scheduled practice sparring.

THE CAGE

Adjacent to the Sentries barracks is the magical prison known as The Cage. The city did not appear to have a prison originally, so this building has been converted, and walls of magical force separate many of the various cells. While those merely accused of a crime are usually kept in the Sentries' barracks until trial, those who are especially dangerous or ruled guilty of crimes find themselves in the Cage. This multi-storied building as yet has few long-term residents; most crimes to date have warranted a year's sentence or less, so the building has more capacity than it is currently using.

THE KIND DISTRICT

The Kind District is the Middle Tier's answer to the Free District. The area includes companions' residences, private and semi-private baths, fine restaurants, and salons where private concerts and entertainment are held. An airship tower in the north part of the District is where many higher-class residents and visitors take small passenger ships to and from the city. The Kind District is also the center of the city's fashion culture, with a yearly semi-public showing of the latest designs.

THE GREEN DISTRICT

Early efforts by members of the Temple, community leaders, and several Adventurers led to the formation of one of the city's most planned Districts. Even with the spring of the Oasis appearing in the desert below the city, it was quickly apparent that the refugees needed a source of food (and income) as soon as possible. Since most of this District was clearly originally some sort of park, the necessary open ground was already present when leaders looked for a place to grow crops. Community leaders, especially from the Temple, aided refugees in starting up small community farms and gardens here. Quite a few residents now devote their full-time work to growing crops in this District and selling them in the Spice Bazaar. Some have done quite well for themselves growing delicacies and spices from around the world – much beloved in this cosmopolitan city. Each year the District improves; more space is converted from open lot to growing fields and new efficiencies are found. There are even young orchards already blooming here, and the Green District is often enjoyed as a sort of park, kept secure and safe by the efforts of the Sentries and Jin Shi, who both patrol to ensure the safety of the city's food supplies. The airship tower in this district directly supports agricultural efforts. Finally, a breathtaking hanging garden tumbles down the side of the Green District wall above the Stone District.

High Tier

THE GREAT LIBRARY

The Jewel of the Diamond City – the Great Library – towers, glistening, overlooking the entire city. The beautiful, lofty spire is full of tomes, scrolls, maps, and records, all ancient, and even now the Daihonsha has not been able to fully catalogue it all. In early days of settlement, the Library was not well guarded, and some tomes went missing, much to the consternation of the Senior Librarian when he arrived from the Ruby City. What was stolen during that short window was

irreplaceable, and the Daihonsha has issued a standing reward with no punishment for any materials returned to them. They also eagerly accept tomes and records from nearby ruins, which Adventurers and other explorers sometimes discover, though most are in poor condition after centuries.

Magically protected and sealed, the Great Library maintained its pristine condition until it was opened at the conclusion of the Great War of Flame, and now scholars are eagerly copying the materials to preserve them, lest they become lost to the brittle, dry desert air. Scribes of the Daihonsha and skilled students at the Academy of Innovation are often put to work with transcription, though cataloging is reserved for experienced Librarians.

The Daihonsha headquarters offices are located within side rooms off the main library hall, and the Senior Librarian lives on site. The building is guarded by an ample contingent of Sentries. Only ranking members of the Daihonsha or the Academy are allowed unsupervised within the Great Library, although all citizens are allowed in public sections, where there is constant supervision. No materials may be removed from the Library at any time. For some documents, copies may be made, and so talented calligraphers who can accurately transcribe original materials are often in demand. Particularly with artificing diagrams, inaccuracy in transcription can be deadly! At the request of the Diamond Assembly, some materials are restricted and may not be viewed or copied without their approval. Rumors persist, too, of an unknown and shadowy figure that is secretly the master of the library – someone or something that dates back to the days of the Djinn. Some Adventurers have noted that persisting in asking the library staff about the High Curator doesn't seem to net worthwhile information, for some reason.

THE DIAMOND ASSEMBLY HALL AND THE SKY DISTRICT

The grand hall where the Diamond Assembly meets is across a small plaza from the Great Library. The main hall is opulent and beautiful and was clearly once a throne room, with seating for three great leaders. A fine table and chairs, rather than the thrones, now sit on a raised dais at the far end of the main hall. Seats are available for petitioners, so no one needs to stand waiting or kneel deferentially to the Assembly, though many do anyways. Off of the main hall there are offices, living quarters, and associated servants' quarters, kitchens, and work spaces. Most of the Diamond Assembly members, as well as their Arbiters, choose to live elsewhere in the city for the day-to-day life, but each has their own quarters and office within the Hall as well. Clerks, Ritari, and Jin Shi record-keepers that serve the Assembly also have small offices in this building. For special events, the building is opened to the public, and many will come to gawk at the intricate glasswork and metalwork; but the average citizen rarely if ever has need to visit the Assembly Hall for personal business.

Surrounding the Assembly Hall are two great, open plazas, collectively known as the Sky District. Public declarations, high-society weddings, and other large public gatherings are sometimes held here. New laws passed by the Assembly must be read publicly in this District, and many organizations keep scribes and runners here for disseminating information rapidly.

THE OPERATOR

There is a small, unassuming building in the High Tier that is generally left alone. Within resides The Operator, a construct from the original days of the city who maintains and operates the flow of magical power from the Desert Shrines. The Operator monitors the city for threats and keeps

the systems running smoothly. Should the city administration need to, say, shut off the stream in Opportunity Park, or halt all elevators due to an emergency, the Operator would be the one to assist. For the most part, however, he is left to his somewhat mysterious duties. As the first known member of the Quintessence Forge, the Operator's incomplete memory banks have often been the source of unique and important information key to helping the city.

THE QUIET DISTRICT

A few elegant residential estates can be found in the High Tier. Home to a handful of the city's wealthiest individuals, these estates include some of the city's most beautiful buildings and private gardens. Any new construction here has been completed in a way that it blends in seamlessly with the existing architecture. The average citizen rarely, if ever, has cause to see inside the walls of these fine estates.

THE UNDERCITY

TUNNELS

Accessed via hatches throughout the city, tunnels run underneath the surface. The workings of the city hum along, maintained by automatons. Until recently, it was very dangerous to visit here; similar automatons here were unusually aggressive and would attack any visitors on site. After the defeat of the Mechanist, that is no longer a problem. However, the tunnels are not necessarily completely free from dangers. In addition to all of the strange machinery, sometimes there are creatures in the tunnels that no one has seen elsewhere. In deeper levels, Adventurers have found slimes and other odd creatures that the average citizens would not wish to encounter!

BELOW THE CITY

THE RIVER

After the defeat of the Flame Lord, a river appeared in the desert, as if by magic. Scholars of the desert determined that the healing of the six elemental shrines, along with the restoration of the Diamond City, made possible the restoration from underground the great river that once flowed through the area. The underground river, previously known to only a few Adventurers and scholars, now flows freely across the desert past Senabi to the sea just west of Kishar. The fecund river creates a large swath of fertile land where once was desert alone. The benefits of the other shrines, scholars say, account for the rapid growth of vegetation and the appearance of young forests and wildlife. Because of this, wildlife that fled the Lady's Forest during the advance of Nocturnal Empire forces found a new home in the so-called Desert Forest.

In the last year or two, it has quietly become common knowledge that some sort of great power resides in this forest and taking too freely from the forest will not bode well for one's longevity. A handful of individuals have taken to living in these deep woods of their own accord, while others have run afoul of the power there and have not been seen since. Additionally, some of the wildlife

will now watch anyone who passes through with unusual intelligence in their eyes; many of these animals bear a pair of sleek, black horns, regardless of whether their species would normally have horns or not. This clearly upsets some in the city, but others note there has been no aggression toward the city or toward anyone who did not act first.

THE OUTPOST

The Desert Outpost, built many years ago by the Adventurer's Guild as they explored ruins in the desert, lies below the city and atop the cave where the Earth Shrine can be found. The anDwapeh trade road passes through the Outpost's wooden walls, which were rebuilt taller after the Great War of Flame. Within the walls lie barracks for the Guild, multiple inns and a hostel, warehouses, and a few shops that handle basic trade for merchants, diplomats, and explorers passing through the area.

SETTLEMENTS

Within the fertile area created by the river and the influence of the shrines, several small settlements have appeared. The largest and most significant of these belongs to the Lightning Stones gnoll tribe, whose matriarch, Emberclaw, sits on the Diamond Assembly. The Lightning Stones are the first known gnoll tribe to settle in a permanent location in this way. Their housing remains simple and made from natural materials, easy to break down and return to the earth if needed. Settlers in other groups have erected somewhat more permanent-looking homes. The residents of the varied settlements – including the gnolls, unusually – have cultivated fields, pastures, and orchards here that provide food not only for their groups but for the Diamond City above. The thriving, fecund land provides more food each year, which is fortunate since the city continues to grow.

THE SHRINES

Six elemental shrines ring the underground central Hub; together, these ancient magical artifacts power the Engines of Fate, keeping the Diamond City in the sky, the river flowing, and the systems that make life possible here thriving. The shrines, one each to Fire, Lightning, Water, Earth, Life, and Death, are dangerous and therefore off-limits to most civilians, which the exception of scholars, who must travel under guard. In order to keep this key resource safe, the shrines are guarded and patrolled by Sentries, and they are never left unattended.

THE LOST VALLEY

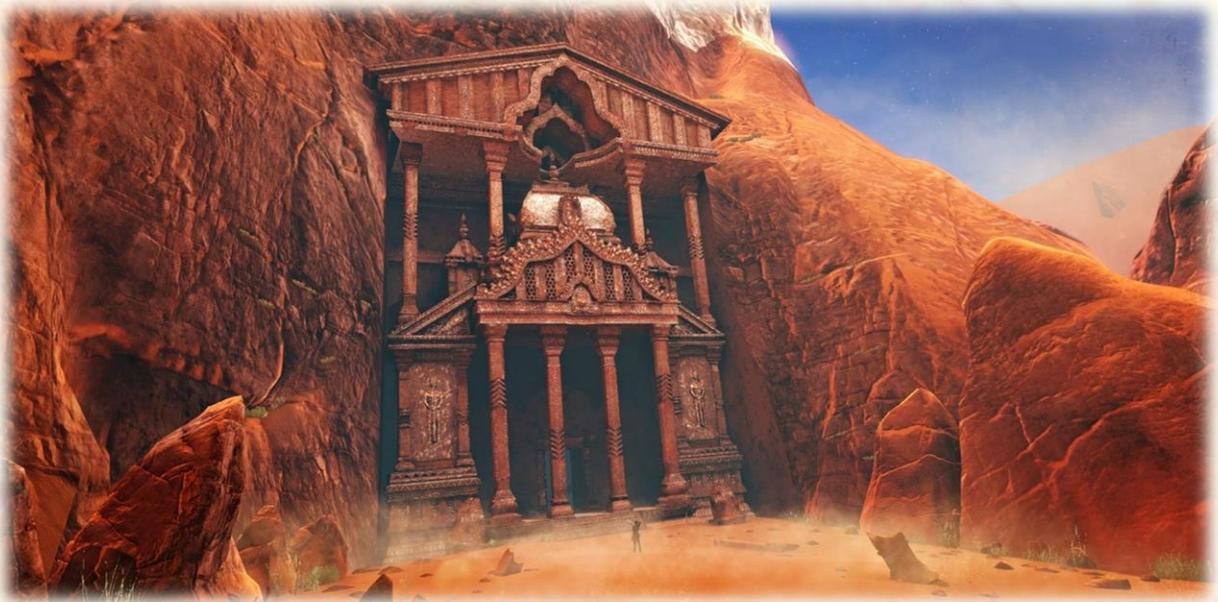
In the desert lies a particularly interesting valley. Full of half-buried tombs and catacombs, the Lost Valley had long been hidden by the sands of the Great Waste. Several years ago, the shifting sands began to reveal their secrets, and scholars from Kishar mounted expeditions to explore the tombs, not all of which were safe. The famed Royal Scholar Ankhares made his name here through the excavation of the tomb of Hakad ad Ipek, last king of the Sky People, more commonly known as the Lost Tribe of the desert (and for whom the Valley is named). Adventurers helped in exploration, but many secrets remained in the area.

During a lull in the exploration, followers of Sulith first moved into the valley. Dark necromancers arrived and began raising the dead to do their bidding. The dead served both to guard the area and to further excavate the tombs and natural caves of the valley. Many artifacts and wealth were

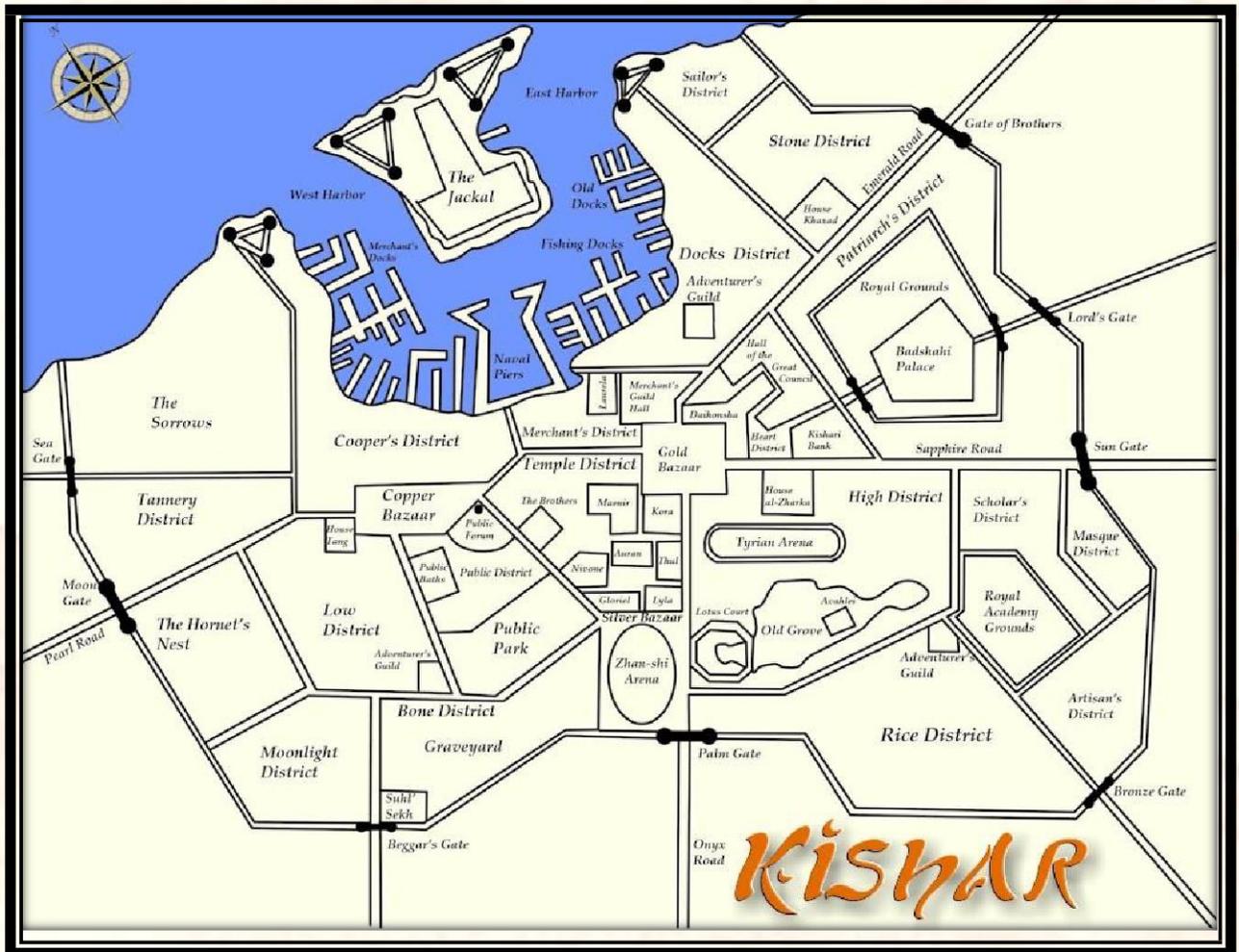
lost to Sulith's followers in this way, but dangers of the tombs were also cleared out. When the Flame Lord and his army arrived, the necromancers seem to have fled, and the remains of their undead army fought the Efreeti and were destroyed. The Lost Valley lay once again open to exploration and scholarship.

As it was believed to mostly consist of empty tombs, the newly-formed Diamond Assembly decided that it would serve as a place to bury those who had died in the final battles of the Great War of Flames. Many were cremated and their ashes scattered to the desert winds or interred in urns, but some cultures called for a burial in earth. Initially this arrangement seemed as though it would work, with Sentries patrolling the valley to make sure that the area remained safe.

Soon thereafter, the Lost Valley was once more overrun by a large force of necromancers serving Sulith, although no one saw them enter the area from any adjoining road or track. They were soon discovered to have passed through a stable portal between worlds in the center of the valley. The portal in the Lost Valley was connected to a new land known as Cyrillia, with an unusual language and a society dominated by vampires and werewolves. Sulith's followers, having retreated there during the war, had discovered a new world ripe for conquest. Exploration of this unusual land by the other peoples of the Jeweled Cities would require contending with the Valley's defenders first, and so not much is yet known about it.

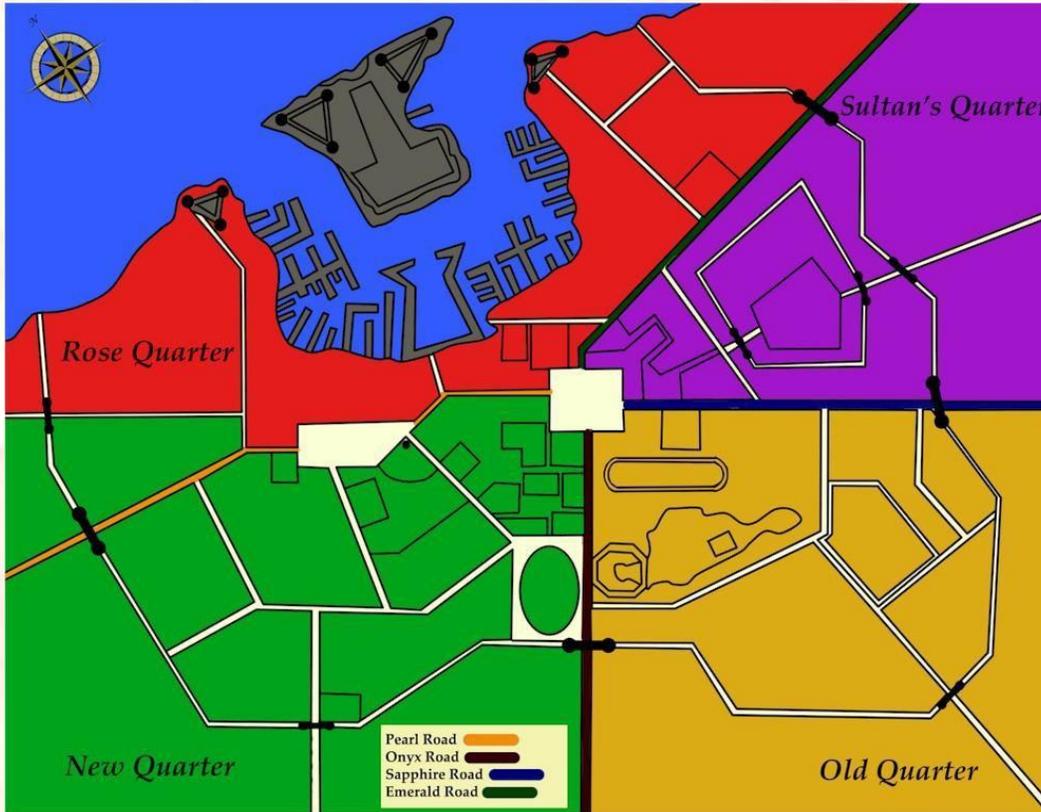


A GUIDE TO THE RUBY CITY



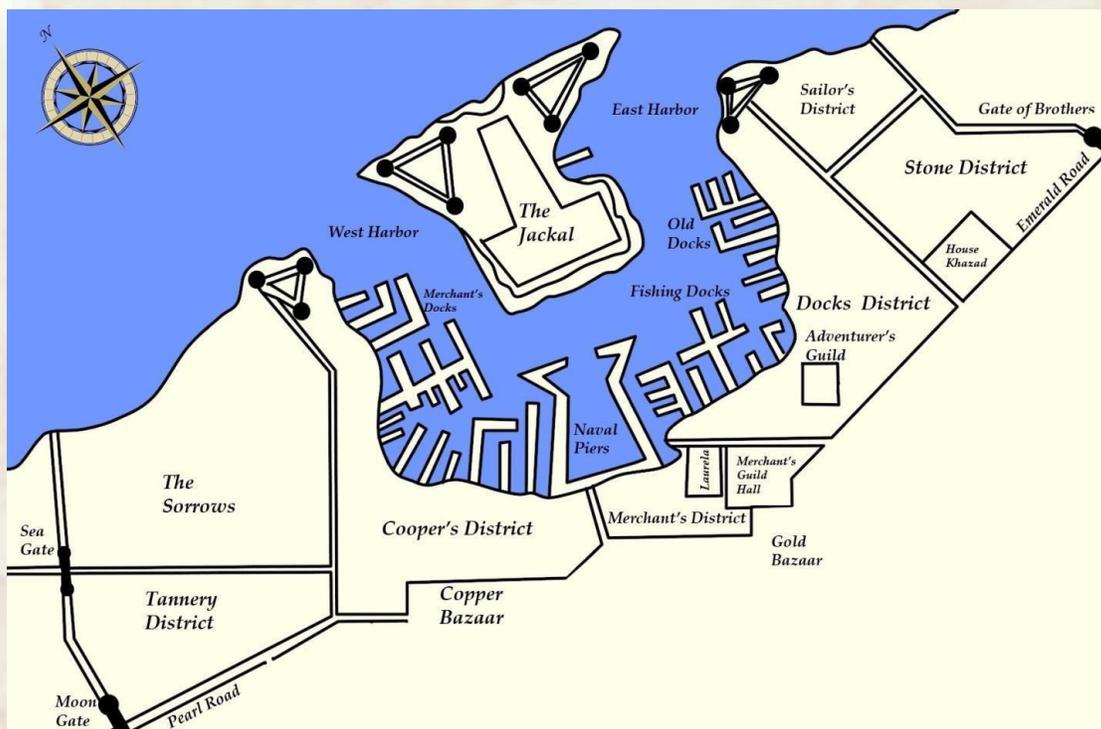
THE QUARTERS

The city of Kishar is divided into quarters by the 4 major trade roads (see key). The quarters, in turn, are divided into Districts. The island that houses Kishar's prison (shown in grey below) and the three open-air Bazaars (shown in tan below) are the only parts of the city excluded from this division.



Official Name	Common Name	Districts	Notable Buildings
North Quarter	Rose Quarter	The Sorrows, Cooper's District, Tannery District, Merchant's District, Docks District, Stone District, Sailor's District	Docks, Temple of Laurela, Merchant's Guild Hall, House Khazad
East Quarter	Sultan's Quarter	Heart District, Matriarch's District	Daihonsa, Hall of the Great Council, Kishari Bank, Badshahi Palace
South Quarter	Old Quarter	High District, Rice District, Scholar's District, Masque District, Artisan's District	Tyrian Arena, House al-Zharka, Old Grove, Temple of Avahlei, Lotus Court, Royal Academy
West Quarter	New Quarter	Temple District, Public District, Bone District, Moonlight District, Low District, The Hornet's Nest	Temples of: Kora, Maenir, Auran, Thul, Lyla, Gloriel, Nivone, The Brothers, Public Baths, Public Park, Graveyard, House Tang, Zhan-Shi Arena

NORTH QUARTER



North Quarter, often sarcastically referred to as the 'Rose Quarter' for its many unpleasant smells, is the largest quarter of Kishar, stretching for the entire length of the city that touches the ocean. Here merchants, fishermen and traders from all over the world dock their equally diverse vessels. The North Quarter was the most badly damaged in the wars.

THE DOCKS

Four sets of docks are notable in the Kishari harbor. Newest and most intricate of these are the Merchant's Docks, build to accommodate the largest trading ships. Next largest are the Naval Piers, a fortified space for the Kishari Navy's exclusive use. Smaller trading ships and the extensive fishing fleets that keep Kishar fed dock at the Fishing Docks. The smallest and oldest of the dock complexes are the Old Docks, a remnant of times far past when these smaller piers could provide for the whole city's needs. These days they are largely reserved for passenger vessels or nobles' private ships and having a reserved berth on a favored pier is a status symbol.

THE SORROWS

One of Kishar's poorest Districts is found here, at the westernmost edge of the city's coastline. Largely comprised of poor widows and those too old or injured to continue their lives as sailors, the dregs of society end up in the shanty-like houses found here, which are often destroyed when the Monsoon comes in and rebuilt again soon thereafter. Gangs and protection rackets run rampant, and the city militia has little presence here, as there is little of value for them to protect.

TANNERY DISTRICT

Because of the unpleasant chemicals involved in this trade, a section far away from a much younger, smaller Kishar was set aside for these industrial productions, as well as forges and dye factories. Nowadays, an expanding city has swallowed this area once more, and the Districts around it, being one strong wind away from being the recipients of its smell, are unsurprisingly the city's poorest. Any large-scale, unpleasant trade is likely to operate here.

COOPER'S DISTRICT

Named for the large-scale production of the barrels and crates that drive shipping, this District has also become home to the largest warehouses for storage of goods. Located next to the Merchant's Docks, loading and unloading vast cargoes is fastest from these warehouses. Due to the quantities of these goods, it is somewhat inevitable that some of them go missing, and speculation has often placed the Thieves' Guild, should such a building exist, in or under one of the many warehouses found here.

MERCHANT'S DISTRICT

This District is home to its namesake, the Merchant's Guild House, as well as smaller commercial houses for the trading alliances of foreign powers. A number of small counting houses make a good trade in money exchange between foreign currencies and the two major currencies of Kishar. The temple of Laurela, goddess of changing circumstance and new beginnings, is located here to greet travelers newly arrived from the sea. Those who come in hope of a better life often give a small offering here and at the temple of Lyla, goddess of luck. One of the smallest Districts, this one also boasts a famously high amount of militia and private guards, and crime here in daylight hours is rare.

DOCKS DISTRICT

The development of this District dates to the beginning of Kishar's rise as a naval trading power, and the warehouses here are the oldest in the city. Many inns, taverns, and small shops of all sorts can be found here, as well as a great deal of street vendors selling foods from all over the world from small carts. Sailors are seen here in great numbers, although most seek lodging in the Sailor's District if they have a mind to save a bit of coin for other things.

STONE DISTRICT

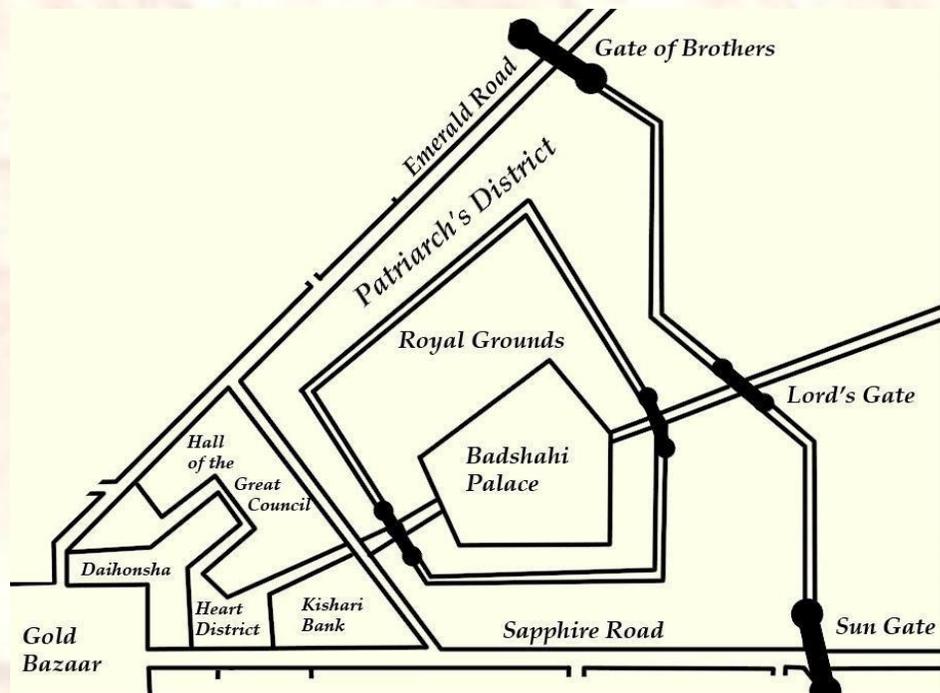
While many of the houses in Kishar are built of wood or other lesser materials, the buildings in this District give it its name, as the respectable dwarven population living here refuses to accept anything less than stone for their homes, shops, and noble houses. Most prominent of these last is House Khazad, a massive walled keep that marks the seat of dwarven power in the city. Those looking for famed dwarven craftsmanship are as likely to find such shops here as in the Artisan's District.

SAILOR'S DISTRICT

Almost exclusively comprised of the lowest of gambling houses, taverns, inns, and flophouses, this District is the refuge of the poorest or most frugal among sailors and other elements of society who draw little pay. While the militia patrols this District, largely they refuse to intervene for anything short of a murder, leaving the inhabitants to sort out brawls and petty thefts. Alchemists make a brisk trade here in remedies of all sorts.

EAST QUARTER

East Quarter, spoken of respectfully or fearfully as the Sultan's Quarter, is also the smallest in Kishar in terms of area, although it inarguably represents the largest concentration of wealth and political power. Dominated by the Royal Grounds of the Badshahi Palace, it is also home to the central buildings of the civil service and the Great Council. After the South Quarter, the buildings here are the city's oldest.



HEART DISTRICT

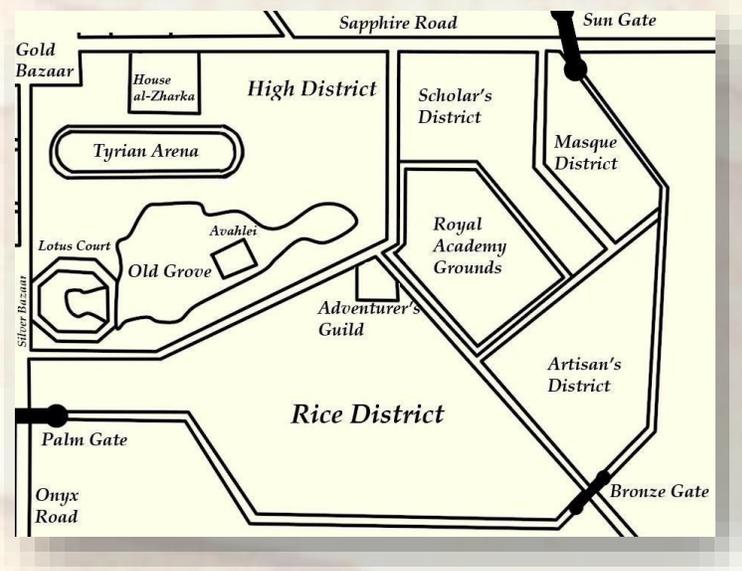
Found at the center of the city, the Heart District contains the Hall of the Great Council, the seat of the nobility's collective power. In addition to this, the colossal three-winged Daihonsha is here, a great building containing the city's extensive library, the Hall of Archives, and the bulk of the Jin Shi, the city's civil servants. While small compared to these two, the Kishari Bank is also found here, housing the vast fortunes of the rich and influential, as well as the city's budgetary funds. Unsurprisingly, the security in this District is impressive, and the militia frequently stops those who look as if they might not belong. Those unable to produce a satisfactory reason for their presence are expelled from the District, while anyone caught with unlawful items faces imprisonment.

Matriarch's District

The vast majority of Kishar's largest District is given over to the Royal Grounds, on which rests the Badshahi Palace, home of the Ruby Sultan, ruler of Kishar. Built onto a large hill, the palace dominates the city from this height, and its gilded tower-tops can be seen over the city's walls from many miles out. Many intermediate noble houses have their seats in this District, generally awarded in return for favors done to the Sultan's line. The Palace keeps its own private exit to the city, the heavily fortified Lord's Gate, although this is rarely used. Recently, the Sultan renamed this District the Matriarch's District – formerly the Patriarch's District – in honor of her firstborn daughter's first birthday.

South Quarter

South Quarter contains the oldest Kishari buildings, although many of these have been torn down for new construction over the long years. Living in the Old Quarter is considered prestigious, as it contains the upper nobility, the prosperous middle class, the promising scholars and artists, and the finest of craftsmen.



High District

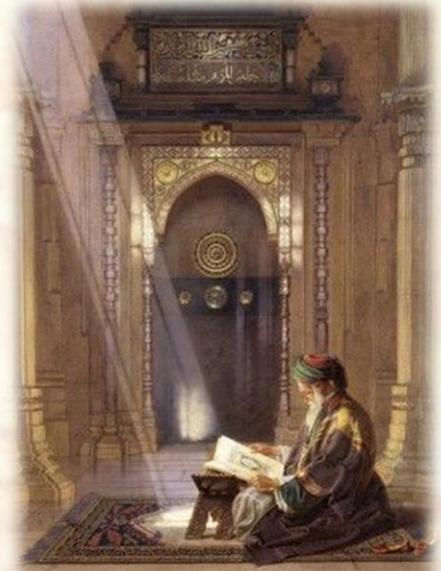
The most central part of the South Quarter is High District, home to the most powerful noble house in Kishar, House al-Zharka. While many of their individual members keep smaller, personal homes, the Lotus Court also keeps their Council House here, adjoining the largest area of forest remaining in Kishar – the Old Grove. Sacred to Avahlei, her temple is also found here. For Kishari with enough funds to afford the admission, the Tyrian Arena hosts bi-monthly chariot races, with the noble houses adjoining it making colorful displays on their balconies and hosting elaborate after-parties in which the charioteers, all of noble blood by law, are feted as heroes. In addition to the city militia, each house keeps a private guard, making crime here a dangerous business indeed.

RICE DISTRICT

Named for the staple dietary crop of the prosperous working class, Rice District is home to what passes for middle class in Kishar – those who own small business, clerks and scribes for nobility, moderately well-heeled traders, and other such people who lack the titles, purchased or otherwise, that would provide them with admittance to upper circles. The majority of the District is residential, but small shops and restaurants exist to serve those who do not feel like trekking across the city for simple goods. While not as well-patrolled as High District, violent crime is rare, and those thefts that occur are generally burglaries. An increasing amount of homes are found covered in wrought-iron window-cages, forcing enterprising thieves to get more creative. The first Adventurer's Guild is located here.

SCHOLAR'S DISTRICT

This District is home to the Royal Academy, where the sons and daughters of nobility and the most prosperous of the merchant class mingle in an atmosphere of learning. The Royal Academy grounds themselves are walled off in much the same manner as the Royal Grounds, and a strong militia presence makes sure no unauthorized persons enter to perform mischief. The rest of the District is generally given over to inexpensive but well-mannered taverns and subdued housing for the students and instructors living here.



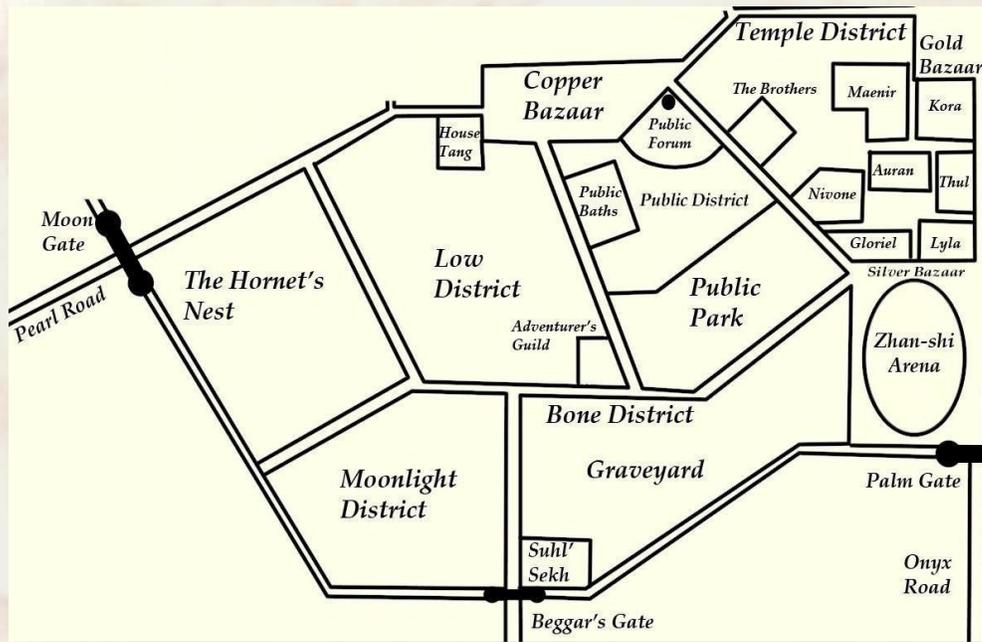
MASQUE DISTRICT

Center of the city's cultural expressions, the Masque District boasts hundreds of small theaters, concert halls, and art galleries. The District's name comes from the long-standing tradition that Kishari performers, whether poets, musicians, dancers or actors, wear masks to keep their identities secret. On any given night, perhaps a third of these will have an active performance or exhibit, and they cater to all aspects of society, although the wealthiest among the nobility sometimes prefer to pay more for private performances. A persistent rumor places one or several of the Sultan's children as performers here, the nature of the performance changing with the amount of drink found in the rumormonger. Muggings and other robberies are known to occur to patrons who drink too heavily or stay out too late without proper bodyguards.

ARTISAN'S DISTRICT

The Artisan's District is the home for shops, forges, halls, and laboratories for craftsmen, alchemists, and magical practitioners of all types, and the most intricate wares are produced here. Almost all of the shopkeepers belong to the Merchant's Guild, and a number of magical guilds locate themselves here as well. The influential Astrologer's Guild can also be found here. The Artisan's District is well-patrolled by the City Militia, and moreover, most of the shops incorporate some sort of crafted defenses, with a loose alliance of the artisans producing mechanical and magical traps for the unwary thief. While many dwarven crafters keep shop in the Stone District, they often maintain facilities here as well.

WEST QUARTER



West Quarter is the newest portion of Kishar, historically speaking, as the city has expanded from east to west along the trade routes leading to the other Jeweled Cities. New Quarter, as it is commonly called, boasts the majority of the city's religious centers, many of its public facilities, the seats of numerous minor noble houses, the heart of the tawdry trades in flesh, and one of the most dangerous areas in the city – the Hornet's Nest.

TEMPLE DISTRICT

Towards the center of Kishar lies the Temple District, so named for the 9 major temples here. This District is known for the beauty of its architecture, the temples often brightly painted or gilded at the top. By custom there is little violence or crime here, thieves and muggers apparently fearing the retribution of the gods as much as the city militia. This appears to be not wholly an idle superstition, as numerous stories report those who steal from the temple coffers vanishing soon thereafter, or perishing in unpleasant ways. The center of this District is a wide square in which representatives from all faiths, domestic and foreign, gather to hold discussion with themselves and passerby. Sulith and Gorgath, being illegal to worship openly, do not have publicly known temples, nor do their followers congregate openly in the square. The rest of the District consists of housing for priests and smaller temples to foreign gods.

PUBLIC DISTRICT

This District is commonly used as a meeting place for strangers, as it is widely considered to be the most neutral ground in the city. The Public Baths are found here, available to most people for a very small charge. The Public Forum is here, presenting a space in which any person may speak their mind if they choose to, although this 'freedom' does not protect them from a thrashing should the

crowd choose to disagree. The Public Park, a shady area with clearings, is found here, and food vendors do a brisk trade supplying the crowds that seek some moment of peace among the greenery. While not strictly contained within it, being located inside the Silver Bazaar, the Zhan-Shi Arena is considered part of this District.

LOW DISTRICT

This District houses the vast majority of the nobility in Kishar – thousands of small houses who are of little consequence in the larger political scheme. The exception to this is House Tang, one of the more powerful houses, whose complex now consists of a conglomeration of smaller buildings inside a wall. Speculation abounds as to why the house does not relocate to High District, but most credit this decision to a desire to remain close to the Copper Bazaar, source of the House's early income. Private house guards, while smaller by a large margin, are still common here, but the proximity to the Sorrows and the Hornet's Nest makes this District a target for theft. The second Adventurer's Guild hall was previously located here, but it closed after the Kishari Civil War.

BONE DISTRICT

Being comprised entirely of the city's graveyard, the Bone District is where all Kishari save sailors traditionally find their eternal rest. A series of shelves and caverns carved into a large hill, the strata here align with a person's status in life, meaning that the most elaborate mausoleums reside atop the hill, like a city in miniature. The temple to Suhl'Sekh is found here, and its priests are the majority of the caretakers as well. The city militia keeps a small guard to discourage grave robbing, and those caught in the act are subject to harsh punishments.

MOONLIGHT DISTRICT

Located in an unlikely spot, between the Bone District and the Hornet's Nest, is the other flowering of Kishari night life. While the Lotus District entertains with plays, music, and paintings, the Moonlight District caters to more immediate pleasures. In addition to the majority of the city's fine gambling houses and opium dens, by a special arrangement, the Moonlight District is the only place in Kishar to find legal brothels. Prostitution is certainly rampant elsewhere, and streetwalkers and tavern girls fill the other Districts, but full-on, licensed brothels are found only here, mostly catering to those whose tastes and coin require something more than a willing partner and a dimly lit alley. Rumors of darker, more lethal entertainments cling to the District, and those who enjoy particularly scandalous gossip might claim that temples to the Dark Gods can be found deep in the basements of seemingly innocent but exclusive establishments. City militia can be found here, but their density is in direct proportion to the obvious protection money paid to them by the establishments, many of whom keep a large private security force to dissuade drunken or violent clients.

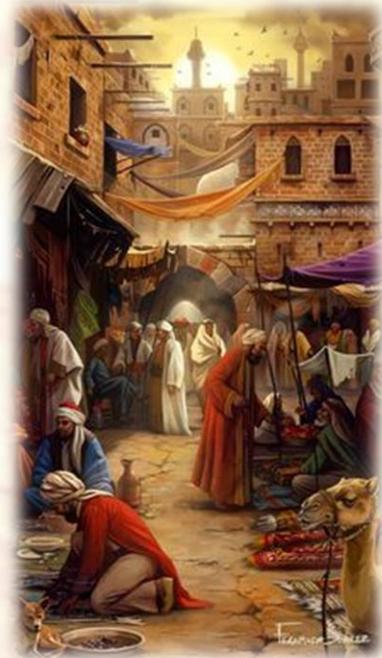
THE HORNET'S NEST

While those who dwell in the Sorrows, exposed to the sea on one side and the Tannery District's fumes on the other, do so largely because they are too poor to live elsewhere, those who live in the Hornet's Nest seem to take a special pride in the severity of their situation. This is the one place in the city where the city militia are never found, and any sense of law or order comes at knife- and club-point, courtesy of the many flourishing gangs that effectively rule this area. By unspoken agreement, their activity is kept within the District's boundaries, and the militia does not hesitate

to inflict swift justice upon gang members caught committing crimes elsewhere. Assignment to the civil service for the Hornet's Nest is largely a joke, a position with impossible demands given as punishment to those who make serious errors in the civil service. Travelers foolish enough to be lured into lodging here are often never seen again, and all manner of stories about the debased and violent nature of the Hornets (those native born to the District) can be heard late at night around a mug of drink. Of late, new gangs have emerged that consist entirely of small areas of residents actively banding together against the older, more violent gangs.

THE BAZAARS

While the city of Kishar is divided up into quarters, and these into Districts, there are four parts of the city not covered by this arrangement. Three of these are the massive Bazaars, open air markets with a wide collection of stalls and tents vending most anything a traveler might need. Most opulent of these is the Gold Bazaar, found in the dead center of the city at the heart of all four major roads. Where these roads meet, a grand fountain flows, at the Sultan's orders. The wares here are costly things, many of which are sold to those who come from foreign lands to marvel at Kishari wonders. Semi-permanent buildings can be found here for the most prosperous shops. Next down in the order is the Silver Market, which surrounds the Zhan-Shi Arena where the Onyx Road meets the city's southwestern wall. Here, ordinary Kishari do their casual shopping or find a quick bite to eat at the more reasonable prices found for natives. The last was the Copper Bazaar, where the cheapest goods were sold by the least reputable vendors. After the Kishar Civil war, it was rebuilt as a memorial.



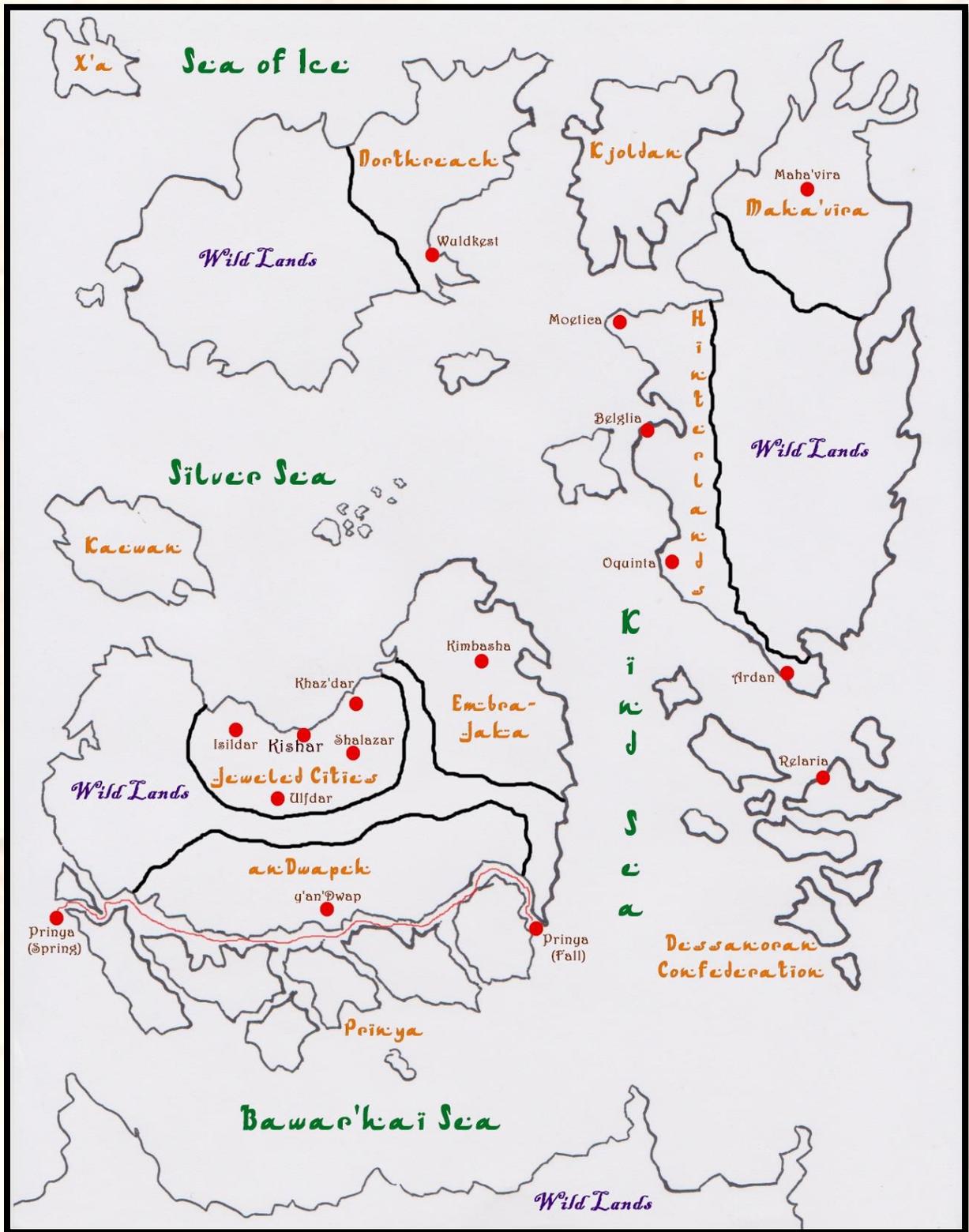
THE MEMORIAL PLAZA

The former Copper Bazaar was the single most damaged part of the city during the Kishari Civil War. The first riots broke out here as well as the worst of the fighting between the two warring factions. Most structures in the immediate vicinity were leveled by cannonballs, and over the months of fighting, dozens of people died here. Since the war's end, the city has rebuilt nearby buildings, but in honor of those who died in the war, the open area has been reconsecrated as Memorial Plaza. Statues honor especially heroic figures and a plinth lists the names of all who perished.

THE JACKAL

The other part of Kishar not under the District system is the island in the center of the harbor, known as the Jackal. This island is home to the city's prison, an unforgiving multistory edifice that overlooks steep cliffs on three sides. Access is provided by a single pier, and the multiple guard emplacements that share the island ensure that anyone attempting a rescue mission would find themselves quickly subdued. Those sent to serve out terms here find a wide variety of unpleasant, dangerous, and difficult tasks awaiting them, and seldom seek to return. The prison itself has the banal official name of 'Kishari Prison', and 'The Jackal' is often used to refer to the building itself as well.

FOREIGN NATIONS



FARLANDERS

The people of the Jeweled Cities, especially the Diamond City, may not necessarily have been born there. Many other nations exist in the world. In Samazar, people of varied origins are common, though there is still friction between different cultures. Kishar is a port city, and it's common to see travelers, sailors, and merchants from all over the world, but this doesn't necessarily mean they receive equal treatment by the locals. Most of the Jeweled Cities are prideful of their nation's prominence in international matters, and they tend to view those from other countries with a little disdain. The common term for anyone not from the Jeweled Cities is "farlander", considered mildly rude but frequently used, and their languages are often lumped together as "farlandish", which saves the average Kishari from having to know the actual names of these countries and languages. What follows is what an educated citizen might know about these nations. Residents of the Diamond City are more likely to know more about the wider world, hold fewer prejudices, and perhaps even hail from a distant land themselves.

[OOC: Each nation's description includes information on real-world (and at times some famous fictional) cultures that may help you understand the overall "flavor" of each fictional nation, but all of the fictional cultures in this setting also incorporate fantastical elements and inspiration. No nation, nationality, or ethnicity in this setting is meant to equate to, symbolize, or parody any real-world one, and any attempts to do so are strongly discouraged.]

anDWAPEH

anDwapeh sits to the south of the Jeweled Cities, across the Wastes. Located in a valley and north of the Bawar'hai Inland Sea, this nation could almost be considered a massive oasis. It has a culture formed from educated warriors and martial sorcerers. Education is held in the highest esteem, followed by martial ability. Every child, even the poorest of the poor, is educated in scholastics and self-defense. Only the upper classes, however, are allowed join the elite of the warrior-scholars, the Lance of Truth. The nation is rich in food production; the climate perfect for dates and olives, cattle and boars, red spicefruits, and deep-rooted tubers. The county's main exports are fruit, meats, oils, and leather armor. Buying an anDwapeian horse is prohibitively expensive to all but the wealthiest, and it is seen as quite the status symbol.

The nation has been ruled by a procession of purportedly kind and merciful kings and queens, the latest line being compromised of Feytouched. The current king is isiKul dWenparah the Golden Antelope, and his eldest, the prince who stands to inherit, is isiNkul anZulah the Red Crane. This generation has seen no Queen. Royal and upper-class marriages are foretold by augurs who read the Web of Fate. If a perfect match is not found, the individual never marries, although this does not necessarily mean they are childless. The prince is known to have a single child, but the mother's identity has never been publicly revealed, although rumors of a dalliance in the Jeweled Cities remain.

The royalty and nobility are especially known for holding to the nation's elaborate traditions. In addition to the strict mandates on marriage, children less than 16 years of age are considered to be the property of the father and a good deal of money is paid to the birth mother, who may choose after the production of children to leave the household and pursue whatever goal she might wish. Following a popular cultural icon, the Panthress of Two Claws, mothers who have chosen to leave their children behind may join one of several martial battalions, and the senior commanders of the anDwapeian army are often women.

anDwapeh is particularly known for its grand horsemen. Their fine, delicate looking horses are as vicious as a wild camel and as easily trained as a domestic dog. Children (even low-class children) who show

inclinations towards driving are raised up with their first foal, learning the tricks and formations of the cavalry. These horsemen can easily cover long distances in many different environs. When not otherwise engaged, they play complex games aback their steeds to stay in practice. With several generations passing without major military conflict, a formal game has been created to showcase the skill of anDwapeian riders, and citizens come out to watch “Chovgan” games in great numbers. Riders with ebony mallets move leather balls stuffed with horsehair downfield through the opposing team’s goal for points, with both teams competing to be first to score a ‘lucky’ 12 points. The game is often played informally in pastures using sticks, but official teams complete in arenas with defined boundaries.

With the construction of the Desert Outpost, the appearance of the Diamond City, and in the wake of the region’s wars, anDwapeh has invested in a new trade road that runs from their capital city, through the Outpost, and to the small city of Senabi. This road directly connects anDwapeh to the region’s trade routes in a way that bypasses the Onyx City, which previously had a monopoly on safe trade between the two nations. Thus, existing tensions between the Onyx City and anDwapeh have been somewhat aggravated.

Most recently, following the clear and overt aggression by the Nocturnal Empire (and perhaps bolstered when the Onyx City signed a non-aggression pact with them), anDwapeh joined the four other free Jeweled Cities and Prinya (or at least, part of it – see below) to form the Daylight Alliance. The Alliance opposes the fascists’ aggressive, expansionist stance towards all its neighbors. Since the Onyx City now has a new sultan who has overturned the non-aggression pact with the Empire, the Alliance is much stronger – but anDwapeh must also endure an alliance with a trade competitor.

[OOC note: The cultural overtones of anDwapeh include Ethiopian and Kenyan, so costuming/fashion, props, and naming conventions should reflect this. Feel free to include inspiration from fiction as well – one example is Wakanda, minus modern technology and vibranium.]



DESSANORA

The Dessanoran Confederacy, commonly referred to simply as Dessanora, is a loose confederation of city-states spread across a wide archipelago, far east of the Jeweled Cities. Dessanora covers a range of climate types, with the upper islands being warmer, but not tropical, and the southern islands seeing mild winters. Members of every lineage inhabit the islands, living in their preferred climate, and as a result Dessanoran culture is much more accepting of differences.

The nation is ruled by a council of noble families, each bound to a shifting alliance of merchant houses and other power brokers. Several of the major temples, mostly those of Auran and Lyla, are involved in politics, and stand roughly on par with powerful merchant houses. The Path of Steel is frequently idolized in popular Dessanoran culture, with the notion of the light and mobile fighter capable of leaping between ships with flashing swords the subject of numerous popular ballads. The arts of magic (Path of Magic and Path of Mind) are considered to be rare and mysterious, with wizards frequently playing the part of villains in popular theater and ballads.

The capital, on the large island of Lissaro, is called Relaria. The city was built by the Rays of Auran sometime in the last several centuries. This powerful group of high caste human and sun elf worshippers, with much sway in the government, planned the layout of the city to resemble the sun and its rays. No new structures are allowed to be built unless the pattern will not be disturbed, and the bright, white-stone city walls are said to repel those who arrive with evil intent. The main result of this building restriction is that the population is not as concentrated in the capital as many other nations – Dessanora has a wide array of well-populated cities.

Most of the economy relies upon trade between these separated populations. Fine wines and cheeses come from the southern islands, where the worship of Lyla is more popular. Sheepskins, wool, and beautifully intricate textiles are provided by the more northern islands. Mines dotting the region provide yellow topaz said to be sacred to Auran. While Dessanoran trading ships range far from home, it takes some time for them to reach the port of Kishar. Many travel to Northreach, where textiles and wines are especially popular. Due to the amount of time they spend at sea and the value of their cargo, Dessanoran ships often carry small armed contingents that specialize in ship-to-ship warfare. Many of the merchant guilds provide their own bodyguards, but mercenaries are common as well.

In the last few years, Dessanoran artificers have appeared, building small, light, and agile airships. Initially, how they got their hands on these plans was unknown, but the Adventurer's Guild of Samazar uncovered a secret trade in blueprints between the former Councilor from Embra-Jaka. To create wealth to be used for the improvement of his impoverished nation, Councilor Khalil Abebe stole various plans from the Great Library of Samazar and sold them to the highest bidder. At the moment, only the Dessanorans are known to have purchased these, but their airships have already changed the political climate in the region. In addition to the ships themselves, some Dessanorans appear to have personal flying devices. While short range, these can allow them to attack from above when launched from one of their fast-attack ships.

Dessanoran merchants and ambassadors can now make new deals and arrangements more quickly than their competitors, though significant transport of goods remains slow. Additionally, while at first it was denied as fanciful rumor, it is now widely acknowledged that the official government looks the other way while Dessanoran airship pirates harass larger cargo airships – and naval ships and caravans – using their maneuverability and speed to strike at high-value targets. Some suspect Dessanoran spies in the

Diamond City are still present, seeking to steal and monopolize secrets of the ancients for the leaders of the Confederacy; other call this divisive nonsense.

Early in the current war between the Nocturnal Empire and the Daylight Alliance, efforts were made by the Diamond Assembly to court Dessanora as mercenaries, but when funds ran low to pay them, they turned to raiding instead. Currently, the Dessanoran Confederacy and its airships are acknowledged as belligerents by both sides, and as such, usually only strike when they are sure of a quick victory. While the Dessanorans ships are small and have shorter ranges than Alliance long-haul ships, they have been sighted increasingly far from their home islands, suggesting either increases in fuel technology or some additional way to supply them.

[OOC note: The cultural overtones of Dessanora are Italian and French, particularly renaissance era and later, so costuming/fashion, props, and naming conventions should reflect this. Fantasy and fiction inspiration might include Stardust or perhaps The Three Musketeers with a bit of a steampunk twist, seeing as there are now airships!]



EMBRA-JAKA

Embra-Jaka has perhaps fared the worst of all nations after the Great War of Flame. The nation's capital, Kimbasha, was leveled by the Flame Lord, and many citizens fled in the ensuing chaos. While the people therein are recovering, the government has fallen apart, and trade is minimal. The nation of Embra-Jaka, as it was just a few short years ago, no longer truly exists.

Located in the northeastern part of the Western Continent, past the Sun Peaks and the Long Grasslands, the land is mostly composed of thick tropical jungles and the climate is quite humid and wet. This is the perfect environment for waterborn, hiwani, dusk elves and low caste humans. Aetherites, orcs, and dragonkin also thrive there, but are fewer in number. The population is composed of an ever-changing coalition of tribes. Until the Great War of Flame leveled the central city of Kimbasha, all tribes paid at least nominal respect to the Great Ruler of Embra-Jaka. After his death, succession remained unclear and contentious, and no single leader came forward to re-unite the tribes.

Unfortunately, during this vacuum the Nocturnal Empire swept in, taking advantage of the dispersed leadership's weak position. Capturing several significant tribal leaders and taking them hostage (or in a few cases, simply executing them), the Empire has all but conquered Embra-Jaka and currently considers it to be part of its "Greater Nocturnal Prosperity Sphere." What the Empire plans to gain from Embra-Jaka's conquest is unclear. The nation is extremely difficult to administer without the normal bureaucracy that would enable communication and record-keeping across such an enormous part of the continent. While the area produces a number of unusual goods, these are largely luxury goods unsuited to feeding the Empire's hungry war machine. Several large divisions of troops have been seen, heavily laden with supplies, presumably heading towards the interior of the jungle, but as they have not returned, their objectives remain unclear.

Culturally, while the usual gods are worshipped here, many tribes of Embra-Jaka revere demi-gods and spirits of the land as well. Naiads, Nagas, Crocuttas (sentient dog beasts) and even some rare plants are considered sacred, and offerings may be left for them. Since the landscape is under-developed and full of deadly challenges, Embra-Jaka tends to spawn animists and masters of arms more than most other regions. Travel between settlements without armed escort is unheard of. Native guides are easy to find, in part because those who travel in the jungle are happy to accept payment from those too inept to find their own way. Trust and honesty can be less forthcoming, although Embra-Jakans insist that their reputation for survival of the fittest is an over-exaggeration of local beliefs about the Wheel of Life.

Embra-Jakans can be isolationist and strongly dislike those who would alter their way of life. Even before the arrival of invaders from over the Silver Sea, every tribe had its own horror story of the filthy cities and dry climates beyond the jungle canopy. The Great Waste is viewed with particular horror for the general lack of plant life. Would-be explorers from other nations often venture into the Embra-Jakan wilderness, but fewer leave alive. Succumbing to the dangers of the terrain is common, but enough return with unbelievable tales and rare materials to keep the flow steady and local guides employed. Those who dwell near the borders often ally with tribes who are less inclined to violence, as the products of Embra-Jaka are sought after in other parts of the world. Trade is unpredictable and ever changing; woven materials, paper, and food-goods go in and feathers, beads, strange medicines, and the skins of monstrous snakes come out... but not always as scheduled. Among the less-commonly found items are ancient relics reportedly unconnected to any current culture, uncut gems seen nowhere else, and tools to tattoo and pierce nearly any part of a creature.

Mermaids who dwell along the coast often refer to a long-lost city in the ocean, and some invite explorers along, but as they are carnivorous, they are not seen as a particularly trustworthy source of information. The Adventurer's Guild is said by some to have rediscovered the sunken city of Crythia in these waters, along with a great temple to Laurel, but as no apparatus exists for diving to the depths this would require, many who hear these tales are skeptical.

[OOO note: The cultural overtones of Embra-Jaka are indigenous South American, particularly Brazilian, so costuming/fashion, props, and naming conventions should reflect this. Fantasy and fiction inspiration might include "The Lost World" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle or the novel trilogy "Obsidian and Blood" by Aliette de Bodard.]



HINTERLANDS

The Hinterlands are a broad stretch of coastal territories on the Arephian (Eastern) continent. Not so much a unified nation as a grouping of feudal towns that share certain common cultural elements, the Hinterlands are principally united by a common foe - the Fey Courts. While the Fey are seen as tricksters who are natural part of the world in other countries, in the Hinterlands they have come to represent everything wrong with the scarred remnants of their landscape. It is unknown what happened in the area to draw down the wrath of these beings, but in their wake a once-vibrant part of the world has been condemned to the status of a backwater. Most lineages are common in the area, but feytouched children are rare indeed, and those who wish such children to live easier lives usually smuggle them overseas to be raised by relatives elsewhere.

The history of the Hinterlands is tied into the Tendran Empire, often referred to in ancient Oranti texts as 'the Golden Ever-Rule' or 'the Ever-lit Nation' for the eternal sacred flame kept in the highest tower of its fabled cities. At its height, the Tendran Empire covered the whole of the Arephian continent and many colonies on other continents as well, and its language, Oranti, became the language of the world's scholars. Tales disagree in the details, but certain common elements are found in each city's history - many hundreds of years ago, or perhaps as much as a millennium, a great wasting disease known as the Red Shakes swept through the prosperous Empire, crushing its population and devastating the systems of government and agriculture.

As many as 3 out of every 4 people died, and the pestilence resisted all attempts at containment or treatment. Some connection is suspected between the disease and the powerful Fey who emerged from the wild lands in the continent's interior to conquer the majority of the former empire, but it is not known if the Fey themselves concocted the sickness or if they merely exploited it. Armies of wild beasts and enthralled mortals devastated the remnants of the Empire's famed Storm Legions, and it seemed as though mortals would be driven entirely out. Legends say that only disagreement between the Fey Lords prevented total subjugation of the land, although they are less clear about the nature of the disagreement. Their armies turned against each other, disappearing into the country's interior, where locals still insist it is certain death to travel.

Regardless of what happened so long ago, the reality of the situation in modern times is stark. Four major cities survived the disease, separated widely down the western coastline. Two of these, Ardan and Belgia, fell prey to the Flame Lord's devastation in the Great War of Flame. While the days of the proud lightning bolts that once graced the Empire's banners are but distant stories, the symbols of the cities of Moetica and Oquinta still fly from their city walls. Symbols of the more recently fallen cities of Ardan and Belgia are added at times in memory of more recent losses, although there are also efforts to rebuild from the broken wreckage left behind. Trade is much diminished from the days in which the Empire's capital of Neplia Magna saw a constant flow of tribute barges, and these days few from foreign lands even remember the existence of the Empire. The region's name now reflects its geography - the surviving cities are coastal, and the locals say that the salt air repulses the Fey.

The region's best-known export is a fine pink salt, farmed from the salt flats that the locals maintain to ward off further incursions from the Fey. Merchants sell flax grown for weaving into linen, and the area is known for its pungent washed-rind cheeses. The most famous liqueur from the area is made from elderflowers, but the locals consume most of this, leaving only a little to be exported at steep prices. The arts once flourished in the long-lost Empire, but now few survive to maintain the elaborate frescos and tile mosaics crumbling among the ruins of this former shining beacon of civilization. The natives of this land are highly superstitious and do not like to travel out of sight of the salt flats. To be far enough inland

to be unable to see these is said to 'court the wrath of the Timeless'. Travelers from outside of the Hinterlands are uncommon, but scholars periodically arrive in search of ancient texts from an Empire that once spanned half the world. The fortunate ones find nothing and return home shaking the fine pink salt from their clothes. The more determined travel deeper inland and are rarely heard from again. To the people of the Hinterlands, those who would ignore taboo and travel where they should not have chosen their own fate.

[OOO note: The cultural overtones of the Hinterlands are those of western Europe, particularly England, Ireland, Scotland, and Germany, so costuming/fashion, props, and naming conventions should reflect this. It might help to think of this as what would have happened to western Europe if the Black Plague succeeded in wiping almost everyone out, and then a few hundred years passed. Fantasy and fiction inspiration might include traditional Euro-centric high fantasy, minus the great kingdoms and merchant families – just a bit post-apocalyptic.]



MAHA'VIRA

The other surviving nation on the Arephian (Eastern) continent is Maha'vira. Populated primarily by a combination of dwarves, humans, and dhampirs, Maha'vira has no particular history of the plague that supposedly swept the Hinterlands so long ago. The nation's terrain is extremely mountainous, and most of the population lives at a higher altitude than those who hail from other nations, so perhaps some combination of these factors served to isolate the nation during this ruinous period. While they were once a province of the Tendran Empire, they wisely joined willingly, and thus preserved their own culture.

Maha'vira is a country with a much more unified population than many of the other nations in the world. Rather than an alliance or confederation of city-states, Maha'vira is ruled by the Court of a Thousand Faces, a combination of the noble houses and bureaucratic systems found in nations such as the Jin Shi of the Jeweled Cities. The Court exists to serve the will of the Twin Child Goddesses, the daughters of the country's founder, whose name is never spoken. Supposedly a god who gave up his divinity to begin the dynasty, his daughters are said to have remained eternally young ever since, and their rule underpins the country's devotion to tradition, unity, and peace.

This history led naturally to the now-ubiquitous worship of the Twins, deities that some say are evil, but the Maha'virans say are terribly misunderstood outside of their country. At this time, worship of the Twins is considered a requirement of residency and citizenship in the nation, and the only traders that are allowed to enter the nation's borders must be devotees of the Twins as well. A single border port is the sole avenue of access for those who travel to the nation in search of goods to trade. With the advent of airships and the risk to the country's security from aerial travelers, Maha'vira has augmented their already formidable mountain forts with arcane walls of force that block entrance to the country by air. The Wall of Peace, as this is called, has resulted in several highly publicized crashes by small vessels attempting to smuggle contraband into the country. With patience and sorrow, the Maha'virans repeat their country's position that outsiders must apply for entry at the trade port, and that it cannot be helped if those who ill-intend come to harm attempting to stray from the law.

Maha'vira does maintain a standing army, commonly called the Dawnguard. The Dawnguard serves to keep peace in the realm, and while Maha'vira is a small and generally stable country, they do skirmish with the animist nomads in the northern part of the nation. The population is concentrated in a number of cities carved out of the mountains themselves, and the artisanship of the terraces of these cities is said to be one of the prettiest sights in the world. A few picture books exist that depict them, although none of these are more recent than a hundred years ago.

In addition to the honorable Dawnguard, the country hosts Dusk's Banner, a division of their military that takes in people who wish to retreat from the larger world or who have committed some crime that prevents them from continuing as part of normal society. Instead of imprisonment, these individuals often choose to serve in Dusk's Banner, with the understanding that this service restores some measure of the harmony they took from their nation in committing their crimes. Dusk's Banner is charged with guarding the remotest outposts, overlooking frozen valleys and barren tundra, both of which are in great supply. To complete one's life in service of such a goal is said to earn favor for the next turning of the Wheel of Life.

The sudden appearance of the Maha'viran army and navy at the final battle of the Kishari Civil War is still considered to be a source of confusion for most military historians, as before this the nation had been almost entirely isolationist. Supposedly this intervention was arranged by an Ambassador of the

nation originally from the Jeweled Cities, and it did result in the legalization of worship of the Twins there. After their participation in repelling the Nocturnal Empire, the military retreated to the nation's borders, and it is not currently considered a party to the war.

Even before their brief involvement in the Kishari Civil War, there had been little commerce between Maha'vira and the wider world for many years. The main exports from Maha'vira are finely lacquered dishes, carved wooden goods, and enameled jewelry in elaborate forms, and these have been rare in the markets for a while. Maha'viran goods are both treasured as precious and seen with some suspicion by those skeptical of the country's leadership.

[OOO note: The cultural overtones of Maha'vira are Tibetan, so costuming/fashion, props, and naming conventions should reflect this. Fantasy and fiction inspiration might include DC Comics' League of Assassins; the novel "Lost Horizon"; or the mystical city K'un L'un as portrayed in Marvel comics' Iron Fist stories.]



THE NOCTURNAL EMPIRE (KAEWAN)

The Nocturnal Empire is a hyper-patriotic expansionistic militaristic state. Formerly known as Kaewan, an island nation covered in light jungle and comprised almost entirely of dragonkin, political change came to the nation less than a decade ago. Purist dragonkin, followers of the demi-god dragon Noctus, took over the nation's government, army, and economy in a quick and decisive coup.

Kaewani society had been inwardly focused and self-sustaining, only in the last century opening up to outside trade and seafaring ventures. This by no way implies, however, that their culture is primitive. Their complex and nuanced spoken language and a highly advanced mathematics system (largely memorized by each generation as there is little paper) came from the counties devotion to learning. Things such as geometric proofs and building plans are scratched onto clay tablets that are often destroyed after use to protect family secrets. White sand, collected from the beaches, is fired into glass forms that are tinted with plant dyes. There is a traditional shape for each god or goddess, with vessels in Auran's shape serving as containers for the oil that is burned at night for illumination. Now, in the time of the Nocturnal Empire, worship of the deities is banned. Under threat of violence, the people now practice a form of ancestor worship centered around Noctus, a full-blooded dragon who died centuries ago, only to supposedly reappear less than a decade ago.

The Empire's war of aggression started several years ago with a dramatic attack on Isildar, the Pearl City. Successfully routing the city's army and executing its sultan, the Empire maintained a firm grasp on the city for five years, pushing outward to encompass several smaller towns as well. At the height of this expansion, they controlled the small town of Senabi between Kishar and Samazar. Recently, the Empire's forces have been driven from Isildar after the non-aggression treaty with the Onyx City was negated by the rise of the new sultan there. To the east of the Jeweled Cities, the Empire also captured the weakened nation of Embra-Jaka. That nation, still in shambles after the Great War of Flame, had yet to be reunified under a single leader, so the imperial forces took advantage of the dispersed power structure.

Opposing the Empire is the Daylight Alliance, composed of the Jeweled Cities, anDwapeh, and the Sky Decade of Prinya (see below for more details), as well as the resistance within the Empire itself, known as the Army of Flowers. The Army of Flowers is largely comprised of Kaewani citizens who oppose the current fascist regime. This is not a standing military force, but instead a quiet, underground resistance that deals in subterfuge, sabotage, smuggling, intelligence, and counter-propaganda efforts. The Army is composed of many individual cells, each with local members known only to each other by floral code names. While certain leaders might be widely known, their true identities are not. Kiku (the Chrysanthemum) is believed to be the highest-ranking member of the Army, and travels frequently to carry news between the allies of the Alliance. Another well-known and respected resistance fighter and healer was known as the "Treefather" – his pseudonym a bit unusual on account of having been an outsider who decided to join the cause. Recent reports suggest he gave his life in the battle to free Isildar, and his memory is spoken of with respect among young, free-thinking Kaewani.

What follows is information regarding what was known about Kaewan prior to the change in their political structure: *On the main island, homes are burrowed into the roots of the massive banyan trees that dominate this kingdom. The trees provide protection and an easy way to funnel rainfall into collection barrels. Family groups are led by a matriarch of considerable age, who is served by her daughters and sons-in-law. Unmarried males have their own family structures, entering these at a young age and leaving them only for purposes of marriage. The male groups take care of foreign trade and are the only ones that commonly leave the island; the matriarchal groups are responsible for gathering food*

and raw materials. The matriarchal families delegate tasks, such as patrolling, overseeing local trade, keeping the villages clean, making accounts of food goods, crafting, etc. Most of the region's food is raw, fermented, or made from dried vegetables. Most foods are served cubed or sliced, then covered in sauces to taste. Carved sticks are used as utensils and wooden or ceramic plates are commonly used. On some religious occasions, large quantities of meat will be cooked in a pit of heated stones.

Major trade items, other than the glasswares, include intricate carvings, formidable weapons, housewares, and jewelry made from local hardwoods and nuts. A variety of dyes are also available, from the same stock as are used in the glasswares. Because of dragonkin's protective, scaly skin and the island's high temperatures, clothing is seen as an accessory rather than a necessity. Linen, being light and breathable, is highly sought after for the layered, elaborate costumes worn on special occasions.

[OOO note: The cultural overtones of The Nocturnal Empire/Kaewan are Korean, with accompanying divides between North and South Korea, respectively, so costuming/fashion, props, and naming conventions should reflect this. Fantasy and fiction inspiration might include the novels of Ellen Oh.]



NORTHREACH

Far north of the Western Continent, across the vast ocean, lies Northreach. Local folklore says that Northreach was once the domain of the ancient Frost Titans and that the mountains encircling the country were raised in defense of their frozen kingdom. Sprawling from the foot of the mountains almost to the sea itself is the Frozen Forest, a dense tangle of various sorts of evergreen trees. Independent villages, scattered through this forest, are usually ruled by interrelated clans.

The main lineages of Northreach are low caste humans, orcs, and waterborn. Other folk tough enough to survive the environment turn up as well, but outsiders are required to prove themselves before being accepted into society. The winters are hard and unforgiving, lasting almost half the year and making food scarce for the underprepared. Food sources may range from red elk and mammoths in the forested areas to seal, walrus, or whale on the coast. In the brief spring, freshwater fish, tubers and mushrooms can be had and these are often preserved for the colder months. The people of Northreach put as much value on cunning as they do on physical strength and endurance, and contests of jokes and stories are as common as those of lifting heavy weights or enduring heat and cold.

Wuldkest, once the city of the Jarl of Northreach, is the only major port, and it has only been partly rebuilt since the Great War of Flame. The last ruler, Celenius Stormguard, gave control of portions of the land to the largest clan in each region in an effort to hold off the country's dissolution. Far from fixing the problem, this exacerbated it, and Celenius was murdered shortly afterwards. His son, Valdos Stormguard, somehow survived the burning of the city and maintains control over Wuldkest and leadership of what little remains of the country's military. His fair and neutral rule has somewhat redeemed his clan, and the Stormguard clan is now once again respected. Whenever a gathering of the Clan Lords is held, it is held in Wuldkest in the former Jarl's palace, which was built out of solid stone. These councils are called infrequently due to the difficulty of traveling in Northreach's climate and the challenge of providing sufficient resources for the leaders and their retinues.

Aside from extreme situations, each clan remains in charge of the care of its own people. In times of strife, some clans will raid and pillage other settlements or ships to feed and clothe themselves. Some clans (whether due to convenience or a reversion to older traditions) prefer this pillaging to honest work and have become a nomadic blight in the area around Northreach. Raiders that have become adept at sailing and maintain small fleets are called 'sea wolves' and make trading with Northreach even more challenging. On occasion, they also turn out to defend coastal settlements against Corsairs, allowing them to maintain their traditional claim to ownership of the waters of Northreach.

Off the eastern coast of Northreach rests a sizable island called Kjoldan, populated largely by hiwani who share the unusual trait of white fur. Among these people, polar bear hiwani are revered as powerful in the ways of the Path of Nature and often act as leaders in settling disputes. The clans of Kjoldan are highly isolationist, and their members are rarely found outside of Northreach itself, leaving only for the direst of reasons. Their presence is rare enough that the appearance of one such white-furred animist in the Ruby City of Kishar almost a decade ago is still talked about there. The practice of runecrafting is said to have originated on Kjoldan, spread to Northreach, and from there, reached the rest of the world. Runecrafters can inscribe symbols on objects to enhance their power. Those with connections to the gods are also said to be able to cast runes for divination, although this is an exceedingly rare art indeed.

The more settled clans (generally in and around Wuldkest) export trade goods such as leather armors, bear, wolf, and seal skins, carved whalebone crafts, raw copper, and iron weapons. In addition, Northreach produces a certain kind of rare mushroom that grows only in caves. These mushrooms,

known as Varje's Wort, are used in the manufacture of medicines and hallucinogenic drugs. Those cunning enough to operate successful export businesses can demand high prices for these goods in the markets of the southern continents, for they have escaped sea wolves, corsairs, and airship pirates in their travels.

[OOO note: The cultural overtones of Northreach are Scandinavian, particularly Norse, so costuming/fashion, props, and naming conventions should reflect this. Fantasy and fiction inspiration includes Skyrim and the graphic novel Vei by Sara Elfgren.]



PRINYA

Prinya is widely considered to be the most unusual of all nations, and as such it finds a place in all manner of stories, ballads, legends, and folktales. The first sight of Prinya has been known to cause even a seasoned traveler to pause and gape: Prinya is simply like no other place. Rather than a fixed city with walls, Prinya is a mobile city: a loose collection comprised of hundreds of boats, barges, and pontoon houses. It moves up and down the Bawar'hai Inland Sea, sometimes leaving behind temporary "settlements" that split off for a few months so that the smaller boats can go further inland. Prinya's preferred places for docking are the brackish sea mouths in the winter and near anDwapeh in the summer, and it spends more time at these two anchorages than most other locations. The population is made up by an odd mishmash of hiwani, dragonkin, low caste humans, and moon elf families. The most common Paths are Faith, Steel, and Nature. Gloriel is held in high esteem here, as freedom is seen as a foundational principle of the city – any ship being free to leave at any time. Many of the city's residents have been refugees from other places and are traditionally under the protections of Laurela.

The 'residents' of Prinya are fond of trading and fishing, and lineages who can swim are considered invaluable to the community for both of these pursuits. The fish they catch provide a major trade good, kept live in wrought reed baskets that are pulled behind the boats. A sort of small sea serpent, called an Eel Drake, has been domesticated by the Prinyans as a work animal. Eel Drakes help pull the less agile vessels and are also used to hunt for larger prey in the ocean. Larger fish and sea mammals are rendered for oil, lending a permanent smell to some of the barges.

The city is ruled by the Decade, a council of ten members selected by votes from the heads of the various families that make up the populace. This vote takes place every five years and is celebrated with a week-long festival called the Choosing that includes food, dancing, and a liquor made from the seaweed that lines the river mouth. The people of Prinya accept outsiders as permanent residents if they bring value to the community or are known to be refugees from their former homes. Newcomers are brought in and given until the Choosing, whenever it falls, to prove themselves. Those who fail are supposedly given a small boat and cast out of the city at the next major docking.

The unusual nature of Prinya, and its ever-changing makeup, have spawned a whole host of legends. In some countries, Prinyans are talked about as kidnappers or slavers, and in others they are presented as slovenly raft-dwellers too foolish to build cities with walls. Few have actually spent time among the Free Folk, as they call themselves, without having something positive to say about them and their non-traditional nomadic lifestyle.

Since the Great War of Flame, Prinya has moved to take advantage of the power vacuum to increase their share of international trade. Some of the Free Folk, excited about the possibility that airships could offer, relocated to the Diamond City to study; other feel that airships threaten their traditional way of life. Several artificers trained in the Diamond City have rejoined the floating nation, adding new technology to existing ships and creating other small, useful machines. The Decade initially issued a standing offer to recruit and pay artificers, though a rumor was circulated that some of the nation's "volunteer" artificers did not go willingly. Among the machines they have created are what could be called the first anti-airship weapons, which are mounted on several of the Decade's own ships.

In the last two years, Prinya's rapid economic growth and the two diverging visions of the nation's future – one staying solely on the sea, one taking to the air for even greater freedom – have led to a deep division. The Decade itself has split in two. Some of the original members of the Decade, joined by other progress-minded captains, have split off and formed a new "Sky Decade," which includes several airships

of various sizes among its numbers. Former Jeweled Cities' residents such as Captain Mariana Andaleh, a sun elf from Isildar, and waterborn Captain Obeah Nganga, who was once a member of the Adventurer's Guild, are included in the Sky Decade. The Sea Decade, which prefers to simply be called "the Decade" since it sees itself as the only legitimate leadership of Prinya, refuses to acknowledge the Sky Decade. However, other nations have since recognized the Sky Decade as a legitimate ruling body with the support of the Prinyan people – admittedly, not all of them – and the Sky Decade has made alliances on behalf of Prinya with anDwapeh and the Jeweled Cities to fight the Nocturnal Empire as part of the Daylight Alliance.

[OOO note: The cultural overtones of Prinya include the Caribbean during the Golden Age of piracy, blended with elements of southeast Asian cultures, mostly Vietnamese (especially in clothing), and costuming/fashion, props, and naming conventions can reflect this. It is inherently a very multi-cultural and independent-minded place. The geography and climate of this region is reflective of southeast Asia, e.g. Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Fantasy and fiction inspiration might include Black Sails the works of Zen Cho, among others. Note that the actual, serious pirates live elsewhere – see the Corsair Islands.]



X'a

X'a is marked on many maps, but few are the people who can claim they have been there. This island nation is said to be a land of solid ice where few mortals can survive. Most of the inhabitants have a direct connection to the element of water that provides them with some protection, such as water aetherites or dragonkin. Supposedly the touch of the Dynamae, the elemental force of creation, is felt upon this land, and certainly the elementals found here are some of the oldest and most powerful seen anywhere in the world. Little else is known of this place, as they seem to have no substantial trading vessels or ports. Recently, some members of the Adventurer's Guild claim to have met and negotiated with vampires from this country, but most people consider true vampires to be ravenous beasts who cause destruction. Whether there is something in this frozen land worth seeing is unknown to those not from there.

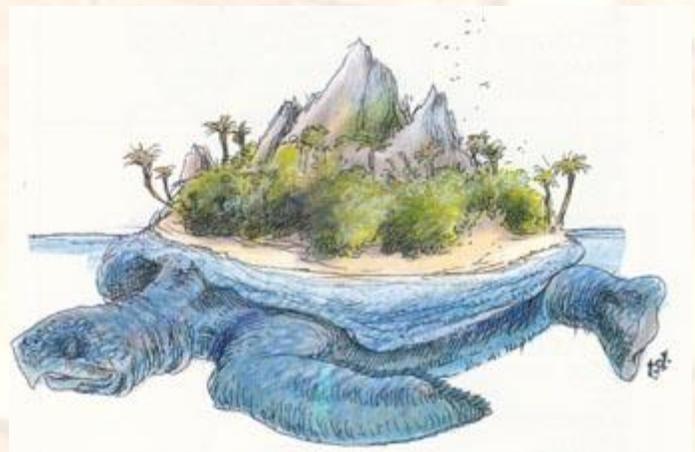
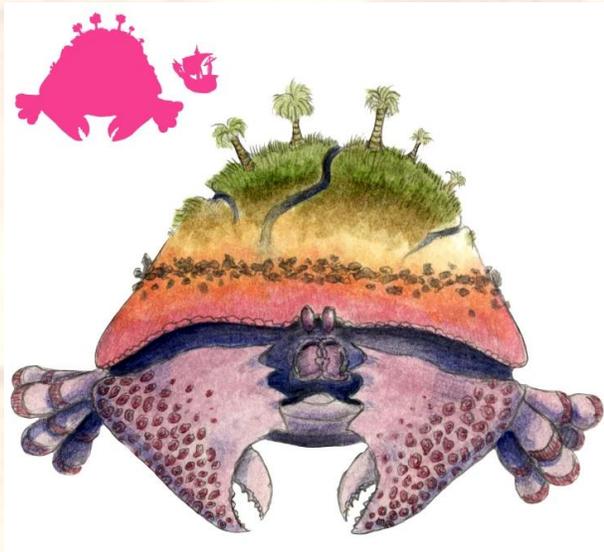


THE CORSAIR ISLANDS

The Corsair Islands are not so much a nation as a loose confederation of islands inhabited by pirates and exiles. Most famously the home of the *Jagan Temur*, or Iron Hundred, these islands are scattered across the Silver Sea. Certainly, the Orcish Armada patrols most regularly around these islands, and most major commerce routes steer well away from them for the same reason, but not every inhabitant of the islands is a pirate, or even an orc. Corsairs are known to take in those cast out from other lands, so long as those people provide useful skills and are willing to swear an oath of allegiance. The Armada's current leader, Ula'slan, is an arc known as the Red Lion for the tide of blood she leaves in battle.

Several of the islands are large enough to host villages or small towns, most of which are constructed around safe harbors for ocean-going ships. Travelers who are not corsairs are welcome to put in at these ports if they can find them, although the corsairs reserve the right to board any ships that are not flying the Armada's flag. Oddly, they are said to seize any books they find. Other than Prinya, these islands are the only place in the world known to be home to drovers of large aquatic animals, including giant crabs, sharks, and lesser sea serpents, all of which may be used in battle from time to time.

Aside from potentially violent pirates, several other possibilities make the area inherently dangerous. First, the weather near the islands is often unpredictable, with the seas turning wild much faster than off other coasts. Secondly, the islands themselves may be... false. Stories tell of sailors who find uncharted islands and land on them, only to find the entire island has moved in the night, as it was in fact the back of a great shelled beast that swims from place to place. These wandering islands are described as great turtles or giant crabs and are called 'Saratan'.



The Saratan are far from the only monster said to lurk in these waters. Great fish or sea serpents that can swallow ships whole, called 'Dandan', are mentioned by writers who have spoken to corsairs, although few claim to have seen them personally. These are said to exist in many shapes and sizes.

Perhaps the most mysterious monster reported from this area is the 'Tannine'. This many-headed beast is said to swim in these waters and to breathe a noxious fume that produces rolling fog. Those who wander into the fog become confused and sometimes find themselves sailing back in the direction they came from. The Tannine's Breath, as the fog is known, is often credited with defending the islands against some of the historical attempts to find and root out the free towns of the Corsairs.

The sea in the area is prone to unusual fogs and strange weather patterns of all sorts. These include waterspouts and sinkholes that appear mysteriously in the ocean to drag unwary ships to the bottom of the Silver Sea. Rumors circulate of strange ruins and people who live beneath the waves; these might be sightings of the merfolk who are common in the Silver Sea, or they might be the legendary Marid who are said to be to the deep ocean as the Djinn are to the skies.



CRYTHIA

Until recently thought to be nothing but rumor, some say that the legends of a great sunken island civilization off the eastern coast of Embra-Jaka are true and that they have been there. While it is referred to by many names, the most common is Crythia. Suggestions for the cause of its sinking include volcanic action, an angry deity smiting the land, and self-imposed destruction by a death cult. The great civilization supposedly included a glorious and opulent city with huge temples dedicated to Laurela. Recent rumors in the Diamond City claim that the Academy of Innovation is exploring Crythia actively and even building new settlements there.



CYRILLIA

Not to be confused with Crythia, only a few people have heard of this even more mysterious and newly-discovered place – a world accessible only by portal, as it exists on another plane! Cyrillia is a world that operates on very different rules, where the gods of this world do not hold sway, vampires rule the populace via their werewolf servants, and the sun does not shine, leaving a world awash in perpetual gloom. Somehow, necromancers of Sulith have made their way to Cyrillia and have run rampant, using their powers – heretofore unknown in that world – to take over the ruling government. Meanwhile, the common people – mostly humans, it would appear – barely survive, mere chattel to the vampires. The Adventurer’s Guild has made some inroads and alliances here, but exploration has really only just begun... The main portal to this plane is located in the Lost Valley in the Great Waste, east of Samazar, and the armies of Sulith encamped there make reaching it truly challenging. A recent rumor suggests this heavily guarded passage may not be the only way to reach this distant land.



COMMONLY KNOWN REGIONAL LANGUAGES

Each region in the world has an associated language. The one for the Jeweled Cities, which includes Kishar, is the Jeweled Tongue (sometimes just called Jewel for short). New characters begin play knowing their regional language and the Jeweled Tongue. Players are always assumed to be speaking the Jeweled Tongue unless they make the hand gesture for “other language”. This consists of making an L shape with either hand. You must make the gesture visibly enough so that all nearby players can see it. Following this gesture, state which language you are using. Tone usually translates across language, whether or not someone can understand you. The available regional languages are:

- Dutsvolk – the common language of the Hinterlands
- Ember – the language of Embra-Jaka
- Envalisianno – the language of the Dessanoran Confederation
- H’an’a – the language of anDwapeh
- The Jeweled Tongue – the language of the Jeweled Cities and the international trading language
- Kaewani – the language of Kaewan/the Nocturnal Empire
- Ma’haran – the language of Maha’vira (and, it turns out, X’a, for some reason)
- Norvan – the common language of Northreach and Kjoldan
- Papiahne – the common language of Corsairs
- Prinyan – the language of Prinya

ANCIENT AND RARE LANGUAGES

In addition to the modern regional languages, there are also several ancient languages of interest to scholars.

Heavily theorized to be the root language of most known regional languages, **Oranti** is a dead language believed to have no more native speakers. As written history dates back thousands of years, Oranti is no doubt a remnant of some other age. Some scholars associate it with the lost Tendran Empire. Items bearing inscriptions in Oranti are found from time to time in ancient tombs or dredged up from the Silver Sea. Some linguists separate Oranti into Ancient, Middle, and High dialects, but the differences are said to be subtle.

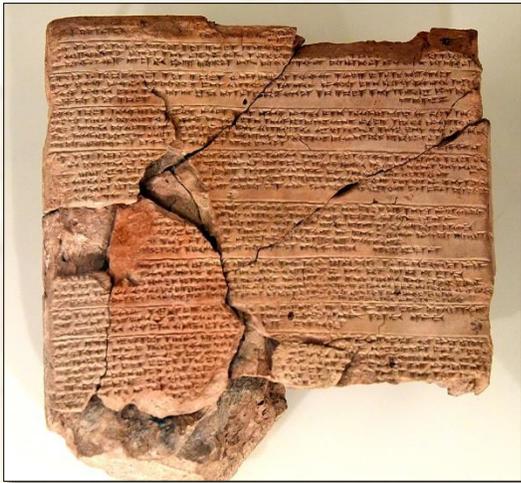
Afrayen is the language of the Efreeti, a demon-like lineage of which little is definitively known. Dealing with Efreeti is said to be dangerous, even if they can be found, so this language is uncommon. The Efreeti are most commonly associated with the night and with wild, uncivilized places, such as the deep desert. Stories suggest that mortal tongues are not well suited to the hissing syllables of Afrayen, but some scholars maintain what they claim to be accurate dictionaries, enabling the reading, if not speaking, of this language.

Next, there is **Sah-mat**, the language given by scholars to an equally ancient lineage of beings known as the Djinn. Very little is known about Djinn, save that they warred with the Efreeti many centuries ago and lost. In some stories, they are said to be possessed of inhuman wisdom and supreme magical powers. The Diamond City has lent credence to some of the ancient tales, and Sah-mat is relatively

common among the scholars of the city, though not the general populace. More is being learned about the Djinn all the time.

Very recently, scholars have learned the names of the ancient languages of the Dao and the Marid through the archives in the library with the Diamond City: **Dushara**, the language of the Dao, and **Yerudav**, the language of the Marid. Very little is known about these languages yet.

Finally, there are three languages that only a few people have even heard of. These include **Kaldu**, “stone song,” or “the language of the Great Below,” which is spoken by the cavern dwarves, a lineage heretofore unknown but recently re-discovered in caves deep underneath the Hinterlands. Additionally, scraps of truly ancient artifacts have occasionally been found with a written language referred to as **Mandaean**; this is an extinct language of an unknown desert people that seems to predate even the original Diamond City. The third language is perhaps the oddest, in that it comes from the further place of all – another plane. **Cyrillian** is the language spoken by the people (mostly vampires, werewolves, and human serfs) of the realm of Cyrillia, about which little is known outside of the Adventurer’s Guild.



RELIGION IN THE JEWELLED CITIES

Religion is acknowledged by nearly everyone in the Jeweled Cities. While the gods and goddesses do not generally come down and meddle in the daily affairs of mortals, their followers are certainly able to manifest divinely-given abilities. No one who has received healing from a cleric, or seen an oathbound in battle, is likely to scoff at the gods casually. Those who directly serve a god or goddess (i.e., who follow the path of Faith) almost always wear a visible holy symbol. While this object is not needed for their powers to function, it is like a badge of office that suggests that the servant is available to aid those who need them. Unsurprisingly, those who serve evil deities are much less likely to openly display such symbols.

Most people know there is a difference between the prayers the clerics call upon and the powers of mages or of those who call upon nature – although, if pressed, they are unlikely to be able to say exactly what this is, other than the fact that the powers of holy servants come to them directly from the gods.

RELIGION AND THE COMMON PEOPLE

Most people, to be safe, pay at least lip service to the ways of the more powerful gods. They might even pray at the appropriate times, or when they truly need something. For example, an expectant mother might pray to Nivone. The same woman, upon finding her husband had broken his leg, might pray to Avahlei for his quick return to health. While it is rare for ordinary folk to revere the dark gods, it is not unheard of for small offerings to be made to them, out of fear. These are considered bribery more than reverence, and the same people who make them might be distinctly uneasy about someone who openly worships Sulith. Throughout the year there are festival days that honor the most popular gods – the largest ones might even be free days, where common laborers are released from work and fill the streets with revelry. Business of all sorts do good custom on these days, although taverns and inns fare best. Offering violence during a feast day is said to be unlucky, and likely to bring the unhappy attention of the deity in question. Despite this, drunken brawls are not uncommon as the day wears on.

FAITHFUL

Not everyone who feels a calling to a particular deity is given access to divine powers. Some serve in more everyday fashions, comprising the more dedicated worshipers at temples and other gathering places. Those among these people who have taken a vow to uphold a particular deity in their lives are called Faithful. For every cleric, there might be 30-50 Faithful. For everyone counted among the Faithful, there are hundreds more who simply revere the deity on occasion.

Faithful receive no special blessings from the gods, but the clerics of those deities watch over them more closely and call upon them in times of need. A cleric of Maenir might train his Faithful in martial combat, so that if anyone threatens his neighborhood or temple, he can call upon this informal militia to defend it. A cleric of Gloriel might raise a collection among the Faithful to pay for the release of someone unjustly imprisoned. Of course, clerics of the dark gods can call upon Faithful as well, who often turn up in unexpected positions of power.

The Gods of Good

The 'Gods of Good' is a collective term for the following deities. They are known for staunchly upholding those things which most people hold to be noble and right, even at cost. Their servants and Faithful try to uphold these principles, regarding the difficulty in doing so as a test in life. These deities are viewed as safest to pray to by most people, for their servants rarely ask for recompense for aid.

All of the Gods of Good teach that their followers should strive to do good acts and shun evil ones (the meaning of this varies from culture to culture, but always includes such things as not committing murder, rape, robbery for selfish reasons, or torture).



THE BROTHERS (CORTH & KHAL) - VALOR, ENDURANCE, EARTH

Other Name(s): The Strongarms, The Guardians

Holy Symbol(s): Two muscular arms, clasped at the hands; a hammer and axe crossed; a golden torc

Depiction: A stoneborn (Corth) and a hill dwarf (Khal), in matching light armor, with heavy golden torcs around their necks

The Brothers are a pair of gods, said to help the weak and those in danger. They are always depicted and worshipped together. Clerics of the Brothers commonly espouse the view that strength is given by the gods in order to allow for the protection of the weak or those who follow scholarly pursuits. Oathbound of the Brothers take this one step further – they actively seek out those who abuse their strength and try to bring them down. Dervishes of the Brothers are rare, but fight demons and undead in order to demonstrate that good is stronger than evil. Chaplains of the Brothers are very uncommon, since nonviolence is not something the Brothers usually teach.



GLORIEL - FREEDOM, JUST REWARDS, AIR

Other Name(s): The Winged Maiden, Skydaughter

Holy Symbol(s): A delicate hand closed around a long white feather; a golden circle with wings

Depiction: A young celestine with brilliant white wings, with lines of gold on her skin and wings

Gloriel is a minor goddess who is said to be the youngest of the gods. Clerics of Gloriel work to help those they feel have been wronged in life. Oathbound of Gloriel are charged with protecting those that bring change for the better to society – a difficult task in a world that more often rewards privilege over achievement. Dervishes of Gloriel are impulsive champions for good - they value action that occasionally goes wrong over inaction that plays it safe. Chaplains of Gloriel are rare but laid-back, arguing that everyone simply deserves a chance to be free to pursue their own happiness.



NIVONE - LIFE, BIRTH, FAMILY

Other Name(s): The Mother, The Bride, The Hearthmistress

Holy Symbol(s): A white circle with a green dot inside of it; a sprouting seed

Depiction: A voluptuous woman of varied lineages (most often a low caste human or hiwani) with hair down to her ankles, wearing a sheer white gown, belted at the waist

Nivone is worshipped by the common folk everywhere, and couples pray to Nivone when they are trying to conceive. Clerics of Nivone have a strong reverence for life. It is anathema for them to kill any sentient being, unless it is in defense of the cleric's own family members, whose lives are considered precious above all others, even the cleric's own. Oathbound of Nivone are charged with protecting those who have lost the normal protections of their family unit, such as orphans and widows. Dervishes of Nivone seek out those who have taken many lives, with the aim to capture and imprison them. Chaplains of Nivone are commonly trained as midwives.

THE NEUTRAL GODS

No commonplace term exists for those deities who remain neutral in the struggle between good and evil, but some scholars refer to them as Neutral Gods. This stance does not mean that their servants ignore worldly events or do evil with one hand and good with another in some attempt to find balance. Rather it suggests that those of many different opinions carry out their will in the world, and these servants may individually lean more towards good or evil, or even be plainly indifferent to both in favor of some other goal. Many of the more powerful deities are counted here, as a policy of playing both sides produces more worshippers and brings more money to temple coffers and more prayers to the chosen god.



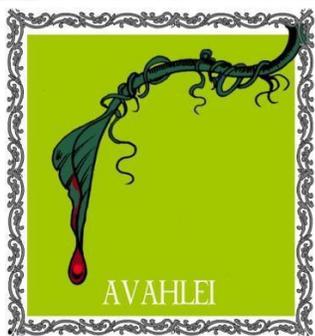
AURAN - DAY, SUN, LIGHT, FIRE

Other Name(s): The Day Star, The Sun Lord, The Scourge of Truth

Holy Symbol(s): The solar disk, with rays, often on a medallion of gold or copper

Depiction: A high human, sun elf, or celestine, clad in red fire-motif plate armor emblazoned with a yellow sun, with a fiery sword and halo

Auran is a powerful god, commonly spoken of in tones of respect. The sun gives life-nurturing energy to all living things, but it can also burn or destroy in great quantities. Clerics of Auran teach that truthfulness and clarity brings peace to people, while deception and darkness oppose peace. Oathbound of Auran are extreme warriors for their cause, often wielding fiery swords in imitation of their lord. Dervishes of Auran are among the most common of all Dervishes, as the Sun Lord teaches that undead and demons are creatures of darkness that must be purged. Chaplains of Auran are nearly unknown, as non-violence is against his teachings.



AVAHLEI - NATURE, HEALING

Other Name(s): The Wild One, The Fanged Goddess

Holy Symbol(s): A cupped leaf, dripping a single drop of blood; an abstract set of fangs

Depiction: A plain, middle-aged hiwani or dusk elf woman, clad in a dress made of autumn leaves and a fur mantle, with fangs and talons

Avahlei is a goddess whose worship varies widely. In cities she is mainly called upon for healing, but in the wild lands, she is considered a general protector. She numbers Clerics and Animists both among her servants, and they strive to maintain the natural order in particular areas. Her Clerics are more common in cities, and much sought after as healers. Oathbound of Avahlei are rare but travel to avenge matters in which the land itself or great quantities of wild animals are coming to harm. Dervishes of Avahlei are sent to cleanse unnatural creatures when they spring up in the wilds. Chaplains of Avahlei are uncommon, as violence is simply another part of the natural order.



KORA - CREATION, MERCHANTRY

Other Name(s): The Tinker, The Architect, The Lady of Coin

Holy Symbol(s): Three golden coins; a drafting compass; a marble column

Depiction: A human or dwarven woman, with items of all crafting trades and merchant's scales on her belt

Kora is a powerful goddess who governs matters of money and crafting. She is often worshipped by merchants and tradesmen. Kora is a fair goddess – it is said to please her when her followers turn a healthy profit, but to anger her if they flatly extort people. Most merchants display a token of Kora to suggest they hold to her creed, although this is no guarantee. Clerics of Kora are people who value the engines of civilization – commerce and craftsmanship. They often serve as officers in Guilds and other similar Organizations. Oathbound of Kora often serve as bodyguards for important people of Rank who are part of the Organizations that maintain commerce and crafting. Dervishes of Kora are rare but are charged with punishing large-scale con artists (think debased coinage, gold-plated lead, or pyramid schemes) and career thieves. Chaplains of Kora are among the most valued of negotiators for economic treaties.



LAURELA - MOON, SHADOWS, LIMINALITY, WATER

Other Name(s): She Who is Between, Moon Maiden, Shadow's Mistress

Holy Symbol(s): A crescent moon; a silver chalice; the reflection of the moon in water

Depiction: An improbably tall, thin, and pale-looking maiden, depicted as a high caste human, feytouched, or dhampir, with ornate silver jewelry, and jet-black eyes with no pupils

Laurela governs all times of transition in a person's life. When the common people think of her, it is usually to make a small offering before major events in their life (marriage, birth of a child, moving), and many of those whose lives were greatly changed by the dual wars a few years ago offer her particular reverence for seeing them through that transition. She is also associated with the ocean and the tides, and it is said that a great temple to Laurela lies within the depths of undersea Crythia. Clerics of Laurela are not common, but Menders are counted among her true servants and often fulfill the role held in other faiths by Clerics. Oathbound of Laurela may appear at times when her followers need protection during an important transition, and Dervishes of Laurela exist to hunt down those who prey on the disenfranchised or others who exist on the margins of society. Chaplains of Laurela are her most common servants, offering sanctuary to those in need of shelter, especially if they come with an offering of silver for the goddess.



LYLA - FORTUNE, TRAVELERS

Other Name(s): Lady Luck, the Lady of the Long Road

Holy Symbol(s): A woven cord of green, silver, and white; dice of all sorts; bells; the wheel of fortune

Avatar: A young feytouched, hill dwarf, or low caste human girl with intricate braids in her golden hair

Lyla is a goddess of travelers, gamblers, and all people who trust their lives to luck. She favors singers, performers, and all those who go through life with spring in their step and honest smiles on their faces.

Those who find unexpected fortune in life often donate a portion of it to the temples of Lyla in thanks. Clerics of Lyla often run gambling houses or traveler's inns, pursuits seen as perfect embodiments of what she teaches. Oathbound of Lyla are rare, but traditionally patrol the trade routes, keeping them free of bandits and safe for travel. Dervishes of Lyla seek out those who have obtained power by cheating the fair mechanisms of the world. Chaplains of Lyla often act as messengers, guides, or entertainers.



MAENIR - MIGHT, WAR, VICTORY

Other Name(s): The Warlord, Lord of Battle, The Champion

Holy Symbol(s): A steel mace against a golden shield; crossed maces; a steel gauntlet held upright in a fist

Depiction: A large, baldheaded, red-bearded human in half-plate, with a mace wreathed in holy light and a golden shield

Maenir is a well-known god worshipped by warriors, strongmen, and those who generally believe that might often does make right. Those who survive battles make offerings to Maenir and donate a portion of any plunder to him. Clerics of Maenir are often found in the ranks of the various armies, and not uncommonly as leaders. Unusually, Tacticians are accepted as his direct servants as well, being regarded as equals with his Clerics. Oathbound of Maenir are hardened warriors who appear to aid a side he favors, and Masters of Arms may be accepted as equivalent to this role as well. Dervishes of Maenir exist to demonstrate the strength of their god against some of the most difficult opponents. Chaplains of Maenir are rare but do serve as neutral referees in sporting events or tournaments of arms.



SUHL'SEKH - DEATH, THE SOUL, KNOWLEDGE

Other Name(s): The Reaper of Hearts, Death

Holy Symbol(s): A quill, crossed with a sickle; an ankh

Depiction: A robed figure carrying a crescent scythe. While he is most often depicted without an obvious lineage, he is sometimes shown as fellblooded

Suhl'Sekh is the god of death and the keeper of secrets. He is not regarded as an evil deity, and it is believed that he serves the dead by guiding them to the afterlife, receiving secrets from them in return. Those who are numbered among the Faithful of Suhl'Sekh generally value considering one's options thoroughly over headlong rashness. Clerics of Suhl'Sekh are somber people and often run establishments associated with death, offering hospice care to those in their final days and acting as undertakers for the recently deceased. Oathbound of Suhl'Sekh are extremely rare but put an emphasis on protecting sages and scholars. Dervishes of Suhl'Sekh regard the undead as mere echoes of life that must be put to peaceful and respectful rest. Chaplains of Suhl'Sekh serve in one of two ways - travelling into the worst neighborhoods to recover the bodies of those murdered in the night, or doing what they can to lift spiritual burdens from others, whether this be to hear a deathbed confession, give their honest advice even when it is difficult to hear, or suggest ways in which someone might atone for the misdeeds that weigh heavily on their conscience.



THUL - ORDER, TRADITION, HISTORY

Other Name(s): The Lawgiver, The Just

Holy Symbol(s): A stone tablet; even balance scales

Depiction: A shirtless mountain dwarf with an enormous, braided beard, carrying two large stone tablets

Thul is the god of law and justice, generally invoked by the common people when they have been robbed or the victim of some other crime. Clerics of Thul are often part of the Jin Shi or teachers at the Royal Academy, although some also serve in the Guilds. Oathbound of Thul seek out those who commit great injustice for punishment. Dervishes of Thul are uncommon but hunt down those who desecrate tradition. Chaplains of Thul are more likely to dispense judgments and wisdom in unofficial forums, acting as traveling wise men who hear the everyday disputes of common folk.

THE DARK GODS

These deities are known for actively advancing evil causes, taking a more personal interest in their servants than is often the case with other deities. While it is not illegal in most places to worship or serve the dark gods, many of the things they ask of their servants are illegal. Openly preaching the word of these deities might or might not draw the eye of the law, but it is likely to draw thrown stones from a crowd, and these might also be ignored by the local militia. Notably, worship of the Twins has been made explicitly legal in Kishar and Samazar but remains firmly illegal in the Onyx City and many other places.



GORGATH - CHAOS, UNMAKING, VOID

Other Name(s): The Unending Maw, The Beast of Chaos, Shadow's End, Souleater

Holy Symbol(s): A black disk, surrounded by outward-facing teeth, with a red eye in the center; a circle of points

Depiction: A flowing mass of eyes, mouths, and tentacles

Gorgath is a vile god of destruction, believed to come in the night to eat those who wander alone. People often swear they know a friend who know a friend who..., but few people claim to have lost someone to him personally. Scholars say that Gorgath opposes all other deities and seeks the true and final destruction of the world. The dark, chaotic places of the Ethereal plane are said to be his domain, and those who can invoke the powers of Chaos or Phasing are sometimes viewed with a lingering suspicion as a result. Only the most truly vile and self-destructive count themselves as willing servants of Gorgath, although others are sometimes forced to aid his servants. Clerics of Gorgath are found at the center of all manner of nihilistic and anarchic cults. These often practice human sacrifice or cannibalism. Oathbound of Gorgath are said to wear jet black armor and single out virtuous people for abduction and murder. Dervishes of Gorgath are uncommon, but some exist in a twisted perversion of their normal role, aiding the actions of undead and demons. Chaplains of Gorgath are rarest of all but exist on the rare occasion that a message must be delivered without fail.



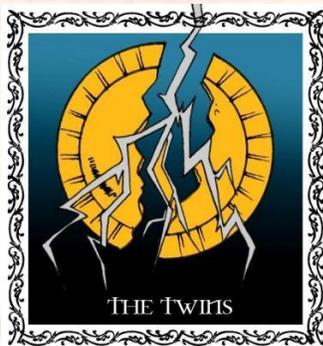
SULITH - DARKNESS, EVIL, RAW POWER

Other Name(s): The Dark Lady, Nightbringer

Holy Symbol(s): A black-hilted sword wreathed in green fire; a black mask with green eyes

Depiction: A demonic moon elf, in black leather, carrying her holy symbols

Sulith is a powerful goddess of great evil. She haunts the night in the form of an evil temptress, ready to lead those who would do good astray. Demons and other things of darkness are often associated with Sulith. Those who follow her teachings believe that power is the most important thing in life – where followers of Maenir might conquer another land, and call it just because their army was victorious, followers of Sulith would send assassins after the other land's leaders, poison its wells, and then conquer the crippled land with armies. Clerics of Sulith lead bands of well-trained soldiers of darkness and head organizations of assassins. Oathbound of Sulith escort her other servants, keeping them safe while they do her bidding. Dervishes of Sulith are uncommon, but some exist, generally trained specially to kill powerful forces of good or evil beings who betray their oaths to her. Chaplains of Sulith are uncommon but exist to serve as her spies and support her other followers.



THE TWINS (EBON & ALABAST) - DESIRE, LUST, SUBVERSION

Other Name(s): The Visitors, Soulmasters

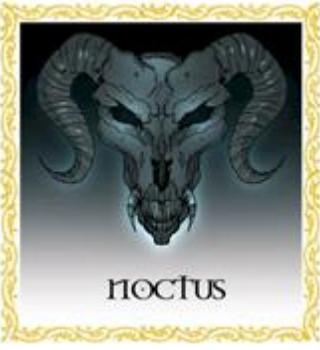
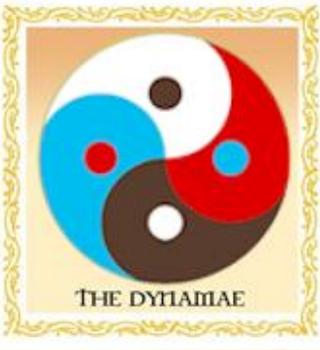
Holy Symbol(s): A triple yin-yang (one white, one gray, one black); a broken circle in gold with a jagged silver bolt through it

Depiction: Two beautiful grey-skinned beings, identical save for gender, with white eyes and flowing golden hair

Appearing about a decade ago from the heavens, it is unclear whether Ebon and Alabast are two separate beings or one deity in two bodies. When present together, they tend to speak in unison or complete each other's sentences, and the same eternal, knowing evil is found in both of their pupil-less eyes. Their objectives are unclear as yet, but they seem to accomplish them through the ability to see a mortal's heart's desire. Ebon and Alabast are too new to the world for there to be anything definite to say about their followers.

THE OTHERS

While not deities as per se, there are other forces in the world that play at larger than mortal levels. These might have servants in the world, although whether they would be considered the equal of those who serve the true gods is debated in scholarly circles.

	<p>NOCTUS</p> <p>Symbol: A horned black dragon's skull</p> <p>Something short of a god, but something much more than a mortal, Noctus is a great dragon who is said by some to be the progenitor of the dragonkin. Little is known of Noctus in scholarly circles, and even some dragonkin consider him to be more of an attempt at racial solidarity and an origin story than anything factual. He supposedly returned to this world several years ago and is the figure at the head of the Nocturnal Empire.</p>
	<p>THE DYNAMAE</p> <p>Symbol: A four-sectioned wheel, showing the opposition of elements</p> <p>Regarded by some scholars as the source of all magic, the Dynamae is spoken of reverently by most aetherites, although it is not clear if it is a personified being, an ancestor to the lineage, or their vision of the afterlife.</p>
<p>No known symbols</p>	<p>THE FEY COURTS</p> <p>True fey are powerful and often confusing natural spirits. While knowledge of the fey abounds, little of it is factual. Still, many stories suggest they organize themselves much as mortal nobles do, and that they have some connection to the seasons. Whether or not the Fey Courts exist as more than mortal speculation is unknown.</p>

(OOC note: Larger resolution versions of the deity icons are available for players wishing to use them in costuming – please contact the Organizers if you are interested.)

THE CALENDAR OF THE JEWELLED CITIES

The cycle of the year is counted somewhat similarly across the world, at least as far as is commonly known. The counting of years, however, is another matter. Outside of the Jeweled Cities, years are counted very differently, though the influence of the Jeweled Cities is strong along trade routes and among some scholarly circles.

NAMING AND NUMBERING THE YEARS

In the centuries-long history of the Jeweled Cities, while the Ruby City and the Onyx City have at times vied for dominance, Kishar has held sway as the foremost Jewel for as long as almost anyone now living can remember. Thus, the Jeweled Cities count and name their years (and eras) in terms of reign years; that is, the life of the Sultan who reigned at the time. The Sultan's reign name is followed by the number of years since their coronation, starting with 1. For example, it was at the beginning of Sulaiman 50 that the Sultan was assassinated, which started the Kishari Civil War. The war, taking most of that year, resolved with the coronation of Sultan Eismana, so the following year was Eismana 1, the year after that was Eismana 2, and so forth. Note that Sultan's Day (explained below) is the day when a new Sultan's rule officially starts; if a new Sultan takes the throne partway through the year, they are considered a regent until Sultan's Day, and the first year under their name starts then. (Note, additionally, that the Sultan will also take a reign name upon their ascendancy that is different from the name they had previously used.) To outsiders, this is unfortunately quite opaque; if you aren't aware of Kishari history and informed on the topic of royal lineages in particular, understanding how many years have passed since, say, Saladin 23, well – that is effectively impossible! The Daihonsha keeps excellent records and could tell you, but in truth, who among the common people needs to know that exact detail? Suffice it to say, knowing that it is Eismana 5 or 6 right now is good enough, and if you know how long ago Sulaiman 38 was, all the better. Calculating the distances between details in historical records is a matter fit only for scholars. Most foreign nations use their own dating system for years, which may come from an absolute date since the founding of the nation (as in anDwapeh), a claimed date since the start of time (Maha'vira), or era names and dates from important historical events (Prinya).

THE CYCLE OF THE YEAR

The first day of each year has a different name in places across the world, but in the Jeweled Cities, it is known as Sultan's Day, and it is considered a universal holiday and day of rest. No work is done, no markets are open, and no taxes are collected. Some celebrate with great zeal, but typically the celebrating is done the night before and the day itself is left for sleeping, resting, tidying, and starting the new year with a clean slate. Around the world, after Sultan's Day, the rest of the year is divided up evenly among the gods; well, among the thirteen original gods, that is. (The Twins, being recent arrivals to this world, have not yet been integrated into the calendar in any way.) Each month is 28 days long, divided into 4 weeks. In order, the thirteen months are:

1. shah-Gorgath
2. shah-Sulith
3. shah-Laurela
4. shah-Nivone
5. shah-Gloriel
6. shah-Brothers
(or shah-CorKhal, in some places)
7. shah-Auran
8. shah-Kora
9. shah-Thul
10. shah-Avahlei
11. shah-Suhl'Sekh
12. shah-Maenir
13. shah-Lyla

Each deity, in turn, has their own holiday. Once every four years there is a special holiday honoring the Dynamae. (That is, during so-called “leap years,” there is an extra holiday which falls between the second and third months.) Below, each of the holidays are listed and described in turn (*OOC - along with the real-world date analogs, to facilitate understanding*). The exact date of each holiday varies.

Months of the Year / Holy Days & Festivals	
	Sultan’s Day (January 1) – See above.
Month 1: shah-Gorgath (January 2 - 29)	<u>Day of Hunger</u> – In observance of his hunger, people leave offerings of food for Gorgath along with prayers regarding something they wish the Beast of Chaos to devour (such as a rival, an illness, a debt, etc.). It is traditional to leave these offerings outside of the house. This month is also known as the Hungry Month, as it is the time of year when food storage begins to run low and the poorest citizens begin to go hungry.
Month 2: shah-Sulith (January 30 – February 26)	<u>Night of Darkness</u> – To observe this, people put out all candles, hearth-fires, and sources of light and pray that the Dark Lady passes them over. Silence is not technically part of this ritual, but many people also try not to speak above a whisper that evening. Leaving a light on, traveling with light, or being boisterous on this night is said to attract the Dark Lady’s attention.
[Leap years only]	<u>Dynamae Day</u> – On this day, people (especially those on Path of Nature) honor the cycles of nature. Each person chooses an element with which they feel particularly aligned and wears a ribbon in the associated color. Friendly competitions between “elements” occur during the day, and at night the elements come together in celebration with a special ribbon-weaving dance around a tall pole.
Month 3: shah-Laurela (February 27 – March 26)	<u>Day of Passage</u> – This day celebrates transitions in people’s lives, and it is traditional to mark rites of passage on this day. Events such as marriages, births, graduations, apprenticeships, moving into a new home, etc. are celebrated on this day. Those who wish the Goddess’ favor might leave offerings of silver at her temples in hopes of favorable passage in their life.
Month 4: shah-Nivone (March 27 – April 23)	<u>Family Day</u> – Observers of this holiday celebrate by reuniting with their families, birth or chosen, and celebrating togetherness. This is considered an auspicious time to get married. Large communal meals are common, and those inciting violence are shunned. One notable history tells of a Sultan who tried starting a war on this day – only to have their entire army refuse to fight.
Month 5: shah-Gloriel (April 24 – May 21)	<u>The Day of Just Rewards</u> – This holiday is traditionally celebrated with the cancelling of debts, freeing of slaves, and release of prisoners who have been well-behaved during their incarceration. It’s also a traditional day to reward others who have done something selfless. Temples of Gloriel often release caged birds for those who donate to the temple.
Month 6: shah-Brothers (AKA shah-CorKhal) (May 22 – June 18)	<u>Service Day</u> – People who honor the Brothers perform acts of service on this day, especially toward those less fortunate or the weak. It is a traditional day to volunteer to help a neighbor or to aid the poor and refugees. Building or repairing structures that can shelter others is considered particularly worthy.

<p>Month 7: shah-Auran (June 19 – July 16)</p>	<p><u>The Day of Fire</u> – On this day, a ceremonial bonfire is lit at dawn and kept burning until the next dawn. It is bad luck for it to go out. Hearth fires started from twigs lit in the ceremonial fire are considered to bring good luck. The Day of Fire is an auspicious time to confess secrets, and mercy/kindness is expected towards those who do. If someone’s fire goes out on this day, it is commonly assumed that they are hiding a secret they need to confess.</p>
<p>Month 8: shah-Kora (July 17 – August 13)</p>	<p><u>Trade Day</u> – On this day, everyone who honors Kora makes something and sells it, even if it is something small sold for brass. It is also a traditional day to celebrate bazaars and makers. The Merchant’s Guild offers special items on this day, often rare and unusual items not otherwise available. In Samazar in particular, the Academy of Innovation sponsors a special Inventor’s Fair in Victory Square.</p>
<p>Month 9: shah-Thul (August 14 – September 10)</p>	<p><u>Ancestors Day</u> – Observers of this holiday tell stories of their family’s history, recite their ancestry, boast about their ancestors’ accomplishments, and leave offerings at shrines of Thul so that their ancestors may watch over them and grant them wisdom. At some temples, priests of Thul offer to read and interpret the law for anyone who does not understand it.</p>
<p>Month 10: shah-Avahlei (September 11 – October 8)</p>	<p><u>Day of Vigor</u> – Those who wish to seek Avahlei’s blessing offer drops of blood at her shrine, in exchange for healing or protection. Children born on this day are marked on the forehead with a thumbprint of blood, that they may always heal quickly and be protected from harm. It is also traditional to harvest a wild animal (or a domestic animal in a pinch) and feast with abandon. While it’s less of an ‘official’ part of the festival, sexuality is recognized as a normal and healthy part of most people’s lives, and those who choose to be ‘vigorous’ in this way are also considered to be fulfilling the Goddess’ tenets.</p>
<p>Month 11: shah-Suhl’Sekh (October 9 – November 5)</p>	<p><u>The Day of the Soul</u> – It is common on this day to light incense in honor of those who have passed in the last year. Those who wish to honor the Reaper of Hearts more thoroughly seek out a priest of Suhl’Sekh for advice on matters close to them, which often involves revealing secrets. Sometimes the priests have secretive or cryptic requests for their petitioners, something that will make right a secret wrong. To receive such a request and not fulfill it is to incur a heavy burden on one’s soul.</p>
<p>Month 12: shah-Maenir (November 6 – December 3)</p>	<p><u>Tournament Day</u> – On this day, people honor Maenir with shows of strength, physical competitions, and tourneys of arms. Priests of Maenir, especially the rare chaplains, serve as referees and judges of these tourneys and competitions. The victor of the tourney of arms sponsored by the temple of Maenir receives the title “Favored of Maenir” for the next year. This is a traditional time for commanders to present their soldiers with new weapons, armor, or equipment – a tradition that is also sometimes seen outside the formal military.</p>
<p>Month 13: shah-Lyla (December 4 - 31)</p>	<p><u>Fortune Day</u> – This holiday is most beloved of children, as it is the year’s traditional gift-giving holiday. Gifts from foreign lands are considered particularly auspicious because of the distance they have traveled. Prayers to Lady Luck are offered, along with special blessings given to travelers, songs are sung, and games of chance are played all day long. Cheaters are treated most harshly on this day, while entertainers are celebrated. The temples of Lyla offer (for a coin or two) fortunes that visitors pull from trees, each of which contains a statement of good or bad luck to come in the next year.</p>

FAUNA AND FLORA OF THE JEWELLED CITIES AND THE GREAT WASTES

A Treatise by Guru Bakshi of the Royal Academy of Shalazar

Commonly observed living creatures of our greater region are here documented for the enlightenment of interested scholars and explorers, as well as travelers of wild areas looking to avoid danger.

FAUNA

Fauna, the mobile and somewhat conscious living beings, are grouped here into wild animals, elementals and demi-elementals, and constructs (including both natural creations and folk-made ones); finally, some unusual beings which may possibly be sentient lineages of their own are also included, though I will note that their sentience is *debatable* at best.

WILD ANIMALS

THE GREAT WASTES AND THE ELFWALL



Commonly found and abundant in the Great Wastes (and now in the Desert Forest), the **Sand Dragon** (left) is a large, burrowing creature that is sometimes hunted for food – either for meat or for its eggs – but it is, nevertheless, very dangerous to individuals or small groups who arrive unprepared. Usually found in clusters of 4 to 15, they hunt in groups and show basic intelligence. In anDwapeh they are called *falang*.

Also abundant in the Great Wastes are **Giant Scorpions** (right). These are no ordinary arthropod! When fully grown, these beasts are large enough to ride, and in fact some gnollish tribes of the Wastes have learned to capture the young when pliant and raise them tame, training them to serve as beasts of burden and of war. Reputedly, at least one tribe even makes a liquor from a mixture involving the fermented venom of their drovers' scorpions, but this author has yet to verify this personally.



Another large denizen of the Wastes, albeit a less common one, is the **Giala** (left). A territorial large reptile with a distinctive red crest, the illustration on the left captures the giala at its most beautiful – and most dangerous – during the mating season of early spring. Abundant rains coincide with a flush of color. Avoid gialas during their mating season when possible, and probably at other times as well. None have yet been tamed.



Beautiful but elusive and haunting, the slow-moving **Shadhvar** (left) are best known for their signature *sounds*. Their horns are hollow, and so as the wind blows over and through them, it makes a most haunting and enchanting sort of flute-like sound. It is very ethereal, for lack of a better term, though I know of no real connection to that plane.

Most commonly found along the Elfwall, but also found throughout the Wastes and the rest of the continent, **Rocs** (right) are birds that defy common sense in terms of sheer size. Truly massive, these enormous birds of prey will pick off a guardsman as easily as a hawk would a mouse. Unlike most birds of prey, these tend to flock in groups of at least 3 to 4.



The deadly **Karkadan** (left) boasts a thick hide and a single massive, destructive horn at the front of its body. Fortunately, these creatures, while massive, are usually slow and even passive unless angered. Unfortunately, once angered, they are both swift and incredibly dangerous. Rarely does one anger them and live to tell the tale...

FOREST DWELLERS

Common residents of *the Lady's Forest*, and now of the **Desert Forest** as well, include the following unusual creatures.

Moas (left) are the best known, as some have been domesticated and even bred for show. However, their origin is wild and certainly wild populations do still exist. These large, bipedal birds are generally gentle, but depending on their disposition and the season, they can become quite territorial. Fortunately, they are typically quite talkative, which gives the informed listener a valuable clue. Listen for a high-pitched *kweee!* – this means the bird in question is in a gentler mood, more likely to be sociable (with other moas) or shy (with people). However, a loud *WARK!* is the sign of a territorial and assertive moa, often but not always a dominant male, and this individual is more likely to become aggressive, especially if it is mating season – or if you approach too quickly. *Note: The plumage of moas during mating season often takes on an increasingly orange hue, due to the pigments in flowers that they seek out at this time. It has been reported that moas may be particularly interested in (or even aggressive toward) brightly-dressed people during this time as a result – especially those dressed in orange. Proceed with caution.*





Rarely seen, **Fey Tigers** (left) may or may not have any real connection to the fey themselves, but they do similarly tend towards only being seen when they wish to be. These ambush predators are masters of stealth, appearing and disappearing as if magically – perhaps in fact magically! It is hard to say, as they are difficult to capture, and I have yet to have the opportunity to examine one in close detail. They will stalk their targets, and are generally quite silent, though they will growl. Their pelts, pinkish-purple dark stripes on white, are greatly prized in certain circles.

Tree-dwelling **Giant Centipedes** (right) are sometimes blamed on wayward magic-users' experiments gone awry, but there is nothing to substantiate such libelous claims. These creatures have called the woods of the Lady's Forest home for as long as our records of the forest have existed. Their brilliant and unusual hues – not typically seen in most places – certainly would make them stand out, but as their preferred habitat is in the mid-level canopy, they are not frequently encountered unless they are hungry. Note that their elongated mandibles drip with acidic juices and it is unwise to let them too close!



Side note: A novice might comment that Kirin, Mosstdogs, and greater Axolotls are also often seen in the forests of this region; however, both are more properly classified as demi-elementals, and as such, are located in the appropriate section, below.

Other **Giant Animals** also exist – most commonly in the Desert Forest but sometimes elsewhere. The Desert Forest is the most likely place to encounter them, due to the influence of the Life Shrine's ability to enlarge any wildlife that drinks from its fountain. However, "giantism" can occur in other ways, either through natural variations in species, fluctuations in magical power, and so forth; these cannot be predicted perfectly.



Finally, I will briefly mention the exceedingly rare **Anqa** (left). While you are unlikely to ever encounter this majestic bird, its beauty is second to none. If you are ever afforded the good fortune to encounter one in the deep forest, consider yourself to have been shown favor by Avahlei herself. Their stunning plumage is unmatched in the known world.

WILDLIFE THAT CROSSES ECOSYSTEMS



Perhaps most beloved – yet deceptive! – of our region’s animals are **Mirage Rabbits** (left), as they are commonly known, or more properly, *al-miraj*, as we scholars know them. These lively creatures are rabbits about the size of a large dog which will appear with a single horn on their head. Admittedly quite adorable, their most dangerous trait seems to be the false sense of safety that one would assume in the presence of quiet, gentle herbivores. While they are not overtly aggressive, these creatures are more of a hazard of the natural world than a predator; you see, any touch by that horn will instantly put a person to sleep! This would not be a great danger, as the sleep is not indefinite, but mirage rabbits rarely travel alone; surrounded by several, one might end up asleep for some time, vulnerable to many of the dangers of the Forests or the Wastes – so take care. *Note:* one of the most intriguing aspects of *al-miraj* is that, upon death, those dangerous horns simply disappear! It is not possible, therefore, to collect any for study.

SPECIAL: CYRILLIAN WILDLIFE

Finally, recent reports of peculiar and unique wild animals from the foreign land known as “Cyrillia” have been reported to me and are here rendered as described by the Adventurers who saw them first-hand. Normally I would not list any creatures that I have not personally seen physical specimens of, alive or dead, but corroboration by multiple sources seems to lend weight to the existence of these bizarre and possibly unnatural animals. Upon future examination, they may be reclassified.



The so-called **Zarvas** (left) initially appears much like a stag, but several features render this animal much different from the animal we know and love to hunt. The Zarvas, in fact, is not a delectable herbivore at all, a fact that might be first noticed by the wary due to the eyes being more forward facing on the head than is usual for an herbivore. Second, in lieu of simple hooves, each foot bears long claws. Finally, if you should see the beast open its mouth at any time, say to snarl or growl at you – which it may very well do, I am told – the presence of prominent canines (or “fangs”) will certainly give away its taste for flesh.

The other unusual creature from this strange land that has been described to me is a very large bird of prey (right) – larger than a person, though not as large as a roc – but which bears upon its head a mighty pair of antlers, like a stag. This creature has not yet been encountered much, but it does seem to be a significant threat.



ELEMENTALS AND DEMI-ELEMENTALS

ELEMENTALS

Creatures of pure energy, born of each of the elements (earth, air, fire, water, life, and death), have been known for as long as recorded history has existed. The first four are very simple and need no further description:



The elementals of life and death, however, are rarer, and as such are a bit harder to understand.



Dehva (left) are the elementals of **life**. While otherworldly and strange, these beings are rarely hostile unless attacked first. They never speak.

Khayal (right) are the elementals of **death**. They are dark and, while inherently uncomfortable for mortals like us to be around, it is important to remember that they are not *evil*. Similar to dehva, khayal never speak, nor are they actively hostile. Most often encountered near the Death Shrine, I generally do not recommend engaging them in any way.



One unpleasant variant of fire elementals is known: the **lava elemental** (left). The lava elementals seem to be a much more powerful and dangerous version of a fire elemental. This begs the question: are their similar variations of the other elements? There certainly have been in stories and legends, but as of yet there are no serious historical or modern records attesting to their existence. Lava elementals, however, are reliably documented to exist around the Fire Shrine in the Desert Forest, often if not always.



DEMI-ELEMENTALS

More abundant and commonly encountered, demi-elementals are frequently mistaken for animals, constructs, or simply “monsters” by the ignorant.



Beloved in legend and story, but not often encountered in life, **Kirin** (left) are demi-elementals of air. Lithe and nimble, somewhat like a horse or a deer but with a single delicate horn upon its forehead, there are many legends surrounding the kirin, and it is a staple of poetry and art in the Pearl City. They are quick creatures, too, flighty and easily startled, which is perhaps why they are so rarely spotted. Once most common in the Lady’s Forest, some of their population has relocated to the Desert Forest since the wars.

The many-legged greater **Axolotl** (right), is the demi-elemental of water. This sinuous, reclusive creature stays to moist, low points of the forest floor and, if disturbed, will hiss and display its claws in an attempt to scare off any who disturb it. They are quite large, so it is not an idle threat, but they are otherwise not particularly aggressive if left alone. I have seen them captured for droving, but I cannot recommend it in good conscience; they are solitary creatures of moisture and darkness and not suited to city or farm life.



Often misunderstood, the **Ettin** (left) is, in fact, also a demi-elemental, this one of earth. While they are commonly thought of as mere monsters or abominations, they are in fact natural beings wrought from the earth itself. Stalwart and sturdy, these massive, bipedal, two-headed creatures can even speak a sort of language, though their intelligence does not seem to be great, and they truly cannot be considered to be sentient. They are very animalistic, thinking only of their own needs, and they are quite territorial. Most often found along the Elfwall, ettins are large, strong, and dangerous to anyone caught unprepared. They are cunning and will make use of traps and ambushes to catch prey; I suspect they may consider folk among their food options. Proceed with caution!

Relatively unknown, **Slimes** (right) are simple in name if only because so very little is known about them. We have yet to have reliable, detailed information regarding their nature, habits, or feeding patterns. These emanations of the element of death have an acidic makeup that can eat through their surroundings, but they do seem to have some level of control over this, though the mechanism for this is as-yet unknown.



CONSTRUCTS, NATURAL, AND UNNATURAL

NATURAL CONSTRUCTS

Among the most commonly encountered natural constructs, **Mossgods** (right) may initially appear, from a distance, to be normal canines; however, this observation does not withstand closer examination. Upon approach, these creatures are clearly constructed of bits of earth, stone, and vegetable matter. Covered in bits of living vegetation which reflect the seasons, these fierce packs animals are decidedly territorial and, despite appearances, decidedly *not* herbivores.



UNDEAD CONSTRUCTS

Perhaps more well-known and well-feared are undead constructs, creatures either created through foul necromancy or ritual.

The most common of the undead constructs is the shambling **Skeleton** (right). Simple and just as it sounds, this creature is the animated skeleton of a formerly living creature, usually but not necessarily some sort of person. Animated animal skeletons have also been reported, but skeletons of people are usually chosen for their dexterity and ability to wield weapons. Skeletons move quickly but are not known for their stealth – the rattle of bones is a bit of a give-away, you see. Do note that, unfortunately, the moniker does not necessary mean that the skeleton is a *clean* one, however; their can be bits of flesh and clothing sticking to them still, which can be rather putrid, so be prepared. I recommend that, when skeletons are expected, one prepared a face covering doused with essential oils. Tea tree oil, while expensive, is both strong and fights diseases, so that is my first recommendation – but be careful not to overdo it. It is *strong*.



The **Wraith** (left) is the quintessential ghostly figure, floating around with no true physical form, yet it is certainly tangible enough to cause real harm. Their haunting wails, while deeply chilling, appear to have no lasting effect, but their long, clawed, grasping fingers are quite dangerous, ignoring the best of armor. These constructs appear to be unwilling spirits of the dead, tethered to this plane by some terrible power, wailing in some sort of pain, anger, or torment, I cannot say; but with these same chains that bind them, they will also lash out! Be wary and stay clear of these chains, or else you may be entangled as well.

Finally, the uncommon and powerful **Tomb Guardian** (right) typically guards a specific location, but any scholar who explores ancient ruins may stumble upon one sooner or later. These constructs are much stronger than the others, having been champions of some sort in life prior to being raised from the dead and reconstructed into this form. They retain greater intelligence and abilities, sometimes even using shields or bucklers and even strategy in combat, and furthermore they seem to radiate death; a swing from a tomb guardian's glowing weapon is painful.



DJINN-MADE CONSTRUCTS

Finally, while not *currently* considered a threat, at times in the past the complex and beautiful constructs left behind by the Djinn of the Diamond City *have* been antagonistic and, as such, I feel it is important to document their variations here, particularly should the need to oppose them ever arise again. While not intelligent, sentient, or showing any signs of bearing a soul, and therefore not truly a *construct* in the lineage sense, they are *constructed*; to prevent confusion, I believe it is important that we call them *automata* or even “robots” as some prefer.

The predominant type of automaton that most citizens and visitors to the Diamond City will be familiar with is known commonly as the **Diamond-bot** (right). This sturdy, practical automaton serves a wide variety of purposes within the city and was clearly designed to be a multi-purpose and flexible tool. They carry burdens, sweep streets, perform repairs and construction tasks, and complete a great variety of duties as assigned by the Operator – the true Construct who manages the Diamond City’s logistics – and a set of commands that allows local neighborhood authorities (that is, Jin Shi and Samazar Sentries at the neighborhood *koubans*) to issue new orders, so that necessary work in each neighborhood can get done in a timely fashion.



(above), often seen making repairs and making fine manipulations, and the smoothly rolling yet deadly **Sphere-bots** (right), which roll into place and then spring up with tools or weapons already in “hand”.

Much more rarely seen are the other types of automata, all of which exist solely in the city’s underlayers – the Undercity, as it is better known to scholars – which was, upon our initial arrival, a hostile place to venture. While the surface automata were neutral or helpful to settlers, the automata of the Undercity were immediately hostile and violent. This included both the skittering **Spider-bots**



Deeper underground, larger automata, often wielding proportionally larger weaponry in both hands, are set to patrol and guard specific areas. These **Sentry-bots** (left) are not to be taken lightly! Their construction is tougher than their lighter and more nimble cousins, so they are more difficult to damage, and so one might assume they are quite slow. However, their construction has one more unique and unexpected feature; their torsos can rotate independently of these bases, and they use this in an offensive capacity that must be seen to be believed. (I must say that I am grateful to have only seen this from some distance, myself!)

There is a second variation of this, the so-called **Brass-bot** (right) – and it is threatening even from some distance. While necessarily less armored, these particular hulks may be even heavier due to their reservoirs of water. It is unclear to me at this time whether these serve some other purpose, but regardless of whether this is their primary or secondary purpose, the forced expression of steam in a most rapid fashion is *quite* efficacious against most foes.



Finally, the most human-like of the automata and the rarest are a variety that have only been spotted a few times (left), and I have yet to see a specimen myself. The devious *Mechanist*, bent on eliminating all non-Djinn from the city, personally “possessed” these slim and nimble automata, using the bizarre and explosive “weird wands” to attack and kill many of the citizens of the city, including those who thought they were safe on the surface – including, even, one of the Diamond Assembly councilors, may he rest in peace. I have no name for these monsters, for though I loathe that term, I have nothing better yet; their creation was a work of great mastery, I am sure, but that they were turned to such tragic ends... well. It is perhaps for the best that this kind, and their weird wands, have not been seen again since the Mechanist’s defeat.

“DIFFICULT TO CLASSIFY”

Finally, I am here listing several creatures that are, frankly, *difficult to classify*. They do not (yet) tidily fall into any other category. Further study is necessary, and both observation of living specimens and thorough, careful dissections in proper laboratory conditions could open whole new avenues of study.

FORMIANS



The **Formians** (left and right) of the Great Wastes, it is said, may be a kind of Folk – a distant and unusual lineage of their own. They are certainly unlike any lineage previously identified, with their four legs, exoskeletons, and scent-based language and communication. They do, however, have a sort of society, hierarchies, language, and power structure; they create their own tools and weapons, wage war with one another (and sometimes our people as well), can learn the Jeweled Tongue, and are willing to make trades and treaties. The Formians seem to come in variations of size, color, and other traits such as strength and *disposition* that may be either related to their sub-type or to their culture; it is hard to say where one ends and the

other begins. Suffice to say, we have had good fortune in communicating and working with the social and intelligent **Green**, but the **Red** are larger, stronger, and openly hostile, seeking to harm us and the Green at every opportunity. Supposedly there are also **Blue** formians elsewhere, deeper underground, and rumors exist of so-called **Yellow** ones, too, though I have yet to hear any first-hand accounts of sightings, let alone successful encounters.



UNIQUE CYRILLIAN LINEAGES

In the strange, foreign land of Cyrillia, in addition **Vampires** (not pictured) being commonplace, there are also reported to be other previously unknown lineages of Folk, such as the so-called **Werewolves** (*right*). From descriptions and sketches, like the one at the right, these seem to be similar to hiwani, but I am told they are all shapeshifters. They appear to be subservient to the vampires of this nation, who are the nobles and regents. Whether this is a natural order or chosen, I cannot say.



“DEMONS” OF CYRILLIA

Additionally, in Cyrillia, there are unique creatures of a category that, I am told, translates most closely to “Demon”. I suspect that the lack of an appropriate translation leads to unfortunate sensationalism in this case, but the creatures in this category defy definition in any other category, so I have no other satisfactory term for them.



These so-called “Demons” include the dark and unsettling **Silence** (*left*), which made their way into Samazar for a while. In appearance somewhat like a large raven hiwani, at least in the head, yet, also shadowy and a bit formless and floating, like a wraith, these creatures bring deafening silence when they attack. Coordinated group efforts at music can, apparently, repel them, but it does take quite a coordinated and significant effort, all the more so if there are more individuals of the Silence present.

In contrast, the **Patchwork** (*right*) at first appeared perfectly normal – perhaps a bit *abnormally* perfect; “incredibly, unbelievably average and perfectly boring – it was actually creepy!” That was how it was first put to me. Eventually, however, they showed their true



colors – their faces revealed only as a horned “patchwork” mask in a variety of colors and patterns. They sought out “exceptional” individuals – anyone with unique talents and abilities – and sucked those very skills away from them before slaughtering them. They have the ability, moreover, to summon some number of *puppets*, dubbed **Marionettes** (*not pictured*); it has since been discovered that these marionettes are none other than their previous victims, talented artists, scholars, warriors, and the like who had been disappearing over recent months. It is a terrible and terrifying tragedy!

I would be remiss not to mention one other: **The Lord of the Desert Forest** (*not pictured*). I will not linger on this topic long as, much like the fey, I fear this is a dangerous path on which to tread. However, I will say this; whatever this giant horned tree-man-being of the deep woods is, whatever he wants, he does not come from this land originally, and I certainly do not think it is the Jeweled Cities’ best interests that he has at heart.

FLORA

The multitudinous flora of our glorious region has been extensively documented in a number of comprehensive volumes, which I shall not seek to duplicate here. If you are looking for a reference for flowers specifically, I recommend anything by Guru Shigemi of Isildar, whose insight is unmatched. For alchemical purposes, I would recommend for the novice Instructor Singh's *Flora of Gold*, Volumes 1 and 2, and for the advanced practitioner, the classic work of Chancellor Kabeer el-Kassem, *Our Inheritance is Petals and Stars*. For medicinal uses, nothing is a substitute for a solid education at a reputable Academy, but a basic set of Jayanta Dhakal's treatises on *Remedies and Poisons of the Desert and Sea* are worth memorizing.

In this context, I would like to merely offer a quick reference guide to the most common and widely encountered flora of the forests, foothills, and oases in and around the Jeweled Cities and Great Wastes.

ALCHEMICALLY USEFUL FLORA

Perhaps this most often in demand for their multiplicity of uses and ease of growth are four brightly colored, bold flowers often known collectively as "The Sultan's wives". These are, in the order pictured below, **Maiden's Blush**, **Desert Lily**, **Lionblood Bloom**, and **Sun Blossom**.



Maiden's Blush is commonly used for binding rituals performed by enchanters. The plant (leaves, stems, roots, and flowers) is highly sought after by alchemists for a variety of uses, including its ability to remove cloudiness from potions. Finally, I would be remiss not to mention the flower's original use – to bring the bright shades of youth to the cheeks of courtesans everywhere.

Desert's Lily produces a mild soporific used by healers everywhere. I am told it can be refined further to be more potent by alchemists, but I do not encourage such uses. The artificers of Samazar refine an oil from its rhizomes said to be useful to their craft. Courtesans prize them to wear in their hair.

Lionblood Bloom provides an extract that fortifies the body against injury – alchemists make potions to instill the strength of iron into skin from this. Courtesans brew it into tea that gives them focus on their art for hours on end, and the exotic craft of runes uses it to fix magic into symbols.

Sun Blossom is used to make ink fixatives in tattooing, in combination with other ingredients to produce the chemical fire of alchemists, and by cooks looking to add additional seasoning to their dishes.

MEDICINALLY USEFUL FLORA

The below illustration is courtesy of the generous and honorable physic, Zhung Lao, of Kishar's Royal Academy. These flora were commonly found in and around the Lady's Forest prior to the great fires there, and it stands to reason that they may also be found in the Desert Forest at this time or in the near future.

Please do not that gathering fungi is a *particularly* tricky skill to master, and I do not recommend consuming any until you have had its identity confirmed by a master in the area; even then, I recommend trying only small amounts initially, as different individuals may react differently to various wild fungi.

